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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME VIII - No. III - March 2007

From Legal to Social Equality: Toward a National Strategy Against Homophobia ***By Mona Greenbaum, LMA coordinator***

On March 6, 2007, the Quebec Human Rights Commission (*la commission des droits de la personne et droits de la jeunesse* - CDPDJ) will launch a consultation report with recommendations entitled: “***De l'égalité juridique à l'égalité sociale. Vers une stratégie nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie.***”

The publication is the product of three years of work. It started in October 2003 and March 2004 when representatives from the gay and lesbian community met up with Michèle Courchesne who was then the minister of Citizen Relations and Immigration. The idea was to put a governmental structure in place to ensure that homophobia in Quebec would be addressed and that services and institutions would meet the needs of the gay and lesbian community. The *ministère de relations avec les citoyens et l'immigration* (MRCI) was a ministry that had historically been involved with gay and lesbian issues through its mandate to take care of citizen relations.

It was in this context that in June 2004, minister Courchesne along with representatives from other provincial ministries and community organizations, put in place the « *groupe de travail mixte* » (the mixed working group). The mix in this case was of community activists, researchers and ministerial representatives. Our job was to analyze homophobia in Quebec, to study the problems in our community and to work with government representatives to find ways to address the issues that we as gays and lesbians confront in our everyday lives.

The *Lesbian Mothers Association* had two representatives in the working group from the outset: Diane Labelle, a two-spirited mom was there to represent the *Quebec Two-Spirit Association* (a group for native sexual minorities) and myself, Mona Greenbaum the coordinator of the *Lesbian Mothers Association*, to represent families. As one of the founders of the *Multimundo Coalition* (a coalition of ethnocultural LGBT groups) I also later took on the role of helping to represent the issues that are faced by ethnocultural sexual minorities.

In the beginning, twelve community organizations were represented around the table including, the *Table de Concertation des gais et lesbiennes*, *Gai-ecoute*, *GRIS-Quebec*, the *Quebec Lesbian Network*, *Action Sero-Zero*, the *Centre communautaire des gais et lesbiennes de Montréal*, as well as the *Forum des gais et des lesbiennes syndiqués du Québec*. Seven provincial ministries were also represented (Immigration; Justice; Work; Family; Health and Social Services; Employment and Social Solidarity; and Education). Finally, two researchers, Line Chamberland of UQAM and CEGEP Maisonneuve (who is especially known for her research around homophobia in the workplace) and Bill Ryan of McGill's School of Social Work (who has an expertise around men's health, ethnocultural issues and youth) joined our team.

In the beginning three subcommittees were formed for an in-depth study of health and social services, education and community life (*vie associative*). These were the three domains that we had determined to be of priority. I took on Health and Social services, as well as community life and Diane, who has many years of teaching experience and has dealt with homophobia in schools for over a decade, sat on the education sub-committee.

An initial report was presented to minister Courchesne on January 2005 but in February after a government shuffle, the MRCI became the Ministry for Immigrations and Cultural Communities (MICC). The responsibility for the coordination of our work was no longer with the MICC and suddenly our project was without a home! The work was suspended for a few months.

Finally the coordination of the group was transferred to the ministry of Justice and on June 1st 2005 on the International Day Against Homophobia, Yvan Marcoux the justice minister mandated the Quebec Human Rights Commission (CDPDJ) to assure the coordination of our work as well as the publication of the final report.

The mandate given to the CDPDJ was to review the existing situation in Quebec relative to homophobia and heterosexism by: examining the institutional measures, projects, public, para-public and community initiatives that were already in place for LGBT people; detailing the manifestation and impact of homophobia on LGBT people; and formulating recommendations as to how the Quebec government can effectively deal with homophobia in government related sectors, as well as in society in general. The needs of the LGBT community organizations working against homophobia were also to be considered.

When the work was taken up again in September 2005 a small number of people were added to the group in order to fill in some of the missing pieces. A representative from REJAJQ (a coalition of LGBT youth groups), a representative from the newly created Coalition Multimundo and a few more unions were added to the mix. Finally 7 ad-hoc committees were put together to accomplish the group's mandate:

- Health and Social Services
- Education, Leisure and Sports
- Family, Youth, Old Age and the Status of Women
- Immigration and Cultural Communities
- Work, Employment and Social Solidarity
- Public Security and Justice
- Community Organization

A representative from the Coalition des transexuelles et transexués du Québec (CTTQ), Julie-Maude Beauchesne (who is a future mom and also an LMA member) joined the group to address the health, legal and security issues faced by the transsexual community. A large weight to carry a whole community on her shoulders, but Julie-Maude did amazingly well.

