

Revision of the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*: it's high time for change!

On May 31, the Minister responsible for the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, Roger Bertrand, entrusted me with the task of drafting a bill amending the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*. The Minister requested that this undertaking be supported by structured, constructive dialogue with partners from the associative movement and the various service networks. Mr Bertrand intends to table this bill with a view to having it passed by the National Assembly this fall.

The context

The *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*, which established the OPHQ, was passed unanimously by the National Assembly of Québec in June 1978. Since that time, there has been no in-depth revision of this piece of legislation, despite the fact that social inclusion of persons with disabilities has progressed enormously and the OPHQ's activities have changed considerably.

For example, the needs of persons with disabilities in the areas of transportation and accessibility have become clearer since 1978, given that they are now more integrated into society. Specialized transit services have been implemented in almost all regions of Québec, although some areas are better served than others. Improved standards for barrier-free design and renovation of public buildings have gradually been introduced, but older buildings still present barriers for the disabled. The needs of persons with disabilities and the obstacles to their social inclusion, in the areas of employment, education and access to various services, have also evolved over the past 25 years.

Responsibility for administering the various components of the OPHQ's material aid program, developed during the 1980s, has gradually been transferred to the appropriate government departments and agencies. In April 2001, the OPHQ's Vocational Integration Contract (VIC) program was transferred to Emploi-Québec. The hiring program, which targets employers with 50 or more employees, has not been in operation since 1996.

Similarly, the powers and duties of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec have evolved. In February 1993, the Conseil des ministres entrusted the OPHQ with new responsibilities, mandating it to promote the service program, experiment with new goods and services, measure the progress of disabled persons' social integration, identify the obstacles thereto and make the appropriate recommendations to the government.

Too often, unfortunately, the means required to achieve full social inclusion are still lacking. How many policies are developed and decisions made without taking persons with disabilities into account? Why, 20 years after the International Year for Disabled Persons and the social mobilization it triggered, must the importance of adapting policies, programs and approaches to prevent the exclusion and marginalization of a considerable proportion of Québec's population be constantly recalled? This plea to the government to grant priority to persons with disabilities in all of its decisions and orientations has been made many times before; in fact, in 1999, it was one of the OPHQ's main avenues for fostering the social inclusion of persons with disabilities. This message is thus still very timely, and putting it into practice frequently calls for a change in attitudes and values.

The process

In order to meet the deadlines set by the Minister and the legislators, a bill was sent to Mr Bertrand during the summer so that he could table it before the government's executive council. This bill is based on a white paper produced in February 2001 at the request of Pauline Marois, who was Minister responsible for the OPHQ at the time. This white paper, in turn, was the follow-up to a draft bill which was tabled in 2000 before the executive council, but which went no further.

Given the summer hiatus, the OPHQ was unable to hold consultations before forwarding the bill to the Minister. However, it did gather comments from its main partners in September. The Minister must table the bill before the National Assembly by mid-November in order to enable a parliamentary committee to pursue deliberations.

I sincerely hope that this bill, which has seen many ups and downs, will finally be passed. The Act, in its revised form, will enable persons with disabilities to be better served by the government, which will in turn be better equipped to assist them and their families when they encounter obstacles to their integration.

For more information on the content of this bill (in French only), visit our Web site at www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca and click on "Quoi de neuf."

INTERVIEW

An historic medal

Known as the "Inclusive Games," this year's Commonwealth Games were indisputably champion in a new event, namely, the inclusion of disabled athletes. The Games, which were held from July 25 to August 4, 2002, in Manchester, England, were the first to offer eight official events for disabled athletes.

Chantal Petitclerc, who competed in these Inclusive Games, was the first athlete to win an official gold medal in her event, the 800-metre wheelchair race, a landmark achievement in the history of the integration of persons with disabilities. We met with Ms Petitclerc.

L'intégration: You've participated in numerous international competitions. In what way were these Commonwealth Games different for you?

Chantal Petitclerc: Since the Olympics in Los Angeles, wheelchair racing has been a demonstration sport in major meets such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games and the World Championships. This was the first time it was presented as an official event, like all other able-bodied sports.

