

# Appendix

## Appendix 1 – SC Access Centre at Alma in Saguenay-Lac St-Jean

In Quebec, seven Service Canada centres were created in association with Human Resources Development Canada: Gaspé, St-Hyacinthe, Repentigny, Mont-Laurier, Alma, Drummondville and Café Jeunesse. While these centres all offer a set of common services, the list nonetheless varies with the size of the centre and region concerned. Examples of specific initiatives undertaken at these centres include:

- The assignment of personnel to the road to meet with organizations, employers and various groups (a Mont-Laurier initiative);
- A postcard sent to all homes to promote the centre in Drummondville;
- The involvement of 13 departments in setting up Café Jeunesse;
- Group facilitation and training sessions carried out in association with the Human Resources Information Centre;
- Production of a promotional video and information capsules for community television by the Alma bureau.

With all the projects carried out in Quebec, officials emphasized that the harsh political climate of federal-provincial relations had some impact on acceptance of the SCI project. The two governments regularly wrangle over jurisdiction and, in some parts of Quebec and with some groups of people, the federal government is not always welcome! The in-person access centres also encountered problems experienced in other regions across Canada. For example, the problems with Public Works and Government Services database access and security arose because some community groups provided part of the services and needed access to information traditionally available only to federal civil servants. The limited computer literacy of many people, more so in rural than urban areas, also meant providing more support; navigating the Canada website was not also considered easy. Lastly, the atmosphere of questioning HRDC program management and insecurity surrounding SCI short-term renewals apparently made many employees fearful of losing their jobs.

The Canada Human Resources Centre (CHRC) at Alma in the Saguenay-Lac St-Jean region is under the jurisdiction of the Jonquière regional office. The director of the office was the one who took charge of the SC project. The project was very well received because it meshed with the turnaround underway at the Department, which was abandoning some employment-related activities and redefining its mission in terms of informing, supporting and assisting citizens in their efforts to improve community development. The approach favoured by HRDC is one of relational rather than transactional type service, as administrative tasks can now be done more quickly with computers. Service Canada provided an opportunity to add another information tool to the existing one. The CHRC in Alma already had a number of projects underway with the HRICs (Human Resources Information Centres to help job-seekers), CACs (Community Access Centers) and Ambassadeur (a regional development project; see separate case study), and all of these projects were complementary.

After consultation with employees, a team was formed from among the volunteers and a coordinator took the helm. SC was set up in a local semi-rural community, Alma. The six assistance officers there received training in SC and two were assigned directly to the new service. All expressed tremendous interest in this new orientation to their work — becoming information brokers and providing guidance for citizens who needed it.

A person who approaches the CHRC about an employment-related problem is given a brief information session on federal programs and services. The officials also meet with various groups upon request, or after proposing meetings they consider worthwhile. Lastly, they provide additional services such as CV preparation, training in job-hunting or how to use a computer or fax machine. The employees interviewed appreciated the job enrichment that came with the introduction of SC. "We're doing marketing," said one of them very proudly. The contacts and relations they develop with community groups will enable them to expand the clientele they reach. The coordinator even prepared a guide of proper addresses organized by needs that has proven very useful for everyone, both officials and citizens.

In terms of cooperation, project participants underscored the large number of partners: the TBS, HRDC with its national arm and regional branches, Economic Development Canada, Industry Canada and a few other departments, not to mention community groups. This did not make the job any easier. Project evaluation was also a problem because, after not receiving any clear instructions from SCI, they first tried to develop their own evaluation tools only to find themselves later required to use a national questionnaire. Regional consultation was still minimal. SCI publicity also sparked some disagreement because they would very much have liked to see the service receive more.

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As a result of all the delays, the service had only been in operation a few months when this research was done. Despite this short timespan, HRDC personnel involved with the project are unanimous in considering the experience an outright success that meets local needs. How do they see the future of SC? First, they would like to be able to propagate the Alma experience at the five other CHRCs in the region. And even though it was a "strict agreement with local flavouring", they all appreciated the opportunity provided by SC to develop customized service for their fellow citizens.

