



**SOUTIEN À LA PERSONNE HANDICAPÉE EN ROUTE VERS L'EMPLOI AU QUÉBEC
(SUPPORT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN QUÉBEC)**

Financial activities funded through the
"employment activities for individuals" portion of the
Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities

2005-2006 Annual Report

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Message from the President: A very busy year

The year 2005-2006 will forever be etched in our memories. How could we possibly forget our first year of existence?

SPHERE-Québec (Soutien à la personne handicapée en route vers l'emploi au Québec) was created in December 2004, born of the desire to respond to the needs of disabled individuals more effectively in terms of integration and re-integration into the workforce. The founding members of SPHERE-Québec had a vision of providing disabled individuals with access to an organization whose sole responsibility is to offer them concrete support in their quest for employment, and that is able to meet their needs one person at a time.

During this first year, the operating structures were put into place, and the organization prepared to take over management of the "employment activities for individuals" portion of the Opportunities Fund from CAMO (the Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'œuvre pour personnes handicapées). We also signed an agreement with Human Resources and Social Development Canada to secure our mandate and maintain our support in the field, while offering continuous support to our clientele. The challenge was daunting, but as the first fiscal year draws to a close, it is clear that our efforts have been truly successful.

In carrying on the work that was started by CAMO, SPHERE-Québec will continue to rely on the ties that have already been forged with its partners all across Québec. The methods that we employ are meticulous, our management is efficient, and more importantly, we always listen to our clientele.

The next few pages will provide you with a more comprehensive overview of this pivotal year. I am convinced that, after reading them, you will join me in the belief that SPHERE-Québec is prepared to continue its journey!

Martin Trépanier
President

Statement from the Director General: A year of change

The first year of operation was a busy one for SPHERE-Québec. Since its founding, SPHERE-Québec has made considerable headway. It is important to point out that taking over the management of the “employment activities for individuals” portion of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities from CAMO was no small matter. It presented us with an interesting challenge, which was enthusiastically embraced by the entire team.

With the inception of the Opportunities Fund in 1997, CAMO was entrusted with implementing employment activities for individuals in Québec. The transition from CAMO to SPHERE-Québec required particular attention so that the files could be passed on without incident in order to not disrupt the clientele and the ongoing activities. It was out of the question that disabled individuals might be penalized by the operation! In fact, the objective associated with the creation of SPHERE-Québec was to serve this clientele better, and that is still our priority.

Therefore, starting on June 1, 2005, working with professionalism and conviction, and embracing this spirit of continuity, the team at SPHERE-Québec went to work. Our holistic intervention philosophy has always been based on the real needs of disabled individuals who are interested in seeking employment. The team at SPHERE-Québec works with its partners across the province to identify and implement innovative solutions. For SPHERE-Québec, this type of collaboration is both valuable and necessary for the accomplishment of its mission.

The work that we have accomplished over the past twelve months has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of our efforts, as evidenced by the results that we have achieved in five areas:

1) Services for disabled people

Over the course of the year, we helped 749 people across all regions of Québec in their quest to find employment. This incredible result was achieved through our ongoing collaboration with our partners from specialized labour services, associations, and organizations that work in the field.

I am very proud to report that we reached, and even surpassed, our objectives. For example, in terms of the number of disabled people whom we wanted to help to find employment in Québec over the past year, our objective was 520. We ended up helping 44% more than we anticipated, without ever compromising the quality of our work!

2) Accountability

SPHERE-Québec worked very hard on issues such as follow-up with participants and financial control over activities. This process led to the development and application of a practices and procedures guide for our project officers. This attracted the attention of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, which asked our permission to use it as a model for similar projects elsewhere in the country.

3) Multiplication of intervention models

SPHERE-Québec considers its team members to be multiplying agents, or rather as a production line for models. We must foster the emergence of innovative projects by promoting the intervention models that respond to the real needs of disabled people most effectively. More specifically, this vision resulted in the creation of an audio-visual tool on DVD that describes our successful projects. The promotion of this tool to partners in the regions made it possible to ascertain what was happening elsewhere. Success attracts success!

