

Local News

'There's a lot of work': Orderly training begins for thousands of Quebecers

Katherine Wilton • Montreal Gazette
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Montrealers like Phillip Bemaine have signed up for orderly training. Bemaine gives a thumbs up on the first day of training at the Shadd Business and Health Centre in Montreal June 15, 2020. DAVE SIDAWAY / Montreal Gazette

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The plan to fast track the training is necessary as Quebec takes steps to prepare for a potential second wave of COVID-19, and the departure of hundreds of Canadian soldiers currently doing some of the heavy lifting in CHSLDs.



Montrealers line up at the Shadd Business and Health Centre in Montreal June 15, 2020, on the first day of training to become orderlies. DAVE SIDAWAY/Montreal Gazette

Local health agencies sifted through 86,000 applications for the coveted posts, which offer the chance of full-time employment and a \$49,000 annual salary.

Phillip Demaine was another successful candidate who started training on Monday.

The N.D.G. resident had a career in construction, but wanted to shift gears after not working for a few years.

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Patrick Pierre was driving around town when he heard a radio report about Quebec's ambitious plan to hire and train 10,000 orderlies to work in long-term care residences.

When he returned home, he sent in his application and waited to hear from the government.



He had a telephone interview a few days later and then heard that he had made the cut.

On Monday, he was one of 132 successful candidates who started their first day of training at the Shadd Business and Health Centre in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

“It’s a great opportunity to develop some skills and help people in need — and the pay is great,” said Pierre, who was laid off in March from his job as a warehouse worker.

Pierre, 47, is one of almost 10,000 adults who will be trained over the next three months to work in understaffed CHSLDs. Another 2,000 employees in the health sector will be trained as orderlies starting in September, the government announced on Monday.

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Students will receive instruction on how to engage with seniors, how to prevent infections, first aid and end-of-life care.

There will also be onsite training in CHSLDs, where they will gain experience feeding, dressing and moving elderly residents, many of whom have dementia.

The courses are offered in French and English at various vocational centres across the province.

The Commission scolaire de Montréal has 800 students who started training Monday.

Student will be paid about \$760 a week during the three months of training.

The course has also been popular outside the greater Montreal region. The New Frontiers School Board, which serves English schools in southwestern Quebec, is training 44 people to work as orderlies, or préposé aux bénéficiaires in French.

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Edith Bouyer, a Grade 4 teacher at Willingdon Elementary School, welcomed new orderly trainees at the Shadd Centre in Montreal June 15, 2020. DAVE SIDAWAY/Montreal Gazette

Édith Bouyer, a Grade 4 teacher at Willingdon Elementary School in N.D.G., turned up at the Shadd Business and Health Centre on Monday to wish the new students well.

For the past month, she has been volunteering on the weekends at a CHSLD in St-Henri, where there are 184 residents.

There have been few COVID-19 cases at the residence, so Bouyer spends most of her time chatting and entertaining the seniors, many of whom are lonely and love the company. She plays the piano and sings songs by Quebec singer Félix Leclerc and French singer Édith Piaf.

“We also sing Au Clair de la Lune and À la Claire Fontaine and (occasionally) La Marseillaise because there are some French people there,” said Bouyer, who is from France.

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She said she is thrilled that so many Quebecers have come forward to work in CHSLDs, but cautioned that working with ill seniors is very demanding and often emotional.

“You have to be able to face that and cope with it,” she said. “There’s a lot of work and not enough people to look after them.”

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MORE ON THIS TOPIC



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Note to readers: We know the speed and volume of coronavirus-related news is overwhelming and a little frightening. To help with that, our daily live blog synthesizes the most important coronavirus-related news, especially as it relates to life in Montreal and Quebec. [Follow the updates for June 15 here.](#)

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