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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME VII - No. I - September 2005

Jumping Through Hoops

By Mona Greenbaum – Coordinator, Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec

Things have become a lot easier for lesbians who want to start a family. Back in 1998 when the Lesbian Mothers Association first started up, there were no laws that supported or recognized our families. There was also very little social recognition.

For those who wanted to get pregnant through fertility clinics things were even tougher. Many women called me with horror stories about the infamous “Dr M.” who many of us saw because he was the only doctor doing inseminations for lesbians. Although a few of us did succeed in getting pregnant with his somewhat questionable techniques (he once kept a thawed sperm sample of ours under fluorescent lighting for 45 minutes while he slipped out to run an errand), the large majority left frustrated and still not pregnant.

Then we discovered a few doctors who would order sperm for us and let us do the inseminations at home (this is now illegal). Because of this and the large fees associated with shipping sperm from various parts of the continent, my partner and I started up our own “household” sperm bank. No, we didn’t screen donors or put up ads to recruit handsome and educated men, but we did rent two large liquid nitrogen tanks and helped a bunch of families by storing their sperm (which they could order in bigger shipments and so save on shipping fees and hassles with Canada Customs).

It’s hilarious in retrospect, but at the time, having sleepy lesbians ringing our doorbell at 5 a.m. on any day of the week, so that their partners could inseminate before going to work, wasn’t the most convenient solution.

That’s why I still get a little thrill, whenever I am asked, to be able to reel off the names and phone numbers of Montreal’s three fertility clinics that serve lesbians. The fact that we still can’t access those public hospital clinics is annoying, but tolerable.

For this reason I feel myself getting increasingly infuriated these days with each story I hear about how hard it is if you want to start your family through adoption. Sometimes it just feels like one step forward and two steps back...

Our hopes were raised in 2002 when Quebec adopted the Civil Union Bill. Many, especially those in the press, referred to the law as the one that gave gays and lesbians the “right to adopt”.

But what really happened?

For those of us who were having kids through pregnancies the new law definitely helped. With the law we could establish our parental rights and responsibilities through something as simple as a birth certificate...who could ask for more? But that really had very little to do with adoption.

Adoption by out-of-the-closet gays and lesbians was never illegal in Quebec in the first place. You just couldn’t do it as a couple and then both get the legal rights and responsibilities. The new law, in theory, allowed same-sex couples to apply together to adopt a Quebec-born child (domestic adoption). *Batshaw Youth and Family Services*, the organization that oversees adoptions by Anglophone Montrealers had an open policy towards

gays and lesbians long before the civil union bill was even a spark in anyone's imagination. One of our very first members had legal custody of 3 children back in 1998 through Batshaw's mixed bank (fostering with a view towards adoption). Her sexual orientation was never a secret. The 2002 law simply made it possible for a second parent of the same-sex to be legally recognized as well.

On the French side, the *Direction de la protection de la jeunesse* (DPJ) showed a greater resistance. My partner and I know about the lack of sensitization of their caseworkers because one of them evaluated us when we asked the Quebec government (through its involvement in our family court case) to recognize my partner as the 2nd legal parent of our boys. The caseworker "investigated," and we were asked hundreds of questions (from banal to outright homophobic). Then in her final report she deemed my partner okay because she was seemingly, for all intents and purposes, just a regular dad (!), with the misfortune of having been born with the wrong body parts!

As coordinator of the group I have had a large enough number of calls from people complaining about the DPJ in order to draw the conclusion, independent of our own experiences, that there is really something going wrong down there.

And in case there was any doubt, Montreal's DPJ's spokesperson, Monique Marchand, actually came out with a public statement about our families:

« The Youth Protection Services of Montreal is looking for the best possible environment for children. But we live in a society that considers that the best family is the traditional family : dad, mom and kids. We are not yet living in a society that considers a family with same-sex parents to be a part of the norm. The Youth Protection Services of Montreal conforms, for the most part, to this social norm. »¹

It is already quite complicated to adopt babies in Quebec. Even for heterosexuals. My friend Sym who's a lawyer for Batshaw tells me that this is due to a combination of Quebec laws and philosophies, which make the situation very much different here from that in Ontario. There have been a few lesbian and gay couples and individuals who have succeeded and they continue to say, regardless of their success, that the DPJ desperately needs to be sensitized about same-sex parents.

Because of this, many people who want to start a family turn to the *Secretariat à l'adoption internationale* (SAI) when they think about adopting. The SAI has a list of countries that it provides to prospective parents. There is not one country in this list that permits gays and lesbians to adopt. This of course is not the fault of the SAI. These countries have discriminatory laws and practices and there is no way, short of concealing our own identities, that we can succeed.