Caroline Tremblay (who is a lesbian mom from Quebec City and also an LMA member) came on as a representative of the Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ). She was especially knowledgeable about the school system being a teacher herself, and thus another strong advocate for education related issues. Because of her contribution, "*les familles homoparentales*" were extremely well represented in the final recommendations for both education and the workplace.

The results of this detailed work were agreed upon by each ad-hoc committee and then by the group as a whole. Of especial importance is the fact that all of the recommendations to the different ministries and para-public agencies have been officially endorsed by the CDPDJ.

As for families there are few areas that weren't covered. In the final report which will soon be available on the CDPDJ web site, you will find extensive recommendations for the schools, for maternity leave, for sensitivity training of health care professionals, social workers, and teachers, as well as recommendations to help groups like our own, that are always struggling financially.

This report should serve as a reference for fighting homophobia in Quebec for many years to come. Please check it out at: www.cdpedj.qc.ca

News Briefs: December 2006 - February 2007

Montreal and Quebec News

December 8th, 2006 (Montreal, Quebec) According to the French-language TV channel *LCN*, the organizing

committee of last summer's gay sporting event has been placed under bankruptcy protection.

Among the list of creditors owed money by the Outgames are lesbian tennis great Martina Navratilova, an LGBT media company and the famed Cirque du Soleil. Canadian taxpayers are on the hook for about \$3.2 million. In all, some 219 people and companies are owed money.

The Outgames faces a \$2.09-million debt. Organizers had originally projected a \$200,000 surplus but the province of Quebec sent in its own auditor. Suggestions of bookkeeping errors had circulated for months. Both the athletic and the cultural events surrounding the games had drawn far fewer people than had been expected.

The Outgames grew out of a dispute with the Federation of Gay Games. Montreal was to have hosted the more established Gay Games in 2006 but in a dispute over control and money the Montreal organizers pulled their bid and decided to host their own sporting event. The Federation later gave the 2006 Gay Games to Chicago, but that event also wound up in the red with a projected loss of about \$200,000. To offset the loss the Chicago organizers sold off many of the game's assets.

Unlike the Outgames, the Gay Games relied solely on corporate sponsorships. The Outgames was projected to cost \$16.9 million dollars, of which 29% came from the federal and provincial governments; another 27% was to have come from registrations; and the remaining 30% from sponsors and other sales.

With two sets of games on last summer LGBT athletes had to choose where to go, diminishing the income from registrations and ticket sales.

Money problems have plagued the gay version of the Olympics from the start. The Gay Games also lost money at its four previous events--Vancouver in 1990, New York in 1994, Amsterdam in 1998 and Sydney in 2002.

The next Outgames will be held in Copenhagen in 2009 and the Gay Games will be in Cologne the following year. By scheduling the two sets of competing games a year apart organizers hope that in future the games will at least break even.

January 4, 2007 (Montreal, Quebec) In 1993, cynical gay rights activists in Montreal placed bets on how few marchers would bother coming out for Divers/Cité's inaugural Gay Pride parade that summer. But against all odds, 5,000 people showed up and, over the next decade, the parade grew into one of the biggest Pride cocktail parties on the planet, with total attendance topping 1.2 million in 2003.

But the times they are a-changing: After years battling Gay Village merchants who wanted more control over Divers/Cité - and thus, observers point out, reap more profits - Divers/Cité is now spinning off their non-profit Pride parade and community day into a new, separate organization called *Fierté Montréal Pride*, which will be held at another point in May or September. Divers/Cité itself will continue as a gay arts and culture festival, and will celebrate its 15th anniversary August 1-5.

Divers/Cité co-founder and executive director Suzanne Girard pointed out a CROP survey that reported 76 per cent of festival-goers don't go to the parade, and 25 per cent of parade-goers don't attend the rest of the festival. "We separated the events to give the parade the space it deserved, and so that it would no longer compete with other Divers/Cité events and concerts." Girard said recently

Fierté Montréal Pride's independent administrative board will be filled with representatives of Gay Village merchants and community organizations. Now a member of the international InterPride organization of Pride parades, *Fierté Montréal Pride* will also benefit from the logistical support of Divers/Cité for its first two years - support that will be crucial since Montreal must now compete with other Pride parades throughout the Northeast each June, namely Toronto, New York, Boston and Chicago.

