



NEWSLETTER - VOLUME XVI - No. IV – June 2015

LGBT Family Coalition Report Card

By Mona Greenbaum, executive director, LGBT Family Coalition

As the school year comes to an end, many of us, look forward in anticipation/trepidation to our children's report cards. Because the LGBT family Coalition's year is synchronized with the school year, I thought it would be a nice idea to let you know a bit about our group's 'report card' over this past year a.k.a. our *Annual Activity Report 2014-2015*.

This year marked the 17th year of our existence as a community organization, and our 7th as a mixed group. Throughout the year, our elected board oversaw the wellbeing of our organization. In terms of our staff, apart from myself, Rachel Benoit was with us for a 6-month period, on a part time basis, as a project development agent. She was an incredible asset to our organization, updating our workshops and professional resources.

We also benefitted from approximately 5500 hours of volunteer work from our members. Whether stuffing envelopes, assembling resource kits for teachers, coordinating family activities or giving presentations and workshops to professionals, the strength of our organization clearly lies with our membership.

In fact, in terms of our membership, we are probably the largest organization in the LGBT community in Quebec. As of March 31st 2015, almost 1400 LGBT families across the province were members of our organization. Because of our financial limitations we are only able to have truly active groups in Montreal (where our office is based) and Quebec City (thanks to our Quebec Coordinator Jeanne Lagabrielle, member Mona Belleau and our partnership with GRIS-Québec). But we do have an Outaouais contingent, with Bianca Nugent organizing, from time to time, some of our family activities in Outaouais (like our camping trip at Lac Simon). And last fall we were able to meet up with a core of LGBT parents and future parents in Gaspésie who seriously intend to start up a satellite for their region in the coming year!

We also keep in touch with the big LGBT Family Diaspora through our web site (with Amy Green as our web-mistress), our Facebook page (overseen by our co-president Émilie Jouvin), through this newsletter, and of course via our telephone line, which is open to calls during weekdays from 9am-5pm.

An important mandate of our group is to help future parents to start their families. In Quebec City we hold monthly workshops between January and May each year that are carried out by Jeanne Lagabrielle, Stéphane Ruel and Sophie Marcotte. In Montreal we carry out two weekend intensives for future LGBT parents, in the fall and in the spring, that are animated by myself, Gary Sutherland our co-president, and Rachel Benoit. We also have a number of LGBT parents who volunteer their time and connect with future parents by sharing their stories at these various workshops.

This year we also organized 28 family activities including camping trips, picnics, sugar shack parties, bowling, tobogganing, hockey games, baby massage workshops, Christmas and Halloween events and of course pride activities.

For the adults, we held a number of interesting conferences with subjects like family separation, surrogacy and gender-neutral parenting. We also held 3 well-attended talks specifically for trans parents and future parents.

One of the ways that we break down barriers regarding the social acceptance of our families is to show that we exist. Each year the LGBT Family Coalition participates in a large number of media interventions. This year was no exception with over 40 interviews for radio, TV, magazines and newspapers. Hot topics included bill 20 and the government-funded assisted procreation programme; regulations around bill 35 regarding sex designation on legal documents for trans folk; and surrogacy (especially after Quebec TV star Joel Legendre announced on his Facebook page that RAMQ paid for the surrogacy that led to his twins).

Many LGBT Family Coalition members don't know it, but apart from the services we offer to parents and future parents, the principal work that the organization carries out is the training of professionals: especially teachers and future teachers. Our goal is to sensitize them about family diversity as well as to discuss issues surrounding homophobia and gender-based harassment. We do this by carrying out workshops across the province. Initially funded by Québec's Ministry of Education these workshops continue to be sustained through grants from Québec's Bureau de lutte contre l'homophobie (an agency under the Justice Ministry) and through SACAIS (a funding agency in the *Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité Sociale*).

This year, through the work of our 20 trainers (14 based in Montreal and 6 in Quebec City) we carried out 98 workshops (14% more than last year) in 15 out of the 18 administrative regions of Quebec (Montréal, Capitale-Nationale, Laval, Mauricie, Montérégie, Estrie, Laurentides, Centre du Québec, Outaouais, Gaspésie, Saguenay, Abitibi et Chaudière-Appalaches). In total, in 2014-2015, we trained 3354 professionals and future professionals who work with youth and with families. About 80% of the people who attended our trainings over the year, are people who work in schools. One of our most important target audiences is future teachers. This year we carried out workshops in all 12 of Québec's education faculties (McGill, Concordia, Bishops, Montréal, Laval, UQAM, UQAT, UQAC, UQO, UQAR, UQTR and Sherbrooke). I had the pleasure of showing off all of this great work at the international NELFA (Network of European LGBT Family Associations) conference in Köln, Germany last fall where I was invited as a keynote speaker.

