

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Shared Values, Common Interests

To ensure the full participation
of Quebecers from cultural communities
in the development of Québec





A time to listen and the means to take action

Québec is undergoing profound change. Faced with major challenges, it will have to take a dynamic and determined approach to maintain its position among the world's leading economies.

Québec's current demographic context is marked by a declining birthrate, an ageing population, a growing demand for labour and an expected shortage of human resources. Now, more than ever, Québec understands the valuable contribution of immigration to its development.

"Shared Values, Common Interests" is an action plan that recognizes the importance of immigration, rapid and successful integration of newcomers and harmonious intercultural relations. Implemented collectively, this action plan will allow all Quebecers to develop their full potential, while contributing to Québec's economic, social and cultural growth.

The various issues presented in the action plan pertain to Québec society as a whole. In order to gain a better understanding of the expectations of individuals and groups concerned by these issues, a consultative tour in the regions and a day of discussion in Montréal, held by the Conseil des relations interculturelles, were organized. Representatives from the business community, the socioeconomic milieu, community organizations, unions and the municipal sphere were given a chance to express their opinions.

Recommendations and comments gathered during these meetings and the public consultation on the Three-year Immigration Plan 2005-2007 enabled a clear definition of targeted and innovative actions. Among other things, their implementation will pave the way to attaining the following goals:

Ensure better alignment between labour needs in the Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions and the selection of skilled workers;

Promote the first steps toward integration and francization, even before arrival in Québec;

Accelerate French learning;

Reaffirm the partnership with non-profit organizations, particularly to offer personalized guidance to immigrants, prevent conjugal violence and break women's social isolation;

Remove the obstacles to rapid and successful integration into the job market;

Strengthen ties with cultural communities;

Lend greater support to employers and institutions in order to build a more inclusive Québec;

Emphasize the value of immigration to Québec's development and fight discrimination.

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Note

When addressing issues of concern to both immigrants and Quebecers from cultural communities, the short formulation "Quebecers from cultural communities" is used. When addressing issues that concern both these two groups but in different ways, the full expression "immigrants and cultural communities" is used.

Related regional action plans will allow the regions that so desire to rely more on the contribution of new citizens as an invaluable asset to their development strategy.

The action plan Shared Values, Common Interests addresses a diverse clientele, with varied needs. For the most part, it includes candidates for permanent or temporary immigration, newcomers, long-time immigrants, visible minorities, employers, organizations and institutions from the private and public sectors, and Québec society at large.

Concerted action, collective implementation

The government cannot act alone to implement the action plan. In this sense, a renewed and broadened partnership will be proposed throughout Québec's regions. The action plan also calls on all members of the host society as well as the Québec government's departments and organizations to help ensure that the objectives are attained as effectively and promptly as possible.

Guiding principles

The following guiding principles have helped the government choose the most appropriate measures for the action plan:

- Respect for human equality, a principle upheld by Québec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and in various Québec laws;
- Respect for the values that have always informed Québec's immigration policy with regard to family reunification and humanitarian considerations;
- Equity and integrity in processing applications, which reflects a commitment to reconciling immigration policy objectives with maintaining a diversification of immigration movements;
- Approach adapted to the needs of immigrants from the different immigration categories and members of visible minority groups;
- Consideration of the different needs of women and men with regard to integration and full participation;
- Closest possible alignment between Québec's needs and economic selection;
- A specific approach adapted to the conditions and particular characteristics of each region in Québec; An integration process that begins as soon as the candidate is accepted either abroad or within Québec;
- Guarantee of a secure process in the current international context, which requires all measures to be taken to prevent identity fraud and other forms of fraud, and to protect national security.

First pillar

An immigration policy true to Québec's needs and values

Within the framework of its immigration policy, Québec welcomes several thousand permanent immigrants every year. From 1999 to 2003, between 29 200 and 39 500 people were admitted yearly. Workers, businesspeople, family members or refugees: these women, men and children contribute to Québec's development.

Well aware of the importance of immigration in terms of its social blueprint, Québec has signed agreements with the federal government over the last few decades on the sharing of immigration responsibilities. The most recent Canada-Quebec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens, which came into effect in 1991, gives Québec exclusive responsibility for the selection of permanent immigrants destined for its territory.