In recent years as the fight for LGBT rights in Canada has become increasingly mediatised, some of these countries have even gone further, by demanding that potential applicants sign a paper saying that they are not gay or lesbian. Other countries will only take married heterosexuals.

Some interesting possibilities have come to light in the past year though. First, we got wind that there was an American agency in California, run by gay men that actually recruited gay and lesbian prospective parents and that Ontarian gays and lesbians were using their services. Some of our members are google fanatics and with their help I tracked down over 60 American agencies that accept gay and lesbian applicants. Some of them are as nearby as Vermont.

¹ [Monique Marchand, the social worker that oversees requests for adoption at the Montreal Youth Protection Services – from an interview on same-sex parenting by Mikaelle Monfort in the *Voix du village*, January 2005]

Unfortunately, the SAI only deals with one American agency, *Small World*, and this agency accepts only heterosexual couples. We are wondering if this in itself is not a basis for a human rights complaint or charter challenge, given the otherwise completely non-discriminatory situation for lesbian and gay parents in Quebec.

There seems to be the possibility however to deal with both US and overseas agencies that are not on the "official" SAI list, as well as adopting from other provinces in Canada, but the procedures for this are not clearly stated. The SAI has the power to allow or block these kinds of adoptions, but we don't know the necessary criteria. Many have given the impression that regardless of publicly stated policy our fate lies in the hands of a few individuals and their personal opinions.

Enough people have spoken to me about these issues that we were able to organize two meetings on this subject with about 40 interested individuals. At the end of the last meeting we decided that it would be interesting to find out more about our possibilities from a specialist in international adoption. If you have questions that you would like to pose, we are gathering a list to submit to the lawyer in advance. Please see the attached flier for more information on this important and informative meeting.

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

News Briefs - June-September 2005

Montreal and Quebec News

June, 2005 - Montreal's 2006 *OutGames*, has announced that Québécois icon Diane Dufresne and Montreal's *Cirque du Soleil* are confirmed for its opening ceremonies.

And, for the first time a gay sporting event will be televised around the world. Canada's French language *Radio Canada* has bought the broadcast rights for an undisclosed amount. It will show the opening ceremonies live on Radio Canada across the country and internationally on RDI its international service. The broadcast will be produced by Sogestalt Television with internationally acclaimed producer Guy Latraverse at the helm. Latraverse insists he will also sign international entertainers for the opening ceremonies.

The Opening and Closing Ceremonies will take place at the Olympic Stadium. The *OutGames* will be held from July 26 to August 5, 2006.

June 19, 2005 *Hour /365 Gay.com* (Quebec City) Promising to achieve Quebec sovereignty, former Parti Québécois cabinet minister Andre Boisclair announced he is running for the party's top job.

"Together, we will make Quebec a country that will be known for its social values, its French character, its diversity and its creativity," he told a news conference. Boisclair, 39, said he wants to devote much of his energy to bringing sovereigntists of all ages together to build a new country.

Boisclair, who is openly gay, was asked if he would face any homophobia in his run for the party's leadership.

"I've had the great privilege of growing up in a society of openness and tolerance in Quebec," he replied. "I'm proud of who I am.

Boisclair had been a closeted gay politician for many years. Finally in 2000 he came out to the revue *Voir*.

"For me, coming out is a false debate," Boisclair told *Voir*. "If coming out of the closet means being at peace with your family, friends and colleagues, I did it a long time ago. Besides, I refuse to wear labels imposed on me by others. Liberty also means the freedom to make one's own choices. I will not allow anyone to define my

identity or group I belong to. I associate with my friends, my family and Quebec. Not with the gay community. I have never chosen to live in the [gay] community. And I'm not about to begin today."

June 16, 2005 *Hour/La Presse* (Montreal) *Divers/Cité* got bashed by Quebec City and the federal government. On the eve of the Pride festival's June 16 press conference, Tourism Quebec cut their promised funding in half to \$50,000. A week earlier, Heritage Canada withdrew its \$60,000 grant, slashing *Divers/Cité's* \$1.5-million budget.

Divers/Cité head Suzanne Girard bashed back at the press conference, singling out Heritage Canada's charge that *Divers/Cité* is not an "artistic presenter."

"I don't believe this excuse is the truth," Girard said. Since 2000, *Divers/Cité* has presented free outdoor concerts by Diane Dufresne, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Samantha Fox, Nanette Workman, Martha Wash, Patsy Gallant, Ashley Maclsaac and Joey Arias. Performers this year include Lila Downs, RuPaul and Carole Pope.