People who participate in our trainings do not leave empty handed. Over the years we have created and distributed thousands of bilingual resource kits that include posters, classroom activities, book and film lists, modules on how to respond to homophobic language, how to answer children's and parents' questions, how to develop inclusive policies and forms, explanations about Québec's laws on bullying and anti-homophobia policy, etc. etc. In fact, this is the first year that we put the majority of our resources on-line. Please check them out at www.famillesLGBT.org/tools. While you're on our web site don't forget to take a peak at our guides for parents and future parents: <http://www.familleslgbt.org/publications.php?lang=en>

As you probably know, our group is principally recognized as an advocacy organization. Over the years we have worked on a variety of dossiers to legally advance the cause for LGBT families. Here are some of the fields of intervention this year:

- participation in a variety of committees both at community and governmental levels to oversee the government's action plan against homophobia 2011-2016 ;
- presentation of briefs regarding assisted procreation and surrogacy in the National Assembly and in consultative committees;
- participation in a parliamentary consultation on bill 35 for sex designation on legal documents of trans people;
- working with the director of youth protection to assure parental leave for mixed bank parents;
- participation in a consultative committee at the Ministry of families;
- launching of a press release and letter campaign to school boards (15% made their forms inclusive of our families as a result of this campaign).

As you may have noticed through the barrage of e-mails that we send you, we often try to get you involved in this kind of work by signing petitions, through research (we are officially partnered in many of these research projects), by asking you to participate in various visibility events, through letter campaigns, pride events and media requests. Each time you respond to these requests (and so many of you have!) our families become more visible and prejudice about our families decreases!

When it comes down to it, all of this good work is for our kids. So, you can feel very proud to be part of an organization that is helping our society to evolve in a positive direction by fighting homophobia and gender based harassment and by increasing the visibility and social recognition of our families.

If you believe in the work we do, please join us (we need your help to reach quorum) by attending the annual general meeting of the LGBT Family Coalition on June 9th (see attached notice). We will also be hosting a small cocktail party afterwards with snacks to celebrate our good report card at the end of this year!

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@famillesLGBT.org or by post to CF-LGBT, 110, rue Sainte-Thérèse, bureau 405, Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 1E6

News Briefs

Quebec News

March 10 – The LGBT organization Fierté Montréal has announced that Montreal will host Canada’s inaugural national Pride festival in 2017, as the city celebrates its 375th birthday and the 50th anniversary of Expo 67, and Canada marks 150 years of Confederation.

Fierté Montréal will organize the 10-day Canada Pride celebration from August 11–20, 2017. The program will open with a weekend of sports events and feature an international conference on LGBT rights, like Toronto hosted for WorldPride 2014, as well as a series of indoor and outdoor parties and concerts, plus Fierté Montréal’s annual LGBT Community Day, Dyke March and Pride parade.

Fierté Montréal president Eric Pineault estimates Canada Pride’s budget will be between \$2.3 and 3 million dollars. Pineault hopes one million people will attend Canada Pride in 2017. “But we will be happy with 750,000,” he says, adding, “We expect to draw a sizable number of tourists from the Francophonie, from countries like Belgium and France. Our goal is to help put Montreal back on the international gay map, as well as bring national and international attention to pressing LGBT issues, such as transphobia.”

The goal is to have a different Canadian Pride organization host Canada Pride every four years.

May 14 - Montreal MNA Manon Massé says she has reason to be hopeful after sitting in on a provincial parliamentary commission looking into sex changes and civil status for trans people in Quebec, which just wrapped up its work.

Representatives from each of the four provincial parties sat on the commission. They were tasked with the responsibility of evaluating existing and potential new policies regarding the hoops trans people have to jump through to be recognized as their chosen gender.

The province's Civil Code was modified in 2013 when Bill 35 was passed. The bill most notably stipulated that a person can get the sex on their official documents changed without having medical treatments or undergoing gender-reassignment surgery. But, Massé says, there needs to be more done in the province to ensure this can actually happen. For example, many white-collar workers don't quite know how to manage files for trans people, she says.