Only the 800-metre wheelchair event was presented as an official sport. Why? Because this was the event that was first chosen as a demonstration sport. It's not necessarily realistic to try and present all track-and-field events for both able-bodied and disabled athletes. The 800 metres was selected because it's the event that the majority of people are interested in.

Is it important for you to have won a medal there?

Oh yes, I was very happy to win; it was a great race. Because it was an official event, my medal is even more precious, but the fact that it became an official sport at Manchester is even more important to me than having won the gold.

What does it mean to you to be the first athlete with a disability to have won a gold medal in an official competition?

I've been practising this sport for almost 14 years now, and I've performed well in the past three Paralympics and the World Championships, so when I realize that my name will go down in sports history, although it may not mean a lot to most people, I feel very proud and honoured. A great deal of progress has been made in disabled sport and wheelchair racing events. The athletes are more and more committed and the level of performance reflects that commitment. It's an appropriate recognition of this movement, which began over 50 years ago.

In your opinion, will what happened at these Commonwealth Games have an impact on the next Olympics, to be held in Athens in 2004?

We, as athletes, are never consulted about such things. The Olympic movement is reserved for a favoured few; decisions are made at political levels to which we don't have access. It's obvious that wheelchair racing doesn't have high visibility with major sponsors like other sports such as beach volleyball, for example. And the Paralympics Committee has to decide what it wants and commit to supporting this event properly. In short, things are difficult and we athletes have very little say in what's going on. We feel rather powerless and often a bit frustrated too. It's the type of thing we won't know until six months or a year before the Olympics are actually held.

The experience at the Commonwealth Games won't do any harm, especially since everything went well, we had a good race, and the spectators, the media and the entire population of Manchester were very supportive. The whole experience was very positive. But people have to understand that the Commonwealth Games were not a test for the Olympics; the two meets are very different.

But surely this experiment will interest the Paralympics Committee, won't it?

Yes, but don't forget that the Committee also represents all the other types of disabilities, and not everyone is in favour of integrating the events. There are many different schools of thought. Some people feel that the Paralympics movement is sufficient unto itself. I agree that the Paralympics is important, but I also think that giving an event official status at a major meet for able-bodied athletes doesn't take anything away from it. There are a lot of politics within the Paralympics itself. Some people don't see the purpose of or interest in participating in the Olympics; others say, "Why wheelchair racing, why not other sports for persons with disabilities?" I suppose there's also a certain degree of jealousy.

In your opinion, should all Paralympics events be integrated into regular meets?

No. The Paralympics movement is still relatively young, and there are sports that have achieved a certain level of excellence, while others are still developing and still others will never reach such a level. The phenomenon of categories at the Paralympic Games is very complicated. You have events for amputees, events for the blind... It's difficult, with so many different categories, to have a sufficient number of athletes in each one and achieve an Olympic-level calibre of performance. I feel that wheelchair racing has all the right stuff: it's one of the oldest sports, and therefore one of the most developed; it's also a sport practised by numerous athletes who are sponsored, paid, and who earn

their livelihood all over the world as professionals. Not all Paralympic sports have progressed to this degree.

Do you think that this recognition of wheelchair racing will have repercussions on the lives of persons with disabilities in general?

Yes, although our main goal is to promote sports rather than social inclusion as such. Most athletes at my level train with the same energy and priorities as any able-bodied athlete, and I think this image is definitely a positive one for all persons with disabilities, even in areas other than sports. Persons with disabilities have almost always been portrayed as “victims,” in a very negative light, thanks to telethons and even TV shows. The images associated with the disabled were frequently images of need. It was undoubtedly necessary at the time, but now wheelchair racing depicts a very strong, physical image, with a lot of positive potential. I find that interesting. The fact that it’s visible thanks to the media, that it’s become an official event, means that there are no more barriers. People don’t see a difference between us and other athletes anymore; they just focus on assessing the potential to win. The fact that we’re in a wheelchair becomes secondary.

Do you have any plans once you retire from competition?

I’m 32 years old. I want to compete in the 2004 Olympics and then we’ll see. I don’t have any definite career plans, but I do have some experience in the field of communications: I’ve done a bit of radio and TV commentating, which I enjoy very much. But I may do something different; I have a degree in history and I may choose to work in that sector if I feel like it. I’m not worried. I’m not thinking too far ahead at the moment.

Chantal Petitclerc, congratulations on your outstanding performance and your gold medal that will go down in history.

Thank you very much.

Chantal Petitclerc was interviewed by Micheline Thibault.

The transition from school to active life

After school... what’s next?

When the time comes for disabled students to leave school, are they well-prepared for adulthood? Statistics would seem to show that making the transition is not easy. According to a survey conducted by Québec’s department of education (MEQ)¹ in 1997, only 27.7% of disabled youngsters succeed in finding work one year after leaving secondary school, compared with 42.4% of young people who leave school without obtaining a diploma. Of this proportion, the poll shows that three out of four of those who do find work received assistance (from an employment centre, a specialized organization, etc.), or found a job after having completed an apprenticeship or training session.

In general, leaving school is synonymous with seeking work, but employment isn’t the sole component of active life. Recreational activities, for example, are particularly important in creating a social network. However, as shown in the MEQ survey, the

recreational activities practised by disabled youth, regardless of their disability, do not necessarily involve social contact, since listening to music and watching TV are very popular. Moreover, these youngsters have little or no contact with friends, contrary to other young people leave school without obtaining a diploma. And the more severe their disability, the less frequent are their contacts with their peers. It may thus be advisable to consider the transition process as including dimensions other than work, such as the transformation of the social network or preparation for the practice of recreational activities.

The problem lies in the lack of continuity and linkage between the actions of the various networks (education, employment and rehabilitation), which means that several young people with disabilities find themselves inactive at the end of their schooling. Ill-prepared for active living, they may even forget certain things they have learned. In 1998, Jacques Pelletier, in a report prepared at the request of the OPHQ, observed that cooperation between schools and their partners who support persons with disabilities in their daily and professional lives is insufficient and must be given priority.²

Support for the transition process

With regard to this situation, the OPHQ, in its 2001-2004 strategic plan, set the objective of developing a harmonized vision of the problem of linkage between the main sectors of intervention for persons with disabilities (health and social services, education, employment) and possible solutions. To this end, the OPHQ intends to organize a consultation process with the various players concerned. This should lead to the drafting of a report that may eventually serve as a reference framework for the development of a transition process.

In order to fuel the debate of the working committee, the OPHQ enumerated those experiments carried out in Québec³ (approximately fifteen) that focus on a coordinated school-active life transition process. It also looked at what is being done elsewhere (measures, policies and legislation), both in the other provinces and in the United States. Comparatively speaking, and despite the experiments being conducted, it was observed that Québec lags behind when it comes to the implementation of such a process.

Québec does have the legislative tools required to implement such a process, namely, the individualized education plan (IEP) provided for in the *Education Act* and the service program provided for in the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*. However, it must be conceded that it is exceedingly rare that IEPs are geared to a transition process, or that disabled students contact the OPHQ in order to obtain a service program that fosters such a transition. Unfortunately, in most cases, disabled youngsters who leave school simply wait for another network to take them under its wing.

The overview of experiments conducted in various regions of Québec has shown that certain elements need to be defined in order to properly structure a transition-based approach, including the direction and scope of the transition process (what should be worked on and how); the partners involved and the coordination of the approach (who does what); the target clientele (who and what age group); the level of flexibility of the approach (single model or adapted to the person or the context); the type of supervision (legal, political or voluntary); the philosophy underpinning the intervention approach

(management or empowerment); and the operational structure and the follow-up (with or without a support structure).

These elements are already being studied by the joint committee set up by the OPHQ last spring. This committee is composed of representatives of the government departments of education, health and social services, and employment and social solidarity, of the associative movement, and of the Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'œuvre pour personnes handicapées (labour adjustment committee for persons with disabilities). Once the partners have agreed on a transition model, it will be submitted for widespread consultation to the various networks concerned (education, health and employment). If everything goes as planned, this consultation could be held before the year is out.

