translated as:

We hire both new and older graduates. The level of education is not as important as the level of skill.

(Director of a group of community organizations)

Skill is valued and perceived as specific to the profession. In university graduates, employers look for an ability to analyze a situation as a whole, to perceive the factors present, and notice their inter-relations. Training in technique is what provides useful basic skills and knowledge. The ability to establish helping relationships is considered essential.

Attitude is also very important for employers. At this level, they basically look for: sound judgment, maturity, flexibility, and interest for the work sector.

« On recherche chez les candidats des qualités personnelles qui permettent de progresser: jugement, autonomie, disponibilité. »

(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

We look for personal characteristics that will allow the candidate to evolve: sound judgment, self-reliance, availability.

(Institutional employer)

Level of Training upon Hiring, Employer Expectations, and Weaknesses Found

Employers feel that graduates are relatively well-trained upon completion of CEGEP (social work technicians) or university (B.Sc., M.Sc). A certain gap is nonetheless observed in regards to more specific skills, and the desired degree of maturity and professional self-reliance.

College or university education provides a basic training, but the social worker will also learn on a daily basis during his or her work. Employers consider daily work as an important source of learning.

Although the overall opinion is positive, some employers’ expectations are not always met. Here are two examples:

translated as:

« Souvent les travailleurs sociaux ne connaissent pas bien la problématique de la violence familiale. Ils ne savent pas comment “dévictimiser” la personne. »

(Directrice d’un regroupement d’organismes communautaires)

translated as:

Often, social workers do not know how to deal with family violence. They do not know how to “devictimize” the individual.

(Director of a group of community organizations)

« Il y a une problématique majeure dans le recrutement : on engage des gens pour leur savoir, leur diplôme et on vérifie très peu le savoir-faire et le savoir-être [...]. On remarque souvent un manque de savoir-être, de jugement du comportement humain. On a trop axé les modèles d’apprentissage sur les connaissances et pas assez sur le savoir-être. »

(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

There is one major problem in the recruitment process: we hire people for their knowledge and education, but we hardly ever check their skill or attitude [...]. We often notice an unsatisfactory attitude and a lack of knowledge on human behaviour. Learning models are excessively focused on the acquisition of knowledge, but not enough on the development of the right attitude.

(Institutional employer)

New Employee Orientation Programs

Some employers provide full orientation programs to their new employees; others provide only the minimum.

« Nous offrons aux nouveaux une journée d’intégration et 1/2 journée par semaine pendant 16 semaines pour nos nouveaux intervenants psychosociaux. Il s’agit de faire une mise à niveau par rapport aux employés déjà en place. »

(Employeur du réseau)
translated as:

We offer our new employees one orientation day, and 1/2 day per week for 16 weeks to our new psychosocial workers. The idea is to bring them to the same level as the other employees.
(Institutional employer)

« Nous n'avons pas de programme comme tel mais des mécanismes d'initiation pour connaître les secteurs. On fonctionne par système de pairage. »
(Institutional employeur du réseau)

translated as:

We do not have a program as such, but we have implemented some orientation mechanisms to learn about the sectors. We have a tutoring system.
(Institutional employer)

Continuing Education
The continuing education picture varies considerably from one institution or organization to another.

« On a des programmes de formation continue. On dépense 1 % du budget global pour la formation du personnel. On a un budget et des programmes de formation. »
(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

We have continuing education programs. One percent of our total budget is allocated to staff training. We have a budget and training programs.
(Institutional employer)

« Nous n'avons pas vraiment de programme de formation continue. Nos priorités vont plus au perfectionnement du personnel pour répondre aux besoins de l'établissement. On donne des formations pour amener les employés à faire face aux problématiques rencontrées : violence, suicide, intervention en cas de sinistre. »
(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

We do not have an official continuing education program. Our priorities focus on employee development in order to meet our institutional needs. We provide training to help our employees deal with issues they encounter: violence, suicide, emergency response.
(Institutional employer)

Employee Support
In general, support to service providers is irregular and inadequate. Supervision is not available everywhere. In the health care and social services system it has become a relatively rare commodity, so that service providers must mutually support each other.

« Il existe un soutien informel entre les pairs. Au plan de l'organisation il n'y a rien. Jamais on ne se sent appuyé. Il n'y a rien du tout pour les jeunes. Avant, il y avait du développement professionnel. »
(Travailleurs sociaux en centre hospitalier)

translated as:

There is an informal support system between peers. At the organization level, there is nothing. We never feel supported. There is absolutely nothing for the younger ones. Before, there was some professional development done.
(Hospital social workers)

« Nous n'avons pas de programme de supervision comme tel. Le support entre pairs est privilégié. Nous avons également des conseillers juridiques pour conseiller les travailleurs sociaux. »
(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

We do not offer a supervision program. We favour a peer support system. We also have legal advisors to help social workers.
(Institutional employer)

Private Practice
Private practitioners interviewed for this study explained that they chose to become self-employed after they had worked in the system for several
years. They all wanted to have more control over their activities, and be able to choose their clients. More than university, their extensive experience and continuing education helped them in their switch to private practice. They believe that the private social work sector is bound to develop considerably, and that there is good reason to invest in it. Social workers, they believe, must be confident and assert themselves. They should have no fear of other professionals if they possess valuable and relevant skills.

According to several service providers and employers, the private sector is bound to grow and work in close co-operation with health care and social services institutions and community organizations. The future private practice should be seen as a joint effort with others, instead of a solo effort in an isolated office. The private practitioner is being asked to perform more and more different types of activities, and to maintain close ties with colleagues and partners of other disciplines. Therefore, the development of the private sector should be considered as a complement rather than as a barrier to the growth of institutional and community organizations. Private practitioners’ strategies should aim in this direction, said respondents.

3.3. Change Shaping Social Work Practices

Both managers and employees agree that deteriorating economic and social conditions in the general population, but specially in its more deprived groups, are the main factor most likely to affect social work practices. The problem is aggravated by cutbacks in social service supply while demand is rising. As a result, there is an increasing gap between growing needs (demand) and response (supply). Social service providers feel the pressure, and must deal with both enormous needs and a known lack of adequate means.

Public and private service providers as well as employers stressed that the consequences of this deterioration is an aggravation of the social problems workers have to deal with. Violent behaviour, drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, and situations involving severe poverty and marginalization are becoming run-of-the-mill. Social workers increasingly face complicated problems or multi-faceted issues. Clients who seek help are in a state of great distress. These findings are consistent with those expressed by key stakeholders (Module B), and by employers in the fax-back survey.

In Montréal particularly, but also in other regions on a smaller scale, changes to the composition of the population have a major impact on how social services are organized. Services must be re-engineered to reflect cultural diversity and respond to the needs of different population groups. This includes transforming institutions, but it also means that individuals, such as front-line service providers like social workers, must adjust. University programs will have to prepare future social workers to face these issues, and institutions will have to re-organize in keeping with the new multi-cultural reality: multi-ethnic staff, services provided in several languages to a population with different cultural backgrounds, need for an open-minded attitude, understanding and respecting different values and concepts, etc... Training programs and operational procedures will have to integrate this approach.

In outer regions, high rates of unemployment, poverty and decreasing population create just as many problems that social caregivers and decision-makers have to face:

« La dévitalisation des villages, la difficulté de retenir les jeunes dans la région, le taux de natalité bas, non compensé par l’immigration, tout cela cause des problèmes de développement régional. »

(Coordonnateur CÉGEP d’un programme de techniques de travail social offert en région)

translated as:

De-vitalized towns, problems in retaining young citizens, low birth rate—not compensated with immigration—have a negative impact on regional development.

(CEGEP Co-ordinator for a regional social work technical program)
Across the province, there is a general increase of the senior population*. As a result, there is a higher demand for services to older citizens. The choices made to respond to the needs of this population group, as well as new service orientations, such as the shift towards ambulatory care, have a great impact on social service delivery. According to caregivers, the shift towards ambulatory care, with its objectives of service delivery in the home and shorter hospital stays, puts additional pressure on social workers, in terms of both workload and required timeliness. Hospital beds must be freed quickly, and patients discharged in a matter of hours or days need follow-up care.