The Committee on Institutions for the National Assembly held public hearings and consultations to better understand the needs of trans people. Justice Minister Stéphanie Vallée, who is responsible for the dossier at the provincial level, has said she would like to move quickly on the matter.

May 22 – The Montreal Alouettes have announced that defensive end Michael Sam has just signed a two-year contract with the team. The 25-year-old American is well known for having become the first NFL player to come out as gay before retirement.

“With the signing of Michael Sam today, we’ve become a better organisation”, declared Jim Popp, general director of the Alouettes. «Not only have we added an excellent football player to our team, but we’ve also added a good person that brings dignity, character and heart to our team”.

May 26 – Women over 42 years will be able, finally, to have access to assisted procreation under certain conditions. Health Minister Gaétan Barrette announced that he will abandon measures that were envisaged in the draft legislation for Bill 20 that would have prohibited women over 42 from using assisted procreation. Various groups criticized these measures.

“We are not retreating: I’ve adapted the slated legislation to comments that were made by experts,” he pleaded during a press conference, “ If each time we listened to constructive criticism coming from experts, we were retreating, then yes, listen, we are retreating! Then I am at the National Retreating Assembly! Let’s retreat together!”

Bill 20 looks at the access to family doctors, as well as the Assisted Procreation Program. The program will no longer be free and guidelines will be stricter.

And in the end, same-sex and heterosexual couples will not be systematically subjected to a psychosocial evaluation. Discretion will be left up to doctors.

Canada News

February 21 -The Alberta government is making it easier for transgender people in the province to make changes to their personal documents. In the past, transgender persons were required to have reassignment surgery in order to change the gender on a birth record. To file for the change, transgender Albertans were required to submit two affidavits from two different doctors stating that their gender has changed through surgery. Now, only one affidavit and a doctor’s letter are required; and neither document requires the mention of gender reassignment surgery.

“Our laws respect the rights of Albertans, and reflect the values of a modern society. These regulatory changes support those important goals,” said Service Alberta Minister Stephen Khan.

The changes to the Vital Statistics Information Regulation mean transgender people can change their gender on any government-issued ID, including driver’s licences and birth certificates. The changes come 10 months after a judge ruled that an Alberta law dealing with birth certificates violates the rights of transgender people.

February 23 – Ontario kids as young as six will learn about consent while eight-year-olds will be taught about same-sex relationships under a revamped sex-education curriculum the province has just released. The curriculum brings Ontario in line with other provinces, Education Minister Liz Sandals said in a new conference. Some of the changes, she suggested, may even place Ontario ahead of the pack.

Grade 1 students will learn how to understand non-verbal signals like facial expressions and tone of voice, as well as the proper names for body parts, which was already in the old curriculum.

Sandals said she knows some parents think that’s too early for such discussions, but she doesn’t think very many will pull their kids out of class.

Other changes include students in Grade 2 will learn about the stages of development and related bodily changes along with the concept that “no means no.” By Grade 3, students will learn about same-sex relationships, which Kathleen Wynne, the first openly gay premier, said would help kids with two moms or two dads feel their families are just like everyone else’s. Children in Grades 4 and up will learn more about the dangers of online bullying and of posting or sharing sexual images, while specific lessons on the dangers of sexting will come in Grade 7. Students in Grade 6 will be taught about masturbation and “gender expression,”

while kids in Grades 7 and 8 will discuss contraception, anal and oral sex, preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Meanwhile Quebec has no sexual education program in place since the *Personal and Social Development* course was removed from the curriculum 10 years ago. The reform suggested that all teachers should integrate sexuality into their courses. But 10 years later with no teacher specifically designated to fulfill the mandate most teachers say they have no idea how to teach the subject, and just are not prepared for the questions students have.

March 10 - MLAs at the Alberta legislature have passed a bill that would mandate gay-straight alliances in any school where students want them. The vote came after Alberta Education Minister Gordon Dirks tabled a draft amendment to Bill 10 that will allow students access to the student clubs in the province's public and Catholic schools.

The legislation will also add sexual orientation, sex, gender identity and gender expression to the Alberta Bill of Rights.

Kristopher Wells, an assistant professor with the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta, said the legislation makes Alberta a leader in LGBT rights in Canada!

