



Coalition des familles homoparentales

NEWSLETTER - VOLUME XI - No. IV – June 2010

Where are our Rights??

By Mona Greenbaum
Director LGBT Family Coalition

Sometimes I wonder if the fact that we receive 4 newspapers *chez nous* may be a sign of some undiagnosed masochistic tendency that we are sharing as a family. These days Nicole, Léo and I are moaning and groaning over a barrage of frustrating news about the latest doings of the Harper government. Meanwhile Simon, the only sane one of us all, happily devours the sports section, oblivious to it all. Not being a sports fan, I hope you don't mind me using this newsletter as a little therapeutic rant outlet...primal scream anyone?

Earlier this year, news about the Montreal-based organisation *Rights & Democracy* started to filter through. The story is quite complicated, too much for a short article, but it's been dramatic: suspensions, resignations, firings, infighting, a break-in, a theft and even a death by heart attack. Who needs Swedish murder mysteries?

In fact, *Rights & Democracy*, created under Brian Mulroney's Conservative government to encourage democracy and monitor human rights around the world, has been in turmoil since the Harper government appointed new board members last year. The new members challenged grants that the organization had previously awarded to three human rights organizations known to be critical of Israel's human rights record.

When three senior managers at the agency publicly declared their lack of confidence in the Conservative appointees they were suspended and then fired. Many rights organizations as well as opposition party politicians have accused the government of trying to sabotage the organization from within. The icing on the cake however, is the government's appointment of Gérard Latulippe as the new president of *Rights & Democracy*.

Latulippe, a former politician who ran for the Canadian Alliance party in 2000 is against gay marriage and in favour of capital punishment. He also once argued that the "*geographic concentration of more and more immigrants from Muslim countries*" undermined "*the proper functioning of Quebec society.*" He added that if Quebec failed to change the way it selected immigrants, it faced a significant threat: the "*unnecessary risk of fostering domestic terrorism.*"

Alexa Conradi, the president of the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* (FFQ), believes the crisis that is currently rocking *Rights and Democracy* is a crystal-clear sign of the erosion of democracy in Canada. "The time has come for the public to demand an end to the interference by federal Conservatives in this organization that spearheads human rights and democratic development in this country," Ms Conradi said.

Let's go on... a couple of weeks later: In no uncertain terms, Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon rules out any kind of family-planning programs being included in Canada's "signature" initiative at June's G8 summit - a strategy to improve the health of mothers and young children in poor countries. "It does not deal in any way,

shape or form with family planning. Indeed, the purpose of this is to be able to save lives," Mr. Cannon told the Foreign Affairs committee.

Hmmm... isn't there a bit of a contradiction here? Dorothy Shaw, an assistant dean of medicine at the University of British Columbia and spokeswoman for the *Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health*, said Canadian coalitions that include even conservative faith-based organizations, agree that family planning to time and space pregnancies is key to saving lives.

Maternal-health advocates worry that the government's desire to steer clear of the abortion issue - and therefore not upset part of its political base - is also pushing it to rule out all other family-planning programs, like distributing contraceptives. Oh goody! We seem to be following in the steps of Bush's "global gag law," which cut funding to organizations, like the *International Planned Parenthood Federation* that provide both family planning and abortion in developing countries.

Well, at least Hilary Clinton didn't mince words on the topic. At a Gatineau meeting of G8 foreign ministers Clinton said, "I'm not going to speak for what Canada decides, but I will say that I've worked in this area for many years, and if we're talking about maternal health, you cannot have maternal health without reproductive health. And reproductive health includes contraception and family planning and access to legal, safe abortion. We should be beyond arguing about family planning. Rich women in every culture have access to family planning. It's poor women who don't. And I've always believed if it's good enough for a woman of education and affluence, then why isn't it good enough for a woman who is struggling to raise the children she already has? So family planning, to me, should be just obvious and available."

But as our international reputation slides and slides the government would have us erase even past accomplishments. Did you know that Canada's new citizenship study guide for immigrants makes no mention of gay rights — because those sections were ordered removed by the citizenship minister?