Budgetary restraints and service delivery re-engineering that have caused, among other things, a new wave of de-institutionalization and hospital closures, have also brought to the CLSCs new client groups with mental health problems. It is a fact that the support services that were supposed to be provided as de-institutionalization progressed, remain inadequate; a sizeable share of potential clients, now re-integrated into the community, come knocking at their CLSC door. CLSCs now have to accommodate an increasing number of clients with severe, persistent psychiatric problems, or who are unwilling and unmotivated to follow their therapy.

Furthermore, extreme cases are now referred systematically to the community sector,* which is not equipped to handle all kinds of problems, and cannot spend all its efforts on curative care alone. Excessive workloads of severe cases are a serious problem for those who fear for the very survival of community organizations. A balance is difficult to achieve, and the risk of collapse is very high, given the small resources allocated to this sector, its underpaid staff, and its multiple roles of advocate of change (social policy); full-fledged partner (at roundtables) and as service provider to clients.

**Changing Practice Conditions**

With the massive number of departures among employees, there is now a considerable shortage of expertise. Service providers who remain in the labour force are overloaded and pressured to close one case and go on to the next on the waiting list. Social service employees are worried because they are pulled between the growing and more urgent needs expressed by an increasing number of users and the limited capacity of the health care and social services system.

Due to the nature of their work and the multi-disciplinary team working method, social workers explicitly expressed the urgent need for support activities, such as supervision. For interviewed social workers, supervision is a priority, a basic condition of quality work.

Unfortunately, most social workers experience lack of support and absence of supervision. In many environments, conditions in this respect have regressed over the last few years.

« Le service social a perdu sur le plan de l'encadrement avec la création du Centre hospitalier universitaire. »

(Travailleurs sociaux en centre hospitalier)

translated as:

Social service has lost in terms of supervision since the creation of the CLSCS.

(Hospital social workers)

Nonetheless, a few supervision experimental models are being tried out in some settings, and some managers are concerned with re-implementing employee support resources. These initiatives are highly appreciated by practitioners.

In general, practitioners complain that managers are removed from the practice, do not listen to them carefully enough, and do not provide the required support.

« L'écoute de la part de la direction serait importante. Les gens quittent parce qu'ils sont laissés seuls. »

(Travailleurs sociaux en CLSC)

translated as:

It would be important for management to listen to us. People quit because they are left to themselves.

( CLSC social workers)

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* See Table 3, p. 141.

* This was also mentioned by key stakeholders (Module B).
Social workers have also become a minority in all workplaces since the 1992 reform. Furthermore, the new ways of organizing the services often cause social workers to work in isolation from other professionals in their field. They find themselves within multi-disciplinary teams, the lone representatives of their discipline and without any opportunity for exchanging ideas or working with other social workers. Finally, as mentioned in the above paragraph, supervision is often more the exception than the rule. In this context where they are a minority, isolated and unsupported, social workers perceive themselves as trapeze artists performing without a safety net. They see themselves as having to address more and more problems involving increasingly unstable and deteriorated clients. The margin of error is at its smallest, and pressures are directed towards providing services to more users with a shorter time to do so. Social workers in these circumstances try to avoid botched up work, are afraid of making mistakes, and fear the possible consequences of such mistakes for their clients and themselves.

As mentioned earlier, in the health care and social services system, new employees are highly vulnerable. During the years prior to achieving permanent status, they are compelled to go where they are needed. In any sector or field where they are assigned, they must take on cases immediately, and muddle through more or less without help. Once the contract is completed, they become available for another job in another unknown sector and dealing with other unknown problems. These new employees must be very versatile.

New employee orientation and support projects are only barely in the process of re-development. Employers are concerned with the integration of this vulnerable new personnel, but, all in all, they offer very little in terms of training. If employees are not asked to quickly become self-reliant, they are at least told not to ask repeatedly for professional help or support.

**Changing Management Methods**

The prevailing management method in current social services organization is similar to the industrial management model. The ideology is productivist, and the tendency towards bureaucratization is greater. Social work as a professional practice model is substantially the loser.

For example, in the particular field of hospital practice, a survey conducted in 1997 by the OPTSQ shows that management by program as implemented in several hospital centers has affected social workers’ practice conditions considerably because of limited professional supervision, loss of contact with other social workers, reduced emphasis on the institution’s psychosocial mission, and partial loss of professional identity. Respondents also pointed out the reduction of professionals’ decision power and of social workers’ clinical mandate (they are instead asked to act as resource brokers and provide instrumental activities to clients), and the lack of attention given to family and social aspects of health-related issues. Furthermore, among institutional executives, there are no more social workers committed to defending users’ social interests. Management by program has given more power to doctors and encouraged nurses to move into the social work field, and does not provide a strong basis to build multi-disciplinary teams.

**Increased Use of Multi-disciplinary Teams and Networking**

As mentioned earlier, the days of solo practice are over. From now on, social service providers must work in teams and with personnel from other institutions, organizations and resources. Teams are multi-disciplinary, cross-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary. This way of organizing the work is considered both as a benefit and as the only realistic way for a social worker to deliver full services while at the same time sharing the burden and making his or her own specific contribution.

> «Tout n’est pas multidisciplinaire, et on respecte les identités professionnelles. »

(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

> Not everything is multi-disciplinary; we also respect occupational identities.

(Institutional employer)

Service delivery is built upon three pillars: the health care and social services institutions, community organizations and private practitioners.
Therefore, more and more hospitals are developing ties with CLSCs. Much in the same way, Youth Centers call upon community organizations as well as the private sector, while at the same time building gateways to CLSCs. In Youth Centers, social workers often team up with psychoeducators and educators. In CLSCs, social workers most often interact with nurses. However, links are created with all the different professions, and the teams are made up of staff members from various levels. None of this is achieved without some risks, and even occasional confrontations, according to our respondents: in order for multi-disciplinarity to be productive, rules and roles must be clearly stated, people as individuals must be respected, and each one's particularities must be recognized. Also, power must be shared.

"Chacun doit, pour cela, respecter les frontières professionnelles, sinon il y a danger de perdre la spécificité."

(Hospital social workers)

translated as:

Everyone must respect the professional boundaries; otherwise, we risk losing specificity.

(Hospital social workers)

"Il y a des expériences enrichissantes de travail interdisciplinaire lorsque le message est très clair dès le début. Les rapports doivent être égalitaires dans le groupe."

(Hospital social workers)

translated as:

Interdisciplinary work can be very rewarding when the message is clear from the start. Team members must be on an equal footing.

(Hospital social workers)

Unfortunately, conditions for optimal and harmonious team performance seldom co-exist. Thus, we observe that some workers have a disrespectful attitude towards colleagues or try to take on responsibilities or tasks that traditionally belong to others.

"Un gros problème, c'est l'environnement professionnel. On doit se battre contre l'infirmière de liaison, le gériatre, l'urgentologue. Tout le monde fait un peu de tout. Ça finit par être épuisant, par user et on n'a plus la force du nombre."

(Hospital social workers)

translated as:

One big problem is the trespassing of professional boundaries. We struggle against nursing co-ordinators, geriatricians and emergency doctors. Everyone does a bit of everything. You end up being exhausted; it wears you out; and, we no longer have the power of numbers.

3.4 Issues and Challenges for Social Workers

The prevailing opinion on this subject is that, all things considered, interdisciplinary work has more benefits than drawbacks, and for this reason, it should be encouraged. However, in order to be effective, teamwork should take into account the different professional identities of each partner, and should be governed by clear procedures and rules.

Private practitioners interviewed mentioned that, for them, professional identity was clear. Three out of four said they explicitly identified themselves as social workers. They all consider themselves as skilled and qualified professionals and are confident in the value and quality of their products.

