



Old Brewery Mission

Montreal, Quebec

PROGRAM TYPE: Housing and Support Services

Like other major cities across the country, Montreal, Canada's second largest city, is faced with an increasing number of homeless people on its streets. (Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal, 2011; RAPSIM, 2008). The last official count by the Institut de la Statistique du Québec in 1998 found that there were 28,214 people who had been to a shelter, soup kitchen or a day centre, 12,666 of whom had been without a fixed place of residence in the preceding 12 months (Fournier, 2001.)

A variety of measures and initiatives have been put in place to try to deal with homelessness in Montreal. Beginning in the 1990s, the City of Montreal, like the City of Toronto, put in place judicial measures to control the problem of homelessness.

Citizens can be ticketed for being in a park after hours, loitering, blocking traffic, consuming alcohol in a public space, sleeping on a bench, seat or floor of the metro, and travelling without paying for a ticket. Between 1994-2004, the number of tickets issued quadrupled, with homeless people receiving 31.6% of the tickets issued in 2004 and 20.3% in 2005, despite making up less than 1% of the population (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, 2009). Youth in the city reported having between \$7,000-\$20,000 worth of tickets (Douglas, 2011).

Researchers at the universities of Montreal and Ottawa published a report on the increasing criminalization of homeless people through the use of such measures. The authors concluded that increased arrests and tickets for minor offences only serve to criminalize people with no previous criminal history; it is not an effective solution to poverty or homelessness (Bernier et al., 2011).

In 2009, the Quebec Human Rights Commission published a report indicating that the social profiling that homeless people are often subject to in Montreal contravenes the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Among the commission's 93 recommendations was that the city change its approach to the

KEY MESSAGES

- SOLVING, NOT SOOTHING HOMELESSNESS
- INVESTING IN RESEARCH
- PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT TO AVOID A RETURN TO HOMELESSNESS
- SUPPORTING A VULNERABLE POPULATION – WOMEN

THE OLD BREWERY MISSION

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problem of homelessness by focusing on prevention (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, 2009). Three years later, the Commission reported that very few of their recommendations had been implemented (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, 2012) and homelessness had not gone away.

Given that the criminalization of homeless people in Montreal has not been effective in reducing the number of people who end up on the streets, more is needed to end homelessness, rather than simply manage it. While some people on the streets might only need financial assistance for a deposit on accommodation as the result of a sudden job loss, others may face several challenges including family crisis, mental illness, physical illness and addiction problems. In these cases, holistic support to address not only housing issues, but also physical and mental health, as well as other social issues that contribute to homelessness are needed. Ending homelessness means providing the services that clients need to help them avoid homelessness permanently.

The Old Brewery Mission (OBM) is a non-profit organization that has been working with Montreal's homeless men and women since 1889. Support and assistance are offered according to two principles: to respond to the basic needs of homeless people and to find practical, sustainable solutions to the problem of homelessness. OMB's goal is to offer clients the opportunity to see the Mission as a starting point rather than a final destination.

While originally an emergency shelter, a needs assessment and analysis of services suggested a new approach to homelessness was needed, one that 'solves rather than soothes' the problem. As a result, OBM introduced support and transition services aimed at helping people get off the street in a sustainable way and back into society.

"Homeless people are not in that state because they lost the keys to their apartment. They are homeless for a whole host of reasons. Mental illness, drug or alcohol use, financial collapse and loss of employment, family or personal problems and tragedies are common reasons for someone to find themselves on the street. The people who come to our doors have a history and have often experienced a long descent out of society and into the exclusion and isolation of homelessness. The road out of the streets and back into society is a big job and requires time, persistence and the support of qualified people."

(OBM website)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

OBM provides four types of services: emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing and support services.

Emergency Services

Temporary overnight services include a meal, a hot shower and a change of clothes, as well as access to counselors. The Webster Pavilion is the largest resource for homeless men in Quebec providing essential services to over 300 clients nightly. The Patricia Mackenzie Pavilion, a resource for homeless women in Canada, welcomes up to 70 women per night.

Transition Services

OBM provides 30-day transition services, and, if necessary, three-month residential extensions. The first services of its kind in Quebec, Maison Claude-Laramée provides support to men and women who are struggling with mental health issues, alcohol or drug addiction problems.

Permanent Housing Services

In order to address the lack of affordable housing in Montreal, OBM has become involved in the development and provision of housing. Residents pay rent and prepare their own meals and can also access support staff. The Marcelle and Jean-Coutu pavilion provides 30 apartments for formerly homeless men, while the new Lise Watier pavilion offers 29 apartments for women who have left homelessness. Finally, the le pont program offers 15 apartments across the City of Montreal to both men and women.

