

Rethinking Bill 10

While major changes planned for Quebec's health and social services system will still affect English-serving institutions, some easing of the proposed legislation, Bill 10, has been promised. In fact, some amendments have already been proposed. For example, the status of already bilingual institutions would be recognized and the two mega health administrations being created to serve central and western Montreal would be bilingual. Other assurances are being considered.

This turnabout in government thinking can be attributed to strong representations made by English community leaders both in public and behind the scenes. By deciding not to force the bill into law before the National Assembly rose for the holidays, the government has provided the opportunity for further discussion and analysis. Final details are to be worked out during committee hearings in January. The community continues to be vigilant.

New uses for old hospitals

While speculation continues as to the future of hospital buildings scheduled for closure when their operations are transferred to Montreal's two new super hospitals, some provocative ideas are coming from the grass roots.

A proposal to convert the Montreal Children's Hospital site into a multi-functional health and social services centre is progressing apace. Introduced by the CSSS de la Montagne, and now supported by an important coalition of community organizations in downtown Montreal, the *Village Santé* has been presented to the Health Ministry. And the mayor of Montreal has now intervened to prevent sale of the site to private developers until this project has been given adequate appraisal.

In the meantime, the Old Brewery Mission has indicated its interest in the Hôtel Dieu facility for its operations. The Mission's present location is being considered for a possible government expropriation.

The new CCS

The venerable CCS is entering its 83rd year with a new name and a renewed blueprint for action. Long known as Catholic Community Services, this social services agency has always served a broader community. The name change aims to confirm the openness of its operations and its future path.

"We'll now be known as Collective Community Services," says **Fred Jensen**, executive director. "That change has been made to clarify our mandate, to ratify our commitment to being more inclusive. It better explains what we do, and the larger role we'll be playing in the community."

CCS's basic plan for action pivots around the welfare of children and families at risk. Early education programs for preschoolers and parenting skills counselling, services long offered by CCS, are vital to improving the lot of vulnerable families. They are particularly crucial to the many new immigrant families arriving in the community.

"We're running child development programs and education workshops for new immigrants on the health and educational resources available to them," Jensen explains. "We want to ensure our community is responding to the issues they're facing. At the same time we're extending our children's prevention and inclusion programs into many more schools and upping our efforts to address needs in the main-stream community."

CCS is not standing alone. "We've been developing key partnerships in the community with other organizations to reach common goals," Jensen explains. "We participate in neighbourhood tables and forums, and actively support specific projects that we think will benefit the community in the long term. We'll be making sure that there is a CCS presence wherever we can make an impact."

An illustration of the CCS outreach policy is the bylaw change just introduced by its board of directors that creates a new category of CCS membership: organizations.

Relieving stress and strain

A groundbreaking new project aimed at improving the mental health of vulnerable English-speakers, as well as the professionals who serve them, is just under way. AMI-Quebec has received a grant from Health Canada to coordinate the three-year, three-partner project that will address three distinct populations. AMI is concerned with caregivers of mentally-ill persons and their service providers; Youth Employment Services (YES) will address the stresses experienced by unemployed youth; and the Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors will work with homebound seniors and their older adult family caregivers.

“This project is based on resiliency building and prevention training,” explains **Ella Amir**, AMI executive director. “It’s an approach that has been proven highly successful in dealing with children’s stress issues, both here and internationally. We’re adapting the same principles to help other vulnerable people in our community.”

An important part of the project is to develop programs of support for community organizations and their volunteers. “They need to be strong in their coping strategies,” says Amir. “Working with fragile people with mental health problems, they often suffer from stress as well. So we’ll be helping staffers in developing and evaluating best practices in their work.”

Black program gets go-ahead

A joint project between the African-Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDPN) and Batshaw Youth and Family Centres has received approval and a three-year grant from the Montreal Health and Social Services Agency. Strengthening Parents and their Families addresses the issue of unnecessary calls for intervention by Youth Protection Services related to disciplinary practices in Black families. The goal is to teach positive parenting strategies to strengthen family bonds and to dispel fears many have about Youth Protection.

Seniors to get attention

Results of the most recent research on Quebec’s English-speaking Quebec seniors highlight some basic needs and priorities that call to be addressed. Co-sponsored by the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) and the Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREEN), researchers compiled the most up to date socio-demographic statistics and personal attitudes from a field survey of seniors across the province.

One of the survey’s key finding was that their language situation strongly affects how anglophone seniors fare. Some 94 percent of responders reported that receiving public services information in English was important. Although half claim to speak French, nearly 70 percent feel their ability to realize their full potential is curtailed by language barriers. Nearly one third reported that they require assistance when communicating with public service providers. Such concerns as access to health and social services, adequate living arrangements, social isolation, and the burden of caregiving are widespread.

The goal of the research project was to provide a credible knowledge base that would assist seniors, their community and policy makers in finding solutions to pressing problems. The full report is available at www.qcgn.org.

Montreal Foundation grants

The Foundation of Greater Montreal awarded \$4.1 million to 71 charitable organizations in 2014. Over half went to the health and welfare sector, 17 percent to arts and culture and 16 percent to social development.

Since its creation in 1999, the Foundation has distributed over \$12.2 million in total, and \$4.8 million through its community grants program. These are awarded for individual projects, collaborative initiatives and for larger long-term projects. Call for applications for 2015 grants opens in April. For information: www.fgmtl.org.

