

SPEAKING NOTES FOR CARMEN LAMBERT

HEALTH CANADA SEMINAR

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McGill Project builds the future on solid foundations

Le projet McGill bâtit l'avenir sur de solides fondations

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the Health Professionals Training and Retention Project, administered by the McGill University Faculty of Arts, which we shall refer to by its short title, McGill Health Dialogue.

Introduce Estelle, Hélène, Andre and Norman.

THE PROJECT AND ITS THREE MEASURES

Our Project is intended to support the Quebec government's initiatives to improve English-speaking Quebecers' access to health and social services in their own language. To attain this goal, three types of measures were developed.

The first measure is the language training program, which consists of training strategies, initiatives and tools to support, in the regions of Quebec, health and social services workers in their communications with English-speaking clients. Seventeen of the eighteen health and social services agencies have organized professional English language courses aimed at these workers in their region.

The second measure is the retention and distance support program, which aims to facilitate access to English-speaking professionals by the English-speaking population. This measure comprises three components.

The retention component is aimed at English-speaking or bilingual students in health and social services programs. These students are encouraged to complete internships or placements in health and social services institutions in the regions that are less well served by English-speaking personnel. Studies have confirmed the importance of internships as a route to finding one's first job. However, before an internship can lead to a job, there are a number of challenges that must be overcome. The Project has a mandate to support institutions and communities that receive interns, to support supervisors in the

internship institution and to provide these students with adequate financial support.

The second component, distance professional support, is aimed at English-speaking professionals working in the regions. In the first phase, carried out in collaboration with the McGill University Health Centre, these professionals were offered professional development sessions on various topics.

Responsibility for implementing the third component, distance community support, was assigned to the Community Health and Social Services Network.

Finally, as an institution of higher learning, we must take up the challenge of promoting, developing and disseminating knowledge, strategies and practices that will guide, indeed facilitate, efforts to reduce barriers to access to health and social services. We have already laid a solid foundation for a research program whose findings should help improve language training practices and provide invaluable tools for professionals interested in improving their language skills in professional communication.

We will now present some of the outcomes of the first phase of the Project, from 2005 to 2009, followed by the improvement or development targets chosen for the second phase of the Project, which will run from 2009 to 2013. Particular attention will be paid to the research program's expected contribution to the Project as a whole in this second phase.

THE LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM

SOME OF THE RESULTS

During the four years in which professional English language courses were offered in approximately 100 institutions in Quebec's health and social services network, 7,112 workers attended these courses offered by some 30 training organizations that included universities, CEGEPs, school boards and a few private agencies. In the last year, health care professionals accounted for more than 55% of course participants, while 25% were social services professionals and approximately 15% were intake personnel. Of the participants who completed the course, 89% were promoted to a higher level.

In order to support the learners following completion of the language courses, the Project produced three self-study workbooks: one aimed at receptionists, another at triage nurses and a third at psychosocial workers. The professional bodies concerned (the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec and the Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec) validated the professional content, while adult education and language teaching experts validated the teaching approaches. In addition, the McGill Project made available to trainers and learners more than 200 links to teaching resources.

The evaluation of the Project carried out by ÉNAP in 2007 confirmed the very high level of satisfaction of participants in the professional English language courses. Nearly 85% of learners indicated that they were satisfied. Looking beyond the issue of learners' satisfaction and the impressive number of workers who took courses on a voluntary basis, we must ask ourselves: How effective has the Project been in practice? Do the teaching methods and tools reflect current best practices? Are we doing everything we can to teach English to health and social services workers? To answer these questions, we have set up a research program, which I will discuss in greater detail later.

THE 2009-2013 PERIOD

What's in store for the 2009-2013 period? The activities initiated during Phase 1 (2004-2008) will continue: professional English courses for more than 8,000 workers, production of new self-study workbooks and updating of the teaching resources on the Web site. However, three important additions are worthy of mention.