March 16 – High profile public figures—from Seinfeld's Jason Alexander to Academy Award winner Marlee Matlin—lent their support to a national campaign, calling on people across Canada to join together against the crisis of homelessness among LGBTQ2S youth. OUTatNight, launched by national equality group *Egale Canada Human Rights Trust* (Egale), invited participants to collect sponsorship as they sleep outside for a night, raising awareness of the struggles experienced by thousands of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) youth across the country.

"Too often, coming out means being kicked out," said Helen Kennedy, Executive Director of Egale. "In the years since equal marriage, many of us have become complacent, but the reality is, LGBTQ2S youth are still being abandoned by their families simply because of who they are.

The campaign is supported by a rapidly growing number of celebrities and public figures, including entertainers, politicians and business leaders, many of whom are showing their support by participating in a series of Public Service Announcements. The PSAs will be rolled out progressively between March 12 and May 30, airing nationally on television and streaming online.

March 25 - The recognition of LGBT rights may have come a long way in Vancouver and other parts of Canada, but many queer seniors still face discrimination when it comes to end-of-life care, says one B.C. gerontology expert.

Simon Fraser University gerontology professor Gloria Gutman and a colleague recently launched **LGBT End-of-Life Conversations** (<http://www.sfu.ca/lgbteol.html>) a website that helps seniors in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax find LGBT-friendly service providers who can help with things like accessing housing or health care facilities, or preparing living wills or representation agreements.

The website is part of Gutman's research, which looked at the challenges and stigma that some queer seniors in the five Canadian cities face inside care homes and within their communities.

May 4 -The Liberals won their third consecutive election in Prince Edward Island on May 4. Wade MacLauchlan, who became Liberal leader on February 21, is the province's 32nd premier, taking over from Robert Ghiz. MacLauchlan will also make history as the province's first elected openly gay premier.

The first openly gay premier in Canada was Kathleen Wynne, who became Ontario's premier in January 2013 after winning her party's provincial leadership contest, and then was elected premier in June 2014.

The 60-year-old MacLauchlan is a former president of the University of PEI and was named a member of the Order of Canada in 2008, and his partner, Duncan McIntosh is a founder of the Watermark Theatre. The election of both Wynne and MacLauchlan reflects how attitudes towards sexual orientation have changed in Canada, particularly in PEI, which was one of the last Canadian provinces to legalize same-sex marriage.

May 9 - New data shows that homophobia is still alive and well in Canadian sports and the study, which is the first of its kind, suggests anti-gay attitudes are deterring young people from being active in some athletic fields.

The survey, called *Out on the Fields*, was conducted online in six English-speaking countries — U.S., U.K., Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and Australia — and promoted through a coalition of sporting organizations. Of the 9,500 participants, 75 per cent were LGBT. The data shows 81 per cent of the Canadians surveyed witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports, while 84 per cent of gay men and 88 per cent of lesbians polled faced slurs — like faggot or dyke — in sports. Canadian athletic organizations today promote acceptance, but the study suggests hostility toward perceived homosexual players starts at school age. For the full study : <http://www.outonthefields.com/>

LGBT Marriage News

March 4 - Slovenia joins a growing number of European countries that allow same-sex marriages, almost three years after a similar law was rejected in a national referendum. Parliament passes the law giving same-sex couples the right to marry and adopt children with 51 votes in favor and 28 against.

March 7 - The Obama administration formally backs same-sex unions, filing a brief with the **U.S.** Supreme Court in support of couples who are challenging gay marriage bans in several states.

The administration takes the official stance that bans on gay marriage are “incompatible with the Constitution,” with Solicitor General Donald Verrilli writing that the bans “impermissibly exclude lesbian and gay couples from the rights, responsibilities, and status of civil marriage.”

March 21 - The government of **Puerto Rico** will cease defending the U.S. commonwealth’s ban on same-sex marriage. “Because of sexual orientation, Puerto Rico has denied rights that others enjoy,” Justice Minister César Miranda said at a press conference in San Juan. “This is not correct.”

Gov. Alejandro García Padilla’s administration filed a brief with the First Circuit, saying it “cannot responsibly advance before this court any interest sufficiently important or compelling to justify the differentiated treatment afforded so far to plaintiffs.”

March 23 – After a first favorable step by the **Swiss** government towards gay marriage last February, the quest for equality takes a turn for the worse with a referendum that would have marriage defined in the constitution as being between a man and a woman only. The referendum is initiated by the Christian Democratic Party and will be submitted to the population for a vote.