Support Services

L'Annexe is a new program that began in September 2012. It is a residential assessment and referral program for people who are newly homeless and who come to OBM for the first time. The service allows OBM to handle new arrivals outside of the shelter context. The program consists of intensive follow up to get clients out of the cycle of homelessness as soon as possible.

Café Mission, opened in July 2012, is an Internet café for homeless people, but is open to anyone in the city. People can access computers and desk space, as well as counselors, support and access to the help they need to get off the streets. The café is adjacent to the OBM cafeteria, where people gather daily. The goal of the service is to reduce the sense of exclusion and isolation that comes with being homeless, and to increase connections among people and the community.

Future Plans

- OBM is planning to open the first physical and mental health clinic in Montreal with hospital and other health care system partners.
- The Mission is also working on a collaborative effort with the Centre and Association for People Living with Hepatitis C (CAPAHC) to establish a medical centre for people who have Hepatitis C.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

OBM collects data on housing outcomes via the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS); a shared data management system funded by the Homeless Partnering Strategy division of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

The following data represent the outcomes of OBM's transitional programs in 2011-2012 and are drawn from the Old Brewery Mission's Transitional Programs Annual Report 2011-2012. Of the 740 departures reported in 2011-2012:

- 19% individuals were discharged to l'Escale, OBM's transitional residential program
- 47% went on to live in the community either in private or supervised apartments, with family or friends
- 16% of the participants were asked to leave
- 18% left the program prematurely.

Current Research

OBM is currently in the middle of a longitudinal study on the outcomes for clients who have participated in the transitional housing program. The study is a partnership with the School of Social Work at McGill University.

The research was initiated in order to identify the long-term outcomes for people who participate in the Mission's transitional housing, including where they go when they leave, and after three months, six months, 12 months, three years, and five years.

The team has recently completed the second year of the project, which included a literature review and a case study review. The initial set up of the research involved developing or adapting questionnaires, training counselors on collecting and entering data, and adapting HIFIS to be able to collect the appropriate data to answer the research questions.

USER PERSPECTIVE



OBM has collected success stories through one-on-one work with clients, as well as through several research projects in the last four years. Clients have reported:

"I used to meet my children at McDonald's because I didn't want them to know I was living in a shelter. Now they can come see me everyday after school in my own apartment. The Mission made this possible."

"For all the love and support I received during my stay at the Mission...I could never fully give back what I received here, not in words, not financially."

"The most important thing that the Patricia Mackenzie Pavilion has given me is a sense of safety and stability. I now have the confidence to plan a life outside the shelter and to start working as an accountant again."

"It's important to have had a roof over my head, to be listened to, and to have people help me – and they did it with such sincerity. I never thought I would see this day. But I can finally say that their mission is accomplished for me."

"I am a client of the Webster Pavilion. I suffer from mental illness and that is my reason for being at the Old Brewery Mission. I endured years of torment after being misdiagnosed and using medication which worsened my situation. The Webster Pavilion put me in contact with doctors for a new treatment. That, the support of counsellors and a safe place to recover has changed my life. It is like night and day! I'm doing well here and would like to do some volunteering or maybe, if I'm able, return to work."

"Since June 2012, I have lived in my own apartment thanks to the Le Pont program. After spending several years in shelters and two years at the Lise Watier Pavilion, I decided to take the plunge. I'm so comfortable here, it is my home, I have my own space and I take care of it. I can also meet my counselor from the Mission on a weekly basis. My life has been filled with failures and setbacks; it has not been easy but I have learned to love myself and to look to the future. I persevered and will be eternally grateful to the Old Brewery Mission for their help. Thank you."

"I am 52 years old and I was at the Mission for three years; I would go for a few days, then leave and come back. At that time, I was also working part time and 2 years ago, I got very sick. The Mission team really helped me out, physically and emotionally. I had a place to sleep, eat, and to find clothes. I have been living in my own apartment for a year now and I think about them every day. I go back weekly to volunteer and serve supper. I am grateful and it is my way to say thank you."

RESOURCES & ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL



Staffing Model

Finance and Administration

The Finance and Administration department is made up of 10 employees, responsible for the financial management and administration of the organization, including human resources.

Emergency Services and Support

The Emergency Services and Support department comprises 36 full-time, 8 part-time and 48 on-call staff who assure the safe functioning of the shelter offering food, shelter and showers to 160 men every night.

Transitional Services

The Transitional Services department has 26 permanent staff and 20 on-call staff. Together the department provides psychosocial intervention and transitional housing support services for up to 159 clients, including help with justice issues, immigration, facilitating medical and psychiatric appointments, accessing social programs, welfare and referrals.