Girard also points out that *Divers/Cité* draws tens of thousands of tourists annually, who generate millions in economic spinoffs in the region each summer, and *Divers/Cité* has won three prestigious tourism awards. So she gets angry when reminded that Heritage Canada quipped to *La Presse*, "Well, [*Divers/Cité*] can always apply next year."

Worse, while Tourism Quebec paid for a big-bucks Montreal gay tourism ad in the current issue of the American glossy *Out Magazine*, Girard quips, "[They also] told us all along that our funding would not be cut. Now they're giving money to new festivals, or festivals who have not proven themselves."

July 15, 2005 - *365Gay.com* (Ottawa) A Canadian cardinal Marc Cardinal Ouellet - from Quebec City - who had been considered a possible successor to Pope John Paul says that the children of married same-sex couples cannot be baptized in the Catholic Church.

Testifying at a Senate committee hearing into the same-sex marriage bill said that the Conference of Catholic Bishops has decided that if both parents want to sign the certificate of baptism the church will not allow the blessing to take place. Ouellet said that the decision is one of several that have arisen in the Church as a result of same-sex marriage.

"If I take the example of the ceremony of baptism, according to our canon law, we cannot accept the signatures of two fathers or two mothers as parents of an infant," Cardinal Ouellet told the committee.

"With a law that makes these unions official, situations of this will multiply and this threatens to disturb not just the use of our territory, but also our archives and other aspects of the life of our communities."

The cardinal also said that same-sex marriage threatens religious freedom. He told the committee that priests no longer feel comfortable preaching the morality of their own church for fear of being branded homophobes.

"There's a climate taking shape where we don't dare say what we think anymore or we don't dare teach," he said. "Even in the pulpit we feel threatened in teaching the church's sexual morality. ... That's also part of religious freedom."

But Ouellet also said that he believed it would be wrong to do as some church leaders have recommended - excommunicate or refuse communion to proponents of same-sex marriage, abortion or any other violation of church doctrine.

Despite Ouellet's remarks the committee approved the legislation (see marriage section).

Canadian News

June 28, 2005 (Ottawa) Canada's lower house passed legislation allowing same-sex couples to marry in those regions of the country where courts have not already ruled it legal. Same-sex marriage was already legal in 8 of Canada's 10 provinces and one of the three territories. It is now legal throughout the country.

The measure passed 158 to 133. Gays and lesbians who packed the gallery for the vote applauded and cheered when the vote result was announced.

During the final hours of debate on the bill Conservative MP Dave Chatters of Alberta asked, "What will be the next step down the infamous slope? Will it be legalizing polygamy? Legalizing prostitution? Legalizing hard drugs or maybe just working for organized crime to import strippers and drugs? God only knows, Mr. Speaker."

For the Liberals it was about equal rights for all Canadians.

"We are a nation of minorities," Prime Minister Martin told the House. "And in a nation of minorities, it is important that you don't cherry-pick rights. A right is a right and that is what this vote tonight is all about."

Following the vote jubilant gays said that first time they were full citizens.

The Conservatives who had fought the measure since it was first announced by Martin's predecessor Jean Chretien two years ago had sought to delay passage, putting up a long list of speakers and amendments. That failed on the morning of the vote when the government and the two smaller opposition parties - the New Democrats and the Bloc Quebecois - supported cloture and forced the vote.

But, the Tories say they aren't finished with same-sex marriage. The party intends to use it as an issue in the next federal election - expected early in 2006. And, if they are elected, Conservative leader Stephen Harper told a news conference, they'll attempt to repeal the bill and end same-sex marriage altogether even if it means a constitutional fight. Harper said he would replace marriage for gays and lesbians with civil unions.

That attempt may be a long way off though. Recent polls show Conservative support falling and Liberals with a healthy majority. But, if Harper's Tories should get in they would have only one tool to get rid of same-sex marriage most constitutional experts agree: the Charter's notwithstanding clause, a constitutional escape hatch which no federal government has ever used.

"They're going to have to at least be honest with the people," said Justice Minister Irwin Cotler. "They're going to have to acknowledge that they want to override the (Charter of Rights), override constitutional-law decisions in nine jurisdictions in this country, override a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, override the rule of law in this country."

More than 3,000 couples have already wed in eight provinces and the Yukon where gay weddings are already allowed.

July 12, 2005 - *Globe and Mail (online)* (**Vancouver**) On their first wedding anniversary and the 34th anniversary of the day they first met, Peter and Murray Corren finally made it to the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal. But the activist couple, who first launched a human-rights complaint against the B.C. Ministry of Education six years ago, have to wait another year to get their case heard after an adjournment abruptly shut down the proceedings.