According to employers and human resource managers interviewed during the large fax-back survey, present and future demand in the social work field will require further training in specific
fields (e.g. geriatrics or substance abuse), in order to respond appropriately to user needs. Also, service providers will have to adjust to increased use of technology, and incorporate new technologies to their work practices, while maintaining their self-reliance and professional judgment. Furthermore, according to some respondents, another challenge facing social service delivery in the future will be adopting a preventative approach that takes community issues into account, in order to respond appropriately to the changes in their mandate.

The respondents belonging to the Anglophone minority also stated their worries concerning the massive departure of English-speaking graduates to other provinces. They fear that not enough young Anglophones will choose to stay in Québec, and that it will become increasingly difficult to find qualified personnel within the community to respond to its needs.

It is generally agreed that new practice conditions set a considerable challenge for all social workers. Indeed, within this new context, each must face higher requirements, more stress, reduced resources and minimal support.

"Il ne faut jamais oublier qu'on a affaire à une personne, pas seulement à un problème. Il faut donc garder le "focus" sur la personne."

(Travailleurs sociaux en CLSC).

translated as:

We must never forget that we are dealing with people, not only with problems. Therefore, we must stay focussed on the individual.

(CLSC social worker).

"Il y a une iédogie productiviste dans notre milieu de travail. On nous demande d'être experts dans tous les domaines. La difficulté que l'on a est de gérer notre stress. De plus, plusieurs personnes quittent parce qu'elles sont laissées seules."

(Travailleurs sociaux en CLSC)

translated as:

There is a productivist ideology in our working environment. We are asked to be experts in all fields. We have trouble managing our stress. Also, many social workers have left because they felt left to their own means.

(CLSC social worker).

As such, everybody's responsibilities increase (more cases, more complicated problems) while resources are being reduced. Workers are under more pressure, and are required to establish their own priorities and manage their own time. In such circumstances, workers must apply sound mental health principles for themselves, and learn, among other things, how to detach themselves from work to avoid burnout.

The challenge is enormous and many fear ending up in a vicious cycle. The high turnover rates observed in certain work environments are due, for many, to the stress resulting from heavy workloads. When a worker is on leave, this often means heavier workloads for colleagues who must take over his/her cases; thus, the risk of new departures, resignations, absences, burnouts, etc., is amplified. The director of a provincial group of community organizations pointed out the high level of employee burnout and the scarce means available to prevent it.

"On aimerait se payer une journée de réflexion pour prendre du recul, mais on n'a pas assez d'argent. Le sous-financement chronique est un gros problème."

(Directrice d'un regroupement d'organismes communautaires)

translated as:

We would like to be able to afford a day of reflection once in a while, but we can't. Recurrent under-funding is a huge problem.

(Director of a group of community organizations)

Some employers consider the sector study as an opportunity to expose some problems, which they believe are caused by the negative impact of a public bureaucratized system, which gives them very little freedom of action. An employer from the health care and social service system mentions
that the challenge is to develop an approach oriented
towards clients instead of employees:

« Notre défi est d'avoir une approche client.
Dans le quotidien, on est très
bureaucratique. Cela a un effet pervers
sur la population. On donne beaucoup
d'autonomie à chaque professionnel.
Si aucune ligne directrice n'est
donnée, chacun fait ce qu'il veut, en
fonction de ses préférences plutôt que
des besoins des clientèles. »

(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

Our challenge is to have a client-oriented
approach. Our daily activities involve
a lot of red tape. This has an evil effect
on the population. Each professional
is self-directed. If no guidelines are provided,
everyone will do what he
or she wants, according to individual
preferences, instead of client needs.

(Institutional employer)

Another employer reacts strongly to job security
for employees in the system.

« Leur sécurité d'emploi est très privilégiée.
Ils sont très centrés sur eux-mêmes, sur leur
bien-être physique. Ils ont de la difficulté à
voir qu'ils ont à rendre des comptes. »

(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

They are privileged in the matter of job
security. They are very self-centered. They
don't realize that they must be accountable.

(Institutional employer)

Another employer said that public sector collective
agreements greatly restrict service providers’
mobility, since they do not allow employees to
switch from one establishment to the other without
losing seniority.

« Plusieurs occupent le même poste
depuis longtemps et certains
souhaiteraient un changement, mais
cette possibilité demeure limitée. »

(Employeur du réseau)

translated as:

Many have been in the same position
for a long time and would like a change,
but possibilities are limited.

(Institutional employer)

Employers and employees also consider social
workers' personal safety as an important issue to
be considered today, and in the future. The number
of aggressive, dissatisfied, difficult or seriously
mentally-ill clients is rising. Service providers’
protection and respect should be ensured by
adopting and implementing specific institutional
policies and procedures.

Another important challenge is selecting social
services personnel to better reflect the community's
cultural diversity. This challenge is more specific to
the Montréal region, although it is also an issue in
other communities across the province, on a smaller
scale. In the matter of employment, one observes
different proportions of people of other cultural
origin when comparing social services personnel
and the user population. This must be remedied.
In Montréal particularly, the need to close the gap
is obvious. Various means are being used to hire
multi-cultural personnel. For example, job offers are
being posted with language requirements that will
foster the hiring of applicants from different ethnic
origins, or at least to guarantee service delivery
in several languages. However, there is no
employment equity policy. Outside the larger
metropolitan areas, social services personnel is
still mainly of Francophone origin.

About the prevailing situation in Montréal, one
employer mentions the challenge in recruiting
more service providers with an ethnic background
similar to that of users.

« Nous sommes déphasés. Notre personnel
est plus francophone de souche que notre
clientèle. On embauche dans nos
programmes des intervenants plus
polyvalents. Souvent, par exemple, on met
dans les exigences de poste la connaissance
du créole ou de langues asiatiques. »

(Employeur du réseau, Montréal)
translated as:

We have missed the boat. We have
a higher share of people of French origin
among our workforce than among our
clients. We are hiring more multi-skilled
service providers. Very often, for example,
we include knowledge of Creole or Asian
languages in our job descriptions.
(Institutional Employer, Montréal)

4. Training the Social Work
Labour Force in the Face of
Current Practice Needs and
Challenges

In this section of the report, we will present
the opinions expressed by the various Québec sources
of information: social workers, employers, students,
university teachers and college educators, and
persons in charge of continuing education, on
the subject of social work training and its
appropriateness in relation to the labour market.
The main sources of data collection were individual
interviews and focus groups. Data collected through
the surveys and by Statistics Canada will also
be incorporated into the analysis. Interviews
were conducted with the principals, or teachers
representing the principals, of four schools of social
work (3 Francophones, 1 Anglophone), and with
two coordinators of college programs in social work
techniques; two focus groups were conducted with
a total of seven students registered in a B. Sc. or
M. Sc. program in social work.

The issue of training is fundamental in any study of
the labour force, because it is the job of the training
institutions to adequately prepare social workers
and social work technicians to meet the various
challenges identified in the preceding chapters and
to address the changes that are foreseeable in the
future. Educators must not only develop in their
students the skills they will need in their daily
practice, but also impart to them an overall vision
and ability to analyse situations, and encourage
them to continue to develop their knowledge and
skills throughout their entire professional life.

The main change drivers having a significant effect
on the practice of social work, and consequently
on the required skills and training, were identified
in the first part of this report on the situation in
Québec. Some of them are common to Canada as a
whole, and have been summarized at the start of the
general report in the chapter headed: "Responding
to Human Resources Challenges: Education and
Training in Social Services". Let us recall that, at the
societal level, these drivers are: changing values,
market globalization, the exclusion from the labour
market of those who are unable to meet the
requirements of the new knowledge-based economy,
the impoverishment of the population, the growth
in the number of single-parent families living in
poverty, the multiplication and intensification of
social problems, the aging of the population, and the
multi-ethnic character of society. In terms of
the organization of social services, the main change
drivers are: the reduction in public funding of
programs, the shift to ambulatory care, the transfer
of responsibility for the care, support and protection
of those in need to their immediate surrounding
community or family, and the introduction of new
technologies into health care and social services.
In addition to the changes that are common to the
rest of Canada there are those that are more specific
to Québec, which it is important to include and place
within the particular context of the province.

