



The English Speaking Catholic Council

Le conseil catholique d'expression anglaise

Brief on Building Local Health and Social Services Networks in Montreal

Introduction

The English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the public consultations on building new health and social services networks in Montreal.

The ESCC was formed in 1980 as a focal point for coordinating community activities among English-speaking Roman Catholics in Montreal and later across all Quebec.

In keeping with the mission of the Church and with its teachings on the role of the laity in the modern world, the English Speaking Catholic Council acts in the fields of education, health and social services, social justice and culture to build a sense of community identity and common purpose.

We encourage the development of leadership in the community and assist in coordinating human resources in community-based institutions and we endeavour to ensure effective representation before government bodies and on various boards, committees and councils.

Over a third of a million strong, the members of our community are an active element in Quebec's English-speaking minority community. Through the English Speaking Catholic Council, our community's voice has been accepted as an important and credible one by local, provincial and federal governments on a range of issues.

Building Local Health and Social Service Networks

As a community-based organization, as a Catholic organization and as the representative of an important minority community, health-care and social services issues have been perennial concerns for us.

Over the past century and a half our community has created and supported institutions such as youth agencies, seniors' residences/long term care facilities, hospitals and home care programs. We have a clear and practical vision of the needs and expectations of our community.

Our response to the proposal published by the *Agence de développement de réseaux locaux de services de santé et de services sociaux* is based on four principles:

1) Encourage community-institutional partnership

An historic partnership exists between communities and certain institutions in Quebec. For the English-speaking Catholics in Montreal, there are two institutions that have a particularly close relationship with the community – Saint Mary's Hospital and the Father Dowd Home.

Over the years, the nature of that relationship has evolved, but community involvement in these institutions has always been characterized by participation in management and control through community representation on Boards of Directors, by substantial private funding support through the institutions' foundations and by strong volunteer participation in the day-to-day life of the Hospital and the Home.

We believe that these establishments, their patients and the wider health network have all benefited from this historic partnership between community and institutions.

2) Put strong values at the heart of health and social services

Roman Catholic social teaching has always insisted that the vulnerable, the sick, and the poor deserve our support regardless of their religion or cultural background. That is why English Catholic institutions have offered their services to all citizens in need and why these institutions and English-speaking Catholics in the wider public system have contributed to the development of a just, equitable and effective social and health service network across Quebec.

Catholic institutions are fully public institutions in Quebec; they have demonstrated that there is no inconsistency between maintaining a close link with a faith community and offering services to all citizens seeking help.

In this light, we congratulate the *Agence* for stating in its consultation document that care for the vulnerable must be a priority for the system that we are building for Montreal. At the ESCC, we have a particular concern for the situation of seniors and we encourage the *Agence* to be especially alert to their interests and needs in the reorganization process.

3) Language is crucial in the provision of high quality services

The ESCC has come to recognize that language is an essential component of quality of care and service in the fields of health and social services, particularly for a linguistic minority like ours.

The important strides that we have made over the years in ensuring access to English language services through the protection of community-based institutions, through the system of regional Access Plans and designated service delivery points and resources, and by other legal and administrative means must be protected in the process of reorganization in Montreal and across the province.

Members of our community in regions like the West Island and the Monterégie have praised local health care institutions for the quality of English language

services that are available in their public establishments. These historic patterns of service provision to English-speaking Montrealers need to be respected.

As a basic principle, no community or neighbourhood should find itself with fewer services, including services in the English language, at the end of this process than it had at the beginning of it. If anything, this reorganization should be carried out in a manner that enhances services for minorities.

The English-speaking community has worked closely over the years with the Government of Quebec and with the now defunct Regional Boards to develop Access Plans. These plans are lists of entitled services from designated institutions that constitute a baseline of care for our community. As we move toward the development of new administrative and service structures, the ESCC insists that this baseline of services as recognized by the Access Plans be protected and enhanced in Montreal and in other regions as well.

4) Respect and flexibility required

Reform of a critically important network like the one that delivers health and social services in a culturally complex setting like Montreal must be done with great care and with flexibility.

