

Access programs approved

On February 22, the Quebec cabinet approved 11 of 16 new regional programs to deliver health and social services in English. The five delayed submissions require some adjustment, but are expected to be ready for consideration soon.

While there have been improvements to previous programs in most regions, changes are not major. “There were quite substantial increases in services last time round,” says **Ron McNeil**, secretary of the provincial advisory committee on accessibility to English-language services. “However, there is still progress being made.”

They are three-year programs. “But we strongly feel that in future they should be of five-year duration,” says McNeil. “That’s the time line for strategic planning in the public healthcare system, so it makes more sense to follow that pattern.”

Access programs were introduced 15 years ago whereby the regional health and social service agencies across the province are required to develop and administer the means for serving their English-speaking clientele. The advisory committee is appointed by the Ministry to offer advice on delivery of such services in general, and also to give its opinion on each of the proposed access plans.

Election is due

The Ministry will be calling for nominations for positions on the advisory committee that are up for renewal. Five of the sitting members have completed their second mandate and must be replaced. A cross-section of English-speaking community sectors is to be consulted this spring.

English available at rehab centre

The “English question” at the Gingras-Lindsay Rehabilitation Institute has been resolved. While the Lindsay has lost its bilingual designation, the 2008-merged institution has just been indicated to provide all its services in English.

Tyndale turns 85

The Tyndale-St Georges Centre in Little Burgundy is celebrating its 85th birthday this year. It was founded in 1927 as Tyndale House by Montreal industrialist Charles Johnson, supported by Montreal’s Presbyterian community, as a “settlement house” to keep children off the street. It was named after William Tyndale, an English scholar known for translating the Bible. In the 1970s, the Anglican Diocese of Montreal joined with the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the facility became known as Tyndale-St Georges.

“Our church partners continue to provide us with a wonderful range of support,” says **Jen de Combe**, executive director. “But we’re non-denominational now and operate in an interfaith, multicultural context. Our fundamental focus has always been on youth, but over the years we’ve broadened that role to address family development and issues affecting our community. Today the Centre has over 2,000 members participating in our educational, cultural, social and recreational programs.”

And the future? “We’ll continue to be who we are,” affirms de Combe, “an organization that can reach people from 0 to 98. Tyndale is quite an exciting place. And on our birthday weekend of June 15-17, everyone is invited to our open house to enjoy an historical exhibit of Little Burgundy, community tours and other entertainment.” For information: www.tyndalestgeorges.com.

Major Montreal survey started

The Public Health Directorate of Montreal has just launched a major inquiry into the state of health of the city’s population. Titled TOPO, the exercise is designed to provide the health and social services centres (CSSS) with information to evaluate their programs and respond to actual needs. From now to November, 12,000 citizens will be invited to give their opinion. Participants are to be selected by random from among Medicare registrants. For more information: www.topomtl.ca.

Nutrition agency to go national?

After 132 years as a nutritional trailblazer in Quebec, the Montreal Diet Dispensary (MDD) has been asked to carry its message to a pan-Canadian audience. Founded in 1879 by a group of volunteers to provide meals to destitute Montrealers, the MDD included nutritional counseling in its program early on. Today the Dispensary is renowned for its unique approach to helping disadvantaged pregnant women bear healthy babies. As well as perinatal counseling on nutrition, the MDD has its own particular method for nurturing mother/child bonding.

“Essentially we provide expectant mothers living in poverty with a rehabilitation program in nutrition,” explains **Marie-Paule Duquette**, MDD executive director. “Over 45 percent of our clients are undernourished: their protein intake is much below what is needed to avoid low birth-weight babies. That has far-reaching effects because small newborns are prone to health problems both early and later in life.”

MDD today carries an annual case load of close to 3,000, with 160 on the waiting list, at a cost of \$730 per client per year. As well as individual counseling, the Dispensary provides clients with milk, eggs and flaxseed supplements, and maintains workshops, social activities and a drop-in daycare.

To make its program more accessible to more expectant mothers in need, MDD has expanded its service beyond the dispensary walls. Two years ago it launched a new online program, SVP Nutrition (Service virtuel périnatale en nutrition), to answer questions on perinatal nutrition from community workers in the field. Over 60 organizations in 12 regions of the province are using this service.

Its potential to serve an even broader audience has been recognized, and MDD has been asked to consider expanding SVP across Canada. “We’re doing a survey to assess that need,” says Duquette. “If we do go ahead we would include online training for professional nutritionists who are working in perinatal.” For information: 514 937 5375.

OBM to enjoy stellar year

According to **Matthew Pearce**, executive director of the Old Brewery Mission (OBM), 2012 will mark a major turning point for the Mission, and for homelessness in this city. Pearce points to a basket of projects that will alleviate some of the major needs of homeless people and hasten their return to mainstream society.

“We have six very interesting projects on the go,” Pearce explains. “Our transitional housing project, Le pont, will double its number of units from 15 to 30. A short-term detoxification centre and health clinic will be opened onsite. We’re opening an Internet café that will serve as a day centre, with counselors available for consultation. We’re opening an annex for first-time users of the shelter with a view to helping them move quickly back into society, to avoid chronic dependence. And ten more beds have been added to our women’s shelter.”

But growth is not the goal. “We’d like to shrink our shelter and any services that become no longer needed,” Pearce affirms. “But the numbers keep growing. In January, 56 clients moved out into our transition program, but 80 first-time clients showed up. That’s so disappointing, but I think our programs are on the right track. We just have to be patient.”

