

# Seniors' Forum

June 2009

On Thursday May 14th, I was privileged to attend an all-day forum in Mont Tremblant to discuss the needs of the aging population of the Laurentians, the first one I have attended that actively anticipated the needs of English seniors.

Organized by the *Table de Concertation des personnes âgées et du Soutien à domicile de la MRC des Laurentides* (Seniors and Homecare Support Roundtable of the MRC des Laurentides) along with FADOQ, the federation of Golden Age clubs, this meeting brought interested parties together to learn about the challenges our communities face, and to come up with suggestions for how to deal with them.

The event began with a presentation by Jean Desnoyers, the Director of PALV, the department at the CSSS des Sommets charged with designing and delivering programmes to those losing autonomy as a result of aging. He gave us an overview of the demographic profile of seniors in the region, including projections for the next number of years that show that a higher than average proportion of our population will be older as compared to the province as a whole. By 2015, 20% of the population of the MRC des Laurentides will be over 65. He also listed the available housing for people who are ready to move out of their homes or are in need of care, and the numbers are pretty slim.

A short documentary followed, prepared by retired NFB filmmaker Gilles Blais. He attended meetings supporting homecare givers in Mont Tremblant and followed one woman in her home while she looked after her wheelchair-bound husband, a stroke victim. The emotions displayed by the people in the film, as they described their lives, tied to a loved one who is no longer the person that he once was brought the problems home to the viewers in a way that a cold recounting of the facts never can. It also described the need for support systems and the strength and courage the participants give each other.

After the film, the group broke up into workshop groups, and, in a major departure for this kind of event, one of the afternoon workshop groups was reserved for English-language participants to discuss the particular needs of our communities in our own language. Although most circumstances transcend language boundaries, there are some that are specific to the English communities, particularly the delivery of services in English and in a culturally sensitive manner.

The purpose of this forum was to bring the issues to light. Each workshop group kept notes of all the ideas, issues and concerns and these were gathered by the organizers who gave a quick summary of the topics addressed in the first two workshops at the end of the event. They will take all the workshop notes, along with the individual evaluation sheets that all participants filled out, and study them in order to prepare for the second half of this process, the planning for the future, that will take place on October 15, 2009. I'll let you know the results of that meeting in the November issue.

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