

Transformation takes time

The massive reorganization of Quebec's health and social services network is well under way, but will be in a state of flux for some time. Meanwhile, there have been significant developments affecting institutions specifically related to the English-speaking community.

It is complex. Traditional "English" institutions have disappeared, merged into new integrated health and social services centres on a geographic basis. On Montreal Island there are five of these "CIUSSSs". Their operations are grouped under nine service programs – such as rehabilitation, youth, mental health – and the traditional English institutions are now among the "installations" serviced across these new programs. The Ministry describes this reality as *transversalité*. Senior management and mid-management teams have been named for these programs, some of whom come from the English-speaking community, but as yet no directors of individual installations have been appointed.

There has been some progress in community participation within the new health system structure. Anglophones are represented on the new boards of the Montreal CIUSSSs. The process for naming a new provincial advisory committee on access to English services is under way. And steps are now being taken to set up the regional access committee.

Interestingly, responsibility for the regional access committee lies with the CIUSSS Centre-Sud, rather than with either the Centre-West or West-Island CIUSSS, which service the broad anglophone community and are designated bilingual. That is because Centre-Sud inherited responsibilities previously covered by the former Regional Health and Social Services Agency. (This CIUSSS also directs the \$120 million budget of SOC, the program supporting Quebec's community organizations.)

While the legislation allows for people in the community to request advisory committees for its merged historic institutions none has yet been set up.

Centraide welcomes refugees

Welcoming newcomers to Montreal is not new for Centraide of Greater Montreal. In fact, eight of its agencies specialize in an immigrant clientele, and it is they who have been involved for over a year in addressing the needs of privately-sponsored Syrian families – more than 400 to date.

"All our 350 agencies will be involved in some way," says **Myriam Bérubé**, assistant director, Allocations and Social Analysis. "But these eight have the specific expertise to offer frontline services. They deal with the basics: documents, food, French classes, clothing, housing, schools, employment, and referral to health and psychosocial services. In sum, everything these refugees need to get a good start."

Backup is provided by 71 other Centraide agencies with specific programs that offer mid- to long-term support on a daily basis. "The majority of their clients are foreign born and benefit from such neighbourhood services as our housing support, early childhood initiatives and local family centres," says Bérubé. "And all of our 350 agencies are dedicated to creating welcoming communities."

Bérubé also points to the key role being played in the Syrian refugee program by the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal, a Centraide-funded agency. "The Centre is really the entry point for information," Bérubé explains. "It continues to provide timely and effective referral information for the general public. It's a vital source of information for our agencies' staff who want to direct refugees to the right social and community services. And refugees themselves can call for information."

Centraide itself is implicated on the broader scale. A member of the city's Syrian Solidarity Committee, Centraide is participant in its integration and social community support task force.

Anyone interested in volunteering in the refugee assistance program can contact the Referral Centre at: 514 527 1375.

Philanthropy, the challenge

A recent survey of Quebecers highlights a stark difference between thought and action when it comes to charitable giving in this province. The Mallet Institute, an organization dedicated to creating a sustainable culture of philanthropy in the province, revealed its survey results at a high-level conference held in Montreal in November. The “who’s who” of philanthropy participated in panels, discussions and proposals for the future.

This survey was the first of its kind, covering the volunteer side of social engagement and financial support, delving into regional and cultural differences in perceptions of the roles of the state, the corporate sector and non-profits, and analyzing individual behaviour and perceptions. There were 1758 respondents, including 1076 francophones, 392 anglophones and 290 allophones.

Results are telling. Ten percent of respondents donate their time often, 30 percent rarely, 45 percent, never. Seven percent donate goods often, 58 percent rarely, 11 percent, never. Five percent donate money often, 57 percent rarely, 18 percent never. Of those donating less than \$200 a year, 69 percent are francophone; 56 percent, anglophone; and 59 percent, allophone. Of those donating more than \$500 a year, 10 percent are francophone; 18 percent, anglophone; and 17 percent, allophone. Sixty-two percent of francophone giving is directed to their communities and regions, while that of anglophones is 40 percent. However, 27 percent of anglophones donate to national and international causes, while five percent of francophones do.

The report cited two Quebec “paradoxes”. While 80 percent of respondents recognize that their time is valuable to others and indicate they would donate some, only one in two regularly does so. They do not want to pay more taxes, but believe the State has first responsibility for social wellbeing. They merit highly the role of charitable organizations but expressed a strong lack confidence in them. The full report is available at: www.institutmallet.ca.

Finding francos

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal (VBM) has taken an original tack to find young francophone volunteers. Combining a visual ad campaign with an online contest, the technique met with a positive and encouraging response from the target audience of young professionals and university students.

“The ads, which we put in bus shelters, were in the form of amusing ‘teasers’,” explains **Alison Stevens**, executive director. “They didn’t mention the VBM or volunteering; they invited people to a website designed for a contest in which they submitted photos of themselves, naming their volunteer activity and the organization for which they volunteer. Viewers then voted one winner a month for three months.”

The campaign generated double recognition for the VBM. There were over 24,000 hits on the contest site over the three months. And it also raised activity on the VBM site – 81,595 visits compared with 68,126 during the same period last year.

For the bees

Nazareth House, the downtown shelter for homeless men dealing with mental illness and dependence issues, has introduced a new participatory program to help reduce their stress and increase their self-esteem. It’s called Bees, Honey and Hope. And it is a money-maker.

“We received a grant to install beehives on our roof from Bell,” says **Sheila Woodhouse**, executive director. “We already had a garden there, so the bees didn’t have to travel far for nectar. We started with 8,000 in May, and by September had 80,000.”