The Correns want the tribunal to rule that the provincial government has systemically discriminated against non-heterosexual parents and students in the school system by omitting any mention of gay, lesbian and transgendered relationships in school curriculums.

"We learn about histories and experiences of not only British and French people, but also aboriginal and women and marginalized groups like immigrants," said Murray Corren, an elementary-school teacher from Coquitlam. "Those issues are dealt with in the curriculum. The only omission is any history, any experience that the gay communities have had in the development of Canadian history."

The Correns say they also want to see awareness raised about homophobic bullying as part of the curriculum for students in kindergarten to Grade 7.

The couple have long struggled with the Surrey School Board and the Ministry of Education and are on the forefront of a decade-long legal battle to bring gay relationships and history into the school system. In a case that went to the Supreme Court of Canada, Murray Corren was involved in a suit against the Surrey School Board over its refusal to allow three books featuring same-sex families into kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms.

The hearing in front of the tribunal was supposed to last four weeks but an adjournment was called the first day after Ministry of Education lawyers raised the issue of the scope of the complaint.

"This has been an ongoing discussion for years," said Nitya Iyer, counsel for the ministry at the tribunal. "There is significant disagreement as to the scope of the complaint."

The Correns are asking for more inclusion in curriculum materials in all schools funded by the provincial government, including religious schools. The tribunal's decision could affect the curriculum at independent schools such as Montessori, Catholic, Jewish and Sikh schools, said Fred Herfst, executive-director of the Federation of Independent School Associations in British Columbia.

"The concern obviously is that 80 per cent of our schools are religious schools and the decision could impact on the ability of the schools to carry on their religious instructions," Mr. Herfst said.

Fewer than 35 of the 350 private schools in B.C. are completely independently funded, with the remainder getting between 35 to 50 per cent of funding through the ministry. Ten per cent of the total student population is enrolled in private schools. Ministry of Education spokeswoman Corinna Filion said that any private school that receives funding from the provincial government must follow the Ministry of Education curriculum.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

(Skip over this section if you've had enough on marriage)

Please note: In the United States the marriage debate has gone completely out of control!!! There are initiatives for and against marriage in almost every state. Because of this it would be impossible to cover it all in the context of a newsletter. An excellent coverage of the news in the States, however, is available on the web site of the *Human Rights Campaign* in their marriage center: www.hrc.org/marriage/

A well-organized table of the state-by-state progress can be found if you click on "States with Anti-Gay marriage laws" within this site.

We will still continue to cover general American stories related to the debate.

May 17 (Massachusetts) More than 6,200 couples celebrate their first Anniversary a year after Massachusetts made same-sex marriage legal.

May 17 (Ottawa) Canada's same-sex marriage bill comes a little closer to reality with the surprise defection of Conservative MP Belinda Stronach to the struggling Liberals. The development boosts the government's chance of surviving a crucial confidence motion. Stronach, blames Tory Leader Stephen Harper for her defection. She had been at odds with Harper for weeks over his opposition to same-sex marriage and for pushing to topple the government.

May 19 (Ottawa) In a vote that has gays and lesbians along with members of Parliament on the edges of their chairs, the government of Liberal leader Paul Martin survives a confidence vote. The vote, on a budget bill, is won when the Speaker casts a tie breaking vote.

May 22 (Rome) A group of same-sex couples stages a symbolic marriage ceremony only blocks from the Vatican.

May 23 (Washington) The American Psychiatric Association's general assembly votes overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution supporting marriage for same-sex couples.

May 24 (Yellowknife) A gay couple in Canada's far north files suit accusing the **Northwest Territories** of violating Canada's Charter rights for refusing to grant them a marriage license. The Northwest Territories' justice minister Brendan Bell says his department is going to step aside and not interfere with the gay couple's lawsuit for the right to get married.

May 30 (Ottawa) The same-sex committee resumes hearings, with the likely prospect that the sessions will quickly bog down in a trench war over timetables and witness scheduling. Conservative MP Vic Toews says in an interview he fears the other parties, all supporting the legislation, want to ram the bill so quickly through the committee he will be unable to have amendments even reach debate stage.

MP's finally agree to Mr. Toews' request to increase the number of witnesses from 41 to over 60, adding another 22 anti-equality witnesses, mostly from the religious right. In exchange, Mr. Toews and the other Conservatives on the Committee agree the Bill will finish in Committee and be reported back to the House on June 16 for the final third reading stage.

Mr. Toews says he will push for amendments that would, for example, ensure that churches do not lose their charitable status if they refuse to perform same-sex marriages. Such amendments would simply restate protections already conferred by the Charter of Rights.

