
SUMMARY

Diversity: An Added Value

Government policy
to promote participation
of all in Québec's development

**TO ENRICH
QUÉBEC**

Québec 

Coordination and editing

Direction des politiques et programmes d'intégration, de régionalisation et de relations interculturelles,
ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles

Publishing

Direction des affaires publiques et des communications, ministère de l'Immigration
et des Communautés culturelles

Graphic design

Communications CGCOM

Feminine – masculine

All terms referring to individuals are generic and refer to both genders.

Terminology

The expression **Quebecers from the cultural communities** refers to immigrants and to individuals born in Québec with origins other than French or British. It thus includes groups referred to by the term “visible minorities.”

This expression does not assume the identification with a community of individuals likely to be the victims of prejudice or discrimination. Such individuals may very well identify themselves as Québec citizens, for example, and be exposed to negative attitudes because they are deemed to be foreigners. This terminology is not intended to exclude individuals from the communities in question and does not mean that they are not considered to be genuine Quebecers. It seeks to document problems and define the groups targeted by government measures, in a language that the general public understands.

The **visible minorities** are defined by the federal *Employment Equity Act* (S.C., 1995, c. 44) as “persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” According to the 2006 Census Dictionary, this category includes, in particular, the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, Western Asian, Korean and Japanese.

The use of this expression in the policy does not mean that the Québec government endorses the belief in the existence of human races and adheres to this race-based perspective of humanity. The expression is nevertheless used extensively in this document since the general public fully understands it. Colour and “racial” differences can trigger rejection and exclusion by certain Quebecers. Members of the visible minorities can thus acutely experience racism and discrimination, even if their families have resided in Québec for several generations. This situation warrants making them a specific target group.

This document is available from

Direction des affaires publiques et des communications
Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles
360, rue McGill, bureau 2.09
Montréal (Québec) H2Y 2E9
Telephone: 514-873-8624, ext. 20205



Telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD)
and hearing impaired

Montréal region: 514 864-8158
Elsewhere in Québec: 1 866 227-5968

To request the document on the Internet: www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publications/index.html
This document can be consulted on the MICC Website: www.micc.gouv.qc.ca.

Legal deposit – 2008
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
Library and Archives Canada
ISBN printed version: 978-2-550-54398-5
ISBN PDF: 978-2-550-54399-2

© Gouvernement du Québec – 2008
All rights reserved for all countries

*Ce document est également disponible en français
ou dans le site Web du MICC: www.micc.gouv.qc.ca*



Summary

Québec is an open society that values human rights and freedoms. Over the past 50 years, significant progress has been made in this respect. However, obstacles remain to full participation by certain groups from the cultural communities in social, economic and cultural life, as do inequalities. Given the adverse impact that such a situation has on these individuals and on society as a whole, the government, the municipalities and socioeconomic stakeholders must be vigilant and strive doubly hard to enhance the effectiveness of the actions taken, broaden their scope, and collaborate more extensively.

The obstacles include prejudice-based discrimination. In fact, cultural differences are a very sensitive topic. They are likely to engender displays of intolerance that can arise indiscriminately in all segments of the population. Moreover, discrimination stemming from seemingly neutral rules can also contribute to the creation of the inequalities observed and play a role in the dynamic of exclusion and marginalization. As a matter of fact, prejudice, discrimination and social inequalities mutually reinforce each other. A comprehensive, concerted approach is thus necessary to foster equality and fight discrimination.

Québec has adopted significant legislative measures. The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (R.S.Q., c. C-12) prohibits discrimination based on grounds such as sex, age, disability, social condition, colour, ethnic or national origin, and religion. In order to give concrete expression to its commitment and combat exclusion, the Québec government has implemented an array of policies and strategies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and full participation by all Quebecers, in particular women, the disabled, young people and the poor. This policy reflects this context and pursues these initiatives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. All Quebecers must benefit from equal opportunities in all facets of social life in order to realize their potential and aspirations.
2. Equal opportunities and the fight against racism and discrimination require a comprehensive approach that covers education and awareness, prevention, redress of injury to rights, the mobilization of institutions and diversity management, support for victims, and measures to suppress racist violence.
3. The government must display firm, exemplary leadership expressed in structured, recurrent, long-term measures.
4. The fight against racism and discrimination is a collective responsibility and society as a whole must participate in it.
5. Individuals must be protected against direct, indirect or systemic discrimination based on “race”*, colour, ethnic or national origin or religion, bearing in mind other grounds of discrimination such as sex, disability, sexual orientation or social condition, with which it might be combined. In this regard, account must be taken of the differentiated needs of women and men from the standpoint of equality and full participation.
6. The policy to foster equality and fight discrimination works in conjunction with other government policies and programs aimed at reducing social and economic inequalities and responding to the social problems of Québec society overall, including vulnerable groups from the cultural communities. It also rounds out other policies aimed at eliminating discrimination.
7. Government intervention must take into account the special dynamics of various groups and the historic traumas that they have experienced.

* The notion of “race” was abandoned about fifty years ago by scientists. In fact, no human population is perfectly homogenous on the biological level, differences within populations themselves being even broader than those that exist between the various populations. This is why scientists say that the human species shows a profound biological unity. For this reason, we always put the term “race” in quotes. Nowadays, biologists speak of “population” while sociologists use the term “population”, “ethnic group” or “nation”. Since people are socially categorized on the basis of their colour or physical type and often end up identifying with it, sociologists also speak of “racialized groups” or “racialized groups”.

Three key policy directions within a comprehensive approach

The Québec government policy and action plan to ensure its implementation adopt a comprehensive, concerted approach structured around three key policy directions.

1. Recognize and combat prejudice and discrimination

The first challenge facing the government is to ensure the human rights education of all citizens and heighten their awareness of prejudice and discrimination and the importance of avoiding them. From this policy direction stem measures to combat prejudice and discrimination and advance intercultural rapprochement. It will lead to concrete measures, including:

- a campaign to heighten public awareness of racism and discrimination and their consequences;
- an integrated awareness-raising and training plan focusing on human rights and freedoms;
- intercultural and antiracist educational activities intended for young people.

2. Renew practices

The second challenge that the government is facing is to ensure the real equality of all Quebecers and their full participation in Québec's economic, social and cultural development by tackling all forms of discrimination and ensuring better representation of groups that are under-represented in public and private institutions and in businesses. The measures to be carried out pursuant to this policy direction are intended to ensure access to maintenance and advancement in employment, foster fair access to public services, and improve the respect and the exercise of rights. In particular, the measures will lead to:

- means of action aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of equal employment opportunity programs;
- guidance for businesses and public agencies in the elaboration of diversity management policies both in respect of the creation of inclusive, discrimination-free work environments and the adaptation of services to the needs of an increasingly diversified clientele;

- the improvement of intercultural and antiracist training for public service employees;
- the improvement of recourse that allows victims to ensure respect for their rights;
- support for victims in their efforts to assert their rights, obtain redress and recover their dignity.

3. Coordinate efforts

The third challenge facing the Québec government is to ensure coherence and complementarity of actors' efforts to combat prejudice and discrimination. To this end, governance mechanisms will ensure the policy's implementation and its effectiveness. Among the means of action aimed at materializing its leadership, the government will:

- support local and regional partners in the realization of projects aimed at achieving harmonious cohabitation and the prevention of racism and discrimination;
- support under-represented groups to broaden their presence in decision-making positions and bodies;
- establish governance mechanisms to ensure the policy's implementation and its effectiveness.

THE ABORIGINAL NATIONS

From a legal standpoint, Aboriginals have, in the Canadian constitution, the status of peoples. In 1985, the National Assembly adopted a resolution stating that the Aboriginal peoples are nations.

Given the Aboriginal peoples' status as nations, the specific legislative framework that concerns them and the cooperation necessary with Aboriginal bodies, solutions to the problems of

racism and discrimination that affect these nations are not elaborated in this policy. However, the spirit of the policy and the key principles of openness, fairness and equality also apply to them. The Aboriginal nations could thus benefit from broader receptiveness to diversity and greater efforts by public agencies and businesses with respect to diversity management.

NOTIONS USED

From the standpoint of intervention, the notions used in this policy are those of "prejudice" and "discrimination." They refer to specific phenomena which can be acted upon.

Racism has several dimensions. It can be defined as the set of ideas, attitudes and gestures aimed at or having the result of making ethnocultural and national groups feel inferior from a social, economic, cultural and political standpoint, thus preventing them from taking full advantage of the benefits accorded all citizens.