Girls getting help

The Pierrefonds-based Family Resource Center has developed a new program to help girls with emotional problems. Over the next six months, 50 girls aged 9 to 15 will participate in Go for Girls, a series of professionally supervised activities based on a cognitive behaviour approach. “Until now, most of our participants have been boys,” says **Carrie Goldberg**, executive director, “because they more often present themselves as aggressive when experiencing social or behavioural difficulties. Girls have higher levels of emotional problems and tend to suffer in silence. We’re providing a safe and confidential atmosphere where they can develop confidence and critical thinking skills.” For more information: 514 685 5912.

Visible minorities more visible

The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) has just issued a report dealing with English-speaking visible minorities in Quebec. (They have been identified according to the federal designation of “first official language spoken” rather than the provincial designation of “mother tongue”.) In total, these groups number 24.2 percent of the province’s English-speaking population, and account for 31.6 percent of Montreal’s anglophones.

This CHSSN Baseline Data Report 2011-2012 is the first of its kind in that it highlights those socio-demographic features of visible minority groups that could influence their health and well-being. Such data are crucial to setting effective policies and planning. Following are excerpts related to English-speaking visible minorities in the Montreal region:

- One-third are under the age of 25
- Of those 0-14 years old, the highest proportion, 23.4 %, are Black
- Of young adults 15-25 years, Koreans, at 22.6%, have the highest proportion
- The proportion of seniors, aged 65 and over, is only 5.9%

- Over 41% live below the poverty line
- As do 58% of West Asians, 57.6% of Koreans, 50% of Arabs

- The highest numbers without educational certification are Blacks at 22.7%, South Asians, 21.6%, Southeast Asians, 20.8%
- More French-speaking visible minority individuals, 22.4%, are likely not to have educational certification than visible minority English-speakers, 16%
- In total, 30.7% have university level certification
- The highest proportions with university certification are Chinese at 49%, Japanese at 48.9%, and Arabs at 46.5%

The full report is available at www.chssn.org.

Seniors getting much attention

Both provincial and federal governments have been making moves to address issues affecting Canada’s growing senior population. Quebec’s English-speaking seniors are to benefit from some particular attention. Their numbers are not insignificant: across the province, there are over 132,000 English-speaking seniors aged 65 and over. There are 13,000 over 85 years of age, 8,800 of whom live in the Montreal region.

In Quebec, Seniors Minister **Marguerite Blais** has announced a \$5.8 million funding allotment for 73 senior-focused community projects. Among the nine province-wide projects targeted by the Ministry is one by the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN). The QCGN will receive \$274,328 over three years to identify problems connected with English-speaking seniors’ access to services and programs essential to their health and wellbeing.

The Ministry is also funding 64 locally-based projects. Among these is the NDG Community Committee on Elder Abuse program, SAVA, the province’s first shelter for abused seniors. SAVA obtains \$232,000 to expand its operations. The Côte-des-Neiges Seniors Centre receives \$243,432 to assist vulnerable immigrant seniors living in social housing. The Montreal City Mission receives \$50,000 to create a mobile legal clinic for seniors. Prévention Côte-des-Neiges-NDG receives \$48,000 to register vulnerable and isolated seniors in the neighbourhood.

Minister Blais has also indicated that a new program to expand home-care services for seniors is soon to be announced. Some 15,000 seniors will benefit from that new funding. And a new official formal government policy on seniors is to be announced this spring.

From Ottawa, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is funding an analysis of the situation of Quebec’s English-speaking seniors and those support programs now being provided to seniors by federal institutions.

Montreal consulting on seniors

Montreal will be consulting the public in June to garner opinions on issues affecting the city's senior population. Four consultations were held during February with community and municipal representatives. The information thus collected will form the basis of an action plan to be presented on October 1, International Seniors Day.

Students program expands

The program known as QSAID, Quebec Students against Impaired Driving, has expanded its mandate and its name. Because it has become such a pressing issue, bullying has been adopted as another plank in the program, now called Quebec Students against Destructive Decisions (QSADD). The program was introduced in 2010 under the aegis of the East Island Network for English-language Services (REISA), and is now province-wide.

Canadians cutting charity

The Fraser Institute has released its latest analysis of Canadian charitable giving. Its 2011 Generosity Report shows a decline in both donors and donations across the country. Only 23 percent of Canadians claimed a donation. As a percentage of income, donations dropped to 0.64 percent. Manitobans were the most generous, donating 0.89 percent of their income to charity; Quebecers were again the least, dropping from the last report to 0.30 percent.

Clinic concept accredited

The new-style walk-in clinic opened last year as a pilot project at the Jewish General Hospital has received accreditation. Known as a Centre réseau intégré universitaire (CRIU), it was one of two such facilities set up to test a new concept of providing easy access to interdisciplinary healthcare, particularly for patients without family doctors. The Montreal Health and Social Services Agency intends to set up 60 such clinics in the region.

In brief

Theodora Brinckman has been appointed executive director of the MAB-Mackay Foundation.

Fiona Crossling was appointed executive director of Share the Warmth.

Kevin Leonard has been appointed executive director of the EJ Low-Beer Foundation.

Judy Martin has been re-elected president of the board of Batshaw Youth and Family Centres.

Louis L. Roquet is new chair of the Centraide of Greater Montreal board.

Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire has announced her retirement as president and executive director of Centraide of Greater Montreal, as of December 31.

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal is offering workshops on: Everything you ever wanted to know about engaging youth in your work, March 28; Responding to Difficult Situations, May 9; Trainer's Tool Box, May 31. For information: 514 842 3351.

National Volunteer Week is April 15-21. The theme this year is Volunteers: Passion, Action, Impact.

CCS (Catholic Community Services) is 80 years old.

The Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association is 40 years old.

A Caregivers' Guide, a handbook about end-of-life care, is available from the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association: 1 613 241 3663.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada will be releasing its national mental health strategy in June.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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