

# COMMUNITY NetLink

NEWS FOR THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK



On September 16, 2025, CHSSN celebrated its 25th anniversary with a high-energy retreat and celebratory evening in Quebec City, bringing together more than 60 participants from across the network.

The event served as a vibrant tribute to CHSSN's journey, its collective achievements, and the communities that have shaped its mission over the past 25 years.

A standout moment of the Gala evening at the iconic Morrin Centre was the projection of the moving 25th Anniversary video—a heartfelt reflection on CHSSN's evolution and impact.

The video is now available for everyone to watch at: [chssn.org/about](http://chssn.org/about).

Participants also warmly applauded this year's Community Builder Awards, presented in partnership with the Regional Development Network (RDN), recognizing individuals and organizations making an exceptional difference in their communities.

Earlier in the day, the retreat featured CHSSN's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and a dedicated NPI event. Program managers, board members, and NPI representatives took part in dynamic discussions on network development, guided by Joanne Pocock and William Floch. The presentation of the NPI Partner Survey results sparked rich conversations about key findings, needs, and priorities for the years ahead. 

See photos of the event on page 6 

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The CHSSN Board of Directors with Executive Director: (from left to right) Mary Ellen Beaulieu, John Haberlin, Vice-President/Treasurer, Stella Briand-Kennedy, Paula Celani, Jennifer Johnson, President Ron Creary, Ann Marie Powell, Deborah St-Martin, Kevin Erskine-Henry, and Kevin Drysdale. Missing: Pauline Grunberg, Dolly Shinhat.



# Building Safer, Stronger

## Senior Wellness Initiatives Across Québec

This summer CHSSN launched a Risk and Quality Management (RQM) survey within the Senior Wellness Initiative (SWI) network. The goal was to better understand how community groups are keeping seniors safe, included, and supported in their wellness programs.

With input from 33 organizations across Québec — and support from consultant Denise Beaton and the SWI RQM Advisory Committee — the survey revealed both strengths and shared challenges.

The good news is SWI organizations are deeply committed to creating welcoming, meaningful programs for English-speaking seniors. Safety is seen in a broad way — not just physical risks, but also emotional wellbeing, accessibility, and

the quality of staff and communication. However, barriers like limited staff, tricky facility access, and transportation issues remain common.

While most programs manage day-to-day risks well, tools like checklists, training plans, emergency protocols and reporting systems could be developed to help the centres reduce risk, stay consistent and reduce admin work. There's also growing interest in training on inclusive design, supporting seniors with cognitive challenges, and balancing safety with dignity.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

- CHSSN will work with the SWI network to co-create useful resources that meet real-world needs that support safer, stronger programs across the province.
- Want to learn more or get involved in developing these tools?
- Contact CHSSN's Senior Wellness team to join the next steps in this important work. [↗](#)

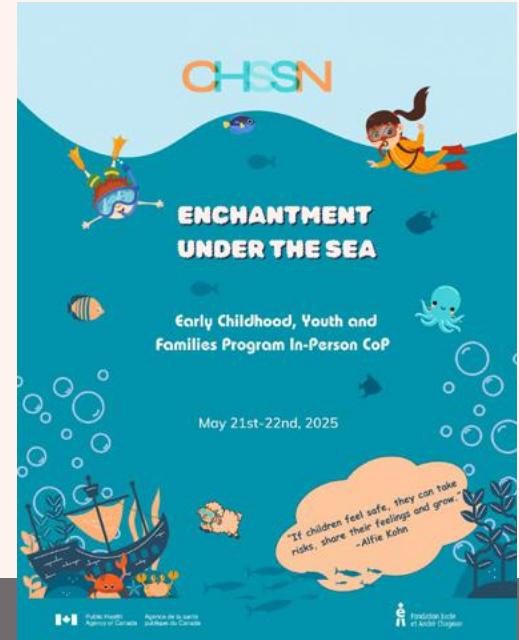
# Enchantment Under the Sea

## Highlights from the 2025 Early Childhood Retreat

Group Discussion at the Retreat



Veronika Racz (ECOL) Promoting Literacy Program at the Retreat



This May CHSSN's Early Childhood, Youth and Families Program gathered coordinators, partners, and community leaders for a richly immersive two-day retreat entitled Enchantment Under the Sea.