February 2, 2007 (Geneva, Switzerland) The U.N. Economic and Social Council committee has turned down a bid by a Quebec LGBT rights group, which sought inclusion on the United Nations advisory panel based in Geneva.

The *Coalition gaie et lesbienne du Québec* had requested observer status. Nearly 2900 non-governmental agencies have representation on UN bodies as observers.

The Economic and Social Council, a think tank made up of non-governmental agencies from around the world, has official representation from some of the most homophobic regimes in the world.

"The delegate from Egypt told me they don't have a gay problem in his country because there are no gays there," Yvan Lapointe, executive director of the Coalition told *The National Post*. "The delegate from Angola was keen to know where we stood on adoption by gays, and questions from others covered various topics like pedophilia, HIV/AIDS and where we stand on gay marriage."

The vote on the Coalition's application was taken without debate. Five Islamic states led the opposition against the group: Sudan, Egypt, Guinea, Pakistan and Qatar. China, Russia and Burundi also voted to reject. The application had the support of the United States, Great Britain, Israel, Peru, Columbia and Romania. With India, Turkey and Angola abstaining there were not enough votes to allow the group in.

Following the vote a Canadian government delegate said Canada was dismayed there had been no discussion or explanation.

Last year the United States came under fire when it voted against the inclusion of a European LGBT rights group on a United Nations advisory panel. The State Department said the vote was prompted over concerns over potential support for pedophilia.

The US later reversed its stand and three international gay groups have been allowed to join the advisory group. The Coalition said it might reapply.

Canadian News

January 3rd, 2007 (Toronto, Ontario) Gay rights organizations applauded while an evangelical group questioned just how many parents one child can have following a landmark Appeal Court decision that allows an Ontario boy to have three parents.

Legal recognition that the five-year-old has two mothers and one father which some say opens the possibility of nightmare custody battle scenarios was hailed by activists as the courts simply catching up to the reality of Canadian society.

"This isn't the only couple that's had a baby with another person and wanted the three people to be equally involved in the child's upbringing," said Kaj Hasselriis, acting executive director of the Egale-Canada, an Ottawa based gay rights group.

The Ontario Court of Appeal's decision to recognize the child's three parents simply shows that the "justice system is ahead of politicians on this issue," Hasselriis said.

"There is now legal recognition of the relationships and families that already exist in Canada, and have existed across Canada for years."

The ruling, believed to be the first of its kind in Canada, perhaps the world - revolves around a lesbian couple raising their son with the continued involvement of his biological father. In 1999, the couple, one a university professor and the other a lawyer, asked the man, who is also a university professor, to help them start a family. The female university professor became pregnant in 2000 and gave birth early the following year. The boy, who turns six next month, calls both women "mama."

Court documents state that the biological father brings his three other children to the women's home for weekly family dinners.

While the Appeal Court's decision was specific to the boy and his three parents, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, which had intervener status in the case under the umbrella organization *Alliance for Marriage and the Family*, said the ruling would have a "definite ripple effect" throughout society.

"We have great concern about the future serious implications of the decision," said Don Hutchinson, legal counsel for the group. "It raises questions that are unanswered, such as how many legal parents may a child now have? If the relationship between three or more parents breaks down, it would complicate custody hearings."

Those concerns were shared by the judge who first heard and dismissed the case in 2003.

"If a child can have three parents, why not four, or six or a dozen," Superior Court Justice David Aston wrote in his decision, adding that "the potential to create, or exacerbate, custody and access litigation should not be ignored."

Ultimately, Aston ruled that while he was prepared to declare that the boy could have three parents, he said he didn't have the legal authority to do so. The Appeal Court did however rule that it had that authority, namely because it found a gap in the legislation due to new reproductive.

But at least one critic disagreed with that line of reasoning.

"It's not the court's role to fill legislative gaps," said Joseph Ben-Ami, executive director of the *Institute for Canadian Values*, a conservative Ottawa-based think-tank.

"The Ontario government must appeal this case regardless of whether they think the decision of the court was right."

"The whole notion that there is such a thing as three parents ... has potential ramifications on public policy on a lot of levels. An appeal would defend the integrity of the legislative process," said Ben-Ami, who added a government study of marriage and family issues is long overdue.

Several so-called pro-marriage groups have called on the federal government to launch a royal commission on marriage and families.

