

Montréal Games Not So Gay?

BY E. LYNN LEMONT

After two years of negotiations with the Federation of Gay Games (FGG), Montréal 2006 has yet to sign a contract. In a press release, Montréal 2006 co-presidents Lucie Duguay and Mark Tewkesbury characterized the lack of a contract as "a crisis situation."

Montréal 2006 and the FGG have not agreed on a vision of the Games, its scope and control over the financing it will receive. According to the press release, Montréal 2006 requested arbitration with the FGG.

Charlie Corson, speaking for the FGG, set a November 7 deadline for an agreement to be signed, reports Cyd Zeigler on OutSports.com.

The original proposal indicated 24,000 athletes and "an elaborate cultural component." A revised proposal allows for 16,000 athletes, which could be expanded to 19,000 with additional fund-

ing guarantees. The FGG wants to restrict the number of participants to 12,000.

Both sides say that the other's numbers are unrealistic and unworkable financially. Montréal 2006 says it has already secured sponsorships to cover a larger number of athletes, and that some of those sponsorships will be at risk if the Games are planned for a smaller number.

"We know this would be a financial disaster, and to operate the Games without deficit, we must aim for a minimum of 16,000 participants. In fact, the level of sponsorships is proportional to the scope of the event and our current funding is already in place for this level of participation," according to a press release from Montréal 2006.

No one wants to risk another Gay Games financial fiasco. The Sydney Gay Games last year were nearly canceled due to financial shortfalls. Zeigler's OutSports story cited the numbers from the Olympics, which generally turns out 10,000 athletes with many more resources than the

Gay Games can field.

Also at issue is control over how revenue is spent. Montréal 2006 says it will not relinquish control over funds from city, provincial and national resources to the FGG. The organization has financial commitments of over \$5 million (CAD), according to the press release, "something never before been seen in the history of the Gay Games." Montréal 2006 also cited an unprecedented agreement for official event coverage with Radio-Canada as well as agreements with private sponsors.

"For Montréal 2006, it is unthinkable that financial decisions on the Games be made by anyone other than its Board of Directors, who are legally responsible for the outcome of the event," the group's spokesperson declared.

Montréal 2006 says it wants members of the Federation, who will be meeting at the annual meeting in Chicago November 9th to 15th to decide the size of the games. If no agreement is

reached, it is likely that the membership will be asked to move the games, and possibly reschedule them for 2007.

Both sides have fallback plans if negotiations fail to bear fruit, according to the report. The FGG would consider moving the games to Atlanta, Chicago or Los Angeles, the cities that lost their original bids for the Games two years ago, and Zeigler reports that Atlanta has already expressed an interest if the games are moved.

For its part, Montréal would consider hosting an athletic festival without the imprimatur of the "Gay Games."

"We still hope," concluded Montréal's Louise Roy, Director of the Games, "that the FGG and Montréal 2006 can come to an agreement and that we will be able to announce this in Chicago. After working on this project for two years, we have now established links with some 500 gay and lesbian sports teams around the world, which means that we can look forward to an edition of the Games on an unprecedented scale, regardless of the outcome of our negotiations with the FGG." ▼

Vermont Woman Returns After 13-Year Hiatus

Last month saw the rebirth of the for-profit *Vermont Woman*, the "printchild" of lesbian publisher Sue Gillis. Featuring a pair of open lipsticked lips replacing the "O" of Woman in the monthly's logo (designed by Creative Director Jan Doerler), the publication appears aimed at a young, mainstream female audience.

At the October 9 launch party, Gillis said she wanted to revive *Vermont Woman* because she wondered, "Where is my niece — she was one when the first *Vermont Woman* folded, and now she's 14 — going to find our

collective women's history?" And because of her concern "at how we're treated around the world."

Gillis characterized the first issue as the result of a "production period from hell," and said the newsprint monthly is "a work in progress," inviting criticism and other feedback from the invitation-only, warmly receptive crowd at Burlington's Boathouse.

The ebullient publisher thanked the audience and singled out for special notice the paper's financial backers, who included, among others, Billi Gosh, Robin Lloyd, Ray Pecor,

Sallie Soule, and Dr. Ethan Sims. Politicians, including Burlington mayor and cross-over gubernatorial candidate Peter Clavelle and former Republican state Senator Barbara Snelling, made an appearance. Snelling is also listed on the editorial advisory board.

