

The benefits of the tripartite agreement

The previous article relates the history of the tripartite (three-partner) agreement on the use of Quebec community residential centres. But how does the agreement harmonize with current correctional operations, resource concerns and departmental policies?

To give the agreement shape, a committee was formed to facilitate cooperation between the three organizations and maintain the commitment of resources to ensure the success of the agreement. The tripartite committee is made up of representatives of the Association des résidences communautaires du Québec, Services correctionnels du Québec and the Correctional Service of Canada, and looks primarily at program delivery, funding, operational standards, and other issues pertaining to residential centres.

The committee is also an ideal forum for exchange of information between the community agencies represented and the two levels of government.

Numerous benefits flow from the tripartite agreement and the committee. This article examines some of the most significant of these benefits. Facilitating service contracts with residential centres Privately run residential centres play a leading role in Quebec Region's pursuit of the Correctional Service of Canada's number one corporate objective, which is to safely reintegrate offenders into the community as law-abiding citizens, while resorting as little as possible to the use of incarceration as a correctional intervention.

Given the number of centres available and the needs of the federal and provincial correctional services, joint service contracts make it possible to rationalize and reduce costs, plan for development, and therefore also ensure that the centres themselves have a degree of financial security.

There are many residential and accommodation centres in Quebec that enter into service contracts with the two levels of government. This assures the centres of a larger potential clientele and allows the federal and Quebec provincial correctional services to diversify resources in one with their budget constraints. However, this does not prevent either of these two government organizations from entering into exclusive service contracts with certain centres. The restrictions governing such contracts are the same as for joint contracts, particularly regarding minimum requirements and rates of pay. Minimum operating requirements The three partners have jointly established minimum operating requirements for both community residential centres and community accommodation centres. All minimum requirements have been approved by the tripartite committee, are discussed regularly, and may be revised. The requirements cover all administrative and operational aspects of the centres: organization, beneficiaries' rights, programming, admission procedures, security requirements, collaboration with other community players, offender accountability activities, case management standards, availability of centre staff, health care, information and records management, personnel, and civil liability standards.

To ensure compliance with these standards, centres are evaluated annually by the Correctional Service of Canada and periodically by Services correctionnels du Québec. Each centre is also audited every three years. This audit is conducted jointly by representatives of the two correctional organizations and covers both exclusive and shared centres. Financial policy The mission statements of both the Correctional

Service of Canada and Services correctionnels du Québec (which are each part of the criminal justice system) focus on contributing to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens. Financial considerations are, however, crucial (to all parties) to the involvement of residential centres in the correctional process.

The tripartite committee's role as a forum for discussion encourages cooperation in this area, even if the various needs expressed (by any or all sides) are sometimes beyond budgetary capacities. For example, the tripartite agreement resolves one question by stipulating that accommodation centres be paid solely on the basis of the number of offenders these centres accommodate. Further, committee members have **together** developed a unique method for determining the daily rates granted to each of the centres. Simple, yet complex, this method identifies and determines the value of all aspects of offender accommodation, service and program delivery, and administration of the centre.

This mechanism for determining operational costs identifies and quantifies 10 components in the daily operation of a residential centre. These components range from staff salaries (based on the accommodation capacity of the centre) to food, to travel and professional insurance expenses, to capital costs. The three parties cooperatively assigned values to each component, which are then used every year to draw up service contracts with the various centres. Information exchange The tripartite committee meetings provide a special forum for sharing information and exchanging opinions - not only on operational considerations, but also on criminal justice issues and policies and on intervention and prevention. The meetings also present an excellent opportunity for the representatives of centres to highlight their centre's contribution to the rehabilitation of offenders. Consultation and cooperation One cannot help but note the many significant advantages of the tripartite agreement. It should, however, be emphasized that the agreement is responsible for two major achievements in Quebec Region.

First, the tripartite agreement has led to the development of accommodation spaces in the community network. Quebec Region alone accounts for 500 of the 1,200 Canadian private accommodation spaces. Second, the agreement sparked the introduction of terms and conditions allowing for centres to be paid on the basis of services rendered (rather than fiat-rate payments).

These benefits are the result of the consultation and cooperation that has been, and remains, characteristic of the tripartite agreement. Although obstacles can pop up along "partnership road," the tripartite committee has been, and will continue to be, an ideal setting for judicious and cooperative decision making.

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