

Police, prosecutors crack down on wife-beating

By CHARLIE FIDELMAN
of The Gazette

Starting Monday, police and Crown prosecutors, with the help of several social services, begin a crackdown on wife-beaters in line with provincial government policy.

Montreal Urban Community police will investigate all complaints of domestic violence, verbal or physical, whether calls are placed by a family member or a neighbor, Alain St. Germain, police director of operations, said yesterday.

And court officials will try to persuade reluctant women to testify against aggressors and speed up proceedings by setting trial dates as early as possible.

"We have some advice for wife-beaters," St. Germain said, "that the police will deal with the situation differently now. The police will arrest, even in a private house."

Investigations are to include a written report on each case which will be placed in a police computer. Crown prosecutors, social workers and social-service agencies will have access to the information.

"The first goal is to have better intervention in those situations," St. Germain said. "Analysis will follow later."

A directive from Justice Minister Herbert Marx, which came into effect last March, empowered police to arrest without a warrant men they suspect of injuring or threatening to

injure their families, even if women do not want to lay charges.

The police will also be responsible for informing both aggressor and victim of available social services where they may receive help.

Starting Sept. 1, all police officers will receive four-hour courses on family violence and the services available to violence-torn couples. "They will also be taught about the law that permits arrest in a private domicile," St. Germain said.

The effect of the new policy will be to reduce the incidence of family violence, he said.

"Everybody is more sensitive to the problem. We are working with social workers, women's shelters, prosecutors and an organization

which rehabilitates men."

More than 300 calls on domestic violence were received in a two-week study done last month at an MUC police station St. Germain refused to name.

In the previous two weeks, only eight calls were noted.

The number of calls has not increased, St. Germain said. "The new policy is to write a report each time the police are called."

St. Germain said the extra work produced by the new policy should not pose any difficulties.

But the Crown prosecutor in charge of the criminal team at Montreal's municipal court said the courts will be swamped with cases this year.

"There will be at least 50 per cent more cases in court," said Laurent-Claude Laliberté. "I really think we need more Crown prosecutors and judges to handle these cases. Otherwise there will be a backlog."

More than 1,000 charges were laid last year, Laliberté said, and he expects more than 1,500 this year.

Under the new policy, complainants will be persuaded to testify instead of being allowed to withdraw charges because of fear of reprisals, Laliberté said.

"We try to explain to her that it is her duty to do so," Laliberté said. "After that, we arrange a meeting with a social worker to try to persuade her to testify."

"But if the woman does not testify

there is little the courts can do." Crown prosecutors will proceed if evidence is available from other sources.

Trial dates will be set in six to 20 days from first appearance except in serious cases involving bodily harm. They will be set in less than 10 days, Laliberté said.

Elizabeth Harper of the Assistance aux Femmes women's shelter said the policy throws new light on family violence.

"It is treated as a crime which could happen on the street rather than as a simple dispute where nothing is done," she said.

The new policy is a positive start, Harper said, but its effects will not be felt for about a year.

Lawyer asks Marx to drop latest abortion charge

Quebec Justice Minister Herbert Marx has been asked to drop a charge of performing an illegal abortion against a Montreal doctor.

Jean-Claude Hébert, lawyer for Dr. Yvan Machabée, said yesterday he has written to Marx asking him to drop the case because it is redundant while the issue is before the Supreme Court of Canada.

"A judicial battle is useless while the (Dr. Henry) Morgentaler case is before the Supreme Court of Canada," Hébert said after Machabée was arraigned in Sessions Court.

An Ontario jury acquitted Morgentaler of performing an illegal abortion in 1984, but the Ontario Court of Appeal ordered a new trial and Morgentaler wants the Supreme Court of Canada to overturn that ruling. Three Quebec juries in the 1970s acquitted Morgentaler of abortion charges.

Machabée is accused of performing an abortion Nov. 5, 1982. A preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 9.

Hébert told a news conference the case is simply a waste of taxpayers' money and court time.

The complaint against Machabée was brought by Reggie Chartrand, a former boxer and well-known anti-abortion activist.

Chartrand, invited to the same news conference, said it is time for a new test of the law's strength. He failed in a bid last year to have a new set of charges filed against Morgentaler.

Earlier this month, anti-abortion groups in the Saguenay region succeeded in filing charges against Dr. Jean-Denis Bérubé, a practitioner in a community clinic. Bérubé faces a



Find another way to make use of Mirabel: businessmen

By ELIZABETH THOMPSON
of The Gazette

Consolidate air passenger traffic at Dorval airport and mothball Mirabel until another use for it is found, Montreal's two largest business groups urged yesterday.

In a 43-page study, the Montreal Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce said the other use could be a specialized industrial park with plants having direct access to the runways.

Similar parks have been created in the United States on closed air force bases, the study said.

Mirabel could continue to handle cargo and would attract industries to the area, the report said.

"An airport industrial park could lead to several thousand jobs on the Mirabel site and could be the launching pad for the economic development of the region, much more than the present airport."

The study suggested a special development fund could be started, including contributions from municipalities that stand to benefit from consolidation at Dorval.

But the federal government should consolidate passenger traffic at Dorval as soon as possible and, if necessary, mothball Mirabel until the industrial park can be set up.

At a news conference yesterday to unveil the study, Board of Trade president Manon Vennat described the