



*The Ottawa-Carleton Public Employees' Union
Syndicat Ottawa-Carleton de la fonction publique*

Dovercourt decision to withdraw proposal a win for Churchill seniors, city workers (Dec. 7, 2009)

After spending the last two months battling the takeover of their city-run facility, users of the Churchill Seniors Recreation Centre are relaxing after receiving word that the Dovercourt Recreation Association board of directors has decided to withdraw its proposal to assume management of the popular community hub.

“We can breathe a sigh of relief now,” said Sally Luce, vice-chair of the Friends of Churchill Seniors. The group, numbering over 300, was formed in early October after the centre’s members learned of Dovercourt’s intentions; their concern was that Dovercourt’s cost structure would leave seniors without affordable community space to frequent for fitness and social programs.

A December 4th letter to Luce from Judy Cameron, president of the Dovercourt Recreation Association, stated, “The Dovercourt Board, Staff and Volunteers are proud of the high rates of client satisfaction we have achieved while delivering recreation services to residents of Kitchissippi ward over the past twenty years. We remain confident that this service delivery model could be replicated at the Churchill Senior’s Centre with great success, but we also understand that the proposal has left many clients of the Centre concerned and anxious over possible impacts on the culture and/or services of the Centre. We also appreciate the renewed engagement by Churchill Seniors’ Centre participants, which is aimed at strengthening the Centre’s programs and operation. It is for these reasons that the Dovercourt Board has decided to withdraw its proposal for the Churchill Seniors’ Centre.”

Though the Dovercourt Recreation Centre already has six satellite locations in the city, it is looking for extra space to accommodate some of its programs, including those targeting children and youth. Churchill users did not want their much-needed senior’s programs, which include supervised fitness and weight training, to be muscled out by relocated programs that don’t fit the mandate of a community senior’s centre.

The Friends of Churchill Seniors were angered over the lack of consultation between Dovercourt and Churchill prior to Dovercourt submitting its proposal to the city, which Dovercourt claimed was an oversight on their part. A November 3rd information meeting saw Churchill members airing their views with CUPE representative Clarence Dungey, arguing that the city was in conflict with its contract requirement by negotiating the Dovercourt proposal without consulting the union.

Dovercourt representatives responded by saying the Churchill facility and its programs was vulnerable to the city’s “serious financial difficulty”, a comment that many regarded as unnecessary fear-mongering. Nor did the audience like the fact that if implemented, the proposal would see Churchill staff either relocate or lose their jobs to make way for Dovercourt staff. The workers are what make the facility the success that it is, said Luce.

“Our people love the city staff...they’re so good with their members, so patient, just wonderful with the seniors.”

CUPE 503 president Brian Madden says the outcome of the situation and the clear preference by Churchill members for a city-run facility reaffirms his view that city workers know how to excel at their jobs, and thus deserve to continue to perform them.

“It reinforces the fact that the city workforce delivers a quality product and the public likes it.”