4) Strategic orientation

Cognizant of the fact that next year will be a year of re-evaluation for the Opportunities Fund, SPHERE-Québec has adopted a proactive attitude in order to prepare the way. We have held several meetings with our partners, with the main objectives being to define the real needs of our clientele and to evaluate how the current “employment activities for individuals” portion of the Opportunities Fund responds to these needs. This thought process led to the creation of the document entitled *SPHERE-Québec : une proposition d’avenir pour les personnes handicapées*. This proposal has been presented to government officials, and we are of the opinion that it will effectively fuel the thought process for decision-makers in their efforts to re-evaluate the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities.

5) The corporate identity of SPHERE-Québec

At the same time, we were conducting another thought process: a communication strategy. This led to the creation of a corporate signature, the adoption of a visual style, and the implementation of a variety of tools, including a website that is fully accessible to disabled people.

In short, the entire team was very busy in 2005-2006. Everyone gave it their all, and rose to meet the challenges with energy and determination.

So what about tomorrow? The Opportunities Fund re-evaluation process is well underway at the national level. We have high hopes that, at the end of its analysis, the Canadian government will pursue the same mission of helping disabled people in their quest for employment, and will accept our proposal of consolidating and improving the “employment activities for individuals” portion of the Opportunities Fund. For us, it’s a question of value: giving each and every person the opportunity to be fully functional with respect to his or her role as a citizen. SPHERE-Québec has only one wish: to continue to improve our response to the real needs of disabled people in Québec who are seeking employment.

Sylvie Bédard
Director General

SPHERE-Québec: A new entity dedicated to constantly improving the services offered to disabled people in Québec

SPHERE-Québec is an autonomous corporation that was created in December 2004, for the purpose of facilitating the integration and re-integration of disabled people into the labour market. SPHERE-Québec began operations on June 1, 2005. This is a report on the activities that it carried out between then and March 31, 2006.

Situation of disabled people

People with disabilities represent a significant percentage of the Canadian population. In its 2004 report entitled *The integration of persons with a disability*, the federal government indicated that one in eight Canadians lives with one or more functional limitations. This represents approximately 3.6 million people in Canada.

Closer to home: in its *Diagnostic sur la formation et l'emploi des personnes handicapées au Québec*, which was published in July 2005, CAMO estimated that this group includes more than 650,000 people in Québec.

Even today, people with disabilities are often not as well educated or trained as the average, and therefore, they have problems finding employment that would enable them to better satisfy their needs and perceive themselves as active, useful citizens. For example: according to CAMO, among the 650,000 disabled people who were surveyed in Québec, only 27.7% hold a job or are self-employed.

This situation raises concerns for all of those who believe in a more inclusive and fairer society that allows all of its citizens to contribute and thrive. SPHERE-Québec is one of these believers!

Mission and mandates

The mission of SPHERE-Québec is to foster the integration, re-integration, and maintenance of employment for disabled people throughout the province.

The organization defined its mandates in order to set guidelines for its current and future actions, which include the following:

Managing and **promoting** all funds or programs designed for disabled people among management, union personnel, associations, and organizations that specialize in the development of labour and employment, and among other partners;

Collaborating, financially or otherwise, with local, regional, and provincial partners in order to develop initiatives that foster the emergence of workplace integration models, among other things;

Encouraging and supporting, financially or otherwise, the introduction of high-quality adapted jobs;

Participating and **contributing** to the network of experts for the transfer of knowledge and practices.

SPHERE-Québec provides its services from four offices, located in the heart of the main regions across the province: Montréal, Québec City, Rimouski, and Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts. Its professionals participate in all regional task forces on employment, and work in close collaboration with partners in the field. In 2005-2006, the SPHERE-Québec team included 10 people, all of whom originally came from CAMO. This ensured a smooth transfer of expertise and knowledge, and seamless continuity between the two organizations.