Tools development

The first year of the program will be devoted to creating and implementing tools, strategies and procedures, with the aim of drawing up multi-year language training development plans. The main tools will include task-centred language skills profiles, which will identify the language skills essential to performing certain tasks and will help set relevant objectives. The kit will be supplemented by a needs assessment tool in order to monitor the participants' progress toward attainment of their learning goal while also providing an estimate of the cost and duration of the requisite training. Program participants will follow an individual training plan. Each learner's progress will be monitored periodically and each individual plan will be adjusted to ensure attainment of the objective set.

Professional development workshops

Professional development workshops will be offered to trainers by the English and French Language Centre at McGill University's Faculty of Arts in order to share techniques and approaches adapted to the specific needs of professional English language training. During the first year, planned Project activities include developing and implementing on-line workshops on teaching multi-level groups and on pronunciation. The topics addressed in later sessions will be chosen based on the needs expressed; intercultural communication and communication with specific age groups are a few of the possible topics.

Professional French courses

An additional budget envelope of more than \$1.3M will be earmarked for French courses aimed at 1,400 English-speaking health and social services workers in order to improve their skills in communicating in French to enable them to function effectively in the health and social services network.

THE RETENTION AND DISTANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

SOME OF THE RESULTS

Retention

The Project promoted the establishment of numerous partnerships between McGill's professional training schools (nursing, social work, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics, speech therapy), health and social services institutions, English-speaking communities and English-language CEGEPs. These partnerships led to the creation of nearly 340 internships in the regions for students in the health and social services disciplines from 2005 to 2009.

Solid foundations were laid to ensure appropriate supervision of interns and to provide them with language training support as well as financial support. Since 2007, 129 health and social services professionals have participated in an on-line supervision course. It should be mentioned that this course is the result of collaboration with the Consortium national de formation en santé – University of Ottawa component, which developed the course in French and authorized the McGill Project to translate it and offer it in English. French courses that meet the specific needs of health and social services students were created. At McGill, 24 students took these courses in 2006-2007, another 32 in 2007-2008 and 26 in 2008-2009. In addition, three English-language CEGEPs offer these courses as part of the Project: Heritage College in the Outaouais, Vanier College in Montreal and Cégep Champlain St. Lawrence in Quebec City. Thirty-nine students received financial support to cover the additional expenses resulting from regional placement.

Distance professional support

Through partnerships established between the McGill University Health Centre and the McGill Project, distance professional support was provided in the form of videoconferences aimed at health and social services professionals. These videoconferences drew participants at 22 audio sites and 22 video sites in 2006-2007. In 2007-2008, these sessions attracted 168 participants at 50 video sites and 32 audio sites in 13 different regions.

Distance community support

From the start of the Project, the Community Health and Social Services Network was tasked to set up distance community support initiatives in order to increase the availability of health and social services promotion and prevention services for English speakers in the regions.

THE 2009-2013 PERIOD

Retention

Most of the partnerships established in the last four years will be renewed, and new ones will be added. Through these partnerships, the Project has set itself the goal of creating, over the next four years, 400 internships in the regions that will be filled by students capable of providing health and social services to English-speaking residents. It is hoped that these internships will generate approximately 100 job offers for the students. The proposed target for students who will accept the positions and still be working in the regions six months after graduating is approximately 60.

Collaboration will continue with McGill's professional training schools (Social Work, Nursing, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and Dietetics and Human Nutrition). The establishment of partnerships with provincial programs, educational institutions and community organizations will help promote the Project.

The Retention Program team will examine ways of increasing intern supervision support. Various activities will be undertaken, such as compiling best practices, developing a guide on innovative practices in supervision as well as a guide on incentives aimed at attracting internship supervisors. Various options will be analyzed. Subsequently, financial support for internship supervision could be provided. New modules will be added to the on-line supervision course.

An analysis of professional French language training activities aimed at students in the health and social services disciplines at McGill will be conducted and the findings used to adapt the courses currently offered and add new ones in order to more effectively meet students' needs.

