

THEN C-SAM BEGAT CPAVIH...

*A Quick survey of Montréal's
Committee of PLWA/HIVs*

C-SAM (Comité sida aide Montréal) was born in September 1985 from MARC/ARMS (Montreal AIDS Resource Committee / Association des ressources montréalaises sur le sida). In 1987, a committee of People with HIV was formed within C-SAM and CPAVIH (Comité des personnes atteintes du VIH du Québec inc.) became a distinct autonomous organization in October 1988.

Things have not been easy for Montréal's AIDS groups. MARC/ARMS was a part of AHM/GMA (Association homophile de Montréal / Gay Montreal Association) and C-SAM (Comité SIDA AIDS Montréal, "AIDS" changed to "aide" to maintain a complete French business name) was formed to gain independence from this anglo-dominated group.

Even though 32 of the 35 members of MARC/ARMS left this group to set up C-SAM, MARC/ARMS refused to let go for a few more years creating a situation where there was some duplication of services, allowing the governments to withhold monies to both groups! Richard Burzinski, who is now executive director of the Canadian AIDS Society, was C-SAM's first chair.

But C-SAM remained an AIDS service group and by 1987, PLWA/HIVs felt that a group was needed for them to concentrate on their needs. There was also some political action that had to be taken. Incorporation for CPAVIH was obtained October 19, 1988. CPAVIH and C-SAM share office space at 3600 Hôtel-de-Ville Ave.

CPAVIH has been lobbying the Québec government in order to obtain the status of "malade sur pied" for PLWA/HIVs. This would add HIV infection and AIDS to a list already containing cancer, mental illness, tuberculosis, diabetes insipidus, cystic fibrosis, and primary hyperlipoproteinemia. The category of "malade sur pied" dispenses drugs directly from a hospital for a monthly flat rate (around \$10). This definitely would be helpful to PLWA/HIVs who often have to spend large sums of money for medication.

Recently, ACT-UP Montréal got on the band wagon with CPAVIH and has held a few demonstrations demanding the "malade sur pied" category for PLWA/HIVs. The issue of access to treatments seems to be an growing concern for CPAVIH — AAN! would definitely agree with them!

Pictured at right are some of the members of the CPAVIH Board: Bernard Paradis, Kalpesh Oza, Gérald Paul-Hus, Gregory Rowe, and Jean Buist.

SURVIVING AIDS

"Always In Debt Syndrome"

There are some benefits to surviving with an AIDS diagnosis. One never has to worry about paying the high premiums for life insurance because as far as insurance companies are concerned, you are already dead. And if you are fortunate enough to have life insurance do not ever be late with your payments...

Have you ever scanned a real estate magazine to see this month's dream home? You should cross that dream home off your list immediately! Chances are the bank will not give you a loan because it is uninsurable.

By the way, if you are still working, I suggest you go out and apply for a few credit cards. Not that I can see you abusing them, but when money gets tight you may perhaps use them to buy essentials such as food and nutritional or vitamin supplements. If you leave applying for these cards until you can no longer work, you might as well not bother... Welfare recipients are labelled as "dead beats" with most major credit card companies. It is not so much that you have become a dead beat but rather that your income no longer meets the necessary level to qualify. Oh well, one's dignity stays intact when one does not deal with credit!

Another benefit of having AIDS is that you no longer have to run to the bank at the end of the year to by an RRSP. After all, why should a Person Living with AIDS even consider a retirement savings plan. When you have received an AIDS diagnosis, a Canada savings bond with seven years to maturity even becomes a little risqué.

There is one major benefit to living with this illness and that is that you become much more aware of the world that you live in. Minutes and hours take on a new importance in our lives in view of our having to deal with our mortality. Relationships and friendships have taken on a new importance as we have stepped out of the fast lane of life.

Survival is the number one priority at this time.

Ronald H. Rogers
PLWA, Thunder Bay, Ontario

