

# Planning Help for Caregivers

August 2008

With the aging population come challenges to our society in providing adequate care, not only to those who are losing their autonomy, but also to those close to them who are providing the care they need. These latter, predominantly family members and predominantly female, are the caregivers who provide most of the help necessary so that the elderly are able to stay in their own homes as long as possible.

But the workload on these caregivers is tremendous. Many of them are the spouses of the people they are caring for and are themselves aging. Most of the others are the children of the people needing care, and many of them are approaching old age themselves as their parents are living longer and longer. Another group caught in this bind is that cohort that delayed having their children until their late 30s and early 40s. They are faced with looking after dependent children and dependent parents at the same time.

*Le Conseil des aînés du Québec* (the Quebec Seniors' Council) has produced a study of the situation (in French only) that is available on their website at [www.conseil-des-aines.qc.ca](http://www.conseil-des-aines.qc.ca) in both its complete 145-page version and in a 12-page summary. The concerns expressed are that the support systems can be improved to help the elderly who want to remain in their own homes and their caregivers. Despite grand announcements of policies, the funding has never been made available on the scale required to actually make a significant difference. As the baby-boom generation ages, this will put severe strain on the systems with more people needing help and fewer available to provide it. This is true not only for those people remaining in their own homes but also for those going through the progressive steps of seniors' residences, assisted-living facilities and long-term care institutions. Even in these institutional settings, in many cases unpaid family members continue to provide a degree of care.

*L'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux des Laurentides* (the Laurentian health and social services agency) and the *Table régionale des aînés des Laurentides* (Laurentian seniors' roundtable) want to hear from caregivers in order to help plan programmes that will lighten the burden on them as well as provide more and better-adapted services to the residents of the Laurentians who are losing their ability to look after themselves.

They are conducting meetings throughout the region to listen to the needs and concerns expressed directly by caregivers. A number of French-language ones have already been held and they are now organizing to consult the English-speaking population of the territory this autumn.

A wide range of participants with different specific needs and challenges will allow government agencies and community groups to better understand what is required. If you are one of these caregivers, you are invited to come and share your experience. The consultations will be informal and confidential and will be coordinated by an independent resource person. You will be encouraged to speak and will be listened to non-judgementally.

If you live in the Argenteuil MRC, you are invited to attend a meeting in Lachute in mid-September. If you are interested and able to attend, please contact Martine Ayotte at 450-562-3761, extension 2332, before September 12. MRC des Laurentides residents can contact Suzanne Rivard at 819-324-4000, extension 4688, by October 10 for the meeting that will take place in Ste. Agathe on October 21. Normand Aubé is responsible for the MRC des Pays d'en Haut. Please call him at 450-227-1571, extension 247, by September 19 for their meeting to be held in late September.

Sheila Eskenazi, President, English Communities Committee of the CSSS des Sommets