Given that certain models have already been experimented with and have shown positive results, it would be advisable to implement the school-active life transition process on a widespread basis to enable young adults who are leaving school to realize their full potential.

By Micheline Thibault

1 MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION DU QUÉBEC, L'insertion sociale et l'intégration socio-professionnelle des jeunes handicapés, September 1997, 133 pages.

2 Jacques PELLETIER, L'intégration au travail des personnes handicapées soutenues par les établissements sociosanitaires, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, March 1998, page 31.

3 Pierre Berger, La transition de l'école à la vie active – Document de support à la réflexion pour l'établissement d'une pratique des plans de transition, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, January 2002, 25 pages (working document).

PIC: from project to program

As a result of the needs expressed by an association of parents of young people with an intellectual impairment (the Regroupement de parents de personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle de Montréal), a project was submitted to the Centre de réadaptation Gabrielle-Major in Montréal to ensure a smoother transition for these youth between school and social and vocational life. Many of the parents, ill-prepared for the next step, feared the end of their children's secondary studies. Unfamiliar with the rehabilitation services offered, they spent precious hours searching in vain for someplace that offered services for their children.

Sylvie Lessard, special educator in the socio-vocational program at the Gabrielle-Major rehabilitation centre, was sent on-site to assess the situation in order to better prepare the school-active life transition process. It rapidly became apparent that needs were felt not only by the parents and the students, but also by the teachers. "I realized that people were isolated from one another, and that a lot of informal data in the parents' and teachers' possession were getting lost along the way."

Gradually, the project took shape and some fifteen students from two special schools in eastern Montréal, along with their parents, are now participating on a voluntary basis.

Most of the young participants have a mild, moderate or severe intellectual impairment, while some are autistic or have pervasive developmental disorders. Several partners are also involved: parents' associations, schools, specialized labour-force services, CLSCs, roundtables, rehabilitation centres and the Comité d'adaptation de la main d'œuvre (CAMO) pour personnes handicapées. The latter provides the services of a research officer in order to document the theoretical and methodological research and draft a report, explains Mario Breton of the CAMO. He adds that the report will confirm that the transition process plays an important role in harmonizing services. However, many deplore that the experimentation was not conducted more systematically, given that the schools were allowed to use their own material.

What's a PIC?

The PIC (integrated continuity plan) is part of the individualized education plan (IEP) designed by the school for each student. Once they turn 18, the young people and their families begin a process that lasts three years and prepares them for this transition that marks the end of their secondary studies. The idea is to link the interventions of the various partners (school - rehabilitation centre - job market) with the young person's socio-vocational life project, so that he or she can see it through. First, the student's aspirations, abilities and strengths must be identified, and then a coherent IEP leading to the realization of his or her project must be drawn up. The rehabilitation centre's role throughout the process is very important, because it connects the partners.

The first year focuses on the individual and consists in developing links with the student and his or her family. They are put into contact with the representative of the rehabilitation centre, who becomes a reference for them for the next three years. This representative participates in the IEP, provides information about the services offered by the rehabilitation centre, the role of the CLSCs and the resources available, and suggests solutions. Sylvie Lessard feels that this direct contact with the family and the student is essential. "I'm a resource person who accompanies them in their process. For example, I may be called upon to go to the family home in the evening to help the mother fill out a request for the CLSC, because she doesn't know what to ask for or how to ask for it," she explains.

At the end of the first year, the parents already know what to expect, that there is a waiting list for rehabilitation services, that they'll have to look for alternatives and, according to Ms Lessard, that if they're willing to take the risk with the school and their child, they'll be able to go a bit further in order to ultimately receive services. These parents are aware that, if their child has already pinpointed his or her interests and developed certain skills, he or she won't require as much supervision and will thus be able to obtain services more rapidly.

The second year focuses on the youngster's life project. Sylvie Lessard explains, "If the students are able to express themselves, we try to help them determine what their interests are and what they want. If not, we rely on what we observe in their daily lives, what they seem to enjoy and in what context they're happy, in order to design a life project." This approach to exploring interests and strengths can be confirmed in a training session or other contexts. Certain partners can be enlisted in order to harmonize interventions to determine ways of helping the students to achieve their aspirations.

Finally, the last year sums up what has been learned. While still at school, the young people complete their training sessions. The parents and the teachers help them pinpoint the experiences they liked and disliked. At the end of the year, guidance counselling is given and the appropriate steps undertaken.

In all cases, the relevant elements of the student's school file are forwarded to the resource people who take over, in order to ensure that subsequent efforts go smoothly. "I help the teacher compile the file to ensure that it is as complete as possible. But especially, I meet with the parents to ask them what they've learned from their child's transition process because, when they apply to the rehabilitation centre or elsewhere, I won't be around anymore to help them," explains Sylvie Lessard. Depending on the case, the young person may register in a rehabilitation centre through the CLSC or a specialized labour-force service or, depending on his or her capabilities, opt for adult education. Student who prefer recreational activities to work are directed toward services that meet their needs. As Sylvie Lessard points out, "Students don't necessarily have to register with rehabilitation centres."

Spin-offs

The PIC has thus developed from project to program, and responsibility for its implementation is assumed by the Centre de réadaptation Gabrielle-Major, which assigns a resource person thereto and works in close collaboration with the schools. This experiment can thus be considered successful. What's the secret? "It works thanks to our approach, which is customized to each individual and based on respect," answers Sylvie Lessard, adding that common sense and knowing the participants well also plays a big part. The fact that all partners have a better understanding of each other's work also makes their interventions more efficient. Indeed, adjustments have been made to each resource person's role, to ensure that there is no duplication or overlapping. Also, due to the staff turnover rate in the schools, those responsible for the PIC have realized the importance of holding an information meeting with teachers at the start of each school year.

According to Ms Lessard, the only drawback is the parents' disappointment. After having worked with their children on this program for three years, they are often forced to wait for rehabilitation services for up to another two years, in some cases. "The parents find it hard," she admits. However, given that they have become much better informed thanks to the PIC, they are less reluctant to defend their rights. The rehabilitation centres are aware of this and accept the consequences, relying on the fact that "it's public opinion that brings about change." There is greater benefit in informing the parents and equipping them to act than in leaving them in the dark. As Ms Lessard so aptly explains, "We work with people, not files. There's a world of difference."

Five years after its inception, the PIC is used in seven schools in the area served by the Centre de réadaptation Gabrielle-Major, and Ms Lessard has trained other special educators at the centre to accompany families throughout the three-year program. Other rehabilitation centres on the Island of Montréal (Lisette-Dupras, L'intégrale, Miriam) are working to implement the PIC. In fact, schools are eager to use it because their students receive services from different rehabilitation centres, and those who benefit from the PIC definitely have a head start! In addition, the school boards of the Centre-du-Québec region are experimenting with a school-active life transition approach based on the PIC, with the participation of 17 students who have different types of disabilities.

The OPHQ, in partnership with various resources, is working to devise and experiment with different transition models in the regions of Estrie, Outaouais, Laval, Laurentides and Centre-du-Québec. Some of these models target students with motor impairments, while others are designed for students with mental health problems. In Laval, for example, the OPHQ and its partners are preparing a reference framework intended to standardize service coordination and ensure a transition plan for the students. The school board has even expressed its intention of including provisions pertaining to the implementation of a transition plan in the service organization policy for students with disabilities or learning difficulties.

All these experiences will result in one or more models that can be implemented in virtually any context. Sylvie Lessard is convinced of the merits of such an approach. “It’s been demonstrated that when you work as partners, everyone’s a winner.” Sound familiar?

By Micheline Thibault

Continuing education for adults

A policy and an action plan

Lifelong learning can be an interesting alternative for certain disabled youngsters. In May, the Minister of State for Education and Employment, Sylvain Simard, and the Minister for Employment, Agnès Maltais, launched the first government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training, along with an action plan.

This policy centres on four main orientations:

- to provide basic education for adults;
- to maintain and continually upgrade adults’ competencies;
- to acknowledge prior learning and competencies through official recognition;
- to remove obstacles to access and retention.