According to a recent survey 71% of Swiss citizens are in favour of same-sex marriage.

March 28 - According to some calculations, around 10,000 people march through the streets of Lima, **Peru** and congregate in the San Martín Plaza to demonstrate their fury after the Congress’s Justice Commission refused to approve a civil union law for same sex couples.

April 13 - Jared Milrad and Nathan Johnson become overnight stars after they appear holding hands in Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign announcement video. The **Chicago** couple say they are happy to be featured in it and that they support the former Secretary of State because of her position on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. They even invite Clinton, if she'd like -- to their wedding.

April 17 - A new law in the southeastern African nation of **Malawi** that raises the minimum age for marriage from 16 to 18 is great for women and girls, but terrible for the country's LGBT community, a global LGBT rights group says. That's because the law defines all marriages, unions and cohabitation arrangements as being between a man and a woman -- and excludes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from legal protections.

April 20 - **Mexico's** highest court calls bans on same-sex marriage "totally unjustified". The court responds to a petition for legal recourse submitted by a gay couple against state laws in Sinaloa which prevented them from marrying. It is part of a battle to gain equal marriage across Mexico. Currently only some states allow it, and if more petitions and legal challenges are made to the court, it is expected to become legal throughout the country.

April 25 - President Michelle Bachelet signs the Civil Union Accord, the first recognition by the **Chilean** State of family diversity which will apply to shared households of the same or different sexes. Bachelet emphasizes that "today (...) we are taking a first fundamental step on the road to (equal) rights, justice and respect for individual freedom. Today we are signing a law that recognizes and formalizes the bond of domestic partnership, for same sex couples as well as for those composed of a man and a woman."

April 28 - The South American nation of **Ecuador** looks set to formally recognize same-sex couples for the first time after lawmakers in the country's National Assembly approve a bill creating civil unions for unwed couples regardless of sexuality. However the bill does not deal with custody issues or adoption by same-sex couples – something which President Correa has said he is adamantly against.

April 28 - The Sinn Fein proposal to allow same-sex marriage in **Northern Ireland** is defeated in the Assembly yesterday by 49 votes to 47.

April 28 - The **United States** Supreme Court begins to hear arguments over whether the Constitution gives same-sex couples the right to marry. Questions indicate that the court's liberal and conservative justices are divided. Same-sex couples can currently wed in 36 states and the District of Columbia, and the court is weighing whether gay and lesbian unions should be allowed in all 50 states.

The cases before the court come from **Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee**, four of the 14 remaining states that allow only heterosexual marriage. Those four had marriage bans upheld by the federal appeals court in Cincinnati in November, the only federal appeals court that has ruled in favor of the states since the Supreme Court 2013 ruling.

The Supreme Court decision is expected in late June.

May 15 – **Luxembourg** prime minister, Xavier Bettel, marries his Belgian partner, Gauthier Destenay, a few months after gay marriage became legal in the country.

May 22 – **Irish** citizens vote "yes" in response to a referendum proposing to amend the constitution to allow marriage between two people of the same sex. The result of the vote is yet another proof, according to Anglo-Saxon media, that "one of the most catholic countries in the world" is going through profound changes. 62.1% of Irish voted "yes".

International News

February 26 (ILGA News) Two brothers who are 11 and 13 years old became the first case of boys awarded in legal adoption in the country to a gay couple in accord with existing law on marriage equality. The adoptive parents are Juan Castro and Pablo Silva, who live in the city of Río Grande in **Tierra del Fuego** and who have been married for four years.

Castro and Silva had the brothers in provisional custody since September 2013. The couple had obtained custody when the boys were nine and 11 years old. After the ruling, they began the process for winning legal adoption in Tierra del Fuego and obtained the sentence that made it so from Judge Susana del Valle García, head of the Court on the Family and Minors of the City of Río Grande.

March 10 (The Advocate) For the second year in a row, **New York** Mayor Bill De Blasio has decided to boycott the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade for its refusal to welcome LGBT groups into its ranks. Admittedly, the parade's organizers have made a small concession for 2015: For the first time in the parade's 253-year history, an LGBT group is being included in the march down Fifth Avenue. But it's just one group, and it happens to represent NBC, the network that televises the parade every year, leaving the unfortunate impression that the organizers are more concerned with appeasing their broadcaster than doing what is right. As De Blasio told reporters, this gesture "is too small a change to merit a lot of us participating."