June 3 (Sacramento) The **California** Assembly passes up a chance to make history. The Assembly narrowly defeats a bill that would have legalized gay marriage in the state. The measure loses by a slim four votes in the 80 seat Assembly. The loss leaves Massachusetts as the only place in the US where same-sex couples can wed.

June 6 (Vatican City) In talking about marriage equality the Pope references "pseudo-matrimonies" and says, "Matrimony and the family are not, in reality, a casual sociological construction or the fruit of specific historic and economic situations."

June 6 (Ottawa) A member of the teetering Liberal government resigns saying that he is fed up with Martin's support for same-sex marriage. Pat O'Brien, who represents southwestern Ontario in Parliament, says that he will sit as an Independent.

June 7 (Ottawa) Prime Minister Paul Martin prevails over a revolt by a small group of Liberal MP's who threaten to vote against the government's budget and plunge the country into an election. The group, nearly a dozen strong, opposes the government's same-sex marriage bill. Martin already has said that all Liberal MPs except for cabinet ministers will have a free vote on the marriage bill.

June 14 (Halifax, Nova Scotia) News surfaces of a gay couple marrying at Canadian Forces Base Greenwood in what is believed to be the first gay wedding on any military base in North America. The wedding was held May 3 with about 45 guests attending.

June 15 (Ottawa) The Conservatives offer to let the federal government quickly pass a \$4.6-billion budget bill in exchange for a delay in same-sex marriage legislation. The Tories had protested against C-48, the government's \$4.6-billion budget deal with the NDP.

June 19 (Madrid) Thousands of people heed a call from the Roman Catholic Church and demonstrate against same-sex marriage in Madrid. Church officials say that nearly 2 million people attended the rally but police put the count at closer to 150,000. The rally was organized by the Church and the conservative opposition Popular Party.

June 20 (Ottawa) Canada's minority Liberal government serves notice it will ask MPs to extend Parliament's sitting indefinitely, which could bring same-sex marriage legislation to a vote. Liberal House leader Tony Valeri gives notice of a votable motion to extend the Commons sitting beyond the scheduled June 23 recess.

June 21 (Madrid) The **Spanish** Senate begins debate on the government's legislation to legalize same-sex marriage after the leader of the country's conservative opposition party delivers an apology for remarks made the day before by one of its own witnesses at a committee hearing.

The President of the Popular Party says his party regrets remarks made by Aquilino Polaino, a psychology professor at Madrid's Catholic university, who told the Senate committee that homosexuality was a "disease" and that gay adoption would turn children gay.

June 23 (Ottawa) The government had been facing a non-confidence vote on an upcoming budget bill. But Thursday night the party realizes that many Conservatives are not in House of Commons having opted to start their weekend early. The Liberals quickly use an old and seldom used law to force an immediate vote and pass the budget bill. Had the bill been defeated Canada would have been plunged into an election and the same-sex marriage bill would have died.

June 23 (Fredericton) Canada's Maritime province of **New Brunswick** becomes the latest region where the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman has been struck down. In a written ruling Judge Judy Clendenning rules in favor of four same-sex couples seeking the right to marry.

The ruling leaves only two provinces - Prince Edward Island and Alberta - and two territories - Nunavut and The Northwest Territories - where same-sex couples cannot marry.

June 25 (Ottawa) As Canada's parliament prepares to vote on a federal marriage bill the country's largest union urges its members to lobby their MPs in favor of equal marriage. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) sends out an urgent appeal to its 540,000 members to contact their MPs to immediately pass Bill C-38 before Parliament stands down for the summer recess.

CUPE was the first union in Canada to establish a gay and lesbian committee, and was among the first to enshrine transgender rights in its own constitution.

June 28 (Ottawa) Canada's lower house passes legislation allowing same-sex couples to marry in those regions of the country where courts have not already ruled it legal. The measure passes 158 to 133.

June 29 (Edmonton) With passage of same-sex marriage legislation in Ottawa, **Alberta's** Conservative provincial government talks about its next move. Ted Morton, a Calgary Tory figures there are two options: In the short term, take the province out of the marriage business altogether, and in the long term, seek a constitutional amendment that would effectively kill C-38.

June 29 (Madrid) A Catholic lay group opposed to gay marriage presents lawmakers with a petition bearing 600,000 signatures, a day before Parliament is expected to legalize same-sex unions in **Spain**.

June 30 (Madrid) Parliament legalizes gay marriage, making **Spain** the third country in the world to officially recognize same-sex unions. The other two are the Netherlands and Belgium.

The measure passes the 350-seat Congress of Deputies by a vote of 187-147 with four abstentions. The bill, part of the ruling Socialists' aggressive agenda for social reform, also lets gay couples adopt children and inherit each others' property. An official of the ruling Socialist party, which sponsored the law, says the party will now seek legislation to protect Spain's estimated 8,000 transsexuals.