## Appendix 2 – Community Centres for Francophone Communities in Manitoba

This project fits into the broad movement of Francophone communities taking control of municipal, school, economic and social management. These communities are facing a number of problems such as the exodus of the young, a shortage of jobs, lack of training, and often distance from urban centres and therefore resources capable of helping them.

Provincial Bill 41 on French-language services, inspired by the Chartier Report, aims to shatter the isolation of Francophone groups by providing them with services in French within the community, and by creating special units to provide these services because the report clearly signals the imbalance of bilingual positions added at service centres in English-speaking communities. These conclusions were also largely supported by the Delotte and Touche report commissioned by the Economic Development Council of the municipalities, which points to the need to develop the economic thinking and business skills of community members. The Fontaine report submitted to the federal government reaches a similar conclusion on the necessity of customized services for these minority groups.

The SCI therefore fit perfectly into Manitoba where several groups backed by the provincial government were looking for means to carry out their project, namely provide government services where people lived with respect for their culture and language, and do all this proactively. Given the shortage of funds, the arrival of a new player in the form of the federal government was welcome. The players were now in place: first, the Manitoba government serving as project leader, then the federal government represented by the Federal Council, whose most active representative turned out to be Canadian Heritage, the municipalities involved including the City of Winnipeg and, lastly, the established community groups. The hiring of a project manager to implement the plan for the creation of community centres by Service Canada was the catalyst that got the initiative off the ground.

The concept of access centres was quickly developed — a sort of shopping mall for federal, provincial, municipal government and community services. There would be six of them serving the main Francophone centres in the province, including St-Boniface (now Winnipeg) and Notre-Dame de Lourdes. All the partners in a centre formed an alliance: they shared the same premises, some pooled reception services and costs in proportion to the space occupied. The objective, however, was not simply cost-sharing, but rather to build a critical mass of services to revitalize the community. For this, the policy adopted in dealing with citizens was to "go the extra mile", i.e., provide more information than was requested.

The cooperative process then ran into a few problems. At the federal level, while the Federal Council clearly had good intentions, decisionmaking at the operational level greatly dampened everyone's enthusiasm. Differences between federal and provincial standards concerning access to the centres and building occupancy were hard to reconcile. Finally, a harmonization committee was formed to develop a structure for the centres as well as operating plans and policies. Meanwhile a coordinating committee focused on the building-related problems. Lastly, a board of directors was formed to manage the six planned centres with a management committee made up of representatives of the tenant organizations responsible for running each centre. The latter met regularly and held training and brainstorming sessions to map out common spheres of action.

As regards Service Canada, participants said they received good support but complained about the constant turnover in personnel that made cooperation, if not more difficult, at least longer to establish. Service Canada provided the centres with all kinds of information, but the team still lacked coordination mechanisms to learn the needs and expectations of the local management teams. Moreover, the SC implementation team had problems monitoring the projects which, once launched, soon reached cruising speed. This wait for policies that would enable them to proceed undoubtedly tried the patience of the Manitoban participants.

Community centre officials were all given the same training and formed ties as evidenced by frequent telephone conversations; they helped each other gain a better understanding of government services and meet special demands. Since the centres were in the start-up phase, they used downtime to learn more through the Government of Canada website. The information officers saw their role as proactive: they offered citizens help and promoted the service among community organizations. They also wrote a monthly column for the local

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newspaper, answered the phone and met with clients. If, for example, a student group announced a visit, they provided the group with information about education, scholarships and bursaries, summer jobs, drugs or anything else of interest to youth.

Everyone agrees on pointing to the experimental nature of the project, yet they all say they are enthralled by the concept. The people who so far have taken advantage of their services were first surprised to find someone from the government offering them help and delighted with it. Citizens went there to pay their taxes or a fine, or even to change their library book. They see the computer, the official, the posters and they come closer. That's the starting-point...