March 17 (Japan Times) A group of lawmakers have launched a multiparty caucus to examine discrimination against sexual minorities in a move expected to further intensify debate ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The group, led by Liberal Democratic Party member and former education vice minister Hiroshi Hase, Democratic Party of **Japan** policy chief Goshi Hosono and Komeito member Masaaki Taniai, said it is planning to study overseas laws on same-sex unions as well as canvass the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

The group, however, has no plans to draft any bills relating to sexual minorities, Hase, who heads the caucus, told reporters after its first meeting. Hase said Japan needs to deepen its understanding of the LGBT community before it hosts the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

March 17 (o.canada.com) In a recent interview, **Italian** fashion designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana ensured for themselves an instant and furious backlash when they espoused their views on "traditional" families, surrogate mothers and children born through in-vitro fertilization.

"We oppose gay adoptions. The only family is the traditional one," Dolce pronounced in a recent interview for an Italian magazine. "No chemical offspring and rented uterus: life has a natural flow, there are things that should not be changed. You are born to a mother and a father – or at least that's how it should be," he added. "I call children of chemistry 'synthetic children'. Rented uterus, semen chosen from a catalogue."

March 18 (HRC News) HRC is working to counter a wave of anti-LGBT bills that have been filed by state legislators across the **United States**. More than 85 bills have been filed in 26 state legislatures. There are currently four major types of anti-LGBT bills being filed in state legislatures. These bills would:

1. Allow individuals, businesses, universities, adoption agencies, and others to use religion to challenge or opt out of laws, including state and local laws that protect LGBT people from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations;
2. Prohibit cities and towns from protecting LGBT people from discrimination;
3. Criminalize transgender people for using appropriate restrooms; and
4. Explicitly protect therapists who engage in harmful "conversion therapy".

The diversity of the legislation is unprecedented and a record number of bills have been introduced. Together, these bills undermine, and even cripple, fundamental protections and basic dignity for LGBT Americans and other minority groups.

March 19 (The Advocate) An attorney from Huntington Beach, **California**, Matt McLaughlin has proposed a ballot measure that authorizes the killing of gays and lesbians by "bullets to the head," or "any other convenient method." McLaughlin's "Sodomite Suppression Act" now is testing the limits of free speech and raising the question: Why can't the state's initiative process screen out blatantly illegal ideas? To begin collecting signatures for a ballot measure, advocates must simply submit their idea, along with \$200, to the attorney general's office.

The Legislature's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus wrote a letter to the State Bar, asking for an investigation into McLaughlin's fitness to practice law. More than 3,800 people signed a petition to State Bar President Craig Holden asking that McLaughlin lose his law license for advocating to "legalize the murder" of gays and lesbians. Yet the measure is likely to proceed to the signature-gathering stage. At the moment, its fate rests with state Attorney General Kamala Harris, who is charged with writing a title and summary for the proposal. Legal experts say she has little choice but to let the process continue and that McLaughlin is unlikely to face professional repercussions.

April 1 (Vice.com) The tiny nation of **Malta** has passed an internationally groundbreaking new law: the "Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act." The law offers a host of new and powerful anti-discrimination protections and eases the process of gender identity change and administrative recognition for transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals. But most significantly, the law bans the performance of non-vital gender assignment surgeries on intersex children before they're old enough to consent to the procedure—a global legislative first.

"Intersex," medically known in the US as Differences of Sex Development, or DSD, refers to the approximately 1.7 percent of children born every year with genitalia, reproductive organs, or chromosomal patterns that don't fit traditional gender norms. This umbrella categorization covers a host of genetic and medical phenomena (from micropenises to undescended testes that turn out to be ovaries to partially fused labia).

Starting in the 1950s, it became standard practice to perform surgeries on infants to make them better fit traditional genders based on whatever the presiding doctor thought their genitalia resembled the most—ostensibly to save them from strife and confusion later in life. However in the 1990s, intersex people, parents, and advocacy groups started to come forward with stories of the emotional, physical, and mental trauma caused by these involuntary surgeries, often concealed from them and others in their lives. Yet despite growing consensus that such knee-jerk surgeries are unethical, the procedures are still regular and legal in most of the world, including in Canada.