July 2 (Massachusetts) Provincetown passes a gay milestone - granting the 1000th marriage license to a same-sex couple.

July 4 (Ottawa) Canada's Senate begins debate on the government's same-sex marriage bill. The bill is expected to encounter little difficulty in the Senate where the governing Liberals have a large majority.

July 7 Members of the **Ugandan** Parliament vote to amend the constitution to forbid same-sex couples from marrying and to impose criminal fines on such couples who do wed.

July 9 - Canada's smallest province, **Prince Edward Island**, becomes the ninth province to acknowledge same-sex marriage - leaving only the province of Alberta and two northern territories waiting for a bill before parliament requiring them to issue marriage licenses to gay couples.

July 12 - The American cruise ship Norwegian Dawn sails into **Halifax** harbor - on board 2,200 gays, lesbians and their families - to take part in what is being described as a gay wedding blitz.

The Canadian Tourism Commission is spending \$250,000 this year to entice gays and lesbians from New York, California and south Florida to Canada.

July 13 (Johannesburg) South African same-sex couples anxiously await a court ruling that could make the country the fifth in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. The Constitutional Court heard arguments for and against same-sex marriage in May and a decision could come at any time. The case was brought by Marie Fourie and Cecilia Bonhuys, who have been partners since 1994 but are unable to marry.

July 14 - A **Regina** marriage commissioner says he is facing a **Saskatchewan** Human Rights Commission complaint after refusing to perform a same-sex marriage. But Orville Nichols - a marriage commissioner for the past 23 years who has registered a complaint before the human rights commission over being forced to perform gay and lesbian wedding ceremonies - says he'll go to a higher court to keep his marriage commissioner's licence.

July 14 (Athens) Greece's leftist party commits itself to support same-sex marriage. The government of Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis is opposed to same-sex marriage. Gay wedlock is also opposed by the Orthodox Church, the state religion in Greece, which wields considerable power.

July 18 (Ottawa) A poll conducted for *The Globe & Mail* newspaper and the CTV television network, shows that 55 percent of Canadians surveyed say the next government should let same-sex legislation stand. Only 39 percent say they would like to see an attempt made to repeal it. A further 6 per cent say they do not know.

July 19 (Ottawa) The Liberals say they will need to invoke time allocation - called cloture - to keep the debate from dragging on interminably. The move to impose cloture will also signal the end of one of Canada's longest-running social debates. The Liberal government already invoked cloture on C-38 in the House of Commons and for a second-reading vote in the Senate earlier in the month. The bill passed second reading in the upper House by 43 to 12. A similar result is expected in the final vote.

July 19 (Ottawa) One of the most raucous debates in Canadian history results in a late-night vote that makes Canada the fourth country to sanction same-sex marriage. The Third Reading of C-38 passes without amendment.

The final word in the debate comes from Lone Christensen, the 71-year-old Liberal senator from the Yukon. To a hushed chamber Christensen reads an e-mail from a constituent.

"You have no idea what a difference it makes to the human spirit to know that you are treated equally under the law," the e-mail says.

With that, members of the upper chamber are called in for a three-minute vote that comes after about three years of political and legal battles. The 47-21 vote comes after years of court battles and debate that divided families, religious groups and even political allies. When the vote is tallied the chamber erupts in a loud cheer.

July 20 (Ottawa) The equal marriage bill receives Royal Assent and is proclaimed into law making Canada the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage.

July 22 (Brussels) The **Belgian** government says that 2,442 same-sex couples have wed since gay marriage became legal in 2003. Belgium became the second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage on September 1, 2003.

July 23 (Charlottetown) Prince Edward Island, is dragging its heels in implementing Canada's new same-sex marriage law. Mildred Dover, the province's attorney general, says that the province is not opposing the law but will not issue licenses to same-sex couples until it has amended all of its provincial laws pertaining to marriage. That could take months.

Alberta, which was expected to go kicking and screaming to the altar, barely let out a whimper once the federal bill was passed. Within hours of the legislation being passed into law the first gay couple to apply were given a marriage license.

July 27 - Two Alberta women became the first lesbians to be married in the staunchly conservative province.

August 13 (Sydney, Australia) A protest rally with about 3000 people attending is organised for the Same Sex Marriage National Day of Action

International News

May 25 - *New York Times/ PlanetOut* - The **American** Food And Drug Administration has implemented rules recommending that any man who has engaged in homosexual sex in the previous five years be barred from serving as an anonymous sperm donor. The FDA rejected calls to scrap the provision, insisting that gay men collectively pose a higher-than-average risk of carrying the AIDS virus. Critics accuse the FDA of stigmatizing all gay men rather than adopting a screening process that focuses on high-risk sexual behavior by any would-be donor, gay or straight.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2005/05/05/1>

June 10 - *365Gay.com (Edinburgh)* The **Scottish** government has announced that it will recognize the rights of both partners in same-sex relationships to be co-parents of their children. The government said it would overhaul the adoption law to give both partners legal rights and responsibilities.