January 12th, 2007 (personal communication) The Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled on the case of a lesbian who was refused access to fertility treatments because her known donor was a gay man. Jane Doe ("Jane") is a 39-year-old lesbian who wanted to have a child. She has been in a monogamous relationship with her partner "W" for 13 years. W is the biological mother of "L" who was born in 1998. Jane legally adopted L. Jane wanted to give birth to a child as well and wanted her biological child and her adopted child, L, to be biologically related. They thus asked "B" a personal friend of Jane and W's and the biological father of "L" to be their donor. Jane

had been trying to get pregnant since April 2000 with inseminations at home but was unsuccessful and sought medical help in the following year to get pregnant.

In February 2001, Jane visited a fertility clinic in Toronto. The doctor sent her for tests that showed that she had one blocked fallopian tube. He told Jane that because of the law, he could only perform an insemination with semen from an anonymous donor or from a woman's spouse or sexual partner. The doctor could not inseminate Jane using B's fresh semen. Jane was shocked. She was not interested in an anonymous donor because she wanted her children to be biologically related.

The only other option open to her, she was told, was to go to the sperm bank (Repromed) and have B's sperm screened and banked for six months. When she called Repromed to inquire about this she was told that because of the law B would have to be under 40 and heterosexual in order for them to process his sperm. B is neither.

Essentially, the Court of Appeal agreed with the lower court's ruling that the distinction between spouses and sexual partners (who are not regulated by the *Semen Regulations*) and those who are regulated (including LGBTs who wish to participate in assisted conception), is that the former have likely already been exposed to risk, so it makes no sense to regulate the former.

The consequence of this decision is that LGBTs may still participate in assisted conception, however, they will continue to be subject to the *Semen Regulations* and the *Donor Semen Special Access Program (DSSAP)*. The semen donation will have to be frozen for at least 6 months and other criteria from the *Regulations* will apply. Donors who are gay and/or over 40 will have to apply to the federal government's special access program, for permission to have their sperm used in a fertility clinic setting.

The Court of Appeal claimed that the differential treatment of gay men was not unconstitutional but simply an acknowledgment of the greater prevalence of HIV in the gay population. The court did not go on to deal with the more fundamental question of whether it was unconstitutional to apply attributes of gay men as a group to a specific gay man in a known donor setting.

The ruling also did not explore the implications of the *Semen Regulations* for gay men seeking to father children. (Did it even occur to the courts that gay men might also wish to become genetic parents?) The *Semen Regulations* do not discriminate only against lesbian women: the effect of the *Semen Regulations* is to make it impossible for gay men to have their semen collected for AI with a surrogate mother.

January 19 (Ottawa) A gay and lesbian bookstore that wanted to sue Canada Customs over the way it declares books and magazines obscene hit a dead end when the Supreme Court of Canada said the case couldn't get federal funding up front.

Joe Arvay, lawyer for Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium of Vancouver, said the matter is finished unless a Good Samaritan appears with a lot of money. "The case is dead," he said.

In a 7-2 decision, the high court upheld a ruling by the British Columbia Court of Appeals and denied advance funding for the suit, which has been on hold since 2004 pending the money decision. Writing for the majority, Justice Michel Bastarache and Justice Louis LeBel said the case doesn't meet the very special circumstances required to qualify for cash in advance. "It is only a 'rare and exceptional' case that is special enough to warrant an advance costs award," the judgment said.

The ruling said the store hasn't shown that the issues go beyond its own individual interests. The injustice involved "must relate both to the individual applicant and the public at large," the judges wrote. "A litigant whose case, however compelling it may be, is of interest only to the litigant, will be denied an advance costs award."

In 2000, Little Sisters won a partial victory over the way Customs scrutinized imports of gay and lesbian books

and magazines. But it argues that Customs bureaucrats still arbitrarily ban gay and lesbian material as obscene. Arvey said Customs bans thousands of books, comics, DVDs and videos at the border each year, 70 per cent of them aimed at the gay and lesbian community.

"This demonstrates that there continues to be systemic discrimination directed at that community," he said. Joe Deva, owner of the store, called the decision "a setback to the expression rights, equality rights and access to justice for all Canadians."

Little Sisters wanted to sue specifically over the way Customs handled the import of two books and two comics that were banned as obscene in 2001 and 2003. It also wanted a systemic review of the way Customs and its bureaucrats deal with such material.

A lower court judge in B.C. ruled that the case was important enough to warrant having the federal government pay costs up front. The provincial court of appeal reversed that. The store appealed to the Supreme Court and argued last April that it simply can't afford the costs involved.

Cost estimates for the case vary. The lower court allowed for \$300,000, but the federal government said the tab could hit \$2 million. "What the Supreme Court ... said is that only people with deep pockets are ever going to be able to prove that Canada Customs isn't doing its job," Arvey said.

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.