This type of cooperation with partners is reflected in the composition of the SPHERE-Québec Board of Directors, which brings together representatives of employers, unions, and leading organizations that are working to ensure the well-being of disabled people across the province (see the list of members hereafter). At the national level, SPHERE-Québec representatives participate in the efforts of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW).

Members of the Board of Directors:

- Mr. Martin Trépanier (Chairman) - Regroupement des associations de personnes handicapées de la Gaspésie et des Îles (RAPHGI);
- Mr. Martin Fortier (Vice-Chair) - Conseil québécois des entreprises adaptées;
- Mr. Louis Adam (Secretary-Treasurer) – Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada;
- Mrs. Gaétane Lacroix – Regroupement d’organismes de promotion des personnes handicapées de l’Estrie (ROP);
- Mrs. Denise Gagnon - Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ);
- Mr. Jean Lefebvre - Regroupement des organismes de services spécialisés pour l’emploi des personnes handicapées (ROSEPH);

- Mr. Olivier Collomb d'Eyrammes – Alliance québécoise des regroupements pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (AQRIPH).

Portrait of our clientele

SPHERE-Québec addresses the specific needs of disabled people who are located far from the labour market. These are people who live with a functional limitation (intellectual, psychic, motor, organic, auditory, or visual), and who have not yet succeeded in integrating into the labour market, either because of this limitation or because of a lack of training or professional experience.

Results exceed objectives

In its 2005-2006 Action Plan, SPHERE-Québec anticipated helping 520 people to find jobs, to become self-employed, or to return to school.

The following tables demonstrate that SPHERE-Québec exceeded this objective by accommodating the projects of some 750 people from every age group, every level of education, and every type of limitation. A little further on, we will see that this allowed SPHERE-Québec to invest close to the total budget allocated by the Ministère.

TABLE 1: CLIENTELE BY AGE GROUP

AGE GROUP	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Ages 16 – 25	151	95	246
Ages 26 – 35	96	60	156
Ages 36 – 45	95	81	176
Ages 46 – 55	75	68	143
Ages 56 – 65	16	12	28
Total	433	316	749

TABLE 2: CLIENTELE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

LEVEL	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Primary	92	58	150
Secondary	250	192	442
College	58	35	93
University	33	31	64
Total	433	316	749

TABLE 3: CLIENTELE BY TYPE OF DISABILITY

CATEGORY OF DISABILITY	%
Intellectual	33%
Psychic	28%
Motor	22%
Organic	8%
Auditory	5%
Visual	4%
Total	100%

A clientele that is located increasingly far from the labour market.

The objectives that were set in 2005-2006 anticipated that 57% of participants would remain active at the end of a SPHERE-Québec intervention (employed, self-employed, or in school). The data collected demonstrate that these results were slightly below what was hoped for, with 47% of disabled people still active at the end of their project.

TABLE 4: RESULTS OF ACTIVITIES FINANCED IN 2005-2006

RESULTS	%
Employed	40%
Self-employed	4%
Studying	3%
Unemployed	53%
Total	100%

The results demonstrate that the clientele served by SPHERE-Québec is located increasingly far from the labour market. The observations made in the field by our agents and our partners corroborate this fact, and attest to the many difficulties that disabled persons face in terms of integrating into the labour market. The obstacles are formidable, not only because of the necessity of developing a longer-lasting intervention plan, but also because of the multiplicity of needs. The holistic approach that is favoured by SPHERE-Québec makes it possible to satisfy the many needs in a personalized manner.

Jobs

The type of jobs that are held by participants varies, but we have observed that they can be primarily categorized as labourers, support personnel, and non-specialized personnel.