Although it is already legal for gays to adopt, partners were often left out in the cold, and often children born to lesbians through in vitro fertilization were not recognized as the legal kids of partners. The changes will speed up the whole adoption process, said Euan Robson, the deputy education minister. They follow a recent report to the government on the Scottish system by adoption experts who recommended that the barrier to gay adoption be dropped.

The law in England and Wales has already been changed.

June 24 - 365Gay.com (Beijing) Access has been restored to **China's** largest gay website following a damning international human rights report that accused the Communist government of preventing gays from getting information on HIV/AIDS and learning about safe-sex.

In addition to HIV/AIDS information, the site, *gaychinese.net*, also contains news and forums where Chinese gays often discuss problems of coming out. The site is on a server outside of the country but Chinese government censors blocked it from being viewed inside China. The government blocked access to the site in early April. Other LGBT sites continue to be blocked.

A Human Rights Watch report accused the Chinese government of routinely harassing and impeding the work of HIV/AIDS workers in the country. It cited China's notorious restrictions on the Internet which have hampered the delivery of urgently-needed AIDS information to high-risk groups, such as men who have sex with men.

The report is credited with a decision by the Chinese government to announce it would work with the World Health Organization to help educate the gay community in one of the worst areas of the country. The WHO said that a program targeting men who have sex with men will be set up Hunan within a year.

June 28 - 365Gay.com (Brussels) Pressure is mounting in the **European Union** for a formal vote censuring **Poland** for its treatment of gays and lesbians. The Green Party in the EU Parliament has issued a statement saying that **Poland** has "betrayed" a commitment, made when it joined Europe last year, to uphold the European Convention on Human Rights.

Earlier in June Polish gays implored the EU for help after the mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczynski, banned gay Pride celebrations and made a series of homophobic remarks. The Pride Parade went on despite the ban and some 2500 people marched through the streets.

A week later hundreds of people took to the streets in a counter march organized by an ultra right wing group. The show of force - called The Normal Parade - was organized by the militant Polish Youth, an offshoot of the ultra conservative Law and Justice Party of which the Warsaw mayor is a leading member. Kaczynski is running for President of Poland and polls show he has a good chance of winning.

Many fear that unless the EU intervenes Polish gays will be either driven out of the country or there will be mass arrests despite the 1997 Polish Constitution which guarantees the rights of minorities. The European Convention on Human Rights also specifically guarantees civil rights for gays.

July 8 -The first large-scale conference to address LGBT issues in Asia opened in **Bangkok, Thailand**, for three days of meetings, with more than 160 delegates.
Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2005/07/08/5>

July 22 - The **Massachusetts** governor's office has instructed hospitals to cross out the word "father" on birth certificates for children of same-sex parents and substitute "second parent," But municipal clerks, who register and store birth records, say the cross-outs could leave the documents open to challenges by passport agents, foreign governments and other officials.
Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2005/07/22/2>

July 25 - 365Gay.com (London) International indignation is rising over the hanging of two gay teens on July 19th by the **Iranian** government. Mahmoud Asgari, 16, and Ayaz Marhoni, 18, were publicly executed in the northern city of Mashhad. They said before their executions that they were not aware that homosexual acts were punishable by death. Under the Iranian penal code, girls as young as nine and boys as young as 15 can be hanged

Calls for Iran to be publicly rebuked for its treatment of gays has resounded from Washington to Moscow.

In Tehran, Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi condemned the execution and discounted the government's assertion that the two had raped younger boys. Ebadi, who runs the Center for the Protection of Human Rights in Tehran, said that the executions violated the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Iran is a signatory.

"My calls for a law clearly banning execution of under-18s has fallen on deaf ears so far but I will not give up the fight," Ebadi told the *Associated Press*.

Ebadi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, has campaigned to protect the rights of children and improve human rights in Iran but has met stiff resistance from the judiciary, which is controlled by hard-liners. According to Iranian human rights campaigners, over 4,000 lesbians and gay men have been executed since the Ayatollahs seized power in 1979.

July 12 -In a landmark ruling, a judge in **Brazil** cleared the way for a gay couple to adopt children. The couple is seeking to adopt a little girl between 2 and 4. It is believed the case is the first in Brazil where a gay couple has been allowed to jointly adopt a child.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2005/07/12/4>

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

September:

For adults only:

Wednesday September 21st at 7 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Doreen Brown, lawyer and international adoption expert.