This Accord also confirms Québec's commitment to the principles of family reunification and international solidarity. Under the Accord, Québec determines the volume and composition of a large portion of the immigration influx, sets selection criteria, organizes promotion and selection activities and defines certain rules with respect to sponsorship. Lastly, the Canada-Quebec Accord recognizes Québec's full responsibility in receiving and integrating newcomers into Québec society.

Objectives and actions

These are the objectives the Québec government is pursuing in order to enable all immigrants to play an active role in Québec's development:

- Foster an influx of permanent and temporary immigrants based on the needs in the Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions;
- Ensure better alignment between economic selection (workers and businesspeople) and Québec's needs;
- Accelerate the reunification and integration of immigrants from the family class;
- Strengthen interventions abroad and in Québec in the area of humanitarian immigration.

The following key measures will be implemented to achieve these objectives:

- Expand and refine promotion and information initiatives abroad;
- Update guidelines for selecting skilled workers based on Québec's present and future needs;
- Match vacant positions in Québec with foreign candidates whose professional profiles meet the needs expressed;
- Review the guidelines for the immigrant investor program;
- Reduce the sponsorship period for young sponsored adults;
- Review the procedure for processing undertaking applications for family reunification in order to reduce waiting periods;
- Improve the selection and reception of refugees and facilitate the integration of individuals admitted on humanitarian grounds.

Second pillar

Reception and lasting job integration

Employment contributes to personal growth, economic security and a sense of dignity. Very often, work also provides access to a social network.

For immigrants, access to jobs takes on particular significance since the main motivation for emigrating is often the search for an improved economic situation. Employment leads to contacts and opportunities to speak French which, in turn, accelerates the process of integration into the various aspects of social life and fosters a sense of belonging to Québec society.

Data from the 2001 census confirms that job integration is not always as rapid or as successful for immigrants as one would hope. The unemployment rate among the immigrant population is almost 12%, compared to 8% for the total population. However, the unemployment rate among immigrants decreases significantly as their period of residence in Québec increases.

Some of the difficulties in securing a job include insufficient knowledge of French, non-recognition of experience and training acquired abroad, and the absence of networks. The employment situation of individuals from visible minorities is of even greater concern.

Employers, for their part, may have difficulty recognizing the skills of immigrants and integrating them into their organization. In a context where labour shortages are forecasted in the next few years, the use of this pool of skills will be an important issue in the development of all regions in Québec.

Objectives and actions

Many actions are underway and will be taken to accelerate the social and employment integration of immigrants and members of visible minorities. The Québec government is pursuing the following objectives:

- Accelerate and personalize the integration process;
- Facilitate and ensure recognition of skills acquired abroad;
- Encourage businesses and public organizations to welcome and retain a diversified labour force.

This pillar is vital to the action plan. The following measures will be implemented to achieve these objectives:

- Offer personalized guidance to immigrants;
- Improve response to the needs of newcomers and members of visible minorities by drawing on Emploi-Québec's employment services;
- Initiate and intensify exchanges with professional orders and educational institutions in order to find concrete solutions to the problem of recognition of credentials; a working committee composed of parliamentarians will contribute to moving discussions forward;
- Intensify and better orchestrate the MRCI's interventions and those of its government partners with regard to evaluating diplomas and intervening with regulatory bodies.
- Study the possibility of creating a program to assist in the employment integration of immigrants and visible minorities;
- Mobilize employers around the issue of job integration.

Roadmap

The roadmap is a new support tool that will be made available to all immigration candidates from abroad and newcomers to Québec to help them take control of their integration process.

It will present all the steps that must be taken to successfully integrate in Québec, while enabling individuals to make use of all the services offered by the Québec government and its partners.

This individualized tool will help immigrants pinpoint their needs, define their objectives and raise their awareness about the importance of mapping out their integration process, if possible before arriving in Québec or very soon thereafter.