Women's Services

The Women's Services Department is made up of 20 staff (including 8 full-time and 10 part-time counselors), as well as 16 on call interveners and counselors. This department works to provide services for women.

Food Services

The Food Services Department assures the safe offering of food to program participants.

OBM Foundation

The Foundation is made up of 6 employees, responsible for fundraising, including securing major donations and donations in kind, planning special events, developing campaigns, and preparing communications.

Housing, Research and Special Projects

The Housing, Research and Special Projects Department, made up of 9 employees, coordinates research on the effectiveness of OBM's programs, including a long-term study in partnership with McGill University.

Funding

Government – 38% (\$3.63 million)

Funding is provided primarily by the Agence de la Santé et des Services sociaux de Montréal, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec, Douglas Mental Health University Institute, Service Canada, Correctional Services of Canada, Société d'habitation du Québec, Société d'habitation et de développement de Montréal and the City of Montreal.

Individuals and Corporations – 52%

OBM is funded by several foundations including the Lise Watier Foundation, The Marcelle and Jean Coutu Foundation and the Tenaquip Foundation. Revenues from bequests were especially significant in 2011-12, totaling \$1.07 million.

Self-Generated Revenues- 10%

Fundraising includes an annual campaign, and events including the Ken Reed Golf Tournament, the Supper Experience, as well as third party events. A gala is held every two years to generate revenue to fund transition services

Partnerships

Key partnerships that are crucial to the success of OBM include:

Douglas Mental Health University Institute

The Mission's transition services for men and women with mental health problems and/or substance abuse issues are offered in partnership with the Douglas Mental Health University Institute.

Social Welfare

The majority of OBM's clients lack financial aid and therefore need help accessing financial aid. OBM works closely with local government welfare agencies to help clients secure an income.

Treatment Facilities

Some clients require referral to an outside facility for mental health or addictions treatment. Partnerships with local treatment facilities ensure that OBM's clients can access the necessary treatment.

Immigration Offices

Some of OBM's clients are dealing with immigration issues and require support to access information and complete legal paperwork. OBM staff liaise with government immigration offices to support clients in sorting out any immigration issues that could contribute to their housing status.

Local Community Service Centers

OBM works with a variety of local health services to help clients get assistance for their medical needs.

KEY MESSAGES

SOLVING, NOT SOOTHING HOMELESSNESS

In order to end people's experiences of homelessness, it is critical to address the many issues that contribute to life on the streets. Homelessness is both a health and social issue, and people experiencing homelessness need to be able to access help in both sectors. OBM provides housing, medical and social services for people, in order to address their needs. In addition to housing, clients can get help with mental health and addiction issues, basic skills like managing a home, as well as access to medical staff for physical health problems, all within the same service.

INVESTING IN RESEARCH

In order to understand the outcomes for people in their transitional programs, OBM is investing in rigorous scientific research through a partnership with McGill University. The research will identify the outcomes for people three, six and 12 months after they leave OBM's transitional services. The information will help OBM and its stakeholders truly understand the effectiveness of their programs and provide information that will enable staff to refine their approach to transition services.

The results will be published by McGill and thereby made available to other homeless resources across Canada and the United States so that they too may consider adopting or adapting the OBM model.



PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT TO AVOID A RETURN TO HOMELESSNESS

Overcoming the issues that lead to homelessness can be a lifelong process. Transition services provide clients with some of the skills, experiences and resources necessary to help them successfully manage a home on their own. Many clients, however, will benefit from ongoing support after leaving the care of transitional housing. Some clients are learning new skills for the first time, for example learning to manage a home, and the support they receive during that time can make the difference in their ability to maintain housing after their discharge from transition services. OBM Staff help deal with the challenges that some people face when they are trying to manage a new life, new responsibilities and new experiences.



SUPPORTING A VULNERABLE POPULATION – WOMEN

A woman's experience of homelessness can be very different than that of a man's. More women than men have experienced sexual and physical abuse in their families, and are more vulnerable to re-victimization. Providing services specifically for women, to address some of these issues, is crucial to resolving some of the main factors that have led to, and perpetuate, women's experience of homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Homelessness has many causes, and requires many solutions. Organizations working with homeless people must be able to help clients access all of the services they need to not simply soothe their homelessness, but to solve it.

The Old Brewery Mission in Montreal assessed the needs of its homeless citizens and then developed the resources to support them. They put in place a model that the team has continued to refine as the needs of their clients evolve.

The current research project, in partnership with McGill University, will identify the effectiveness of their transition programs and will help them understand what could be improved, in order to further increase and sustain the numbers of people who transition off the streets.

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