Over the next five years, the Québec government will invest over \$450 million in the implementation of the action plan that accompanies this policy. A series of measures will be set out to promote basic education, improve reception and referral services in adult education centres, develop tools for the recognition of prior learning and implement a loan program for part-time studies. Thanks to these measures, the government aims to increase the number of people enrolled in adult education and reduce the illiteracy rate in Québec.

Several partners are involved in carrying out this action plan. L’Office des personnes handicapées du Québec will participate in a campaign to promote basic education, to be launched by the Ministère de l’Éducation and the Ministère de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, and will reach agreements with its partners in the field of education concerning the services to be offered to persons with disabilities. The OPHQ will also participate in the interministerial table for the recognition of prior learning and competencies that will be created by these same departments. Furthermore, it will work to step up awareness activities among employers and disabled employees by speaking out in favour of continuing education for persons with disabilities.

These measures will take into account the needs of persons with disabilities, whether by improving reception and referral services or adapting adult education services. The principle of “reasonable accommodation” will be applied in terms of access to places where training is provided, appropriate instructional approaches, adapted learning materials and interpretation services. Support for ongoing training of workers with disabilities in adapted work centres will be given special attention by partners in job-related continuing education and training. In addition, the Ministère de l'Éducation will adapt instruments for the recognition of basic schooling and other learning to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

One of the first concrete results of the implementation of the Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training is the creation of the first Québec Adult Education Week, which will be held from October 27 to November 1, 2002. The theme chosen is “A thousand and one ways to learn.” This activity aims to acknowledge adult education and continuing education and training while raising public awareness of the importance of instruction and emphasizing the pleasure learning can bring.

By Gaby Audet and Micheline Thibault

Overview

Right turns on red lights – a bitter disappointment

As we went to press, we learned, to our disappointment, of the decision taken by Serge Ménard, Minister of Transport, to authorize right turns on red lights. On September 11, 2002, the Minister gave the go-ahead to the development of an action plan aimed at legalizing safe right turns on red lights throughout Québec. Only the City of Montréal is allowed to opt out of this new traffic legislation.

As readers may recall, the OPHQ loudly voiced its opposition to this provision, which makes pedestrians, especially those with severe visual impairments, more vulnerable when crossing intersections. Its view is that the time and money that would allegedly be saved are far outweighed by the social and economic costs incurred by a disabling traffic accident.

Child-care services

New reference tool

An information kit entitled “Réseau de soutien pour l'intégration des enfants handicapés dans les services de garde de Lanaudière” was launched last spring by the regional joint action committee. This document, intended for child-care workers and the parents of children with disabilities in the Lanaudière region, sets out a regional child-care model. It contains fact sheets listing the main documents and regional resources that may prove useful to facilitating the integration of disabled children into child-care services. For more information, please contact the OPHQ regional office in Joliette at (450) 752-6971, or the Table de concertation régionale des associations de personnes handicapées de Lanaudière at (450) 755-1488.

Lift safety

According to the conclusions of the report prepared by coroner Luc Malouin, the majority of lifts for persons with disabilities installed in Québec are dangerous and do not meet safety standards. The reports recommends that the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la Métropole, among other departments, grant the Société d'habitation du Québec a special budget to enable it to upgrade its wheelchair lifts. It also recommends examining the possibility of subsidizing these devices to ensure that the lifts installed are of sufficient quality. This report was produced following the coroner's inquest into the death of five people caused by faulty wheelchair lifts. You may obtain a copy of this report (in French only) by consulting the following Web site: (www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/coroner/index.asp), or by contacting Ms Nicole Miller at (418) 643-1845, extension 249 (a fee will be charged).

Three- and four-wheel personal mobility vehicles

The QST and the GST do not apply to the sale or rental of three- and four-wheel personal mobility vehicles designed expressly for persons with disabilities. The sale of parts and accessories specially designed for use with these vehicles is also zero-rated.

Therefore, any individual who has paid QST and GST on such vehicles or their parts or accessories may request a refund from their supplier or from the Ministère du Revenu. For more information, please contact your local Ministère du Revenu office. (Source: Tax News, second quarter 2002)

Driving with a bioptic telescopic lens system

Persons with visual impairments can now drive with a bioptic telescopic lens system. The Institut de réadaptation en déficience physique de Québec has launched a project enabling these people to obtain their driving licence after having followed a training program and passing the examinations set by the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec.