TABLE 5: CLIENTELE BY EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY (2005-2006)

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY	TOTAL	%
Executive	8	1%
Support personnel	153	20%
Labourer	379	51%
Professional	26	4%
Technical personnel	81	11%
Non-specialized personnel	102	13%
Total	749	100%

Types of eligible expenses:

The support offered by SPHERE-Québec comes in various forms, but it is always based on the real needs of the person and is always justified in the action plan. It may entail:

- paying a portion of a person's salary;
- providing equipment in order to adapt the workplace and workstation;
- paying for an interpreter or for transcription in Braille;
- paying transportation costs or expenses incurred for other personal support;
- paying training fees;
- etc.

Financed activities

SPHERE-Québec provides financial support for participants at the start of their journey toward employment. This support is provided via three avenues: targeted salary subsidies, competency development, and assistance for self-employed workers.

1) Targeted salary subsidies:

Workplace integration, or in other words, timely intervention that allows an individual to integrate into a long-term job over the short term; and employability development, which allows the participant to acquire transferable professional experience or to develop good work skills, become more autonomous, and increase his or her self-confidence.

Both have the objective of ensuring that the beneficiary is able to integrate into the labour market over the medium or long term. Eligible expenses under this measure include salary expenses, adaptation of the workstation or workplace, and accompaniment or coaching expenses.

2) Competency development:

Thanks to this measure, participants are able to access training that allows them to improve their employability in terms of professional development, upgrading their skills, and customized adapted training. Eligible expenses include registration and equipment costs, accompaniment and coaching expenses, and charges related to transportation, accommodation, meals, and child care.

3) Assistance for self-employed workers:

This measure allows a participant to start up a business, and thereby create his or her own employment. Eligible expenses in this case include living expenses and adaptation costs.

Cost breakdown per intervention

The numbers presented in the following table also confirm that the clientele of SPHERE-Québec is located increasingly far from the labour market.

Financed activities are increasingly concentrated in the pre-employability niche. Therefore, targeted salary subsidies aimed at ensuring employability development account for the largest portion of expenses, followed closely by targeted salary subsidies aimed at helping participants to integrate into the workplace. These two measures account for almost 75% of the funds invested in 2005-2006.

TABLE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF INVESTMENTS BY MEASURE

MEASURE	INVESTMENT	%
01- Targeted salary subsidies - workplace integration	\$903,834	31%
02- Targeted salary subsidies - employability development	\$1,253,706	43%
03- Competency development	\$524,807	18%
04- Assistance for self-employed workers	\$233,248	8%
Total	\$2,915,595	100%

Regional breakdown of 2005-2006 expenses

For information purposes, the table below provides an overview of the funds used in each region of Québec.

TABLE 7: FUNDS ALLOCATED BY REGION

REGION	INVESTMENT	%
01-Lower St. Lawrence	\$291,560	10%
02-Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean	\$174,936	6%
03-National Capital	\$233,248	8%
04-Mauricie-Bois-Francis	\$145,780	5%
05-Eastern Townships	\$145,780	5%
06-Montréal	\$379,027	13%
07-Outaouais	\$87,468	3%
08-Abitibi-Témiscamingue	\$320,715	11%
09-North Shore	\$87,468	3%
10-Northern Québec	\$0	0%
11-Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	\$145,780	5%
12-Chaudière-Appalaches	\$174,936	6%
13-Laval	\$58,312	2%
14-Lanaudière	\$87,468	3%
15-Laurentians	\$145,779	5%
16-Montérégie	\$408,183	14%
17-Central Québec	\$29,155	1%
Total	\$2,915,595	100%

It is worth noting that SPHERE-Québec's budget is not decentralized. The natural distribution among the various regions of the province is determined according to the jobs available and the offer of services for people with disabilities.

Partnership

This year, as in the past, SPHERE-Québec was able to take advantage of a solid and effective partnership that is upheld by the team in the field. This close partnership allows for the segmentation of models adapted to each region. The result is innovative projects that effectively respond to the integration-related problems that are experienced by disabled people in each region. The committees of partners become a forum for the transmission of information, where groups of professionals have the ability to build projects whose objectives are not only to improve the employability of the clientele, but more specifically, to systematically deal with obstacles. There are many means that can be used to maintain a network such as this:

The presence of project agents on regional employment task forces;

Daily contact with SSMO job counsellors, who are the front-line professionals;

Involvement in multipartner committees for launching innovative projects.