Yes. Newly disclosed documents show that Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney asked that references to gay rights be deleted from the first draft version last June. Department officials came back in August, asking that the sections be re-inserted, but to no avail.

The guide that was released with fanfare last November makes no reference to gay rights. Early drafts of the guide, which new immigrants must study for citizenship tests as of March 15, included references to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 along with other gay-rights milestones. But those references were cut. A spokesman for Kenney said hard editorial choices had to be made so the guide did not become "encyclopedic".

Kenney was a vocal opponent of same-sex marriage back in 2005. Remember, he was the one who said: gays have every right to marry whoever they want -- as long as it isn't someone of the same sex. Yup.

And yet people from other countries still want to immigrate to Canada. Of course they do: everything is relative and when you come from a country where your political opinion or sexual orientation can put your life in danger, Canada *is* a safe haven. Unfortunately this safe haven may become harder to access.

Kenney has also tabled Bill C-11, which aims to reform the immigration and refugee system in order to fast track certain refugee claims and to make it faster to deport others. Sounds efficient.

But one of the hallmarks of this system is the designation of certain countries as "safe countries of origin," meaning that claimants who come from those countries will be dealt with in an expedited manner — and denied the ability to access the Refugee Appeals Division, the creation of which is a part of the reforms.

All three opposition parties noted that gays and lesbians being persecuted in otherwise democratic countries would be particularly vulnerable to the "safe countries of origin" provisions, because of their inability to access the proposed Refugee Appeals Division.

Kenney claims the measures are necessary to deal with the spike in claims from countries like Mexico and Hungary.

"The changes today are fast, but certainly not fair," says the NDP's immigration critic Olivia Chow. "A fast tracking of the entire process is necessary, but every refugee claimant must be treated equally. Prioritizing some countries over others is dangerous. Every person that faces persecution should be treated equally, no matter which country they came from, and they should have the same rights to law and regulations."

As an example, Chow says that Ghana is on the UK's safe list, but homosexuality is illegal in that country. Similarly, Mali is a democracy, and yet they practice genital mutilation.

"We can't assume a country is free from all forms of persecution just because it is democratic," Chow says.

The LGBT Family Coalition has submitted a brief for the public consultation regarding this draft legislation.

And in case all of this wasn't already stoking my already paranoid disposition, I just read in *La Presse* that the ultra-religious right wing lobby group *Canada Family Action Coalition* (CFAC), noted for its fierce opposition to homosexuality, abortion and the judges of the Supreme Court, met *privately* with Stephen Harper twice in the past two years to discuss their political priorities. *La Presse* also found out that the CFCA founder and director, Brian Rushfeldt, has had since 2008, six meetings with ministers and deputies of the Harper government as well as numerous political attachés. And these meetings seem somehow always to be followed by controversial measures coming out of Ottawa, witness the G8 meeting on women's health after a recent CFAC-Harper get-together. Not bad for a group that wasn't given even one meeting in 10 years under Chrétien's liberal government. I'm not so proud these days to be a Canadian.

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

News Briefs: March - May 2010

Montreal-Quebec News

May 11, 2010 - Homophobia, a hostility or fear of those who are attracted to people of the same sex, is very much present in high school when teenagers are becoming aware of their own sexual orientation. Researchers at the University of Quebec in Montreal who are interested in this problem presented their work at the ACFAS (l'Association francophone pour le savoir- French Association for Knowledge) convention that took place at the Université de Montréal.

Maryline Chevrier and her colleagues established that that 38.6% of students in their second year of high school, having responded to an extensive questionnaire, were victims of homophobic incidents at school in the past year. Of interest: only 8% of those affected identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual).

This high percentage underscores the impact of gender non-conformity at this age. Youth that are different

in the way they dress, their style or their interests are often presumed to be homosexual and thus become victims of homophobic discrimination. No less than 69% of those who did identify as LGBT were victims of at least one homophobic incident.