April 2 (The Advocate) The **Irish** Senate has passed a bill allowing same-sex couples to adopt children. Titled the "Children and Family Relationships Bill" and containing more than 120 amendments, the measure was the subject of passionate discussions during the course of a weeklong debate in the Seanad of the Republic of Ireland. Ultimately, the vote ended in a 20-2 win for same-sex couples in Ireland who wish to adopt. It also extends adoption rights to cohabitating couples. Irish president Michael D. Higgins is expected to sign the bill into law.

April 6 (Buzzfeed) A St. Petersburg court has ruled in favor of blocking *Children-404*, an online support group for LGBT **Russian** teens, the group's leader, Elena Klimova, said on the Russian social network *Vkontakte*.

Children-404, or Deti-404 as it is known in Russian, posts stories from LGBT teens all over Russia and offers messages of support. The group gets its name from the 404 "page not found" online error, playing on the idea that LGBT youth are "not found" in Russia. "We exist" is one of the group's taglines.

"Considering the repeated nature of legal proceedings against Deti 404 and Klimova, it is clear that the authorities are using the discriminatory 'gay propaganda' law to harass her and force Deti 404 into silence," Human Rights Watch Russia researcher Tanya Cooper said in a statement issued before the St. Petersburg court's ruling was announced. "Klimova finds herself, like many other Russian human rights activists, locked in a legal battle with the state rather than devoting all of her energy to helping LGBT children get access to information, justice, and equality."

April 15 (EGALE news) **Sweden** has formally added the gender-neutral pronoun 'hen' to the Swedish Academy's dictionary. 'Hen' will join other existing pronouns —'han' (he) and 'hon' (she) — as one of the 13,000 new words added to the dictionary that is amended every decade. Gender-neutral pronouns are

becoming more common as a growing number of LGBT people and allies strive to use language that accurately and respectfully reflects the broad range of gender identities people embrace.

While personal preferences vary, many trans and gender-nonconforming English-speaking people currently use gender-neutral pronouns such as 'they,' 'them,' and 'their,' along with 'ze' and 'hir.'

April 24 (Huffington Post) In the 1970s, Bruce Jenner was a symbol of **American** masculinity as an Olympic champion. Nearly 40 years later, in an extraordinary television interview, Jenner told the world that he identifies as a woman and has felt gender confusion since he was a little boy growing up in the New York suburbs.

Jenner let his hair down — literally loosening a ponytail and letting his hair flow past his shoulders — in a symbolic moment at the start of his two-hour interview with ABC News' Diane Sawyer. "Yes, for all intents and purposes, I am a woman."

For the transgender community, it was a moment as significant as Ellen DeGeneres' coming out as a lesbian was for gays nearly 20 years ago. DeGeneres tweeted support to Jenner, saying the former Olympian was "saving lives and opening minds."

April 27 (Buzzfeed) The High Court of **Kenya** has ruled that the board overseeing NGOs cannot bar an LGBT rights group from formally organizing, a ruling that may create precedent to win protections for LGBT people under the East African country's constitution.

Eric Gitari attempted to register the organization he leads, Kenya's National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC), with the office responsible for granting the permits that give official status to NGOs in the spring of 2013. The Non-Governmental Organization's Coordination Board refused his filing. In a March 2013 letter, the NGO Coordination Board told NGLHRC that it could not register because the Kenyan penal code "criminalizes gay or lesbian liaisons." This assertion was based on a provision inherited from the criminal code imposed when Kenya was a British colony that makes it a crime for someone to have "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature."

The High Court held not only that the Board violated Gitari's right to freedom of association, but also suggested that protections for fundamental rights in the Kenyan constitution could be read to expressly forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

If this precedent is applied to future cases, it could open the door to a wide range of litigation making it a bright spot for LGBT rights in East Africa. It could also counter some recent political trends that have made Kenyan LGBT-rights advocates nervous. Some lawmakers called for more aggressively prosecuting crimes under the seldom-used unnatural offenses provision following the passage of the sweeping Anti-Homosexuality Act in neighboring Uganda in 2014.

May 1 (The Advocate) When **American** president Barack Obama declared May to be National Foster Care Month, he included words never before included in a White House proclamation about adoption. Those words reflect the second time in 2015 the president called for transgender individuals and bisexuals, lesbians and gays be afforded their full civil rights.