All these changes have an effect on the supply of
social services, on the skill sets sought in the
personnel working in the sector, and consequently
on the initial training and further development of
the labour force.

4.1 Factual Data on Social Work
Training
4.1.1 Characteristics of students and their
point of view on the training they receive

(a) Students' Previous Training and Experience

Based on the estimates of the two program
coordinators interviewed, 40% of Québec students
admitted to the "Social Work Technicians" program
at the college level come directly from secondary
school, the same percentage from other CÉGEP-level,
training programs, and 20% from the adult
population.
At the university level, according to the people interviewed, 70% of students admitted to the B.Sc program are graduates from the college program, and have recently obtained a “Diplôme d'études collégiales” (DEC) [college diploma] in human sciences. Between 20% and 30% of students come from other university programs. And finally, less than 10% is made up of adults admitted on the basis of life experience.

Students admitted to the M.Sc. program are either B.Sc. holders who are carrying straight on to the postgraduate level or who have decided to enter after several years of practice, or are holders of an undergraduate degree in a related discipline who wish to change direction and become social workers.

In the past, relatively few students continued on to the M.Sc. as soon as they had completed their bachelor’s degree. Then and today, most of the students admitted to the regular M.Sc. program are practitioners who choose to return to university after a number of years in the labour market. A reversal of this trend is now observable as more students forego an immediate work experience in favor of a postgraduate degree that they hope will increase their chances of finding a job. Of course, this new tendency may simply be due to the fierce competition encountered by social workers in the labour market.

As for holders of an undergraduate degree in a related discipline who want to become social workers, they are admitted to the M.Sc. program after a first-year introductory course or as part of a longer so-called “bridging” program. These students must meet the basic membership requirements of the OPTSQ. Thus, their course of studies will include a certain number of elements of training in social work, such as courses in the methodology of intervention, and periods of internship which are added on to the M.Sc. coursework itself. It is estimated that 80% of students admitted with a degree in a related discipline are holders of a bachelor’s degree in psychology.

The profile of McGill University students is relatively different from that of the other schools of social work in the province, from the following points of view. The M.Sc. degree attracts a more international clientele that comes from a very large number of countries, and particularly from Asia and the Middle East. Having practical experience is a requirement for admission to the program. Students holding an undergraduate degree in a related discipline are admitted to an intensive 15-month program leading to a B.Sc rather than a M.Sc.

(b) Gender and Ethnic Origin of Students
The proportion of female students in college and university social work programs varies between 85% and 90%, depending on the location. Thus, men make up a minority, representing around 10% to 15% of students. As to ethnic make-up, it seems that the profile of the student body stays fairly close to that of the region in which the training institution is located. Away from Montréal, the clientele are mostly Québécois of French origin. The schools and colleges in Montréal, on the other hand, receive a substantial proportion of students belonging to a variety of ethnic groups. McGill seems to be the school where the student profile is the most diversified. In addition to having a student clientele that is both international and Canadian, McGill has a large number of Québec students belonging to very diverse ethnic groups. The white Protestant Anglo-Saxons who once made up the majority of the clientele are now in a distinct minority.

(c) Students’ Choice of Career and Institution
The university students who took part in the two focus groups reported that it was the values they espoused that had led them to choose social work as a career. The students stated that they had always placed a high value on empathy and listening, felt a need to help people, liked making contact with others, and attached great importance to the individual. Six of the seven participants admitted that, when they chose an institution, they had not really “shopped around” among the various possibilities before submitting their application.

(d) Career Aspirations
To the question: “Where will your career be in 5 years?”, the students had no ready answer. The student focus group participants first stressed the difficulty they had in making projections about the future in light of the current highly unstable labour market environment. All, however, agreed that they thought they would be exposed to a variety of experiences in their work and as a result would come into contact with multiple user groups. It is apparent that, in their eyes, contract work will be
the norm, a prospect that does not seem to discourage them.

(e) Job Prospects: Some Improvement

Jobs in community organizations are, financially speaking, much less attractive than those within the public and parapublic system. Most of the students interviewed hope to get, one day, a steady job in the system of health care and social services institutions.

Getting into this system remains possible but difficult. It is achieved essentially by the individual getting on an institution's call list. Whenever a regular staff member is sick or has to be away for a time, he or she is temporarily replaced by someone selected from this list. Whenever a position opens up, it is usually offered to the person with the most seniority on the call list. The road to integration is thus marked by working under precarious conditions and may stretch over a number of years. Since large-scale departures from the public service have taken place and the public deficit has been eliminated, more positions are opening up in the social services system by comparison with previous years.

Integration into positions within the system appears to be relatively difficult for university graduates in social work, and more so in certain regions. Several choose to gain experience in community organizations before submitting an application. Students who are willing to accept geographic mobility will find work more easily. The community sector continues to grow, but offers less favourable conditions in terms of compensation, employee benefits, and working conditions. Positions open in CLSCs or Youth Centers most often involve work with old people or the young, especially young people who are in need of protection. For Anglophone and Allophone graduates, there is the added need to learn French, because that knowledge is becoming an increasingly indispensable requirement for finding a job in the social services system in Québec. Francophones must also learn English if they are to work with users of other origins, especially in the Montréal area.

The co-ordinators of education programs in "social work techniques" who were interviewed reported that their institutions gave a great deal of importance to the linking between practical work environments and the students. CEGEPs, they say, emphasize ongoing contact with these environments and an active preparation of the students for the labour market. Very direct strategies are used in this connection, such as the use of dynamic job-search methods, and support in drafting a résumé. These efforts are said to bring excellent results.

"Le taux de placement de nos étudiants est excellent : 80 % trouvent un emploi C.L.S.C. et Centre Jeunesse, réseau communautaire. Les 20 % restant choisissent de ne pas aller sur le marché du travail en finissant leurs études, mais de fonder une famille."

(Coordonnateur, programme collégial)

translated as:

The placement rate of our students is excellent: 80% find a job in a CLSC, a Youth Centre or a community network. The other 20% choose not to join the labour market on completing their studies, but to start a family.

(Co-ordinator, college program)

Institutional managers are adopting different strategies to deal with budget restrictions and the transformation taking place in practical working conditions. Some prefer to hire staff who have a university education because they are considered more versatile and self-reliant, while others are converting university graduate positions into positions for technicians in order to meet budget demands or respond to specific needs that can be defined in precise terms. For example, a large Youth Center has converted 20 university-level positions (as human relations officer) into college-level positions (as social work technician) in 1997.

One way of increasing chances of finding a job is to have higher education. Some graduates with a B.Sc. in social work decide to continue their studies in order to increase their job prospects. Only a limited number opt for a master’s degree in social work at this stage. Some of them choose instead to get specialized training in a problem area related to social work or invest in an introductory program to a second discipline. The strategy adopted by these students is to make themselves more attractive to
employers by widening their range of expertise through a combination of multiple training courses. Among the programs that are frequently selected for this second training are: law; administration; drug addiction studies; and gerontology.

Social work technicians frequently aspire to become social workers, as obtaining a B.Sc. brings a significant boost in terms of salary and status. However, there is no guarantee for those who take this route that their employer will agree to convert their position into a human relations officer or social worker position. Of course, once a professional position becomes vacant, their seniority will give them priority over other more recently hired employees.

(f) Extent of Preparation for Work
The majority opinion expressed by the social workers who participated in the focus groups is that a B.Sc. provides the necessary basic preparation to the labour market, particularly through internships and conceptual learning, which results in an expanded analytical capacity. Some, however, noted that the extent of direct and hands-on preparation for a job and its associated difficulties has its limitations, saying that they felt overwhelmed by the problems they had to face in their first months on the job.