Results were obtained from a sample of 2757 students in 31 Quebec schools

Canada News

April 29, 2010 (Vancouver)(CP) Music teacher Lisa Reimer says she was fired from Little Flower Academy Catholic School for her sexual orientation, mere weeks after her partner gave birth to their son, Andrew.

The 34-year-old said she was dismissed after the school came under pressure from parents who didn't want their kids to be taught by a lesbian.

At a news conference, Reimer, the founder of Vancouver's Zing! Children's Choir, said she was fired because parents were afraid she would lead their daughters "astray." She said she was surprised by the sudden turn of events, as the administration had showed support when told of the pregnancy in December, and even offered her 15-days leave.

Little Flower Academy, meanwhile, denied the accusations. They said they were surprised by the claims that they insisted were inaccurate. They told Reimer that she would be paid out the remainder of her June 30 contract but would no longer be welcome on campus. She was told her classes would be cancelled and that she was to provide assignments to the kids electronically, which she was to mark and then send back.

The official word would be that she was on personal leave.

"All the families have been told I'm on a personal leave, which I am not," she said. "I feel like I've been fired with a payout to be quiet."

Reimer said she may file a human-rights complaint.

Gay Marriage News

March 9 2010 (Washington, D.C.) On the first day same-sex couples could marry in Washington, brides Angelisa Young and Sinjoyla Townsend are the first of three couples taking the plunge in morning ceremonies at the offices of the Human Rights Campaign, which does advocacy work on gay, lesbian and transgender issues. The District of Columbia is the sixth place in the U.S. permitting same-sex unions. Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont also issue same-sex couples licenses.

March 11 2010 (Buenos Aires, Argentina) A federal judge annuls the marriage of two gay men that took place in Buenos Aires a week earlier. The Argentine congress is currently considering two bills that would legalize marriage equality. Some polls have shown that up to 70 percent of Argentinians support gay marriage. The Argentine Supreme Court is also currently hearing two cases on gay marriage. The Justice Minister is on record as favoring a gender neutral marriage law, as is former president Nestor Kirchner.

March 12 2010 (Mexico City) Two glowing brides in matching white gowns and four other same-sex couples make history in Mexico City as they wed under Latin America's first law that explicitly approves gay marriage. For now the law applies only to residents of Mexico City, though a marriage performed in one state must be recognized in the rest of the country. The Archdiocese of Mexico accused the city government of approving a "perverse and immoral law."

March 29 2010 (London) Britain's Europe Minister Chris Bryant takes part in Parliament's first gay marriage, celebrating a civil partnership ceremony at the historic venue. Bryant, a member of the governing Labour Party, won permission to hold his civil partnership ceremony with partner Jared Cranney at the Palace of Westminster – home to the Houses of Parliament.

April 14 2010 - Iceland is hopping on the same-sex marriage bandwagon and could have marriage equality legal by June. Iceland, the liberal island nation of 320,000, is the first country to have a lesbian head of state, Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir. Sigurdardottir's administration sent a bill to Parliament in March outlining marriage equality rights. The bill is expected to pass soon and could be in place for same-sex marriages by June 27.

April 26 2010 - Finland's parliament is expected to approve gay marriage next year. A recent survey showed there is little political opposition to the notion of allowing same-sex couples to adopt. Currently, Finland has registered partnerships, similar to civil marriage, which allow parents joint custody of children and give immigration rights to foreign partners of same-sex spouses.

May 19 2010 (Blantyre, Malawi) A judge convicts a Malawi gay couple of unnatural acts and gross indecency after a trial that drew worldwide condemnation of this southern African country's colonial-era laws on homosexuality. The couple is sentenced to 14 years with hard labour.

Steven Monjeza, 26, and Tiwonge Chimbalanga, 20, have been jailed since their arrest Dec. 27, the day after they celebrated their engagement with a party that drew crowds of curious, jeering onlookers.

International News

March 3, 2010 (365 Gay.Com) The transgender community in **France** has won a small victory as the nation took transsexualism from the official list of mental disorders – the first nation in the world to make such a move.

