



Urban Agenda Platform

*The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.*

## II. A City For All - Vulnerable People

Region	North America
Award Scheme	Guangzhou Award
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

### Summary

In 2016, a new information and referral service was developed in the Montreal metropolitan area to provide assistance to the citizens by telephone (211) or by the Web on a wide range of social and community resources. The 211 service helps curb poverty and social exclusion, giving the people with non-urgent social needs rapid information on the social and community resources that will help them find solutions to move beyond their precarious situations.

### Background and Objective

In 2015, the City of Repentigny held a series of consultations in the process leading to the renewal of its municipal Policy for the families and the elderly. Many elderly people expressed the wish to be accompanied and guided in the process to obtain assistance and support. According to the 2016 Census, some 13,000 citizens of Repentigny are aged between 55 and 64 and 15,000 are 65 and over. The municipality wanted also to take into account the needs of all the vulnerable people as part of its vision for social inclusion and development with the perspective of leaving no one behind. It is in this context that the City of Repentigny undertook to mobilize its neighboring municipalities, other institutions such as the health and social services network, the private sector and community partners in order to develop a new innovative and practical model to support the most vulnerable people. The goal of the ISC project is to make sure that the essential needs of the vulnerable people, including food, shelter and material assistance, are met as well as the needs regarding personal and family life, mental health and access to justice. The vulnerable people could be referred to the social development officer of the ISC either through the 211 information service or by one of the agencies concerned. The officer can interact with the person through a meeting or by telephone in order to be able to assess the situation and to find the best suitable solutions available. The approach is to contribute to the empowerment of people and to reinforce their capacity to react to the difficult situations they are facing. The role of the social development officer is also to make the links between the different agencies and community organizations and to make sure that the response to the needs of the vulnerable people is as comprehensive as possible. The City of Repentigny has established a key partnership with a community-based organization Le Centre à Nous. The center is a pillar of autonomous community action in the region. It has been created 30 years ago and it provides office spaces and services to 22 community organizations dedicated to the well-being of the population. The municipality was keen to benefit from the skills and expertise of this organization to ensure the success of the project. The ISC and the social development officer are located at the center. Another key partnership has been established with the Regional Health and Services Agency which is an essential player in the delivery of a wide range of social and health services to the population. The Agency has been supportive throughout the development of the ISC project and is contributing to a large measure to its success. The City of Repentigny has also forged partnerships with the neighboring municipalities and with a major regional financial institution to complete the financing of the project for a five year period. The City of Repentigny has invested CAD 250,000 for this initiative over five year period (2017-2021). The regional council of municipalities has allocated CAD 80,000 for the project and the local credit union (Caisse Desjardins Pierre-Le Gardeur) made a contribution of CAD 75,000 from its community development fund. A committee bringing together all the agencies and community organizations delivering services to vulnerable people has been put in place at the start of the project. This committee provides an opportunity for regular feedback on the project. It reinforces the links between the partners, contributes to the complementarity of the interventions and ensures a continuum of services to the most vulnerable people.

### Actions and Implementation

Many cities across the world have adopted social development strategies and specific policies and programs for the inclusion and wellbeing of the children, the youth, women and the elderly. One of the challenges is to reach out to the most vulnerable people in the community and offer them an opportunity to have their basic needs satisfied and to participate in civic life. In the context of the fast expansion of new technologies, the Informational and Social Crossroads initiative offers an example of how a municipality can mobilize its institutional and community partners, as well as the private sector, and can develop an original and practical approach to support and empower vulnerable people. The model rests on the capacity to interact directly with the people in need and to look for a comprehensive response outside the traditional silo approach of many organizations. The City of Repentigny would be glad to share this experience with other municipal counterparts in the different regions of the world.