« On n’est pas prêt à faire face à la vraie vie, et on apprend sur le tas de jour en jour. Si on change de milieu, on n’est pas formé pour le nouveau champ de pratique ou la nouvelle problématique. On est à la remorque des changements sociaux. »

(Travailleurs sociaux en centre hospitalier)

translated as:

We are not ready to face real life, and we learn on the job from day to day. If you change to another setting, you are not trained for the new field of practice or the new problem area. You are dragged along by social change.

(Hospital social workers)

« Les employeurs se disent très satisfaits, de façon générale, de nos étudiants. Ils trouvent qu’ils arrivent de façon bien préparée. Ils connaissent le processus d’intervention. »

(Coordinator, college program)

translated as:

Employers find them very good at analysis and not good enough in interview techniques.

(Manager, School of social work).

Some service providers have no hesitation about pointing out what they consider to be deficiencies in their training:

« On ne veut pas [seulement] un idéal, on veut [aussi] de la technique. »

(Travailleurs sociaux en centre hospitalier)

translated as:

We don’t want [only] an ideal, we want skills [as well].

(Hospital social workers)

« Il y a des professeurs qui sont trop éloignés de la pratique. »

(Travailleurs sociaux en centre hospitalier)

translated as:

Some professors are too far removed from practice.

(Hospital social workers)

Program co-ordinators at the college level report that employers are very satisfied with the extent of preparation of their students.

« Les employeurs se disent très satisfaits, de façon générale, de nos étudiants. Ils trouvent qu’ils arrivent de façon bien préparée. Ils connaissent le processus d’intervention. »

(Coordinator, college program)

translated as:

Employers say they are, generally speaking, very satisfied with our students. They find that they arrive well-prepared. They are familiar with the process of intervention.

(Co-ordinator, college program)
4.2 Data on the teaching institutions

(a) Programs Change Drivers, as Identified by Principals

The Deans and Directors of schools and colleges, or their representatives, who were interviewed identified a large number of change drivers that might play a role in future teaching program design. In this connection, the following were mentioned as determining factors, either structural or ad hoc:

- funding cutbacks
- statutory program review processes
- the requirements of accreditation bodies
- feedback from students and their requests for change
- the new practice conditions and the evolution in society as a whole (new social problems or increased importance attached to some of them)
- demands from university institutions to cut costs
- employer preferences
- changes in the composition of the teaching body.

At the CEGEP level, the new program based on skills acquisition in “Social work techniques” and its implementation process were highlighted.

University respondents, for their part, singled out the increase in student clientèle in all programs as a result of institutional pressure, the general tendency to inter-disciplinary practice, new technologies, and the linking of universities to CEGEPs.

(b) Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Policy

Most institutions have a policy on the assessment and recognition of prior learning, which they apply with caution, depending on the programs and the nature of the credits sought. Due to the nature of their mission, the components of the Université du Québec give a larger place to experience than do the other universities.

(c) Employment Equity

Representatives of academia all expressed a concern about achieving a good balance between men and women in teaching positions. Several universities have employment equity policies favouring women. Nevertheless, in certain universities one encounters more women professors in social work than men. In these cases attempts will be made to hire men in order to restore the desired balance. Apart from these exceptional situations, the general rule is that efforts are being made to increase the number of women professors in the hope of reaching a more or less equal distribution. Outside the major centers, it is sometimes more difficult to attract women holding a doctorate.

The schools also say that they are making efforts to give preference, among equally-qualified individuals, to those belonging to visible minorities and that they generally try to diversify the ethnic make-up of the teaching body. At McGill, special efforts are being made to recruit bilingual staff, as far as this is possible. However, this considerably reduces the pool of potential candidates, and as a result cannot be guaranteed every time.

At the college level, the teachers of social work techniques are mostly women, but efforts are being made to hire men so as to have male role models for students and a significant representation from both sexes.

(d) Continuing Education Processes for Social Work Teachers

In the university environment, the sabbatical is the preferred means of continuing education. Moreover, professors are required as part of their duties to attend numerous conference and seminar activities, and must constantly keep their knowledge up to date for the purposes of teaching and research.

(e) Use of New Technologies

Many teachers make use of new technologies, mainly for their research work and when submitting papers at events on the Canadian or international level. Few make use of them or refer to them in their teaching. The institutions use these technologies for tele-learning or occasionally for research team meetings.

« Les programmes de formation à distance ne sont pas très avancés. On utilise un peu les vidéo-conférences, on fait un peu de formation sur le système de support en D.P.I. qui est un système d'évaluation assisté par ordinateur. »

(Direction, École de service social)
translated as:

Tele-learning programs are not very advanced. Video-conferencing is used sometimes, and some training is given on the D.R.J. support system, which is a computer-assisted assessment system.

(Manager, School of social work)

In just about every university, however, professors have their personal computer, are connected to the Internet, and use E-mail.

(f) Societal Issues
The principals of the schools say they are concerned with the task of preparing service providers who are aware of what is at stake for society and of the complexity of social and multi-cultural issues in modern society. The schools are sensitive to the need to train students to be able to understand the complex issues and dimensions that are present in these situations and to take these into account in their interventions. They offer courses and practical which focus on these problems.

« On prépare les étudiants à la défense d'intérêts sociaux, d'abord en les amenant à faire une analyse sociale à un niveau plus collectif. Le défi est de savoir comment on va calibrer la formation à l'intervention individuelle et à l'intervention collective. L'essentiel est de leur donner une base solide en collectif. »

(Direction, École de service social)

translated as:

We prepare students to defend the interests of society, initially by teaching them to analyze society on a more collective level. The challenge is to know how to balance training between intervention at the individual and the collective level. The main thing is to give them strong basic training in collective intervention.

(Manager, School of social work)

4.3 Strengths and weaknesses of training programs

Strengths
The principals of the schools of social work report generally positive comments from employers on the level of training received by students. Employers, they say, acknowledge that university students come out with good abilities in analysis and social critique. The Québec employers interviewed for the sector study confirm this point of view. They consider that new graduates in social work are relatively well trained when they leave the CEGEP, in the case of technicians, or university, in the case of B.Sc. and M.Sc. degree holders.

University students expressed their satisfaction with regard to the development of a critical mind, their practicum experience, and the large sum of knowledge imparted with respect to models and techniques of intervention. One of the two focus groups was made up of students from a university located outside of the large centers. Students expressed their satisfaction for the way the courses were organized in small groups. Participants in the focus groups stressed that they greatly appreciated those courses that used role-playing. Overall, students feel that their training will enable them to enter the labour market, and be completed by experience.

The co-ordinators of college programs in social work, for their part, assert that employers are satisfied with the training provided by CEGEPs and find that their graduates are well-prepared in terms of skills and are familiar with the interview process.

Weaknesses
Employers have noted certain deficiencies when it comes to the acquisition of certain more specialized skills, the desired level of maturity, and professional self reliance. The investment made in clinical training seems inadequate to most. Deficiencies were mentioned in terms of techniques of intervention and the use of specific tools such as CTMSP.

University students, for their part, affirm that they are satisfied with their practicum experience, but feel that their training does not prepare them adequately to face the difficulties of practical work. They judge

^A standardized tool for assessing the degree of self-reliance in individuals.
their training to be too theoretical and general, and wish that they had more in-depth preparation to deal with the complex cases they will meet in the future. The main deficiencies highlighted relate to: developing the clinical relationship; the lack of knowledge concerning certain types of clients (Aboriginals, people from other cultural communities, refugees); complex social problems such as family abuse, HIV, mental health, legislation (Youth Protection Act, Social Assistance Act); and, more generally, the teaching of intervention skills (helping relationship, intervention techniques and tools). According to the students in the focus groups, the courses dealing with crisis intervention are practising the only ones that are oriented towards acquiring the tools that are indispensable for practising the profession. It is in this type of course that they are brought face-to-face with their limitations, their values, their perceptions, and all essential learning experiences.