Among the main problems encountered to date, the persons interviewed cited:

- The scant publicity given to the Service Canada concept;
- The project's very short-term planning, which depends on renewals of SC's mandate;
- The difficulty developing a common program for all the partners;
- The absence of a financing structure;
- The very identity of the community centres and, more specifically, the SC officials.

At the time when this study was done, two centres were already in operation and preparations were actively underway to open the others. Several federal departments that initially displayed no interest are now backtracking and asking for information about the project. The experiment looks promising. In other centres where a computer is installed with no support, nobody uses it. The concept of a community service centre is innovative: "We're convinced that a collaborative approach is necessary and, in Manitoba, we have a cooperative culture!" says the project manager.

## Appendix 3 – Café jeunesse de Montréal

Can we do more for young people? This question asked by the executive director of youth employment centres in the Montreal area led, two years later, to the opening of Café Jeunesse de Montréal. Following a youth survey, two employees came up with the idea of a centre where all youth services would be represented. The project was first submitted to Human Resources Development Canada, which agreed to sponsor it.

The Café jeunesse project was next presented to an interdepartmental panel representing 13 federal departments, organizations and agencies. The objective then became to reach an agreement on the creation of a one-stop centre for youth services. At the same time, the Service Canada Initiative was looking for experiments in delivering public services and guaranteeing a financial base.

Café jeunesse de Montréal, which opened in April 2000, gives young people between the ages of 18 and 35 unlimited free Internet access for occupational or useful purposes such as job-hunting, education, health and other information. The site chosen in the Quartier Latin, surrounded by the CEGEP de Vieux Montréal and UQAM, the NFB and Cinémathèque québécoise, is perfect. The Café receives an average of 40 visitors a day, and has peak periods when the number climbs as high as 150 youths. The objective is to meet the needs of the clientele and promote federal government services "without waving the flag!", as the director puts it. Occasionally, the premises are also loaned for departmental recruiting campaigns. A young person who visits the Café shows their ID, after which a computer is unlocked for them. A guide is on hand to answer questions and help the youth if necessary, but the young are independent and many prefer to do their own searching without help. If the guide does not have the answer or if the resources capable of helping the youth are not part of the federal government, the young person is steered towards the appropriate services.

The Café has five employees, including two part-timers who serve as counsellors for the youth who drop in. A few people also work on special projects. They are all HRDC personnel. A plan for converting a student job into a regular one was even established with the Public Service Commission so that a student employee could join the public service upon graduation.

As with many projects, even though the departments agree to cooperate, the very nature of that cooperation depends on the representative chosen to serve on the working committees. Some, more open, energetically plunged into the project while others put on the brakes by constantly citing rules and procedures. In general, the meetings were very lively, especially when preparing documentation and information. Subcommittees were formed and the preparations for opening the Café were completed. The interdepartmental panel is not at a stage where it has to review its role and the project management mechanisms to provide it with longer-term funding.

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Some favour the creation of a board of directors with about five members backed by an interdepartmental panel made up of resource-persons from the various departments and agencies.

The Café regularly conducts surveys to assess user satisfaction. It stands at about 90%, which is much higher than the rates report for other government services. In many cases, respondents who notice the named "Service Canada" on the evaluation form are surprised to learn they are dealing with a federal agency.

With its mission redefined, the Café now serves as a one-stop youth centre for information intended for youth. It is also a meeting place for departments that want to reach out to young people. Lastly, the Café serves as an employment centre for summer jobs. An orientation based on environmentalist values has also been adopted, and the arts are promoted there by incorporating exhibitions by young Montreal artists.

Even though its employees are assured of a permanent job, the future of the Café is tied to HRDC which provides coordination and much of the funding. The youth website is not yet integrated with other government services and its interface is not uniform like that of other government information sites. Direct contact with Service Canada is now being pursued.

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