We congratulate the Minister of Health, Dr. Couillard, for stating his intention clearly to proceed with sensitivity and respect, especially where the realities of minority communities and their institutions and the complexities of Montreal are concerned.

The Status of English Catholic Institutions in Montreal

All health and social service institutions will be expected to participate in and contribute to the new networks that are being developed across Quebec. In Montreal, we want to underline for the *Agence's* attention that Saint Mary's Hospital and the Father Dowd, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret's Homes are approaching the reorganization in a spirit of creativity and full participation.

The English Speaking Catholic Council firmly supports the recommendations being made by both Saint Mary's Hospital and by the unified Board of Directors of Father Dowd, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret's Homes with respect to structural proposals that would allow them to continue to make their important contributions to health care in Montreal. (See Appendices)

Saint Mary's has an exciting future as part of the McGill RUIS structure and should continue to provide high quality hospital services as an independent institution to citizens from the Centre-Ouest region and beyond. Father Dowd, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret's Homes envision a dynamic new consortium of community-based institutions that promises to enhance services while maintaining strong community ties.

We note in particular the necessity of maintaining community participation in the management and control of these two institutions. A strong community sense of institutional "ownership", even of fully public organizations, is essential to sustain volunteer commitment and charitable donations. The capacity of these institutions to respond innovatively and to provide the highest quality of care is directly linked to guarding the community-institutional partnership that has characterized the work of these institutions for generations. Services to seniors are very much at play in the discussion of the future of these specific Montreal institutions. Older members of our community are among the most vulnerable in our society – they are especially deserving of our consideration, respect and care, in recognition of their contribution to the life of Quebec over the years.

The Status of English Catholic Institutions in Quebec City

The challenge to respect and encourage community involvement is also part of the deliberations on reforming health and social service structures in Quebec City. Our focus in this brief is on Montreal, but the situation in Quebec City underlines the issues at stake here.

The English Speaking Catholic Council wishes to state in the clearest possible terms that it supports recognizing the Jeffery Hale Hospital and Saint Brigid's

Home as the primary service providers for the English-speaking community of Quebec City with a community-based Board of Directors, while providing a full range of French language services. These institutions have submitted a reform proposal that is consistent with the spirit of Bill 25 and respectful of the needs of English-speaking and French-speaking citizens of the Quebec City region. Their proposal should be accepted.

The ESCC believes that these institutions in Quebec City and Montreal are examples of the sort of complexity and specificity that the Minister of Health pledged to address with care and flexibility. We encourage him to recognize the particularity of these situations and to look positively on each of the proposals advanced by them to structure their future participation in the health and social services network.

Conclusion and recommendations

The ESCC recognizes the complexity of the task of reforming structures for the effective and efficient provision of health and social services for all Montrealers.

We call on the *Agence* to recognize the fundamental importance of the historic and ongoing link between communities and their institutions. The partnership between the English-speaking Catholic community and St. Mary's Hospital and the Father Dowd, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret's Homes is of particular concern to us in these deliberations. That partnership has worked to the benefit of all Montrealers through enhanced volunteerism and charitable financial support; the outstanding quality of care that they have offered has been made possible in large part by strong community support. The reform process should not undermine this sense of ownership and the charitable support that it has engendered.

Direct community involvement in the management and control of these institutions must be preserved in the reforms flowing from Bill 25. This is consistent with the spirit of the legislation with respect to minority communities as described by the Minister of Health in the adoption of the legislation and

respectful of the *Agence's* intention to improve the delivery of health care to all Montrealers.

Improving health care for all citizens is an essential task that is worthy of praise. We would like to conclude, therefore, with words of encouragement and thanks to the volunteers and staff of the *Agence* in their important work.

We believe that caring for one another is the most fundamental definition of what it means to be a community. And we believe that the creation and sustenance of caring communities is among the highest of callings.

We hope that you find this contribution helpful in your consultative process and we look forward to ongoing dialogue with you.

Respectfully submitted,

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President

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