### Outcomes and Impacts



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More than 20 % of the requests received so far by the 211 service for the territory covered by the project were referred to the Informational and Social Crossroads initiative for treatment. This proves the relevance of this additional and complementary component. It shows the complexity of the situations of vulnerable people and the difficulty for them to access the services. In this regard, the ISC is an essential and useful link. The Informational and Social Crossroads has already provided assistance to 290 vulnerable people. Office interviews were held with 130 persons and support was offered to another 160 persons through telephone calls. The statistics show that citizens from all the six municipalities covered have benefited from the services of the ISC in a proportion close to the distribution of the population between each city. The 211 service was the entry point for 70% of the requests for assistance and the other 30 % were referrals directly made to the ISC by the agencies and community organizations. It is worth noting that 67 % of these vulnerable persons were women. The age groups were spread out as follows: 36% were aged between 50 and 69, 25 % were above 70, 28% were between 31 and 49 and 11% were under 30 years old. Close to 30% of the requests for assistance were in relation with basic needs: food, shelter and material assistance. More than 20 % were in relation with personal or family life. The others requests cover different categories, including mental health, substance abuse, services provided by community organizations, access to justice, consumer protection and health care. Vulnerable people in search of assistance through the ISC were referred to 90 different agencies or community groups on more than 370 occasions. Those agencies and community groups included the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, a food security group, an organization supporting immigrant families, a home economics association and a support center for victims of crime. The 211 information and referral service update each month a comprehensive set of statistics that include the data pertaining to Informational and Social Crossroads initiative. With the help of statistics from calls and web frequency, the 211 service sheds a light to government officials and decision-makers on social needs and in determining missing resources that are needed. For the ISC the data include the number, the types and the average time required by the interventions, the origin of the requests, the sex and age of the callers, the municipality of residence, the nature of the requests and the list of the agencies and organizations to which the requests are referred and the number of times it occurs. As mentioned above, new technologies provide the opportunity to monitor closely the evolution of a project like the ISC. In addition, the committee that brings together all the pivotal partners associated with the project is an essential tool to improve the quality and coherence of the interventions in favor of vulnerable people. This initiative is part of the broad vision of the City of Repentigny to continue to develop an inclusive city at a human scale and to table on innovation and creativity. We are one of the leading municipalities in this regard in the metropolitan Montreal area and throughout the province of Quebec. In 2018, the Informational and Social Crossroads project received the prize for the best initiative in support of families by a municipal of over 25,000 people awarded by a Quebec NGO, the Carrefouraction municipal et famille, which has for mission to foster policies and programs for children, families and the elderly at the local level.

## Sustainability and Scalability

Goal 1: End poverty in all of its forms Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Target 1: Access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

## Initiative Contribution

The project is in line with the vision set for in the Repentigny Strategic Development Plan 2014-2019 which is centered on a « totally human city », on social inclusion and on the adaptation of the municipal services according to the needs of all the citizens. It contributes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals that call for ending poverty, achieving food security, inclusive cities and participatory and empowerment approaches.

## Innovative Initiative

By its innovative character and its original design, the Informational and Social Crossroads project opens a new era in the field of inclusive and personalized social and community services. It took advantage of the introduction of a new information and referral service (211) based on new technologies to come to grips with the difficult challenge of reaching out and of providing support to the most vulnerable people in the community through a human positive and efficient interaction. A key element of this innovative approach is the capacity to interact directly with the most vulnerable people, to assess their needs and to identify practical solutions in order to provide them with the support they require. Basically the ISC project breaks down the silo effect that too often limits the possibility to bring together all the elements of complex solutions to address difficult situations affecting vulnerable people. The approach also fosters the empowerment of individuals and families in developing their capacities to react to those difficult situations. Another innovative feature is the committee described above bringing together all the pivotal partners involved in the project. Representatives of health and social services agencies, other government instances, public safety, schools, community organizations and municipal departments are committed to share information and have a common will to improve their practices. So far the committee has met on four occasions. The development of the project has necessitated approaching and convincing a wide range of partners. Considering the innovative aspect of the proposal, substantial time had to be devoted to explaining the objectives and the engineering of the project. Another challenge is to ensure the continuous mobilization through the work of the multi agencies committee mentioned above.



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## Resources devoted to delivery

BASIC CITY DATA Population size: 84,965 Population growth rate (%): 11.00 Surface area (sq.km): 71.25 Population density (people/sq.km): 1,192.50  
GDP per capita (USD): 19,360.00 Main source of prosperity: Industry, services, creative industry, tourism and culture  
<http://www.guangzhouaward.org/a/930.html?lang=en&page=2>