As gays and lesbians do we need to be in the closet to adopt children? What countries are open to gays and lesbians as prospective parents? What are the procedures to adopt in Canada, the United States and Internationally? Are there other options? What are our rights? M^e Brown will be able to answer questions regarding international adoption for gays and lesbians.

Location: 6642A Christophe Colombe (metro Beaubien)

Please send Mona any questions you may have, in advance: info@aml-lma.org or 514-846-1543

October:

For adults only:

Saturday October 1st at 7 p.m.

Welcoming Party

A chance for old and new members of the group to get to know each other and catch up after summer holidays. We will meet on the **1st floor of Le Café Européen at 1560 Ste-Catherine Est (metro Beaudry) in the gay village**. You can get snacks or dinner at the restaurant next door.

For families:

Saturday October 22nd at 10:30 a.m.

Halloween Special: Railway Ghosts

Chills will run up and down the spines of young and old alike when they run into ghostly railway apparitions at the Canadian Train Museum – Exporail. Everyone is invited to attend in costume as we participate in this special event. Please bring your own lunch. There is a nice lunch room where we can eat together but no food is available at the museum.

For prices and directions please see the enclosed sheet.

November:

Saturday November 5th from 1-4 p.m.

Discussion Group: Joys and challenges for queer parents of colour and first nations and their children. Many of the concerns that affect LGBT people from various ethnocultural communities are amplified when they become parents. This informal discussion will be an opportunity to speak on our experiences as LGBT parents of colour and of first nations living in three worlds: the ethnic culture, the gay community and the dominant white culture. Please feel free to bring your kids along to this event. A play area and activities will be available to keep them busy.

Location: Centre Greene, 1090 Greene Ave (Metro Atwater, Greene Avenue is a few blocks west of Atwater. The centre is south of René Levesque)

BULLETIN BOARD:

- ◆ Single Moms everywhere: Come out, come out wherever you are. Let's get together and just discuss baby issues, single mom issues, and anything and everything else. Something light and informal. Of course, with our babies... If interested, please email shariann@sympatico.ca or call Shari Ann at (514) 482-6533. Perhaps a few of us can get together at my house or anyone else's home... Hoping to hear from at least one mom.
- ◆ Mère et fille de 9 ans cherche mère et enfant du même âge (fille de préférence) pour faire des sorties, activités, etc. Écrire à: mjlegault@arobas.net
- ◆ Café-Causerie Aux Fémin'Elles: L'Association lesbienne vous invite à ses cafés causeries le deuxième et le quatrième lundis du mois, de 19h à 21h30 à la salle d'atelier (au deuxième étage) de chez Loblaw's situé au 1155 Boul. Talbot à Chicoutimi. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adresse aux femmes lesbiennes qui désiraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un échange positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer ! Informations: 418-541-9065

MISCELLANEOUS

- ◆ **Traductrices, redactrices, etc:** We are looking for volunteers to help translate this newsletter from English to French. Any contribution (even 1-2 pages a month) would be appreciated. If you are available and willing, **please contact us at: info@aml-lma.org**
- ◆ **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres** is encouraging English speaking and bilingual lesbian couples, and singles, to consider becoming **foster parents**. There are babies, pre-schoolers and older children who are waiting for a foster home. For some the plan will be to help them return to their families. For other children, the plan will be to work toward **adoption**. What a remarkable feeling it is to know you have made a difference in the life of a child by providing a stable, safe and loving environment. For more information, please call, **Rena Rubin, Foster Care Recruiter, at 932-7161, local 416, or send an e-mail to rena_rubin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.**
- ◆ The **Open Book Library's** collection includes over 5500 books written by glbt authors or by authors who write about our communities. Some of these books are for children and adolescents. We are very proud that approximately half of our collection is in French. Much more information as well as online consultation of the book collection is available at our Web site www.ccglm.org/en-b. We are located at **2075 Plessis (CCGLM)** in the Village. Come visit us! Open Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-8 p.m. (514) 528-8424.

The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement in the next issue please send it to us at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8. If you have something to advertise, sell, rent or

buy...anything where money must change hands, you can place an ad in the newsletter. Ads cost 20 cents per word.

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Personalized books & CDs for all families: The text and illustrations change so that the hero looks like your child, with the same skin tone, eyes, hair colour, etc. Include yourself and your child's family & friends. All families can be represented. For children 8 & under. 15% of every order goes to AML when AML is mentioned. Visit www.printakid.com (English) or www.alphakid.com (French) or call 1-888-729-9696.