With 32 participants from across the province, the retreat offered a rare in-person opportunity to step away from day-to-day demands, dive deep into shared challenges, and strengthen the network supporting English-speaking families in Quebec.

Guided by a theme of depth, connection, and discovery, the retreat blended learning, sharing, creativity and reflection; bringing to life the idea that

meaningful professional growth happens when we create space to explore below the surface.

Participants left the retreat feeling deeply connected and supported, noting that "getting connected with other orgs and sharing similar and different realities strengthens us individually; there is a network of support and plenty of NPIs to bounce ideas off."

The evaluations echoed this sentiment, highlighting what participants

are taking home: renewed confidence in co-parenting approaches, inspiration from peers' accomplishments, concrete strategies to strengthen partnerships, a deeper understanding of program objectives, and an overall sense of pride, community, and motivation.

CHSSN extends its heartfelt thanks to all facilitators, organizers, partners, and coordinators who made this event such an energizing success.

Until next time, just keep swimming. ☺

# Empowering Voices

## CHSSN Hosts Forum on Health Equity for Racialized English-Speaking Communities

**O**n November 17, CHSSN hosted the community forum “Empowering Voices,” bringing together nearly 100 participants for a full-day event. The forum was dedicated to advancing equitable access to health and social services for racialized English-speaking communities, including immigrant and newcomer populations across Quebec.

On November 17, the CHSSN hosted the #EmpoweringVoices Community Forum, welcoming around 100 participants to a full-day event focused on advancing equitable access to health and social services for racialized English-speaking communities, including immigrant and newcomer populations across Quebec.

The forum was held as part of *La Grande semaine des tout-petits* (Early Childhood Week)—a province-wide initiative dedicated to placing early childhood at the heart of public priorities and celebrating the role of families.

The forum created a shared space where experiences, questions, and insights could be voiced openly and shape the collective work ahead.

The morning sessions opened with a presentation CHSSN’s Visible Minority Dataset comparing of comparative data from the 2016 and 2021 Statistics Canada Visible Minority datasetsdata which, offereding a critical lens on demographic shifts and service access trends among racialized English-speaking communities. This was followed by a compelling panel discussion featuring voices from multiple sectors and lived experiences, who spoke candidly about access-to-service challenges and the grassroots innovations emerging on the ground.

A highlight of the day was the official launch of Early Childhood Week, marked by the presence of Élise

**(Top photo)** Podcast with Anne-Marie Čech (CHSSN) and Saïd Bergheul (UQAT).

**(Middle photo)** (From left to right) Pemma Muzumdar (NCCDH), Dr. Debra Titone (McGill University), Darley Polony (Independent / BGC Dawson), Sam Nyinawumuntu (BHC), Sapphire Allaire (Y4Y Québec), Dr. Rislaine Benkelefat (DocTocToc), Ushana Houston (ACDPN) — Panel on access to health and social services for visible minorities.

**(Bottom photo)** On-site visual representation with Alina Gutierrez (Visual Versa).



Bonneville, Director of the *Collectif de la petite enfance*. Drawing on 15 years of experience in perinatal and early childhood, she emphasized the importance of collective mobilization, advocacy, and inclusive action to support all children—especially those from marginalized and racialized English-speaking communities.

The forum also featured a data presentation focused on English-speaking children and families, with particular attention to racialized and immigrant populations. A live podcast session with newly created research explored the unique challenges faced by English-speaking fathers, sparking thoughtful discussion and reflection. After this there was a lively and a session sharing tools for working with immigrant fathers.

