

## TOWARDS AUTONOMY INTRODUCTION

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On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the McGill Journal for Law and Health (MJLH), the Disability & the Law Portfolio of the Human Rights Working Group (McGill University), and the Centre for Law and Aging organized a multidisciplinary panel discussion entitled *Towards Autonomy: Exploring the Clinical, Legal and Ethical Aspects of Mental Capacity*. The panel was comprised of Dr. Martin Cole, Geriatric Psychiatrist, St. Mary's Hospital, and Professor of Psychiatry, McGill University; Me. François Dupin Ad.E., Public Curator of Quebec; the Honorable Pierre-C. Gagnon, Superior Court of Quebec; Dr. Henry Olders, Geriatric Psychiatrist, St. Anne's Hospital; Ms. Monique Renaud, t.s., Gerontological Social Services; and Professor Ronald Sklar, McGill University Faculty of Law; and Me. Ann Soden Ad.E., Centre for Law and Aging.

The panelists discussed the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary approach to mental capacity. Highlighting the particular vulnerability of persons with diminished capacity within the medical and legal systems, they emphasized the need for increased comprehensiveness, sensitivity, and collaboration among professionals in these areas. The panelists explored the key values of the presumption of capacity, promotion of autonomy, maximization of positive family and social connections, and promotion of residual capacity.

The event organizers invited the panelists to share their reflections with a wider audience by submitting short papers on their presentations to the MJLH. What follows is a collection of these papers, with some concluding remarks by Me. Soden. We are extremely grateful to all the panelists for their invaluable contributions. Unfortunately, due to the demands of being a Superior Court judge, Mr. Justice Gagnon was unable to contribute.

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\* Disability Law Portfolio of the Human Rights Working Group, McGill University; Centre for Law and Aging; McGill Journal of Law and Health.

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