With respect to the organization of academic life and to learning conditions, students highlight several weak points: excessively demanding first-year courses; courses that are announced and then cancelled later; teachers who fail to show up for their classes; the large number of students in the classrooms in the large universities (200 and more); the isolation of M.Sc. students, due to their small number; certain courses at the M.Sc. level that are disconnected from reality; and students from different backgrounds following the same course, which makes it necessary to establish a standard level of knowledge at the start of every course, something which rapidly becomes repetitive and tedious.

And finally, students deplore the technological backwardness of the schools and teaching programs. The curricula include no courses dealing with the new technologies, and the latter are not used by teachers. Only a few teachers encourage research on the Internet. Students say they all possess sufficient knowledge to work with a computer and use word processing applications for their academic papers. Some of them surf the Internet and do research there, use e-mail and inter-library searches.

### 4.4 Skills sought in university graduates

The employers interviewed said that their wish was to hire young people who were already self-reliant and to whom they did not need to provide support and supervision. Characteristics they are looking for in graduates are judgment, maturity, and flexibility. They also privilege graduates who display an interest for their field of work, who are able to establish a helping relationship, and can analyze a situation as a whole and grasp all the factors at play as well as their inter-relationships. Among the other skills identified by one or other of the employers were: computer skills; training in mediation, and knowledge of more than one intervention model. All these are seen as essential resources to respond adequately to the current and future needs of clients.

The training institutions are also concerned with the diverse set of skills that need to be developed in their students. Here, for example, the principal of a school wonders if students should not be better prepared for work in community organizations:

« Souvent on s’est demandé si on devait donner une formation plus poussée pour travailler dans les organismes communautaires. On n’est pas sûrs que nos étudiants sont préparés pour répondre aux exigences de ces milieux-là. »

(Direction, École de service social)

translated as:

We have often wondered if we should give more in-depth training concerning work in community organizations. We are not sure that our students are prepared to meet the requirements of those environments.

(Principal, School of social work)

The social workers interviewed feel that, in order to tackle a first job with success, the young social worker has to possess an excellent self-analysis ability and a demonstrated capacity to challenge the theories he has learned. He must be able to adapt very quickly.

For her part, one representative of the OPTSQ stressed the importance of training social workers for inter-disciplinary work, imparting them...
recognized skills and an ability to make use of multiple strategies. These, in her eyes, are required if social workers are to retain their professional independence and make a meaningful contribution. She adds that, from the same point of view, it is important to train social workers for management positions.

In addition, the 105 hospital social workers who took part in an OPTSQ poll conducted by mail in 1997 on 'Training requirements in order to respond to the shift to ambulatory care' identified various skills that would be needed to this end. Two-thirds of the respondents mentioned skills in: the use of different approaches (short-term planned, systemic, crisis intervention), using the classification system for individuals in their environment (CFPE), making a rapid psychosocial assessment, and using various professional tools such as computers and synthesized file management. The social workers also mentioned the importance of understanding how to manage stress and making a significant contribution to inter-disciplinary work.

4.5 Continuing education and professional development

The data collected on continuing education come from the students taking part in the focus groups as well as two interviews conducted with people in charge of continuing education, one with the OPTSQ, and the other with Montréal Youth Centers.

It is evident to the students interviewed that updating of knowledge must continue after the earning of a degree. To do so, they plan to: obtain other diplomas (certificate or M.Sc.), and attend training workshops and various types of discussion forums, such as symposia and conferences.

(a) Objectives of Continuing Education Programs

Through their continuing education activities, the Youth Centers aim to facilitate the integration of new employees and respond to the professional training needs of their employees, in line with their orientations and policies. Their main objective is to enhance the clinical skills of the social workers, so that they may assume the desired and expected clinical leadership. The loss of clinical expertise as a result of the mass departures and re-organizations makes it necessary to provide extensive training to service providers. An advisory committee to the director of human resources reviews the program, which must be approved by senior management.

Through its continuing education activities, the OPTSQ aims to maintain and develop professional expertise among its 4,600 members. A continuing education committee suggests directions and activities. As a policy, training sessions are offered in each of the regions. In addition, a full day of continuing education is held in parallel with the organization's annual symposium.

(b) User Satisfaction

Both the OPTSQ and the Montréal Youth Centers claim that their continuing education programs are a great success. Participants express great satisfaction and ask for more such activities. A strict process of monitoring and evaluation ensures that quality is maintained.

(c) Content of the Programs

OPTSQ

The training program offered to members is made up of three components.

(i) Basic Knowledge

The OPTSQ seeks here to ensure that each of its members masters the basic elements that are indispensable to quality practice. Even though these are taught at the university level, the OPTSQ believes it is necessary to offer social workers a regular opportunity to refresh their theoretical and practical knowledge of subjects such as file management, psychosocial assessment, intervention planning, the code of professional ethics, and professional confidentiality.

(ii) Knowledge of Specific Issues and New Legislation

In this component, participants acquire new knowledge needed to carry out certain professional...
acts or use a professional designation. The main programs deal with family mediation, public guardianship, international adoption, and psychosocial assessments.

(iii) Ethical Issues
In this component, sessions aim to help social workers deal with the situations most likely to raise ethical problems in their practice (professional hazards, observance of professional confidentiality, suicide, violence, and self-direction of older citizens). The most problematic issues are also those that foster the most requests for ad hoc training courses.

Montreal Youth Centers
Programs offered over the 1987 to 1999 period dealt with the needs associated with the community-based approach for service providers, skills development for managers, extended general use of technology, and knowledge updating for certain categories of personnel.

The continuing education program was developed around the following four main points:

(i) basic intervention skills in protection cases;
(ii) knowledge of user problems and characteristics: suicide; cultural diversity; de-institutionalization; drug addiction; risk management; family violence; and mental health problems related to neglect;
(iii) models for intervention; and
(iv) diagnostic tools.

An integration program for new employees and interns has been developed and should be implemented in the coming months.

4.6 Issues and Challenges
The challenges mentioned by key stakeholders during the interviews are of various types, but are relatively similar across university and college training departments.

4.6.1 Issues and Challenges for Teaching Institutions
In this part of the report we will deal firstly with challenges facing all the departments, as identified as very important by several sources of information. Secondly, we will consider the challenges identified as being of lesser importance or more instrumental in nature, or mentioned by only one or two respondents.

4.6.1.1 Major Issues
(a) Ensuring Quality Training
Preserving the conditions that are required to provide quality training is the first challenge that the teaching institutions must face. As funding cutbacks have made it necessary to reduce staff, increase admissions, give access to students from other departments or faculties, increase the teacher-student ratio, and increase workloads, one may wonder whether the necessary means are available to ensure the provision of quality training.

(b) Re-Defining Social Work Practice Within a New World Economic Context, New Dominant Ideologies, and New Requirements
The principals of the schools of social work expressed the opinion that market globalization, with its ensuing change in terms of ideology and social policy, is causing an upheaval in the rules and conditions applying to the practice of social work. According to them, we must remain both sensitive to the new social problems and faithful to the essential mission of social work training institutions. Society is evolving fast, and programs will have to adjust to the new conditions. In this regard, several respondents felt that socio-economic factors and their impact will have to be given greater emphasis in the programs offered.

« Il faut se réapproprier la dimension économique. C’est tellement un facteur très important. Il faut que les travailleurs sociaux soient capables de comprendre l’influence des fonctions socio-économiques. »
(Direction, Ecole de service social)

translated as:

We must give the economic dimension the importance it had before. It is such an essential factor. Social workers must be able to grasp the influence of socio-economic mechanisms.

(Principal, School of social work)

(c) Developing Close Ties between College and University
The fact that practical social work training is accessed both at the college and university levels
creates an unusual situation in the labour market. One major problem facing educators and practitioners is the lack of clear information on the course content differential between college and university. As a result, a certain amount of confusion reigns about what graduates in social work from college are able to do, as compared with university. Up to now, few links have been formed between college and university program heads and educators. Discussions with colleges that are being launched by the RUFUTSQ will enable consultation mechanisms to be set up and bridges built between the two types of institutions.