Bringing together 11 Network Partnership Initiatives (NPIs) organizations, community groups, service providers, researchers, and multi-sectoral partners including CIUSSS/CISSS and Santé Québec, the forum fostered collaboration across sectors.

The event culminated in a networking session and resource exchange, that allowed participants to share and exchange different resources and their experiences of the day. Our hope is that these conversations will continue, new partnerships will emerge and innovative ways to access services will be adopted.

Thank you to all the fantastic speakers and panelists and the committed participants for making this event shine! 



## Submission of a Brief In response to Bill 1

**O**n November, CHSSN has submitted a brief to the Committee on Institutions regarding **Bill 1 – Québec Constitution Act, 2025**, urging the Government of Québec to explicitly affirm the rights of English-speaking Quebecers to receive health and social services in English.

While recognizing the Government's intent to consolidate Québec's constitutional autonomy, CHSSN is concerned that the current draft of Bill 1 does not reflect long-standing legal guarantees—namely Article 18 of the *Loi sur la gouvernance du système de santé et de services sociaux* and protections reaffirmed in Bill 96. The Québec Constitution Act contains only a single reference to English-speaking institutions, with no mention of community rights or service guarantees.

CHSSN is recommending two amendments:

- Adding a section titled “*The rights of the English-speaking community of Québec*”;
- Including a clause affirming the right of English-speaking persons to receive health and social services in English.

The brief emphasizes that language is essential to safe, equitable care and that the vitality of English-speaking communities depends on access to linguistically appropriate services. CHSSN calls on the Government to ensure these established rights are clearly embedded in the new constitutional framework. **N**

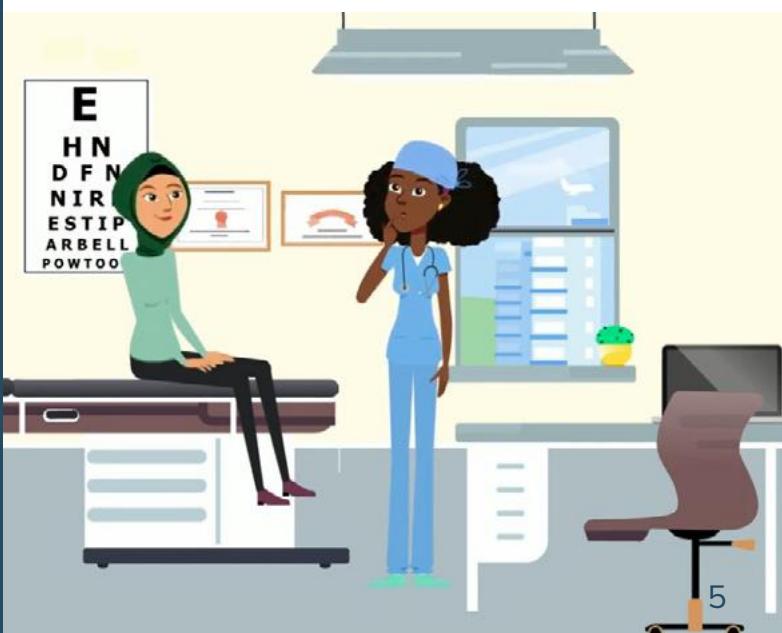
To read the full brief, please consult our website blog:  
[chssn.org/blog/briefs](http://chssn.org/blog/briefs)

## Sensitizing health and social service professionals

**T**he CHSSN, in collaboration with Répondants responsible for English-language services in their respective establishments, have produced 2 video capsules to sensitize and educate health and social service professionals to better support English-speaking patients. “This initiative was inspired through my exchanges with francophone health networks outside Québec” explains Jennifer Johnson, CHSSN Executive Director. She goes on to say that “the francophones have created some great tools educating health professionals in a predominantly English environment to better serve French-speaking patients, and we based this work on their successful models.”