The first incarnation of *Vermont Woman* appeared in 1985 and was published monthly until it folded under financial stress in 1990. Gillis went on to co-publish the weekly *Vermont Times* (which was later sold), and founded and published a newspaper in Provincetown, MA.

The reborn publication's new editor is Deb Alden, whose column "Home Front" in the inaugural issue inveighs against verbal "husband-bashing" and encourages women to thank their spouses for any household chores they do.

Also on staff is former *OITM* editor Barb Dozetos as assistant editor, weighing in with a background piece on women in the Vermont Statehouse. Original founding editor and now contributing editor Rickey Gard Diamond added a piece on hunger in Vermont.

Other pieces in the first issue covered domestic violence, Bantu women in Vermont, Joan Baez, and Vermont women artists at the National Museum for Women in the Arts.

The perspective, declared Gillis, is feminist, cross-generational, and cross-gender, adding, "We know men and women are different. We want men to read this."

Vermont Woman's next public event features Washington press corps dean Helen Thomas on November 16. ▼

Montpelier's First Night Reaches Out to LGBTQ Performers

If you're looking for something different to do on New Year's Eve, check out Montpelier's First Night celebration. For the first time, the celebration is reaching out to Vermont's queer community with at least five performances by LGBT artists.

The five include standup comedian Jason P. Lorber; performance artist and comedienne Janice Perry, a.k.a. Gal; singer-songwriter and bandleader San Gordon; giant butterfly maker and puppeteer Gabriel Q; and author Suzi Wizowati (*The Round Barn*) reading from "Jocko," her new novel-in-progress about a gay man living next door to a couple whose dead son's best friend comes back into their lives ten years later.

Judith Chalmer, in her first year as director of First Night Montpelier, says, "Creating a celebration of diversity was the most rewarding aspect of my work. This year,

for instance, Parade Coordinator Andrea Stander and I are inviting community constituencies to create banners expressing their New Year's wishes. We hope this will start an annual tradition in Montpelier to create a parade that delights and acknowledges all its community members."

Those diverse performers and community members also include Jeh Kulu African Dance and Drum Theater in a pre-parade participatory performance that will continue out into the parade, the Sudanese Boys' Choir, Atlantic Crossing, Jenni Johnson & the Junketeers, klezmer music, jazz, a runners' race, kids' workshops, contra dancing, rhythm and blues, funk, storytelling, poetry, puppets, and more.

In addition to her tasks as director of Montpelier's First Night, Chalmer teaches creative writing at New College on the Vermont

College campus of Union Institute and University and has written grants and been involved in a long list of community organizing and performance projects, including the Central Vermont Immigration Project and a resulting performance, *Cruzando Fronteras/ Clearing Customs/ Preselenje*. With such experience behind her, it is perhaps no surprise that Chalmer exceeded her fundraising goal for the annual New Year's Eve celebration and that her focus is on including performances from a broad spectrum of cultural perspectives.

According to Chalmer, who recently came out as a lesbian, there will be performances all night of interest to the GLBT community at First Night Montpelier, including comedy, social satire, fiction and funk dance music. The venues are within easy walking distance of each other and all are wheelchair accessible. Six performances will be translated into American Sign Language.

First Night Montpelier's program book and poster will also include an invitation to join the party translated into six languages spoken by Central Vermont's immigrant com-

munities. The International Food Court at First Night Montpelier provides a warm-up spot and free performance venue for those who cannot buy buttons.

Twenty of Montpelier's First Night performers have volunteered to donate additional performances early in 2004 to nursing homes and elder day centers so the joy of First Night can extend into the year for people who might have difficulty with the weather.

"If you're looking for a New Year's celebration that is large enough to include the world but small enough to be contained within 3 city blocks, try First Night Montpelier," Chalmer declared. ▼

Buttons for individuals are \$7 in advance or \$10 after Dec. 25; \$30 per group purchase of 5 or more in advance, or \$40 after Dec. 25. Volunteers who pledge two hours of time get a free button; covering admission to all 57 performances. Volunteers are needed for set up in the days preceding First Night, for staffing the event and for cleanup the next day. Call First Night Montpelier (802) 229-0432.