November 30th - With the signing of a new law, **South Africa** becomes the first country in Africa and the fifth in the world to legalize same-sex marriages.

December 3 (Montreal) Stéphane Dion, the new leader of Canada's Liberal Party says he will encourage party members to vote against reopening the debate on same-sex marriage when it comes before the House of Commons. He is poised however to allow his MPs a free vote on the question, musing that imposing party discipline would only hand the Conservative government more leverage on the issue.

December 5 (Ottawa) Canadian Christian activists will make life hell on the next campaign trail for Members of Parliament who break their vows to protect traditional marriage, says a staunch opponent of gay weddings.

December 6 (Ottawa) The Conservatives kick off a controversial debate on a motion to revisit the gay marriage issue, saying they're merely fulfilling a promise to voters.

December 7 (Harare, Zimbabwe) The opposition party "Movement for Democratic Change" tries to force a debate in the Zimbabwean Parliament to pass a motion condemning South Africa for legalizing gay marriage. When the government cuts off the measure, MDC lawmaker Moses Mzila-Ndlovu accuses government leaders of being homosexuals. He declines to name names and later apologizes. Zimbabwe has a long history under Mugabe of oppressing gays and lesbians. In July government passed the "sexual deviancy" law making it a criminal offense for two people of the same sex to hold hands, hug, or kiss.

December 7 (Adelaide, South Australia) The South Australia parliament passes legislation granting same-sex couples most of the state rights accorded to opposite-sex married couples. The legislation also recognizes two people living together in a non-sexual relationship.

December 7 (Rome) Italy's Senate passes a motion calling on the government of Prime Minister Romano Prodi to bring in legislation creating civil unions for gay and lesbian couples.

December 7 (Ottawa) A motion to reopen the issue of same-sex marriage is quickly rejected (175 – 123) by Canada's House of Commons leaving LGBT rights advocates jubilant and opponents accusing the minority Conservative government of betrayal.

The defeat of the measure is not unexpected. Surveys of Members of Parliament leading up to the vote showed that a majority opposed reopening the issue after a series of legal experts advised it would mean using a section of the Constitution, called the notwithstanding clause, that allows the government to override sections of the Constitution.

The majority of Canadians also opposed reopening the issue. A Strategic Counsel poll for the *CTV television Network* and *The Globe and Mail* showed 58 percent of Canadians believe the marriage law should continue to include same-sex couples. Only 36 percent said it should be repealed.

Following the vote Harper says the fight against same-sex marriage is over for good.

December 26 - New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine's signs a civil unions bill into law making **New Jersey** the third state offering same-sex civil unions and the fifth allowing some version of marriage. The law goes into effect **February 19**

December 26 (Dublin, Ireland) A lesbian couple who were wed in Canada are going to Ireland's highest court to have their marriage recognized.

January 3 - The **Czech Republic** reports a boon in civil partnerships since they became legal six months ago, with more than 200 same-sex couples exchanging vows.

January 3 (Geneva) Switzerland records its first civil partnership under a new law that came into effect January.

January 8 - In what may be a lesbian first, a minister weds two inmates at a prison in **Edmonton, Canada**. Both women will be freed late this year.

January 11 (Vatican City) Pope Benedict XVI warns Italian lawmakers the Vatican will use all of its influence to defeat planned legislation to create civil partnerships.

January 12 (Mexico City) Coahuila has become the second state in Mexico to legalize civil unions for same-sex couples.

January 13 (Vatican City) Gay rights protestors take the fight for same-sex marriage to the Pope's front door.

January 17 (Ottawa) The percentage of Canadians marrying has dropped by half over the past 60 years but had it not been for the legalization of same-sex marriage the number would have been even lower according to new government statistics.

January 22 (Cape Town, South Africa) The first same-sex couple to legally marry in South Africa becomes the target of death threats and hate mail.

January 30 (Ottawa) The Canadian government removes an immigration directive that prevented people who

married their same-sex partners abroad from sponsoring their spouse to immigrate to Canada.

Couples who married in Canada and where one partner was Canadian and the other foreign could sponsor that person to immigrate. But in 2004 the government amended the rules to prevent foreign gay marriages from being used for immigration purposes. At the time the government said it feared people who were not gay could use the immigration rules as a ruse to gain entry to the country.

New Democratic Party member Bill Siksay has been fighting the provision for months. "The failure of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to treat legal gay and lesbian marriages performed in jurisdictions outside Canada was clearly discriminatory," said Siksay.