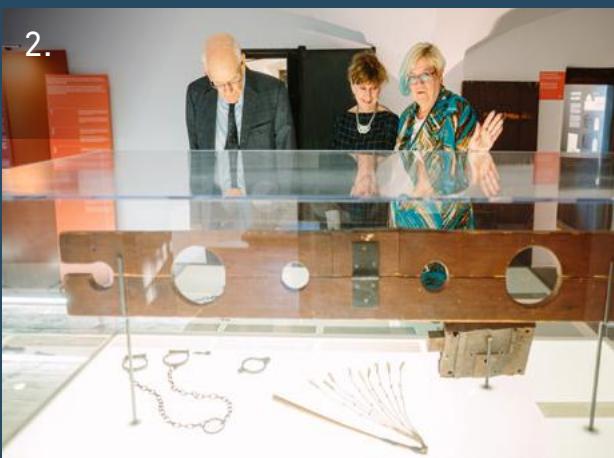
Emilie Bergeron, from CISSS Montérégie-Centre was one of the Répondants leading the way on this initiative and explains that “the video capsules cover aspects of the law and rights of the professional in delivering services and the rights of the user in receiving English-language services.” She continues by saying that “the video capsules also provide useful tips and suggestions for health and social service professionals to be more comfortable and confident in responding to English-speaking patients.”

This project is funded by Health Canada through the action plan on official languages 2023–2028. **N**



# 25 ANS | YEARS CHSSN

It was an inspiring and memorable milestone—celebrating the past, energizing the present, and looking confidently toward the future of CHSSN's work across Quebec.





**1.)** Welcoming the participants at the CHSSN Gala 25th Anniversary in the front of the beautiful Morrin Center in Québec City.

**2.)** Visit of the Morrin Centre Jail Museum — Kevin Drysdale, Brenda Edwards and Deborah St-Martin.

**3.)** CHSSN President Ron Creary and Director Stella Briand-Kennedy on the right.

**4.)** Jim Carter with his wife Monica Warr.

**5.)** CHSSN 25th Anniversary pin.

**6.)** Visit Morrin Centre Jail Museum — Kevin Erskine Henry, Stella Briand Kennedy, Mary Ellen Beaulieu.

**7.)** (From left to right) Emily Côté (Townshippers' Association), Susan Woodfine (HSL), Vanessa Savella (ECOL), Erica Botner (CHSSN), Sharleen Sullivan (Neighbours' Association), Jody Lessard (NSCA).

**8.)** Welcoming desk with Megan Yang, Flora Janos, Claude Levesque.

**9.)** Steve Guimond (CHSSN Patient Navigator) and Mardoché Mertilus (RVP) at the entrance of the jail.

**10.)** Jenn Cooke (CHSSN), Céline Lebigot (CHSSN) and Susan Woodfine (HSL).

**11.)** Cocktail in the Morrin Centre Library.

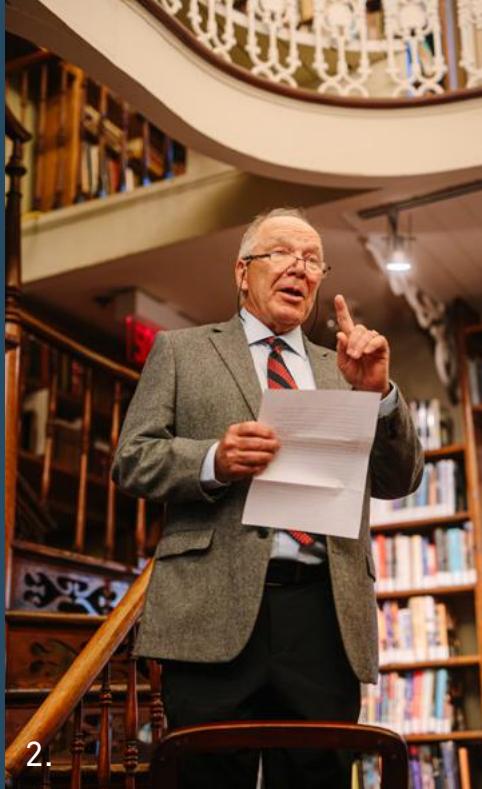
**12.)** Tania Callender (ACDPN), Ushana Houston (ACDPN), Ian Williams (AGAPE).

**13.)** Louis-Pierre Légaré (SRQEA), Charles Taker (CLO/OCOL), Julie Lemieux (CHSSN).

**14.)** Erica Botner (CHSSN), Mona Beck (Seniors Action Québec), Jennifer Johnson (CHSSN), Paulina Abarca-Cantin (Seniors Action Québec).



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**13.** CHSSN 22 ANS | 13 ANS

13.

**1.)** Jennifer Johnson (CHSSN), John McMahon, Deputy Minister for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, Louis-Pierre Légaré (SRQEA), Ron Creary (CHSSN).

**2.)** CHSSN President Ron Creary.

**3.)** Royal Orr, our master of ceremonies.

**4.)** Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN.

**5.)** Participants at the gala.

**6.)** Debbie Horrocks (LEARN), Nick Salter (PERT), Christine Truesdale (LEARN).

**7.)** Dre Joanne Pocock and William Floch.

**8.)** Richard Walling (JH Partners), Hugh Maynard, William Floch, Jim Carter.

**9.)** Danica Logan (CHSSN) and Karoll-Ann Carrier (MEPEC).

**10.)** Julie Lemieux (CHSSN) and Sharleen Sullivan (Neighbours).

**11.)** Anne-Marie Čech and Mardoché Mertilus (RVP).

**12.)** Video speech by Sharon Harper (Health Canada).

**13.)** Cathy Brown (RDN) and Hugo Bissonnet (4Korners).

**14.)** Participants at the Morrin Centre library.

**15.)** Ovation during the gala.



15.

# Community Builder Awards

## 2025

### Celebrating Community Leadership: CHSSN and RDN Present the 2025 Community Builder Awards

On September 16, 2025, the network proudly celebrated two outstanding leaders whose dedication has strengthened English-speaking communities across Québec. The 2025

Community Builder Awards honour individuals whose vision, commitment, and impact exemplify CHSSN's mission of fostering health, well-being, and community vitality.



#### REGIONAL IMPACT: **Peter Whitcomb**

CHSSN and RDN were thrilled to honour **Peter Whitcomb** with the 2025 Community Builder Award for Regional Impact. Peter's grassroots leadership in **Thetford Mines** has inspired community engagement, strengthened local capacity, and fostered long-term vitality for English-speaking residents.

His passion, integrity, and years of service have made a profound difference. Peter embodies the values of collaboration, inclusion, and unity—and his leadership continues to inspire others to get involved. **Congratulations, Peter—your dedication continues to inspire us all.**



#### PROVINCIAL IMPACT: **Jim Carter**

CHSSN and RDN were equally proud to recognize **Jim Carter** as a 2025 Community Builder Award recipient for Provincial Impact. With decades of leadership in health and social services, Jim's work has left a lasting legacy across Québec's English-speaking communities.

As a policy advisor and mentor, Jim has improved access to services, shaped inclusive policies, and inspired a generation of changemakers. His unwavering commitment to collaboration, inclusion, and unity exemplifies what it means to build community at a provincial scale. **Congratulations, Jim—and thank you for your extraordinary service.**

CHSSN thanks all its partners and supporters for helping build stronger, more inclusive communities across Québec. 



# Interview with Nancy Bilodeau from the CISSS de la Côte-Nord

Earlier this year, Nancy Bilodeau retired after more than 14 years as respondent for English-language services at CISSS de la Côte-Nord. We had the pleasure of interviewing her before her departure to reflect on her remarkable commitment to improving access for English-speaking users. Her creativity and perseverance have led to lasting changes that contributed to making care safer and more accessible across this vast region.