The bees have been productive, and the residents are pleased to participate in reaping the harvest. “We sell the honey at \$5 a jar in the community,” says Woodhouse. “It’s given us a small stream of revenue – and a lot of pride.”

OBM on target

“The big shift has happened,” exclaims **Matthew Pearce**, executive director of the old Brewery Mission (OBM). “For the first time in 126 years we have more housing units than shelter beds. It’s been our plan over the past decade to move homeless people out of the state of homelessness into a state of reintegration. We seem to be succeeding.”

The OBM now has access to 186 housing units that it owns or manages: subsidized apartments, city social housing units and its own pavilions. The Mission maintains 115 shelter beds for emergency and transitional use. “Housing options have to be adapted to personal need,” says Pearce. “Not all of our clients are amenable to living in independent apartments. Some are better off in group homes or in adapted living for seniors. If any of them struggle with their new life in society, our counselors are on hand to help make it work.”

Unfortunately, there are still those who will remain outside the loop. “What I don’t want to get lost,” says Pearce, “is that the OBM will always have space for those in need of emergency shelter. But now we’re welcoming them into an assessment and referral environment from which many can move on to a better life.”

A first in palliative care

Montreal will soon have its first day centre for palliative care patients. It is part of the St. Raphael Palliative Care Home and Day Centre scheduled to open in Outremont in 2017. The residence will provide 12 beds for palliative care patients and the centre, space for up to 20 ailing visitors a day.

The new complex will be housed in a renovated St. Raphael Church, which closed in 2008. Interested parishioners and supporters from the business and health sectors developed the concept and funded feasibility, architectural and business plans. The project has now received charitable status. Construction will begin next year.

Old homes need volunteers

Three of the oldest institutions in Montreal’s English-speaking community – with a combined history of 370 years – are in need of volunteers to visit with their residents. The Father Dowd, St. Margaret’s and St Andrew’s Homes were merged into the CSSS Cavendish as part of an earlier reorganization of Quebec’s health system.

“Not everyone wants to work with a frail population,” says **Edward Cho**, coordinator of volunteers at the CSSS. “But many of these residents are spritely enough, and all benefit from attention from their own community. Volunteers can help with recreational activities like bingo or baking or just plain listening.”

Cho orients new volunteers, about the institutions and what volunteers should and should not do. “We have to gauge whether someone would be an appropriate volunteer for the elderly,” Cho explains. “Communication skills are very important. And, of course, we do get character references and a police check on applicants. Approved volunteers then get on the job training from the institution’s staff.” For information: 514 484 7878, ext. 3146.

Hunger pangs

There are a lot of hungry people in this country. Food Banks Canada reports that over 850,000 individuals accessed a food bank in March, when its annual hunger count is made. And, over the year, some 4,400,000 meals and snacks were provided through soup kitchens, shelters and school breakfast programs.

Montreal Moisson, Canada’s largest food bank, reported 146,000 users, up four percent over last year, and that 35,000 are children between 0 and 5. This agency’s directors point out that “the face of hunger has changed over the years. Its growth is not from the homeless, as many believe, but from low income workers, single parent families, seniors with insufficient revenue, and new arrivals”.

Skype to the rescue

Reconciliation of a father and son after 25 years of alienation, a patient with advanced dementia now watching hockey games with his son in Ohio, a bed-bound veteran chatting daily with his dying son in Sweden. Touching stories are coming out of Ste. Anne's Veterans' Hospital on the West Island. Thanks to the hospital staff and Skype.

"We observed younger veterans communicating with their families and friends via Skype," says **Lorraine La France**, acting assistant director of Nursing. "It seemed very plausible to propose this technology for our older veterans as well. Our Foundation provided funds for a pilot project that was so successful it's now part of our daily routine."

The links between social isolation of older people and their mortality rates, hypertension, depression, and cognitive and sensory loss is widely documented. This modern way of "visiting" with their loved ones via teleconferencing is now bringing a new dimension to the lives of these elderly – average age 94 – veterans.

"The positive effects are really amazing," says La France. "And it's so simple to set up, a real 'plug and play' operation. We're doing it in a hospital setting but it is totally adaptable to other situations."

The Ste. Anne's Foundation has prepared an easy to follow guide to operating such a Skype program. For further information: Lorraine La France: 514 457 3440, ext. 2584.

Foundation grants

The Foundation of Greater Montreal gave out \$4,550, 564 in grants this year. The health sector accounted for 41 percent, social development, 30 percent. A broad range of organizations benefitted from this funding, including such organizations as Multi-Écoute, which provides psychosocial services to new arrivals, a mobile mental health clinic and a health accompaniment program at Nazareth House.

In brief

Several members of the English-speaking community nominated by the outgoing Montreal access committee were named to boards of the newly-formed integrated health and social services centres of Greater Montreal:

Alan Maislin: CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Judy Martin: CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Ghislaine Prata: CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Marlene Jennings: CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal
Michael Udy:

Josephine Primiani: CIUSSS de Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Christine Boyle, formerly executive director of the MAB/Mackay Rehabilitation Centre, is director of Operations and Administrative Services at Portage.

Elizabeth Falco has been appointed executive director of Tyndale-St Georges Community Centre.

Beverley Robinson, formerly director of Batshaw's Residential Services, is now assistant director of Youth Services and Clientele Trajectories at the CIUSSS de l'Ouest de-l'Île-de-Montréal.

Dorothy Williams, formerly executive director of the Black Community Resources Centre, has joined CCS as interim director of Strategic Development.

The integrated health and social services centre formerly named CIUSSS du-Centre-Est has been re-named CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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