Tackling youth abuse together

It is a continuously growing problem. Reports on the physical, sexual and psychological abuse of children in Montreal have been steadily rising – up four percent in the past year. A new program now being introduced across the Island is designed to address the root causes of this troubling social issue.

“It’s called Alliance,” explains **Madeleine Bérard**, director of the Youth Protection Services of Batshaw Youth and Family Centres. “It’s a government-directed program that will bring youth centres, the CSSSs and community together to coordinate their services to ensure that at-risk families don’t fall between the cracks.

“Physical abuse and teen behavioural problems are widespread,” Bérard says. “The most chronic problem is neglect and it’s also the most complicated to address because of the number of causes. There is poverty, discrimination, isolation, parental stress – a broad range of issues that require long-term intervention, so a lot of people need to work on a lot of issues at the same time.”

In the meantime, Batshaw is fielding some 7,000 calls annually from people concerned about child abuse. Last year over 3,000 of those were deemed valid for official investigation. “That’s too much for a small population like ours,” Bérard exclaims.

Batshaw’s role is restricted to investigating individual cases. “Our mandate is very exclusive,” says Bérard. “We only get involved when we get called, and we can only stay as long as necessary. However when our involvement is finished, we do try to make sure that there is a safety net around the children. So we work closely with service providers and community organizations to ensure that there are plans in place for follow up.”

Under Quebec’s Youth Protection Act, it is the legal obligation of every citizen who suspects that a child has been physically or sexually abused to report it. Batshaw’s Youth Protection Services line is open 24/7 at 514 935 6196.

New stats are special

The Community and Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) has released its eleventh Baseline Data Report (BDR) on the province’s English-speaking population. Designed to assist anglophone community networks in developing evidence-based programs with their public partners, these socio-demographic data also serve to inform funders about the particular needs of the community, to build a case in their application for funding.

The BDR draws upon the National Household Survey and the 2011 census. So it is the most up to date material available. This edition is particularly noteworthy because it not only covers data from the 72 CSSS territories but, for the first time, includes pertinent information from all 83 CLSCs.

For example: while the population of greater Montreal is 35 percent English-speaking, at the level of the CSSS de la Montagne that concentration rises to 50 percent. The anglophone population served by its downtown CLSC Métro is 68 percent of the total, the highest concentration in the CSSS territory. The report is available at www.chssn.org.

A fantastic fair

“It’s already become an annual event!” **Colin Coole**, executive director of A.R.C. (Assistance and Referral Centre), enthuses over the highly successful health promotion fair held on November 1 in Brossard. Over 600 people from across the Montérégie were attracted to this first-of-its-kind event to be held on the South Shore.

“It was such a success on so many fronts,” Coole says. “We had seven kiosks from public establishments and from anglophone and cultural organizations. **Margaret Trudeau** was our keynote speaker, and Health Minister **Gaëtan Barrette**, a prominent – and highly interested – visitor. He spent almost two hours with us, so he was exposed to a lot of information about English-speaking communities and how we help deliver health and social services.”

Hospitals undergo expansions

Two of Montreal's community hospitals have received funding for expansion and upgrading of their services.

L'Hôpital de Verdun, founded in 1932, is slated for a five-year \$143 million overhaul that will add two wings and transform patient care. Extensions will add a new patient ward with 230 additional beds and add space for the hospital's orthopedic and plastic surgery clinics.

L'Hôpital de LaSalle has just completed a \$35 million renovation of its ER. It now has three new examination rooms, making for a total of ten, and space for 14 patients on gurneys. The workspace is now four times larger and has been updated with new materials and new standards for security and infection prevention.

Food bank use up

Food Banks Canada reports that there are nearly 850,000 Canadians relying on this form of assistance every month. That figure translates into a 25 percent increase in food bank users since 2008. In Quebec the increase has been 23 percent. (In the Canadian North, the increase is a staggering 247 percent.) The largest subgroup of Quebec food bank clients – 42 percent – remains single people living alone.

Moisson Montreal reports that of the 140,000 people using food banks in this city, since 2011 there has been a consistent increase in employed people and retirees.

Charitable giving on the rise

A recent poll, conducted for the Bank of Montreal, says that charitable giving by Canadians is on the rise and is expected to increase next year. The poll found that 84 percent of respondents had given donations last year, up from 77 percent in 2013. And they gave more: an average of \$640 over last year's \$580. Next year's projection is for \$720.

In brief

Leigh Johnston has been named assistant executive director of Batshaw Youth and Family Centres.

Nakuset, executive director of the Native Women's Shelter, received the Montreal Council of Women's Woman of the Year Award.

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres was awarded the Prix Expérience de soutien à l'intervention clinique from the Quebec Youth Centres Association.

The 2014-2015 edition of the Directory of Social and Community Services of Greater Montreal is now available. For more information: www.info-reference.qc.ca.

Fulford Residence for women is celebrating its 160th birthday.

The Father Dowd residence is 150 years old.

The Salvation Army was founded 130 years ago.

The Old Brewery Mission is 125.

A new free legal and notary service is now available to the Italian community in the western region of Montreal. For information: Domenica Pulcini at 514 274 9462.

A new "report card" providing in-depth data on Canadian hospitals can be consulted at: www.yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca.

Starting January 14, AMI-Quebec will be offering monthly workshops accessible by phone on borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. Registration is necessary: 1 866 396 2433.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

Legal deposit:
National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec