



Marcel La Haye

## The OIIQ Youth Committee turns 10!

Despite some labour pains at the birth of the Youth Committee ten years ago, it can take pride today in all it has accomplished over that time.

One of the results of the States-General of the profession held in May 1996 was the decision by the Bureau to bridge the generation gap and reach out to young nurses by creating a Youth Committee.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee reports directly to the Bureau and may make recommendations to it on any subject it deems relevant, in particular concerning the training of young nurses and their integration into the profession. Another original feature of the Committee is the way it is linked to the regions, for each regional order has its own youth committee, with the chair of that committee sitting as an *ex officio* member of the OIIQ Youth Committee. Right from the start, the Committee's roots across the province have helped give it a solid political base as a tool for consultation and participation.

It took some daring to found this Committee, since professional organizations are generally run by long-standing members and experts who have made enviable reputations for themselves over the years. It is difficult for newcomers to become involved in an organized professional order and to make themselves heard. In fact, not to mince words, I have heard it said in the past that the OIIQ was directed by a "bunch of old bags"! I have done all I can to change this perception by updating the Order's approach, projects and image. I personally supported the creation of this Committee, since I was convinced that sidelining

young people in our profession would have serious consequences given the need not only to rejuvenate our ranks but also to meet the challenge of introducing new roles for nurses.

Another point close to my heart is the matter of political mentorship. Given its humanist focus and tradition of helping others, our profession has often been accused of a certain naivety and lack of skill in exerting its influence. I see the Youth Committee as a sort of breeding ground for future leaders. Its members start by learning about the Order, and then mastering its communication tools, from reports to briefs and press conferences. Finally, they feel that they have an important place within the Order itself, with their own logo and membership, etc.

### Impressive accomplishments

Right from the start I wanted this Committee to be visible, in particular by giving it the opportunity to present its report at the Order's Annual General Meeting (AGM). Having the Chair of the Youth Committee speak to the some 1,000 nurses at the meeting caused some murmurs, for it went against tradition. But it represented the beginnings of new hope for the future.

1. Only nurses under 30 years of age are allowed to sit on the Committee.

The truth is, it wasn't easy to create this Committee – but it has come a long way since it was founded. Once fully established, the Committee began working to promote the profession among high school students. Its members have made plenty of appearances at job shows and countless career days. The Youth Committee stand has always attracted lots of attention, with representatives giving CPR demonstrations and handing out condoms. The Committee has worked tirelessly over the years as an ambassador for the profession. It advised the Order on the production of a promotional video and on more effective means of reaching and appealing to young people. The Committee has also kept itself in the spotlight with its regular column in *The Journal*.

In political terms, the Youth Committee got its baptism of fire at the Quebec and Youth Summit in 2000 and as an active member of *Force Jeunesse*. It has also represented the profession in talks with Quebec youth groups and taken advantage of various opportunities to discuss the future of the profession and the healthcare system, including the public hearings held by the commission studying health and social services (2000). In 2005, it submitted a brief to Premier Charest as part of the *2005-2008 Youth Action Strategy*.

The Youth Committee also carried out an interdisciplinary project in co-operation with the Association des jeunes médecins du Québec (AJMQ). The Committee and the AJMQ, with the help of Force Jeunesse, organized the first Espace Santé conference, in 2004, on a theme revolving around the emergence of new leadership. The “Espace Santé 5 à 7” lectures have now become popular events featuring Quebec leaders invited to debate current topics relating to health care.

Ever since 1998, the Youth Committee has made its mark at the OIIQ Convention, by setting up forums and coffee meetings on subjects it considers important. It has transformed the event, by making inter-generational discussions central to the Convention activities.

### **A fountain of energy in the profession**

In 2004, the Youth Committee received the Bureau's support for its idea of launching an ambitious project: a complete clinical handbook for young nursing graduates. In fact, the idea was inspired by the success of a similar guide put together by the Youth Committee of the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec region. All the delegates to the 2005 AGM had the chance to admire the fruit of this ambitious project, in

the form of the clinical handbook, *PRN : comprendre pour intervenir*. The OIIQ now distributes it free of charge to welcome all new candidates for the profession of nursing (CPNs). The handbook, bearing the Youth Committee logo, has also become a favourite with many experienced nurses, which probably explains why it is a best seller at the OIIQ documentation centre.



The Chair of the Youth Committee has spoken or lectured in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada and even on the international stage. To date three young nurses have chaired the Committee: Louis-Martin Dumouchel (1997-1998), Karine Labarre (1998-2001) and Julie Poirier (since 2001). They have represented the new generation with enthusiasm, devotion and sincerity. I congratulate them all, as well as everyone who has lent a hand to the youth committees in all the regions. You have carved out a place for yourselves. Without you the OIIQ would not be at all the same.

I must also acknowledge the unflagging, albeit discreet, work of the Order's Director of External Affairs and the many Director-Consultants reporting to her, who have guided the Committee members and served as mentors. The Youth Committee could have been just one more committee, but in fact it has become a source of energy and inspiration. Thank you! ●

Gyslaine Desrosiers  
President