The change means that gay and lesbian couples legally married outside Canada will now be recognized as part of spousal, family class immigration sponsorship applications.

January 30 (Jerusalem, Israel) The Interior Ministry's Jerusalem office records the first same-sex marriage - three months after the country's highest court directed the government to register gay marriages performed outside of Israel.

January 31 (Piedras Negras, Mexico) A lesbian couple register what officials call Mexico's first gay civil union in the northern city of Saltillo.

January 31 (Regina, Saskatchewan) The rights of a same-sex couple to marry face off against the rights of a Saskatchewan marriage commissioner, who says he couldn't perform the service because of religious beliefs.

International News

November 23, 2006 - 365Gay.com (Sao Paulo, Brazil) A judge in Sao Paulo has affirmed a lower court ruling granting a gay couple the right to adopt a five-year old girl.

One of the partners, Vasco Pedro da Gama, had already adopted the girl. His partner, Dorival Pereira de Carvalho sought to have his name added to the birth certificate. In July a judge ruled that there is no valid reason for denying a same-sex male couple the right to adopt children. Two lesbian couples previously had been granted adoption rights, but courts had denied the same right for gay male couples.

The appellate court's ruling ends a year of legal battles for the couple. Their lawyer said the ruling would make it easier for other gay couples to adopt.

Da Gama, 33, and de Carvalho, 41, have been together for 14 years and own a model agency and beauty salon according to *Radio Brazil*. The men met with a psychologist, social assistants and a public prosecutor before going to court, arguing that Brazil's Psychology Council had declared that "homosexuality was not a disease, a disturbance or a perversion."

The men say that they would like to adopt a second girl, between the ages of two and four.

In Brazil, civil unions between same-sex couples are allowed in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. LGBT rights groups are fighting to extend that to other states.

January 9 - 365Gay.com (Stockholm) A Swedish judge, ruling in two cases involving lesbian couples has ruled that the non-biological mothers cannot adopt their partners' children. In each case the birth mother had been artificially inseminated. And in each case the birth mother's partner had been approved for adoption by social services authorities.

But in separate rulings Judge Mats Orstadius rejected the applications saying that the couples were trying to bypass Sweden's law allowing children to identify biological parents.

"It is not acceptable to use the institution of adoption to in this way circumvent such a basic right of the child. The benefits that the child might gain from the adoption still do not warrant its approval," Orstadius wrote in both rulings.

In both cases the couples are registered under Sweden's civil partner law.

The women called the ruling "incredulous" since the fathers were unknown sperm donors. "There is no father, only a donor. That's why I'm trying to adopt," said one of the women.

An expert in family law at Uppsala University called the ruling flawed. "It feels like the court is somehow trying to punish the women because they did something that is contrary to the interests of the child. But it is doing this in a way that is also contrary to the interests of the child," said Dr. Anna Singer.

Both couples said they would appeal the ruling. In previous cases judges have approved adoptions of partners' children.

January 16 (Moscow) Gay rights leaders in Moscow filed a civil rights lawsuit against the city of Moscow and its conservative mayor Juri Lushkov at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. **Story:** <http://365gay.com/Newscon07/01/012907moscow.htm>

January 22 - (Pink News/ IGLHRC news) (London, New York) Recent calls from British gay rights group *OutRage!* to pile international pressure on the Nigerian government have been blasted as unhelpful and counterproductive by New York-based NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW). African LGBTI Human Rights Defenders as well have issued a public statement of warning against participation in campaigns concerning LGBTI issues in Africa led by *Outrage!*

At the end of December and in early January, Peter Tatchell co-founder of *Outrage!* urged gay and lesbian people to contact the Nigerian government to show their opposition to draconian new laws aimed at outlawing same-sex marriage and restricting other gay rights. Under the bill which was tabled in early 2006, a penalty of five years imprisonment would be imposed on any person who "goes through the ceremony of marriage with a person of the same sex," or who "performs, witnesses, aids or abets the ceremony of same sex marriage," or who "is involved in the registration of gay clubs, societies and organizations, sustenance, procession or meetings, publicity and public show of same sex amorous relationship directly or indirectly in public and in private."

Mr. Tatchell asserted that the anti-gay legislation was actively being debated in the Nigerian Parliament and could become law imminently. *Human Rights Watch* have attacked Mr. Tatchell and *OutRage!*, saying that there is no evidence that the law is about to be passed, and that Nigerian activists hope that the legislation will not become law at all. In fact, the political situation in the country is about to change, with the election of a new President.