**Q. WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AND WHAT ARE THE MOST INTERESTING PROJECTS THAT YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN?**

**NB.** In fact, we are very proud of everything that has been put in place so far! We are particularly proud of having established the position of regional English interpreter (liaison officer), which has become a permanent position within the CISSS. This role meets a real need among English-speaking users, especially those in the Lower North Shore, where all facilities are designated and recognized by the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF).

The North Shore is a vast and difficult-to-access territory, and traveling for specialized services can be a real challenge. English-speaking users in the Lower North Shore sometimes have to fly to Sept-Îles because there are no roads connecting the Lower North Shore to the rest of the region.

Thanks to the interpreter, access to care is greatly facilitated, from the beginning to the end of the care episode. This represents an important and concrete step forward in improving the experience and safety of these users.

**Q. WHAT FACTORS DO YOU THINK HAVE HAD AN IMPACT ON THE LEVEL OF IMPROVEMENT?**

**NB.** Respondents must have a good command of their files, which requires experience. A certain degree of stability in file management greatly facilitates the work. It is also essential to be familiar with regional and English-speaking community issues in order to adequately adapt health and social services in English.

Being part of the Communications Department has made my work much easier, both in terms of communicating messages and choosing strategies to respond to the needs of English-speakers. Working as a team with my colleagues (*who are invaluable!*) in my department has helped me a lot with this file.

The support of a manager who is sensitive to the realities of the English-speaking population and convinced of the importance of developing concrete strategies while respecting the rules of the *Office québécois de la langue française* has been a key factor.

Having a budget, even a minimal one, is essential to be able to implement strategies and carry out planned projects. In this regard, I find the role of the CHSSN to be essential and important.

**Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE THAT YOU THINK COULD HELP NPIS WORK WITH THEIR LOCAL CISSS REPRESENTATIVES?**

**NB.**

- A certain degree of stability in the person responsible for English language issues facilitates collaboration. When a relationship of trust is built over time, working together becomes smoother and more effective.
- Regular communication, even informal, is essential. A spontaneous call or virtual meeting on Teams often helps to better understand ongoing projects and strengthen ties.
- Collaborating with community organizations and the regional committee is fundamental to understanding the health and social service needs of English-speakers.
- Finally, it is important to remain open and receptive to the changing needs of users over the years.

What I appreciated about this role was that, with the support of my colleagues, the two community organizations that defend the rights of English-speakers in the region (the Coasters' Association and the North Shore Community Association), and the members of the regional English-language committee, we really sought to make a small difference in the lives of English-speaking users. **N**



# Celebrating Milestones

## Honoring Our NPI Members' Anniversaries

### Across the Network

This year, the CHSSN proudly celebrates the remarkable anniversaries of six of our dedicated Network Partnership Initiative (NPI) members—each of whom has made a lasting impact on access to health and social services for English-speaking communities across Quebec.



#### CASA – 50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY IMPACT

Congratulations to CASA (Committee for Anglophone Social Action) on its 50th anniversary, this milestone reflects five decades of advocacy, leadership, and service to the Gaspé Coast's English-speaking population.



#### EVA MARSDEN CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AGING (EMC) – 50 YEARS OF COMPASSIONATE CARE

We are honored to recognize the Eva Marsden Centre for Social Justice and Aging for 50 years of dedicated service to vulnerable seniors in Montréal. EMC's commitment to social justice, dignity, and inclusive aging has transformed countless lives and continues to inspire.



#### MCDC – 25 YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES AND LOTBINIÈRE REGIONS

Making Connections Developing Community (MCDC) celebrates 25 years of empowering English-speaking residents through health access, diverse programming, and community development.



#### VISION GASPÉ-PERCÉ NOW – 20 YEARS OF ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

Celebrating 20 years of service, Vision Gaspé-Percé Now has played a key role in supporting the English-speaking population of the Gaspé-Percé region through youth engagement, senior support, and community development.