Students who do an internship in a remote region will continue to receive financial assistance. In addition, the Project will develop a grant allocation strategy aimed at students in remote regions who enrol in health and social services programs in Montreal and then return to do an internship in their region, in exchange for a commitment to work there after graduating. The Project will forge partnerships with provincial programs such as *Make Way for YOUth* in order to encourage the promotion, recruitment, guidance and support of students who return to the regions to look for a job. In addition, a partnership will be

established with McGill University's admissions and recruitment services in order to encourage more students from the regions to come and study at McGill.

These promotion efforts will be supported by the establishment of a working group composed of students who will have the mandate to examine various technological promotional approaches that appeal to young people. The students will become important partners thanks to the working groups and the creation of a McGill Young Ambassadors program tasked to promote the Project and its benefits for Quebec's English-speaking communities.

The Project will help the regional partners to organize local career days and to participate in the McGill career days in order to attract students in their region. The Project will also promote local initiatives on its Web site, in brochures and at face-to-face meetings with its partners.

THE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The McGill University Health Professionals Training and Retention Project includes a research component to promote the success of its mission, i.e., to support the Quebec government's initiatives aimed at making health and social services more accessible to English-speaking Quebecers. An inter-institutional (the four Montreal universities are represented) and multidisciplinary (psychology, nursing, occupational therapy, sociolinguist, specialist in measurement and evaluation, etc.) team has been established for this purpose.

The "added value" of the research program stems from its strong scientific emphasis. The research will contribute to establishing a rigorous scientific basis for the adoption of policies and initiatives aimed at eliminating language barriers in the health care system. By providing a scientific framework for Project implementation, the team's research activities will extend the Project's sustainability in terms of visibility, follow-on funding and training of highly qualified personnel in a field currently experiencing rapid growth around the world. The added value also includes the generalizability of the implementation activities of the language training program by identifying their impact on the communication problems of minority language communities in the health care sector, well beyond Quebec's borders.

The Program objectives are to expand on the knowledge acquired in Phase 1 of the Project, develop new research projects studying potential ways of overcoming recognized barriers to access to health care services by linguistic minorities, and increase the dissemination and adoption of knowledge, strategies and best practices that could solve the health problems specific to minority official language communities.

The proposed fields of research for 2010-2013 include, but are not limited to:

- Development of a measurement tool to provide nurses with feedback on their language skills during verbal interactions in English with English-speaking clients;
- Study of the issues related to the English vocabulary used by health professionals when discussing pain with patients in order to enhance their sensitivity to patients' concerns and ensure that they are more at ease in communicating with patients;
- Study of issues in communication with patients who receive care through the telehealth technology;
- Development of learning modules that use speech recognition technology for second-language training of health professionals;
- Study of English-speaking clients' perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of communication in English by health and social services professionals whose mother tongue is not English;
- Study of health and social services professionals' perceptions of their own language skills when they provide services in a second language.

To conduct its research, the Project research team can draw on a unique pool of more than 7,000 adult learners interested in improving their language skills during social and professional interactions and the exchange of information and instructions. These learners come from different professional and geographic backgrounds. The Project research team also benefits from the significant number of participating training institutions and more than 100 trainers who are already strongly committed to improving knowledge in the field of adult education.

A budget of \$1.3M will be allocated to the research program for a four-year period.

CONCLUSION

Our Project is a collaborative effort based on community participation and the establishment of multiple partnerships with the aim of improving access to health care services for English speakers. Drawing on the strengths of the 2005-2009 program and the recommendations made during evaluations and consultations with stakeholders, the 2009-2013 program is focused on results. In response to the needs identified by both the English-speaking community and the health and social services network, the program is based on the willingness of personnel to improve their communication skills and on the commitment of health and social

services institutions to adapt their services to English speakers. The Project has the support and collaboration of the Quebec Department of Health and Social Services, the English-speaking community (through the Community Health and Social Services Network and its partners), and its collaborators already include some 130 partners from the public and private sectors. Through the activities planned under its three measures, the Project expects to attain its objective of training and retaining a sufficient number of health and social services workers capable of providing services in English to meet the needs of English-speaking Quebecers.