"There is no evidence right now that the bill is moving forward. It has been stalled in committee in the legislature for months. While some action on it is still technically possible, the legislature is now winding down and readying for elections," says HRW's Scott Long. "They're not likely to take up the bill unless something, such as an international campaign, pushes them to."

Mr. Long's stated that gay activists in Nigeria are angry that their strategy, which included asking HRW and other international rights groups to refrain from commenting on the bill, is being undermined. They feel that the

less publicity the bill gets outside Nigeria, the less likely it will ever become law. "There is no excuse for sending out an alert like this without first getting a very clear and factual sense of the political situation in Nigeria, and without talking to, and evaluating the opinions of, all the activists, especially those who have been lobbying the legislature and leading the campaign."

In a public statement African activists state " *Outrage!* has repeatedly disrespected the lives, damaged the struggle, and endangered the safety of African Human Rights Defenders. Therefore, we urge the public not to participate in any LGBTI campaigns regarding Africa that are led or influenced by Peter Tatchell or *Outrage!*, as they repeatedly put our lives in danger through their reckless, non-factual, and inflammatory press releases, letters, and calls to action".

The message further urges people to consult "reliable sources that investigate cases before they report, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI), and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC).

Miscellaneous News

November 23, 2006 (tetu.com)(**Madrid, Spain**) Project Daphne II has been launched in Madrid. The goal of the study is to understand the real situation of children with gay and lesbian parents, in their families, at school, and in their daily lives. Three countries will participate in the study: Great Britain, Italy and Spain through their specialized groups (*The Flag* in England, AGEDO in Italy and FELGT (the National Federation of Lesbians, Gays and Transsexuals) of Spain. Universities in Barcelona, Turin and London will carry out the research. The goal of this European project is to combat violence toward youth, women and children.

December 6, 365Gay.com (New York City) Conservative Judaism has decided to permit the ordination of openly gay rabbis and allow congregations to hold commitment ceremonies for same-sex couples, but at the same time upheld the traditional belief that homosexuality is wrong.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, which interprets religious law for Conservative Judaism made the divided ruling at a meeting in New York City. The committee was considering five separate proposals on how the Conservative movement should deal with gay issues. Two opinions upheld earlier prohibitions on homosexual activity, but the third endorsed commitment ceremonies and the ordination of gay rabbis, while retaining the biblical ban on male sodomy. Two other opinions that were under consideration, which would have removed all restrictions on gay activity, were declared "*takano!*", or substantial breaks from tradition that would require an absolute majority of the committee members for adoption.

The vote was widely anticipated as an indication of the movement's "big umbrella" approach to diverse practices within one movement.

Reform Jews, as well as the smaller Reconstructionist branch of Judaism, settled the question years ago, allowing partnered gays to become rabbis. The Orthodox movement bars gays and women from ordination.

December 21 (Buffalo, New York) The University of Buffalo's Research Institute on Addictions is preparing to embark on what is generally regarded as the biggest study ever undertaken on the role of gender and sexual identity in alcohol use and victimization.

Story:

<http://365gay.com/Newscon06/12/122106alcohol.htm>

December 21 (Washington) Vice President Dick Cheney's wife, Lynne, is dismissing the fuss over her openly gay daughter's pregnancy, which has rankled conservative groups.

Story: <http://365gay.com/Newscon06/12/122106cheney.htm>

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 2007 :

◆ Saturday March 17th at 11 :00 a.m..
SUGARING OFF PARTY

On **SATURDAY** March 17th 2007 at 11 a.m., the **Lesbian Mothers Association** and the **Papa-daddy Group** will have a **SUGARING-OFF PARTY** at **La Sucrerie de la Montagne (Rigaud)**.

For the kids and adults there's a **full traditional lunch**, **horse-drawn sleigh rides**, a **guided tour of the sugar shack and bakery**, **traditional music** played by their singer-musicians as well as **25 kms of easy wooded hiking trails**.

Our space must be reserved in advance so if you have not already filled out your form please call Mona at 514-846-1543.

APRIL 2007:

◆ Saturday April 21 from 1 - 4 p.m.
DISCUSSION GROUP : NATURAL CHILDBIRTH, YES IT'S POSSIBLE !
Animated by Johanne Cadorette, Nathalie Bisson and Dr. H el ene Rousseau

Adults only: The goal of this frank and informal discussion is to demystify natural childbirth and to inform those that would like to have this experience about what resources are available (*maison de naissance*, birth companions, home-birthing, pain-control techniques, etc.). The workshop will be animated by a mom who delivered her child naturally, a mid-wife, as well as a doctor who encourages natural childbirth. Other moms will also be present to recount their experiences. For parents and future parents. Bilingual discussion.

