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CITY EDITION

The Suburban

FEBRUARY 4, 2015

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QUEBEC'S LARGEST ENGLISH WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

1ST PLACE WINNER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE IN SNA'S NORTH AMERICAN AWARDS.

'Counter-productive' Groups denounces welfare reform

By Joel Ceausu
The Suburban

"There's still time," says Clement Citeya of the Comité des Personnes Assistées Sociales de Pointe St. Charles (CPAS). Still time that is, for the province to reconsider its welfare reforms that the groups calls counter-productive and shows "shocking contempt for welfare recipients and are based on a false understanding of the welfare system."

Quebec is applying its austerity belt cinching to welfare rolls as well, affecting many of the nearly half-million Quebecers receiving social assistance.

CPAS along with Côte des Neiges based Project Genesis and other groups held a press conference last week to denounce the changes and Employment Minister François Blais' "spreading false ideas rather than dealing with real social assistance issues."

Quebec will begin cutting

See REFORM, page 9

Another language decision

Just because we still have our constitutional guarantees of being able to use English in the courts does not negate the fact that non-francophones are not "seen to be treated equally before the law." Law is not merely doled out in courtrooms. It is meted out in our hundreds of encounters with agents of the state. They too represent law. And it is the marginalization of minorities implicit in 101 that has led so many of those agents to treat non-francophones with neglect and contempt assuming rights have been stripped over and above those that 101 aborted. Witness the treatment by Sacré-Coeur Hospital officials just last week of a lab technician who had the audacity to speak English to a fellow worker. Brent Tyler argued that 101's "French predominance" requirement was discriminatory and violated Canadian Charter of Rights guarantees on freedom of expression. Mascia rejected the argument largely because he felt the French language was still "vulnerable" because of the North American "sea of English" and the rising number of immigrants. Even if true, which it is not, the response should be "so what?" Mascia used the wrong discipline to avoid the right question.

Excerpt from today's Editorial; see page 10

Tyler receives go-ahead to appeal Bill 101 judgment

By Joel Goldenberg
The Suburban

Lawyer Brent Tyler said he has received authorization from his clients to appeal a Quebec Court decision to uphold the province's language of signs laws, which require French predominance.

The next level is Superior Court. The case, which had 24 clients, involved outside and indoor signs, packaging and websites.

Judge Salvatore Mascia, in his deliberations, dealt with testimony from two expert witnesses as to whether the French language remains vulnerable in Quebec. Demographer Marc Termote, on the government's side, testified that "linguistic transfers in favour of French" between 2006 and 2011 only grew by 10,025, about 2,000 a year, and thus French was "far from secure." He also testified that linguistic transfers to French from allophones were not sufficiently higher than those transferring to

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St. Catherine de Sienne students to be moved to CSDM's new school

By P.A. Sévigny
The Suburban

Following several weeks of negotiations with both EMSB (English Montreal School Board) officials and other school board authorities including Yves Bolduc - Quebec's Minister of Education, local CSDM (Commission Scholaire de Montréal) school commissioner Marie-Josée Mastromonaco told The Suburban that students from the borough's heavily damaged St. Catherine de Sienne primary school will be sent to the CSDM's new St. Raymond's primary school for at least the next two years.

"For at least two years, students [and staff] from St. Catherine de Sienne will be sharing the new school with students from the local [St. Raymond's] district," said Mastromonaco. "Depending upon how much space they use, I think that there should be plenty of space left for everybody."

As reported in recent issues of The Suburban, CSDM school board authorities decided to close St. Catherine de Sienne for at least two years in order to repair extensive damage that was the result of a serious leak in the school's roof that went on to rot the building's second floor support beams along with a few walls and other parts of the school. While parents continued to be concerned about the safety and health of their children who were still expected to complete their school year amid the school's present decrepit facilities, CSDM school board au-

thorities were forced to consider what could be done for the nearly 300 children who would need both a new school and a new classroom in time for next September. Following a number of meetings with the city's EMSB, school board officials from both the EMSB and the CSDM considered a number of options that would include everything from re-opening the EMSB's St. John Bosco in the nearby Ville Émard District to opening up empty classrooms in Marymount High School that's located on the Côte St. Luc Road.

"There was a lot of discussion," said Mastromonaco, "...but in the end, we decided that sending all of the St. Catherine kids to the new school would be the best option for everybody."

Located on the Upper Lachine Road across the street from the Georges St. Pierre Park, the school is still under construction even as school board authorities insist that it will be ready for occupation in a few months' time. While the new school was originally meant to help create some new space for the CSDM's already crowded schools and classrooms, even Mastromonaco admits that nothing much can be done about the school board's crowded schools until the old school is properly restored, renovated and ready for a new generation of young students.

"It's not the ideal solution," said Mastromonaco, "...but this is the only way that we can make sure that all of the students who live in NDG get to stay in the borough."

LIBRARY

Cont'd from page 7

sition between the old and new libraries.

The building, once serving as a chapel for St. Monica's Church, is in good shape, requiring only regular maintenance, and is described as "retaining all the architectural charms of the original chapel and a warm and inviting family atmosphere." The borough has indicated it has no wish to remain the long-term owner of the property, whose value is estimated at \$1.6 million.

REFORM

Cont'd from page 1

benefits to anyone outside the province for more than 15 days per month; slash benefits for those living in a property above a certain value, and decrease assistance for those with more than one roommate; and for those with modest levels of earned income. That last one is especially misdirected says David Régner of ATD Quart Monde, and is actually a disincentive for recipients to integrate into the workforce. "Returning to work is therefore penalized rather than being encouraged. If Quebec really wants to support social assistance recipients in their work integration efforts, it should increase the allowable work income of welfare recipients, which would be a simple and inexpensive measure."

Some 127,000 Montrealers (including 50,000 children) live on social assistance

Benny's hours of operations were cut last year, open only 30 hours a week, and closed on Sundays as part of a reduction of the borough's library budget.

The call for proposals will run until March, and applicants can visit the site until March 28. Public presentation of selected projects is scheduled for April 2015 and approval will be done in late June.

A detailed call for proposals is available on the CDN-NDG borough website, and proposal documents are available at the Accès Montréal Office, 5160 Décarie.

according to a statement by the coalition, adding that many people find themselves on welfare rolls due to medical condition or disability, and experience ongoing barriers including "lack of jobs, low schooling levels, reading difficulties, limited professional experience, inaccessible work sites and linguistic barriers." Most will likely receive "as little as \$616 a month to deal with all their expenses including housing - this is not nearly enough to survive on," stated Benoît Racette of Ex-Aequo.

The group counters that individuals who receive the most support are those able to leave social assistance in the greatest numbers.

Quebec says a very small amount of recipients would be affected by the changes to the property and roommate rules, and is also including a \$200 benefit for recipients living in a recognized rehabilitation centre, along with extra benefits to ensure they maintain their housing. ■

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