Prejudices are preconceived opinions based on stereotypes. They are judgments, usually unfavourable, held by one individual about another who he does not know and to whom he attributes the traits attached to his ascriptive group.

Discrimination is a distinction, exclusion or preference based on grounds prohibited by the Québec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* which has the effect of nullifying or impairing the exercise of these rights and freedoms. Such grounds are "race," colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap. Discrimination occurs as much by exclusion as by harassment or unfavourable treatment.

Direct discrimination occurs when the distinction, exclusion or preference is clearly based on one of the grounds prohibited by the Québec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. Thus, an employer who refuses to hire a Black person simply because the person is Black is engaging in direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination stems from the application of a seemingly neutral, universally applicable practice that nonetheless adversely affects groups defined on the basis of the grounds for discrimination prohibited by the Charter. Thus, to require applicants for certain occupations to be tall without any reason linked to the nature of the work discriminates indirectly against women and individuals from the cultural communities who are, on average, shorter. No intention to discriminate is at issue here. The discrimination arises from arbitrary standards and rules often inherited without critical examination from the past. An analysis of these standards and rules is necessary to identify them.

Systemic discrimination arises when various practices, decisions or behaviours combine with other practices within an organization or those of other social institutions to produce discrimination. Discriminatory practices then become links in sometimes long, complex chains where such practices mutually reinforce each other. No specific facet is responsible. Direct, indirect and systemic discrimination can combine and bolster exclusion.

Harassment is a specific form of discrimination. It may manifest itself with respect to a person or a group of people through vexatious, scornful words, acts or repeated gestures. A single, serious act that engenders a harmful and continuous effect may also constitute harassment.

The 2008-2013 action plan at a glance

Policy direction 1

Recognize and combat prejudice and discrimination

Strategic choice 1

Educate and heighten awareness

MEASURES

- 1.1 Adopt, with community partners, a strategy aimed at heightening awareness of racism and discrimination among all Quebecers
- 1.2 Broaden human rights education and provide information on existing recourse
- 1.3 Ensure better representation of cultural diversity in the culture and communications sector and heighten awareness in the communications industry of its potential impact on prejudices and racism

Strategic choice 2

Promote intercultural rapprochement

MEASURES

- 2.1 Better publicize ethnocultural diversity and broaden the scope of activities promoting intercultural rapprochement
- 2.2 Encourage and acknowledge the commitment made by individuals, organizations and businesses to combat racism and discrimination

Policy direction 2

Renew practices

Strategic choice 3

Ensure access to, maintenance and advancement in employment

MEASURES

- 3.1 Increase the representation in the public administration of Quebecers from the cultural communities and other target groups
- 3.2 Heighten awareness among and equip employers to enable them to hire and retain a diversified workforce
- 3.3 Support the implementation of the *Leaders diversité* network, a forum of business executives engaged in the promotion of diversity in employment
- 3.4 Support participation in economic life

Strategic choice 4

Foster fair access to public services

MEASURE

- 4.1 Support public services to prevent discrimination

Strategic choice 5

Improve the respect and the exercise of rights

MEASURES

- 5.1 Improve the handling of complaints pertaining to discrimination
- 5.2 Support the victims of racism and discrimination
- 5.3 Monitor and prevent propaganda and hate crimes

Policy direction 3

Coordinate efforts

Strategic choice 6

Involve civil society and increase partnerships

MEASURES

- 6.1 Mobilize and foster a commitment by partners in different living environments
- 6.2 Encourage participation in public life and representation in decision-making bodies
- 6.3 Strive to achieve the fair representation of different segments of society on the boards of directors of crown corporations and public agencies

Strategic choice 7

Foster and implement government initiatives

MEASURES

- 7.1 Monitor progress
- 7.2 Assess the impact of legislative and regulatory proposals and of proposed policies or action strategies devoted to full participation

Strategic choice 8

Evaluate and measure discrimination

MEASURES

- 8.1 Produce advisory opinions and progress reports on full participation in Québec society
- 8.2 Broaden knowledge and obtain reliable, objective data on racism and discrimination
- 8.3 Broaden understanding of the intersecting discrimination that affects Québec women from the cultural communities and propose specific projects adapted to their needs and situations