According to *Time Magazine* the move is just the beginning. In practice, French transsexuals said, the move won't make much a difference with regard to medical and legal rights.

"It's a symbolic victory," said Georges-Louis Tin. He is president of the Paris-based IDAHO group, which fights homophobia and transphobia. "Transsexuals are no longer mentally ill. They're normal citizens. But we haven't yet reached the point where they're allowed to make their own decisions instead of depending on doctors and psychiatrists."

France's health care system does cover sex-change surgeries and treatments are covered by the state, but patients said they have little choice in selecting their doctor. Many cross the Belgian border, where doctors specialize in sex-change surgery, but where the cost is higher.

April 15th 2010 (New York Daily News) A lesbian teen barred from attending her prom because she is gay and hoped to bring a female date has been named a grand marshal of New York City's June 27 pride parade, organizers announce

Constance McMillen 18, gained national attention after she was barred from attending prom at her Fulton, **Mississippi** high school with her longtime girlfriend. The American Civil Liberties Union sued the school district on her behalf after school officials said she could attend the dance with a male date, or alone. A federal judge ruled that the school had violated McMillen's First Amendment rights.

She received a \$30,000 scholarship from Ellen Degeneres show after the talk show host said she admired McMillen for standing up for herself against her school district's prom policy.

The city's parade started in 1970, and is the nation's oldest gay pride parade.

April 13th 2010 (ILGA News) The number two in the **Vatican** hierarchy, the Pope's Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, claimed that there is a link between homosexuality and paedophilia. The LGBT movement worldwide has risen up against this false, despicable and anti-scientific statement from the Vatican, which is trying to deflect attention from priests' sex crimes by blaming LGBT people.

While they are trying to hide the truth about the abuses perpetrated against innocent children, by making absurd parallels between homosexuality and paedophilia, the International Gay and Lesbian Association and the Italian LGBT movement have launched an appeal to all citizens and associations all over the world to join a worldwide protest against child abuse and support for victims in front of the Vatican.

Miscellaneous News

April 9 2010 - Tennis great Martina Navratilova has announced that she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I cried. It knocked me on my ass, really. I feel so in control of my life and my body, and then this comes, and it's completely out of my hands."

In February, the 53 year old had a routine mammogram and it was discovered she had ductal carcinoma in situ—also called DCIS. The cancer is non-invasive and confined to her milk ducts—it had not spread to any breast tissue. In February Navratilova had a lumpectomy and next month begins six weeks of radiation therapy. From all accounts, as with most women who find out they have DCIS, Navratilova's future looks bright.

"The prognosis of someone with DCIS is excellent," Dr. Shelley Hwang told People Magazine. "There's only a one-percent chance of anyone with this diagnosis would die of breast cancer."

Navratilova admitted it had been four years since her last mammogram. For the women of the CFH If it has been awhile since your last mammogram, maybe it's time to get one.

**News from the LGBT Family Coalition
UPCOMING MEETINGS**

JUNE 2010:

☐ **SATURDAY JUNE 12TH at 11 a.m.**
PICNIC-BBQ at MOUNT ROYAL

The LGBT Family Coalition, would like to invite all LGBT family members with or without children, as well as all our allies and friends, to a **Community Picnic and Barbecue on Mount Royal**. Join us to relax and exchange with family and friends, at one of Montreal's beautiful landmarks. There will be food, music, sports and games. This activity will take place on **Saturday June 12th from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.** We will meet at the Chalet at Lac des Castors (Beaver Lake).

N.B. We will be selling our delicious LGBT Family Coalition BBQ Plate, as well as Cécile's magnificent punch (adults' and kids' versions). If you'd like you can also bring other food, music, games and/or a picnic blanket to share with others.

Directions to Beaver Lake: Orange Line metro to Mont Royal and 11 bus west.

