

SENIORS NETWORK... A WORK IN PROGRESS FOR SENIORSBY SENIORS

Press Release

English-speaking Seniors Form Provincial Advocacy Group

Thursday, March 29, 2012 – A provincial advocacy network for English-speaking seniors took another step forward as volunteers formed an executive committee that will work towards incorporation and finding sources of funding. The creation of the new group was announced during a community-wide priority setting conference in Montreal this weekend.

Under the motto: “For Seniors... By Seniors”, the group now christened as Seniors Action Quebec plans to provide a provincial voice that will influence program and policy change to address the needs of Quebec’s English-speaking seniors at a grassroots level.

A recent newspaper report noted that Quebec has more seniors than youth today, and the trend also holds for the province’s English-speaking communities. And while many of Quebec’s 132,485 English-speakers over the age of 65 remain active, their access to services is hampered because they’re the age group with the lowest level of bilingualism.

Since 2009 the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has been working to help establish a provincial organization to advocate for English-speaking seniors. What began with “Blazing Trails for Healthy Active Living, An Action Plan for English-speaking Seniors” a report that was funded through a federal grant, was followed up with provincial funding for a series of networking activities that included a forum in the spring of 2011 and a conference on National Seniors Day, October 1.

From those two events a core group of volunteers was created to follow up on the main goal from the action plan, forum and conference - that is to found a provincial network of seniors that will address the needs and challenges that require effective advocacy to influence significant changes needed to ensure that English-speaking seniors in Quebec can access all the services they need in English.

This past weekend the core group of volunteers elected an executive committee consisting of community activists David Cassidy, a retired social worker; Anne Usher, a retired nurse; and Ruth Pelletier, a former consumer advocate. Members of the network, which aims to be province-wide, hail from many regions of the province Quebec including the Gaspé, the Outaouais, Montreal, Laval and the South Shore.

Speaking to a conference of more than 175 participants who were setting priorities for the English-speaking community last weekend, Chairman David Cassidy said the creation of a network will be a win for seniors and for the community. “We are grateful to the QCGN for its ongoing support and are grateful for continued support as we grow into a powerful voice for English-speaking seniors whose voice has been muted up till now,” he said, noting the continue working with the QCGN and work towards becoming a full member.

Offers of support came immediately from many conference delegates including Mrs. Sheila Goldboom, who was the co-chair of the provincial consultation on the living conditions of seniors in 2007. The seniors action group has also met with like-minded organizations in the French-speaking community and plan to partner on common issues.

Top on the agenda for Seniors Action Quebec will be support to the research project recently announced by the Government of Quebec through its support for seniors program *Soutien aux initiatives visant le respect des aînés* (SIRA). The three-year participatory action-based research project will involve seniors in identifying their needs and challenges, doing research on them, and disseminating the results of the research as a means to enact change.

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