Three closely-linked issues must be examined simultaneously, namely the distinction between tasks in practice, training content differences, and mobility between the two levels. The heads of CEGEP social work techniques programs who took part in the sector study stressed the importance of putting an end to rivalry and isolation between university and college training providers. It is an absolute necessity that links be formed, and it is clear that discussions between the two levels will have to be held on a regular basis.

The adoption of a new college-level training program in social work techniques complicates the dialogue that is getting under way.

« Le nouveau programme collégial est plus ou moins comme un programme de baccalauréat. L’articulation entre les deux niveaux de programmes ne marche pas. »
(Direction, École de service social)

translated as:

The new college-level program is more or less like a B.Sc. program. There is no link between the two program levels.
(Principal, School of social work)

« Il y a de la part des universités une attitude critique et une méconnaissance par rapport à la formation collégiale. On devrait avoir plus de liens, plus de contacts pour la reconnaissance par les universités des acquis faits au niveau collégial. »
(Coordinateur, Programme collégial en travail social)

translated as:

On the part of the universities there is a critical attitude and a lack of knowledge about college-level training. We should have more links, more contacts, to gain recognition from the universities for the knowledge that is imparted at the college level.
(Co-ordinator, college program in social work)

4.6.1.2 Other Issues

(a) Reconciling Differences Between Practice and University Requirements

Some academic respondents told they had difficulty in reconciling the requirements of practice settings and the university environment, and voiced their concern over the divergent routes taken. This is a major challenge, according to them.

« Comment se restituer dans le domaine du travail social en 1999 en tant qu’universitaires? Qu’est ce que ça veut dire enseigner le travail social en 1999, en tenant compte des réalités de la pratique et des réalités d’un monde universitaire de plus en plus axé sur la recherche et qui ne reconnaît pas la réalité et les besoins des écoles professionnelles dans l’université? »
(Direction, École de service social)

translated as:

How can you re-define the place of university academics in the world of social work in 1999? What does it mean to teach social work in 1999, considering the realities of practice and those of a university environment that is more and more oriented towards research and does not recognize the facts and needs of the professional schools within the university?
(Principal, school of social work)

(b) Defining a Common Vision for All Educators

One of the challenges that every teaching institution must face is that of building a consistent and relevant vision. A school principal shares his concern in this regard:

« On a du travail à faire pour arriver à définir un projet commun qui nous identifie de l’intérieur et de l’extérieur. Au delà des caractéristiques individuelles des
professeurs on a encore le souci de développer un projet collectif. »

(Direction, École de service social)
translated as:

If won’t be easy to design a shared vision that defines us on the inside and to the outside. Above and beyond the individual characteristics of the teaching staff, you still have the concern about developing a collective vision.

(Principal, school of social work)
(c) Rejuvenating the Teaching Body
Over the next ten years, because of the aging of their professors, the schools of social work in Quebec will have to replace most of their teaching staff. Undoubtedly, the arrival of a new generation of teachers may lead to major self-examinations, and is in itself a sizeable challenge. The schools will have to find ways of avoiding position eliminations and making room for younger professors.

(d) Integrating Psychology Graduates
Bachelor’s of Psychology are eligible to M.Sc. programs after a preparatory year or within special M.Sc. or B.Sc. bridging programs with a professional qualification component. The specific question of the large number of applications coming from Psychology graduates deserves attention. Many seek a master’s degree in social work because very strict quotas restrict access to the master’s degree in psychology. More and more are turning to social work, the alternative that is closest to their interests in the circumstances.

This situation is hazardous in a number of ways. For instance, some schools of social work may become dependent on decisions taken by Psychology Departments and on a clientele turned down by the latter. Also, students who come into social work by way of these programs may not have chosen the profession whole-heartedly, and this raises some questions as to their objective. It often requires significant efforts from professors and lecturers to turn these people into service providers demonstrating a social worker’s proper attitude. Such a task can be all the more difficult due to the high proportion of psychology graduates. Finally, one may wonder about the impact that the arrival of such a contingent year after year might eventually have on the schools.

(e) Ensuring the Survival of Social Work Education Providers
In universities located outside large centers and small-scale education departments, survival requires that admissions be maintained or increased. Some schools are far from being assured of a regular clientele over the coming years, due to the shrinking of the population in certain regions.

Another challenge that, by corollary, college and university departments located in remoter areas must face is to retain their graduates locally, instead of losing some of them as a consequence of the limited availability of jobs and the migration of young people towards the large cities.

(f) New Technologies Into Training
Schools will have to shed their backwardness in offering instruction that employs the new technologies, and make use of these new instruments to train social workers. Use of the Internet and other means of communication, tele-learning, and the use of computer programs as evaluation tools, are all options to explore.

(g) Challenge College Departments
For social work departments at the college level, the challenge of the hour is in implementing the new skills development-based education program, while adapting it to local requirements. This means that teachers will have to co-operate much more closely to design a program that is both specific to social work and complementary to that of the other disciplines and subjects. This dialogue may be an even more difficult challenge because it will involve teachers from other human sciences departments.

« Travailler avec la sociologie et d’autres départements représente un défi titanique. La différence est dans les critères de performance. Il faut déconstruire les cœurs par compétence. »

(Coordonnateur, Programme collégial en travail social)
translated as:

Working with sociology and other departments is a challenge of titanic
important it is for social workers to receive this social recognition. Various arguments are brought to support this position. In order to obtain greater social recognition for the profession, the publicly perceived image of social workers needs to be changed; people must be brought to see that social workers do for society an extremely important and essential job that requires considerable skill and has an extensive social impact. According to these respondents, social workers face problems of great complexity, involving individuals struggling with immense difficulties. They must take difficult decisions with major implications, frequently in contexts requiring quick intervention. They often encounter ethical dilemmas of major scope. For all these reasons, the major role played by social workers in society should be recognized, as well as their significant contribution to the well-being of the general population.

Conclusion

The tendencies and issues highlighted in this report on the Québec situation are consistent with those identified in the general report of the study on the Canadian labour market. A clear conclusion is that the structuring of social services in the province must be re-designed and roles more adequately defined within the new social context. Social workers and other social service providers must adjust to these new conditions, as they face increasingly stringent requirements in their professional practice. Many of them are preoccupied and under stress, and feel that their efforts go unrecognized from a professional point of view. By way of consequence, they lack self-confidence and are confused as to their professional identity and the role and responsibilities they should assume. Such a situation must be faced, understood as to its origins and remedied without delay. Society needs social workers to address today’s challenges; confusion must be eliminated and social workers’ role and contributions must be clearly defined so that they may take the place and the responsibilities that are rightfully theirs.

Educational institutions and practice settings, for their part, will have to produce social workers who are adequately prepared to successfully deal with increasingly far-reaching and complex issues that trigger a higher demand for their services.
1. RESEARCH FINDINGS
   AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Introduction
This chapter assesses the impacts of current pressures and changes in the Aboriginal social work sector. An environmental scan of key Aboriginal issues, drivers and changes in the economy and workplace and their impacts on the Aboriginal social work sector will be synthesized. The chapter also outlines a strategic plan that responds directly to the human resource management challenges facing the Aboriginal social work sector.

2. Methodology
An Aboriginal member of Grant Thornton Research Team facilitated the national research of the Aboriginal sector. Consultations were held with an Aboriginal sub-committee of the Steering Committee, and in-depth interviews with key respondents across Canada were conducted. Aboriginal researchers and professional social workers conducted the data collection and analysis from their respective provinces, regions and territories across Canada. The research methodology was organized into four modules. Three of the modules utilized in-depth interviews with key stakeholders representative of the Aboriginal social work sector. There were 127 individual interviews conducted with managers/directors, employers, employees, private practitioners and educators. A total of twelve focus groups with employees and students were also conducted, totaling 70 key respondents. The total number of key respondents interviewed for this study was 197. Table 1 highlights the diversity of respondent groups for the three module focused interviews.