For more information please call Mona at: 514-846-1543 or Gary 514-522-3497

JULY 2010:

☐ **SATURDAY July 10TH from 11 a.m – 3 p.m.**
A DAY AT THE BEACH – PARC JEAN-DRAPEAU

With its refreshing quality-A water at all times, many entertaining theme-based activities, and sports-friendly offerings such as beach volleyball, the **Parc Jean-Drapeau Beach** is located only a stone's throw away from downtown. France and Claudine will meet LGBT Family Coalition members at the rainbow umbrellas. Bring bathing suits, beach toys and lunch. A snack bar is also available on site. **For prices and directions please see the enclosed flier.**

AUGUST 2010 – PRIDE CELEBRATIONS:

☐ **SATURDAY AUGUST 14TH and SUNDAY AUGUST 15TH**
COMMUNITY DAY AND PRIDE PARADE

N.B.: The Pride Parade and Community Day have been scheduled for the weekend of August 14th and 15th. Please reserve this date in your calendars. We will give you an update on this in the weeks to come!

BULLETIN BOARD:

◆ **La Marg'Elle** est un groupe pour femmes homosexuelles et bisexuelles affilié à la Maison des Femmes des Bois-Francis. Briser l'isolement, favoriser l'échange, l'identification et l'affirmation de soi.

Info: margelleboisfrancis@hotmail.com

www.lamargelle.spaces.live.com

819-758-3384

♦ **Dorshei Emet B'nei Mitzvah Program:** Do you have children entering grade 6? We offer a meaningful program in which children discover the relevance of their Jewish heritage. Dorshei Emet is a welcoming Synagogue to individuals and families of all backgrounds, and to interfaith and LGBTQ families. **514-486-9400 (Alys Geiger)**, www.dorshei-emet, or drop in anytime to Saturday morning Shabbat services, 10h00 to 12h15, and stay for a light lunch and meet some of the members!

♦ **Le Centre des femmes de Rivière-des-Prairies! 514-648-1030** - Nous sommes ouvertes aux lesbiennes! Si vous avez besoin de plus d'informations vous pouvez consulter notre site web : www.cdfrdp.qc.ca ainsi que le site de notre regroupement : www.rcentres.qc.ca/propos.html

♦ **L'Écho des femmes de la Petite Patrie** est un centre de femmes qui offre des rencontres pour lesbiennes. Ces rencontres ont lieu les lundis soirs aux deux semaines de 19h00 à 21h30, et sont animées par une personne ressource. Ces rencontres, qui se veulent un lieu d'échange, de ressourcement et d'information, s'intéressent aux réalités et aux conditions de vie des lesbiennes. Les rencontres sont en français. Un service de halte-garderie est disponible avec réservation faite une semaine à l'avance. Le centre est situé au **6032 St-Hubert (métro Beaubien)**. Téléphone (514)277-7445, télécopieur (514)277-1689

MISCELLANEOUS

♦ **Traducteurs, rédacteurs, etc.:** Nous sommes à la recherche de bénévoles pour la traduction française de ce bulletin. Toute contribution (même à raison d'une page ou deux par mois) est la bienvenue. Si vous êtes disponible, veuillez nous contacter : info@familleshomoparentales.org

♦ **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres** is encouraging English speaking and bilingual gay and 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 LGBT 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 Kid Scoop: The all-in-one reference for kids activities.** www.kidscoop.com

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@familleshomoparentales.org or by post to CFH, 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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♦ **THERE IS NO FREEDOM WITHOUT FINANCIAL FREEDOM - LA LIBERTÉ PERSONNELLE PASSE PAR LA LIBERTÉ FINANCIÈRE.** Financial services for individuals and small businesses: budgeting, debt management, investments, future planning, personal taxes, wealth enhancement strategies. 20% of all subsequent fees will be donated to the CFH. **J. Freed**, (514) 489-8633, www.ifreed.ca

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♦ Photographe professionnelle pour mariages, maternité, portraits, familles. Membre de la CFH. Contactez-moi pour plus de renseignements. **Marie-Andrée Boivin 514-273-9658** marieandreeboivin@yahoo.ca
www.maphotographe.com

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