The OPHQ made a financial contribution to this project, and the training program lasts eight weeks. Thirteen candidates could be eligible for the project in 2002-2003. For more information, please contact Pierre Blais at (418) 529-9141, extension 2211.

Awards

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the World Blind Union awarded the Louis Braille gold medal to none other than Bill Gates during his visit to Toronto on August 20. Bill Gates accepted this prestigious award in recognition of Microsoft Canada's contribution to developing the CNIB digital library system, especially the Children's Discovery Portal, an on-line community where visually impaired children can interact in an informative and safe learning environment.

The Canadian Standards Association honoured Ms Patricia Falta at a special awards ceremony during its annual general meeting held in Victoria in June. Ms Falta received the Order of Merit for her qualities as spokesperson and leader, and for her dedication to the development of accessibility standards. It may be recalled that Ms Falta was one of the founding members of the Société Logique. Our congratulations!

Does the Québec public service interest you?

The Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor wants to remind persons with disabilities that it is possible, in order to be considered eligible for certain job categories, to replace the number of years of education required with relevant work experience (remunerated or not), where this provision is specified in the job offer. For example, in offers that call for a secondary school diploma, family responsibilities or time spent caring for or educating one or more children or other dependants can compensate for missing years of schooling (such experience is considered relevant in proportion to the time spent thereon). In cases where a college or university degree is required, it is sometimes possible to replace the missing years of schooling with work experience that is deemed relevant (two years of relevant experience are equivalent to one year of schooling).

To make the public service more accessible to persons with disabilities, the latter can apply for positions in all regions of Québec, even if the job offer requires that candidates live in a specific geographical area. However, in order to take advantage of this measure, it is important that candidates comply with the legal definition of “person with a disability,” and that they identify themselves as such in the section “Accès à l’égalité” on the “Offre de service” form that must be filled out when applying for recruitment competitions in the public service.

You can obtain these forms in the same places government job offers are posted, i.e., on the Conseil du trésor Web site (www.tresor.gouv.qc.ca) and at the regional offices of the Secretariat of the Conseil du trésor and Communication-Québec, local employment centres (CLEs), carrefours jeunesse-emploi, the Audiothèque and from organizations representing persons with disabilities. (Source: Dorothée Ouellet, Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor)

New publications

The OPHQ published two new documents in June:

Stat Flash: this issue deals with disability levels by age, sex and severity of the disability, and presents the results according to the disadvantage index as developed in the 1998 edition of the Enquête québécoise sur les limitations d’activités (Québec activity limitations survey).

Études en Bref: this issue discusses a research report entitled “Intervention dyadique pour l’intégration sociale,” which deals with the design and evaluation of an innovative intervention model for young adults with intellectual impairments.

These documents are available (in French only) on our Web site at www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca, or you can order them by calling 1 800 567-1465, teletype 1 800 567-1477.

Kéroul recently published the fifth edition of “Québec accessible.” This guide was prepared with a view to meeting the needs of persons with motor, hearing or visual impairments. It lists 1800 cultural and tourist establishments in Québec that have been deemed barrier-free or adapted to persons with disabilities, following an evaluation performed by Kéroul. This guide is available at a cost of \$15 by calling (514) 252-3104, or visiting Kéroul’s Web site at www.keroul.qc.ca.

In early 2002, the Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille (INLB) published a document entitled "Guide d'adaptation des ascenseurs pour l'utilisateur présentant une déficience visuelle." This guide was written by Line Lemay and Réal Perreault for rehabilitation workers and other professionals concerned by the adaptation of the physical environment, and focuses on the principles of adjusting elevators to meet the needs of persons with visual or motor impairments. To obtain a copy of this document, please contact the sales counter of the INLB at 1 800 361-7063, extension 200.

Events

The first Québec Adult Education Week will be held from October 27 to November 1, 2002. The theme chosen is "A thousand and one ways to learn." The activities held during this week will bring together partners from various fields (government, labour unions, community groups, labour-force organizations, etc.). The event is being organized by the Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes (ICEA). For more information, visit the Web site at www.semaine.icea.qc.ca or call 1 877 948-2044.