The fourth module involved Aboriginal researchers and the Aboriginal sub-committee developing strategic directions for the Aboriginal social work sector. Recurring themes and directions from the first three modules were synthesized and the highlights of the study’s findings were grouped into three categories: people, public awareness/marketing and social/economic justice.
Table 1: Distribution of Key Stakeholder Interviews for Aboriginal Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th>Module B</th>
<th>Module C</th>
<th>Module D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Nova Scotia</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview and Focus Group Totals</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Key Aboriginal Issues, Drivers and Changes

Aboriginal communities represent one of the most challenging environments of the social work sector. The perspectives from the field on key human resource issues, drivers and changes reflecting the macro context of social services outline its impacts on all segments of the social work sector. Key aboriginal issues such as the demographically high population growth rates, the marginalization of Aboriginal people, devolution strategies of federal and provincial governments, and the raised expectations for social work practice and education all contribute to the human resource challenges which the social work sector faces.

Aboriginal Population Growth Rates

The Aboriginal population growth rates, with the proportion of Aboriginal children and youth doubling every five years and urban migration of Aboriginal people, are indicative of the many demand drivers facing the urban centers and at the Aboriginal community level. Demands driven by population growth rates contribute to increased need for youth services, therapy/counselling services, integration of traditional and cultural services and higher caseloads. The population growth rates, combined with disadvantaged or marginalized conditions endemic to most Aboriginal communities, such as high unemployment rates, poverty, critical housing shortages and below poverty line incomes, are straining existing resources and driving demand to meet the critical and increasingly specialized needs of the Aboriginal population.

Federal Devolution

In addition to these two major issues are other critical issues such as the federal government's devolution strategy and societal pressures that create challenges that are specific to the Aboriginal social work sector.

The federal government's devolution strategy to deal with Aboriginal aspirations for increased self-determination in social development under existing federal and provincial frameworks and related cost containment strategies have far reaching impacts. Issues related to the level of Aboriginal governance, jurisdiction, quasi-control of programs and services,
minimal resource allocation, and expectations to do more with less all have significant impacts on the Aboriginal social work sector.

**Societal Attitudes Toward Aboriginal People**

Societal and public attitudes are also shaping the Aboriginal social work sector in a negative direction and threatening the social safety net of this most vulnerable sector. Systemic racism is perceived to be increasingly contributing to the inequalities, disparities and gaps in the level of funding and scope of social programs and services available to Aboriginal communities in comparison to the mainstream social institutions. The trend of federal and provincial governments’ social policies towards increased accountability, monitoring and measurable outcomes, tightening social spending and other ideological basis reflects societal pressures to contain expenditures on social welfare programs.

Changes in social transfers, social reform and health services benefits are also having an impact on the social service systems. These policies further limit the supply of scarce resources to meet the demands of an already critical Aboriginal environment.

Sustainable development and expansion of Aboriginal programs and services remain questionable in the face of these current trends. Aboriginal social workers working within mainstream institutions are working with higher caseloads due to fewer resources and perceive some differential treatment with respect to opportunities in advancement and to caseload expectation in comparison to their non-aboriginal colleagues.

### 4. Macro Impacts on Aboriginal Social Work Sector

The macro context of social services has both positive and negative impacts on the economy and workplace including working skills, needs and the social work profession’s identity in the Aboriginal social milieu. Positive trends towards increased Aboriginal control and delivery of programs and services have been growing and expanding. The development of diverse, holistic, integrative systems and models of programs and services is beginning to improve the quality and standards of life in Aboriginal communities. Integration of Aboriginal traditional and cultural systems and ways into the delivery and practices of social services and healing and wellness initiatives have been expanding and evolving.

Employment patterns from the respondents of the study point to the high rates of growth in the employment of Aboriginal social workers and to trends towards maintaining high quality delivery of services through increased numbers of qualified and certified Aboriginal social workers. Movements towards increased Aboriginal delivery of services and programs have also placed demands for higher education of social workers to meet the changing realities of the Aboriginal social work sector. Higher education results in increased credibility, benefits and upward mobility, and to addressing concerns about increasing client litigation. These concerns are being expressed by social workers working within the Aboriginal social work sector. In addition, the Aboriginal communities are demanding that social work education programs become more responsive to meeting new and emerging Aboriginal challenges such as social issues related to urbanization, FAS/FAE, HIV, intergenerational impacts of colonization and the residential school systems.

The subsequent high need and demand for skilled social workers and specialists have and will continue to contribute to increases in the occupational mix of the community social worker occupations.

There have been gains in work patterns towards employment of full-time qualified Aboriginal social workers, but the demand far exceeds available supply, particularly in remote and isolated Aboriginal communities. Earnings related to work patterns are closely linked to educational training. Most of the Aboriginal social workers working in mainstream social institutions require an undergraduate degree for legal and certification purposes. A large number of Aboriginal social workers working at the Aboriginal community level have their BSW and a few have their MSW. The rapid developments in the federal government’s devolution of programs and services and subsequent increased Aboriginal community delivery have contributed to shortages of qualified Aboriginal social workers in mainstream social services institutions and in northern and isolated Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people with minimal educational training or certification, but with knowledge, skills and expertise of their
Aboriginal communities, language, culture and work experience are being hired as social workers especially in remote and northern Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal social workers in the professional occupations are more likely to have bachelor's and master's degrees than community social workers who normally require some in-service training and/or a certificate or diploma to enter the profession.

**Impacts in the Workplace**

Gains on the part of Aboriginal people to close the enormous gaps that exist between Aboriginal people in comparison to mainstream institutions are increasingly being constrained in the workplace by the introduction of business and corporate systems approaches to the delivery and management of social services. Managers of social services have to address government's cost containment strategies and the challenge of meeting increased service demands with fewer resources. Improved accountability, trends towards measurable outcomes, the use of technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness, capacity building and partnerships have raised expectations that Aboriginal people are controlling and delivering social programs and services. And funding constraints and cutbacks shape the everyday experience in the workplace. The impact of these trends is felt in several ways:

- The emphasis of front-line workers on meeting client needs often appears to be working at cross-purposes with the quantitative emphasis of management.
- Trends towards higher and more complex caseloads continue to escalate.
- The rationing of resources directed to meet the demands of a disintegrating social environment is increasing.
- There are non-existent to minimum levels of preventive, remedial services and support structures in place in resource-poor Aboriginal social services, which contributes to high levels of employee stress/burnout in the workplace.

Changes in social policies and demographic factors are affecting Aboriginal social workers' wellbeing, despite the formal and informal support systems that may be available in their workplaces and communities. Aboriginal social workers are assuming multiple roles in intervention, advocacy, mediation and community development, in addition to being members of the Aboriginal community systems. They are facing difficult and stressful situations in the workplace such as dealing with office politics, administrative mismanagement, addressing child apprehensions in their own family and extended family systems, and attempting to integrate traditional and cultural approaches in their communities. Program resources have not kept up to the backlog of needs due to the long-term social exclusion of Aboriginal communities. Crisis approaches to social services, as opposed to a balance of intervention, preventive and family supports systems are emphasized as a result of imposed external policies and resource allocation. Given this critical work environment, there is difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified and professional Aboriginal social workers. This is a critical human resources issue, especially in remote and isolated Aboriginal communities where the lack of qualified, professional and specialized social workers are creating impoverished pockets of Aboriginal communities. Services and programs are more readily available in urban and southern Aboriginal communities, where specialists and availability of other resource professionals are generating more programs and services than community-based Aboriginal social workers are able to duplicate, or may not have the skills or time to do so.

Another area that is impacting on the demand side of the labour market is workplace benefits and services for Aboriginal employees. Support systems for collective bargaining to deal with government and Aboriginal governments with regard to fiscal benefits, income adjustments and other issues are minimal to nonexistent at the community level. This contributes to insecure working conditions, decreased job security and lowered benefits for qualified and certified social workers at the community level. There is also an increasing demand for technological competencies to improve efficiency and program management. While most of the agencies have the resources to provide training and continuous learning, the resources continue to be limited and increasingly difficult to access. The high costs associated with equipment, training and maintenance are prohibitive to most