

# ARTICLE BY MADELEINE LEFEBVRE

For immediate release

## THE REGION LISTENS TO ITS SUCCESSORS!

(caption) **More than one hundred students from high schools in Gracefield and Maniwaki took part in the “Viens nous parler de ton avenir” (Come in and talk to us about your future) activity.**

**Maniwaki, March 17, 2010** – The “Viens nous parler de ton avenir” event took place at the Chateau Logue in Maniwaki on March 27, 2010. This initiative by the Société d’aide au développement des collectivités (SADC) brought together more than one hundred students from high schools in Gracefield and Maniwaki. In the morning, the young people were asked to describe their vision of their future in the region, and in the afternoon, elected officials and employers in the Gatineau Valley came in to listen to the messages that emerged from this broad-based consultation. This was a day unlike any other, and speaker Carol Allain energetically directed proceedings.

### **Education is the priority**

Throughout his energetic discourse, Mr. Allain constantly reminded the young people that if adults have a duty to listen to them, they too have a duty to go to school and learn. And don’t think of working more than 15 hours a week, as too many students end up doing. “Your priority is school, and that is where your focus must be.” He reminded the adults that there are no “poor” fields of study. “It’s tremendous when a young person takes an interest in something. A diploma or degree is not an end – it is where everything begins.”

### **There’s a strong sense of belonging, but...**

One of the recurring key messages heard was the strong sense of belonging young people have with their region. They believe it is nice, pleasant and they are comfortable. The vast majority would like to continue living there. However, this comes with a condition. It depends on a large degree to their employment prospects in the region, which the teens claim they know little or have been misinformed about. It is therefore up to employers and elected officials to clearly convey this information that is crucial to regional development. There are and will be a large number of jobs available in the Gatineau Valley in a host of fields. As Mr. Allain pointed out, “you young people have a golden opportunity here that your counterparts in large cities don’t have. Your future employers are accessible. This proximity gives you a great chance to make yourselves known starting now.”

### **Investing in succession**

Young people in the Gatineau Valley are fond of their region. Nonetheless, they have some major recommendations to make to adults, because most deplore the lack of social, cultural and athletic activities intended for their age groups. One student in the fifth year of secondary school lamented that “it’s almost too late for us, but I am afraid for our children. In fifteen years’ time, I would not want to see my children not have any activities to take part in, as was the case with us.”

The question is how to resolve this. Does it mean building movie theatres, arcades or putting a roof on the municipal pool? It remains to be seen. Thought is now starting to be given to this issue, however, it is clear that today’s decision-makers will have to propose activities and projects intended for our successors. “We have everything to gain if we take the young peoples’ considerations and their solutions into account.” He also indicated that the first step in keeping young people in the area is their

social involvement. They must be engaged in adult activities and invited to sit on their decision-making committees. The good news is that 91% of the students taking in the event said they were willing to get involved to improve their region's future, and no fewer than 98% of adults who came in to listen to them also said they were willing to work alongside them so that they receive their due consideration in the region. That's just great, so do we get started now?

Pierre Monette, SADC Director, offered the following view at the end of the event, "I can guarantee you that this day will mark the beginning of the process to improve young people's interests in the region. It's a challenge we will work on collectively."

(Caption)

**The young people in the Gatineau Valley are the future of the region. Their recommendations must be taken into consideration.**