From November 28 to December 1, 2002, the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec will host the ninth edition of the OPHQ International Wheelchair Tennis Classics. This tournament, sponsored by Hydro-Québec, offers more than \$10 000 in prize money and will enable Québec players to pit themselves against athletes from the United States, Mexico, Ontario and Western Canada. The organizing committee brings together representatives of the OPHQ, the Fédération québécoise de tennis, the Association québécoise des sports en fauteuil roulant, Tennis Montréal and Tennis Canada. The OPHQ Tennis Classics, sanctioned by the International Tennis Federation, is one of the top indoor wheelchair tennis tournaments in Canada. For more information, please contact Mr René Gauthier at (514) 270-6060, extension 609.

Literature review

School-active life transition

NEW BRUNSWICK ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING. Building Bridges: A Parent Guide on Transition from School to Work, Adult Life and Community Participation for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities. Fredericton, NB; New Brunswick Association for Community Living, 1997, 123 p. (M5438)

This guide, intended for families and parents, may also prove useful for teachers, guidance counsellors and other people working to facilitate the transition from school to adult life for young people with intellectual impairments.

BRETON, Mario. Arrimage des ressources socioprofessionnelles en déficience intellectuelle. Étude portant sur la transition école - travail dans le secteur Est de l'île de Montréal, Montréal, QC; Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'œuvre pour personnes handicapées (CAMO), 1999, 131 p. + appendices. (M5563)

This study sets out a socio-vocational integration model for young people with intellectual impairments. A pilot project was conducted in the eastern region of the

Island of Montréal in collaboration with the partners concerned (the school network, rehabilitation and vocational adaptation centres, etc.), with a view to facilitating the transition from school to work and adult life.

GOUPIL, Georgette; Tassé, Marc J.; Doré, Catherine (et coll.). Démarche de plans de transitions entre l'école et la vie adulte : Rapport de recherche à l'intention des participants, Montréal, Département de psychologie, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2000, 29 p.+ appendix (M6349).

This document, a follow-up to a series of preliminary studies, highlights the issue of transition in the areas of work, occupational activity, recreational activities and housing. The study presents the main data collected using questionnaires, observation grids and analyses of transition plans.

RUSCH, Frank R.; CHADSEY, Janis G. (Edited by), Beyond High School: Transition from School to Work, Toronto ON: International Thomson Publishing Co.; Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1998, 479 p. (M5143)

This compendium is the result of analyses presented by experts in the field of special education and rehabilitation psychology, and by other researchers working in institutes specializing in disability and aid for transition. This collective work presents various aspects of the transition from secondary school - both for regular and special-needs students - to the labour market in American society.

By André Lauzon

For further information, call the Documentation Centre at (514) 873-3574, or 1 888 264-2362 (toll free), or send an e-mail to documentation@ophq.gouv.qc.ca

L'intégration is always happy to hear your comments, suggestions or opinions on various topics concerning the integration of persons with disabilities. We may decide to share your viewpoint with our readers. Don't hesitate to contact us!

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A MOMENT IN HISTORY

A memorable encounter

From August 31 to September 2, 1996, Québec hosted the first meeting of French-speaking member countries of the World Blind Union. This event brought together participants from various European and African countries. The objectives of this meeting were as follows:

- to foster exchanges between blind persons living in a French-speaking cultural context;

- to forge ties of cooperation;
- to create a permanent forum for dialogue; and
- to implement collaborative mechanisms with developing countries.

The numerous workshops enabled those present to discuss topics such as social development, adaptation and rehabilitation, literacy, the challenge of educating young people with visual impairments, and communication and technology, to name just a few.

This encounter had significant spin-offs, because a few years later the Union francophone des aveugles was created.

By Micheline Thibault

The aim of *L'intégration* is to promote the interests of persons with disabilities and to favour their educational, vocational and social integration. It also aims to inform and advise the public at large about the integration of persons with disabilities in Québec.

L'intégration is published by the Direction des communications of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).

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