Location: CCGLM (2075, rue Plessis, between Ontario and Sherbrooke) (Metro Papineau)

MAY 2007:

◆ Saturday May 26 at 7:00 p.m.
DISCUSSION GROUP : Blended Families
Animated by Manon Thivierge and Julie Simard

Adults only: The reality of families with lesbian moms also includes the possibility of blended families. Whether the kids were conceived in a heterosexual or lesbian relationship, families do breakdown. The themes of this discussion will include: How do we announce the separation to our kids? What resources are available to us? How can we facilitate joint custody arrangements? What is the role of our new lover in the family? There are as many answers as there are different families! Manon Thivierge and Julie Simard will share their own experiences which are common to so many others who have gone through a break-up. A family mediator will also be present to share her expertise.

Location: CCGLM (2075, rue Plessis, between Ontario and Sherbrooke) (Metro Papineau)

BULLETIN BOARD:

◆ Hi, my name is **Zoyla Batres-Garcia** and I am a 29-year-old single Guatemalan mom with 2 kids: a 6-year-old daughter and a 1-year-old son. I'm looking for friendship and love and someone to share the pleasures of life. If you are interested please give me a call at **514-252-9605**.

♦ **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.

♦ Bonjour, J'ai 43 ans. Je veux rencontrer quelqu'une sérieuse-d'amour. J'ai un garçon de 7 ans. **Line 514-678-8935**

♦ **L'association des lesbiennes aux feminielles**: L'Association lesbienne vous invite à ses soirées le premier et le troisième mardis du mois, de 19h à 21h30 au CLSC situé au 411 Hotel Dieu à **Chicoutimi**. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adressent aux femmes lesbiennes qui désiraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un échange positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer! Informations: **418-550-2259**.

♦ Recherchons femmes en couple avec enfant(s), ou désirant devenir mères, habitant **Joliette** ou ses environs, pour échanger sur nos expériences de parents. Nous venons d'aménager dans la région et cherchons à créer un réseau d'amies, bien précieux que nous n'avons pu transporter avec nous de Montréal... Nous sommes un couple lesbien début trentaine avec 3 enfants. Communiquez avec nous à: neige-vive@hotmail.com

♦ **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**

♦ Moi, **Nancy** 31 ans, ma conjointe **Chantal-Cindy**, 26 ans aimerions développer amitié avec des femmes lesbiennes ou couples dans les mêmes âges environs pour activités- discussions- partages d'expériences... Nous avons pas d'ordinateur et habitons loin de Montréal (**Terrebonne**), une 40aine de minutes. C'est difficile pour nous de se faire des amis où d'aller en ville souvent, nous aimerions communiquer par la poste ou par téléphone avec des gens qui sont dans la même situation que nous. **450-477-4505**.

ADOPTIONS AND BIRTHS

♦ **Abby and Leigh Karos** are thrilled to announce the birth of their baby boy, **Elias Felix Karos**, born December 2, 2006 in Gatineau Hospital. He was plenty big: 7 lbs, 13 oz. Both moms and baby are doing well.

♦ **Nathalie Tremblay and Susie Mintzberg** are happy to announce the birth of **Tomas Stefan** who was born on Susie's birthday, on the actual due date, Sunday January 28th 2007. He weighed 7 lb 11 oz and measured 19,5 cm. The two moms are very happy (but a bit tired). And Laura is thrilled to have a little brother (bébé Tomas, in fact) who has a "petit-petit-nez et de tout petits doigts"...We think she is in love. Elle lui caresse la tête quand il pleure et lui tient la main quand on change sa couche.

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.

♦ Would you like to spend Sunday mornings with the **Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation**? We're a warm, liberal, socially-active congregation in the West Island with a progressive program for children and teens, plus weddings, naming and dedication ceremonies etc. Services are mainly in English, but this is very flexible. We're at **202 Woodside Road in Beaconsfield** (rear entrance of Beaconsfield United Church). Web Site: www.luuc.org (site has map)

Tel: 514-695-3031; E-mail: lakeshoreuu@qc.aibn.com; Service Time: 10:30 a.m. See you there!

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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♦ **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 LMA. **J. Freed, (514) 489-8633, www.jfreed.ca**

♦ **Furniture Restoration - Lise Kuhn Studio**
Artistic and traditional furniture restoration, hand finishes, gilding, canning
514-807-2277
www.atelierlisekuhn.com
info@atelierlisekuhn.com

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