In keeping with the guidelines of the Opportunities Fund, SPHERE-Québec relies on the cooperation of the partners in its network. Whether these are specialized labour services (SSMOs), associations, employers, unions, or government organizations, each partner uses its expertise and resources to continuously improve the response to the needs of disabled people in Québec.

Balance sheet

Statement of revenues and expenses

The following table illustrates the distribution of revenues and expenses for 2005-2006.

TABLE 8: REVENUES AND EXPENSES FROM APRIL 1, 2005 TO MARCH 31, 2006

ANTICIPATED BUDGET		ACTUAL BUDGET	
Revenues	\$3,800,000	Revenues	\$3,800,000
Expenses		Expenses	
Participant fees	\$2,925,425	Participant fees	\$2,915,595
Operating expenses	\$874,575	Operating expenses	\$839,551
Total	\$3,800,000	Total	\$3,755,146
		Balance	\$44,854

A successful project

For more than 20 years, Mrs. Louise Leboeuf has worked in the field of holistic healthcare. In 2002, her life was turned upside down. A triple aneurysm left her with irreversible side effects. She was forced to adapt to her new condition, and to learn to live with a loss of peripheral vision, damaged vocal cords, and difficulty pronouncing words. Far from letting it get her down, she did everything in her power to regain her autonomy, to thrive, and to pursue her work with a clientele that was open to being directed toward global harmony.

Because of this, only three years after her accident, Mrs. Leboeuf was able to achieve her dream, thanks to the financial assistance of SPHERE-Québec and the support of specialized partners working in business start-ups. She now runs her own business that specializes in holistic treatments, including orthotherapy and massage therapy. She also holds information workshops to address the issue of health and personal well-being.

Her business, which is called Mission Harmony, has been operating since 2005, and her clientele continues to grow.

SPHERE-Québec is proud of its role in contributing to the vitality of this business, but more importantly, in contributing to the realization of Mrs. Leboeuf's dream of regaining control of her life!

Conclusion

SPHERE-Québec is entering its second year with the feeling of satisfaction that comes from a job well done. During the coming months, we will continue our work.

However, we cannot overlook the fact that the federal government is conducting an in-depth re-evaluation of the Opportunities Fund. The process that is currently underway will inevitably lead to the introduction of new conditions respecting the application of the Opportunities Fund.

These conditions were not yet known at the time when this was written. Without making assumptions, we can confirm that they will bolster the evolution of SPHERE-Québec. They will undoubtedly lead to amendments, adaptations, and changes in the way we operate. SPHERE-Québec will not simply succumb to these changes, but we plan to be involved in the debate, to be proactive, and to participate in the thought process.

No matter what conclusions are reached in light of the re-evaluation process, the fundamental objective of SPHERE-Québec will remain the same: to serve disabled people in Québec to the best of its knowledge, its competencies, and its ability to respond to real needs.

Inclusion through employment – one person at a time.

Acknowledgements

At the end of this first fiscal year, SPHERE-Québec would like to thank its partners with the Services spécialisés de main-d'œuvre for their daily involvement and cooperation in the accompaniment of people with disabilities who participated in the activities in 2005-2006.

We would also like to thank our partners from the regional employment task forces: representatives of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, associations for disabled people, employers, and unions, and the various government organizations that are involved. Their support has been invaluable to the success of initiatives launched across Québec.

SPHERE-Québec would also like to acknowledge the dedication of the members of its Board of Directors, and to thank them for their unwavering commitment to disabled people in Québec.

Finally, we would like to thank Human Resources and Social Development Canada for the confidence that it has shown in SPHERE-Québec, and for the financial contribution that facilitated the realization of projects aimed at ensuring the advancement of a society in which every citizen has the opportunity to move forward according to his or her dreams, competencies, and potential.