At CHSSN, we are deeply proud of these organizations—not only for the years they've served, but for the lives they've touched, the partnerships they've built, and the futures they continue to shape. These anniversaries are more than milestones; they are celebrations of resilience, leadership, and the collective strength of our network.

Here's to the past, present, and future of community-driven change. Congratulations to all!



Participants in the summer event.

## Regional Networks Gather in Terrebonne

On July 15th, the Summer NPI Networking Event, organized by our Network Partnership Initiative (NPI) member ECOL took place in Terrebonne. The gathering brought together 20 people.



Designed as a dynamic platform for connection and exchange, the event encouraged participants to share success stories, reflect on challenges, and engage in meaningful dialogue around NPI-related work. Through peer learning and open discussion, the day fostered a spirit of collaboration and strengthened ties across the NPI network.

From informal conversations to structured sessions, the event highlighted the value of collective insight and reinforced the importance of community-driven approaches to health and social services for English-speakers.

"Hosting the NPI Summer Retreat was an energizing and meaningful experience. I loved creating a space where leaders could step away from daily responsibilities, reconnect with their purpose and peers, and experience the collaboration and support that naturally unfolded. I left inspired and grateful to witness the creativity, resilience, and passion each participant brought to the table." ■

(left to right) Jenn Cooke (CHSSN), Vanessa Savella (ECOL), Eric Prusila (ECOL).

(From Left to Right) Jennifer Johnson, CHSSN Executive Director; Peter Schiefke, Member of Parliament for Vaudreuil; Sherry Romanado, Member of Parliament for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence; Jacqueline Vachon, Associate Director, Dialogue McGill

# Federal Government Confirms Continued Support for CHSSN's 2023–2028 Initiatives

**A**t a press conference held on October 15 at McGill University in Montreal, Sherry Romanado, Member of Parliament for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, and Peter Schiefke, Member of Parliament for Vaudreuil, on behalf of the Honourable Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health, announced the renewed funding of CHSSN's **Networking and Partnership Initiative (NPI) and Adaptation Program** through Health Canada's **Official Languages Health Program (OLHP)**. This five-year investment ensures that CHSSN and its province-wide network of community partners can continue advancing access, equity, and health outcomes for English-speaking Quebecers.

"We are deeply grateful for this multi-year partnership with Health Canada," said Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of CHSSN. "This sustained support recognizes the importance of collaboration and community leadership in ensuring equitable access to care for minority-language communities. Together, we are building a more inclusive and responsive health and social services system for all Quebecers."



## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Through the Networking and Partnership Initiative (NPI), CHSSN supports **23 community networks** working closely with regional and provincial health authorities. These networks play an essential role in connecting English-speaking communities with decision-makers, fostering dialogue, and driving initiatives tailored to local needs.

Since its creation in 2004, the NPI has become a cornerstone in improving access to English-language services—reducing barriers, increasing awareness, and strengthening community capacity across Quebec.

## LOOKING AHEAD

CHSSN looks forward to continuing its collaboration with Health Canada and with the many community and institutional partners who contribute to advancing health equity and well-being for English-speaking Quebecers. **N**



## Happy Holiday Wishes!

As the holiday season approaches, the CHSSN team warmly wishes all our loyal NetLink readers happy holidays and a wonderful 2026!

(From left to right) Anne-Marie Čech, Julie Lemieux, Erica Botner, Jennifer Johnson, Flora Janos, Megan Yang, Danica Logan, Céline Lebigot, Claude Levesque, Jenn Cooke, Steve Guimond. **Not pictured:** Amy Bilodeau, Sara Lahrissi, Ann Martell, Irris Soppo.



The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) is a network of community resources, associations, and public institutions dedicated to the development of health and social services for English-speaking communities in Quebec.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHSSN  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT US AT:**

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