"With so many children waiting for loving homes, it is important to ensure all qualified caregivers have the opportunity to serve as foster or adoptive parents, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status," according to the proclamation. "That is why we are working to break down the barriers that exist and investing in efforts to recruit more qualified parents for children in foster care."

May 3 (Pink News) Buenos Aires has granted a family legal recognition of three parents. A lesbian couple and the biological father of their child have all been listed on the child's birth certificate, which gives them all legal recognition as parents of the child. According the Registrar of Persons, Claudia Corrado, this is in the best interests of the child, and means the father, Hernan Melazzi, retains his rights and responsibilities for the child.

Mothers Susana Guichal and Valeria Gaete have been together for eleven years, and married for three. They said they think of Mr. Melazzi as more than just a sperm donor for their child.

Provincial Cabinet Chief Alberto Pérez said that none of the child's parents should have to give up their rights and obligations. The child, Antonio, will take the last names of all three parents. "While there is no precedent for this legal recognition [in Argentina], the family deserves protection and safeguarding," Pérez said. "This decision may break with some preconceptions, but we are not afraid of excessive love."

In 2010, **Argentina** became the first in Latin America to legalize gay marriage, including full adoption rights for gay couples. In 2012, it became the world's most transgender friendly country, with a gender-identity law that allows people to change their legal gender and name without permission from a court or doctor, and access sex-change surgery or hormone therapy through public or private health care plans.

News from the LGBT Family Coalition

UPCOMING MEETINGS

JUNE 2015:

◆ SUNDAY JUNE 7TH STARTING AT 10 A.M. (the ride begins at 10h30)

FAMILY BICYCLE ACTIVITY (MONTRÉAL)

Oyé oyé les cyclistes de la coalition! Petits et grands sont invités à faire une balade du dimanche à Lachine. On vous invite à découvrir ou à redécouvrir un beau coin pour du vélo en famille. Rendez-vous au pont levis au coin de la Rue St-Pierre et de la Rue de la Berge du Canal à côté de la piste cyclable du canal Lachine. Il y a un petit stationnement. Direction ouest qu'au parc Summerlea (7 km) sur la piste cyclable qui sillonne tous les parcs au bord de l'eau avec vue sur le fleuve St-Laurent. Retour par le même chemin avec un petit détour au Parc Rene-Lévesque (5 km) pour une pause pic-nic en famille. Apporter ballon, frisbee et votre lunch. Le retour au pont Lévis est 3km. Parcours total de 15km. Pour ceux qui ont des cyclistes plus aguerris vous pouvez poursuivre votre balade le long du canal Lachine jusqu'au marché Atwater pour une glace aux Havres-des-glaces (Mmmmm) et revenir au stationnement du pont levis. L'aller-retour est de 14km.

◆ TUESDAY JUNE 9TH STARTING AT 7 P.M.

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY (MONTRÉAL)

Our annual general assembly, followed by a celebratory cocktail. **See attached flier.**

◆ WEDNESDAY JUNE 10TH STARTING AT 7 P.M.

QUEBEC CITY: COURSE FOR FUTURE PARENTS – PART 5: OUT IN THE WORLD: SURVIVING DAY CARE AND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Location: Université Laval (Québec)

Reservations necessary.

JULY 2015:

◆ WEDNESDAY JULY 1ST TO MONDAY JULY 5TH

CAMPING AT AUX BERGES DU LAC CASTOR

<http://www.laccastor.com/>

AUGUST 2015 – PRIDE CELEBRATIONS

THURSDAY AUGUST 13TH AT 6 P.M.

MONTRÉAL : MARCHE DES FEMMES LESBIENNES ET LEURS ALLIÉS.ES ET BBQ

Details to follow!

◆ **SATURDAY AUGUST 15TH and SUNDAY AUGUST 16TH**
COMMUNITY DAY AND PRIDE PARADE: MONTREAL

N.B.: The Pride Parade and Community Day have been scheduled for the weekend of August 15th and 16th. Please reserve this date in your calendars. We will give you an update on this in the weeks to come!

◆ **SATURDAY AUGUST 29TH**
PRIDE COMMUNITY DAY: QUEBEC CITY

N.B.: The Community Day has been scheduled for August 29th. 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.com, 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.cdfdrp.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@famillesLGBT.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 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@famillesLGBT.org or by post to CF-LGBT, 110, rue Ste-Thérèse, bureau 405, Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 1E6. 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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