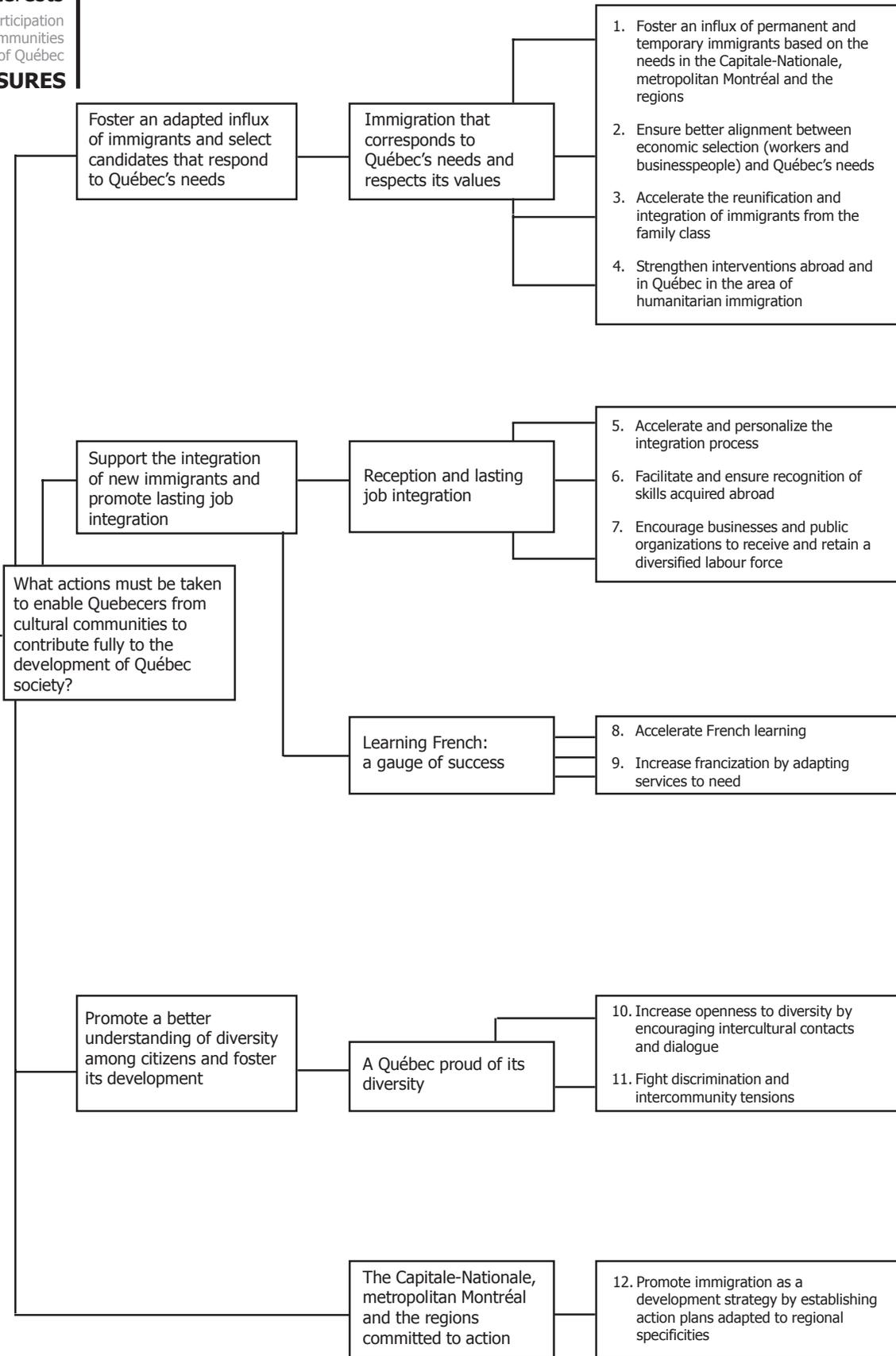
Shared Values,
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To ensure the full participation
of Quebecers from cultural communities
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SUMMARY OF MEASURES

ORIENTATIONS

PILLARS

OBJECTIVES

More than ever,
Québec recognizes
the strategic
importance of
immigration for its
economic, social
and cultural
growth



1. Foster an influx of permanent and temporary immigrants based on the needs in the Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions
2. Ensure better alignment between economic selection (workers and businesspeople) and Québec's needs
3. Accelerate the reunification and integration of immigrants from the family class
4. Strengthen interventions abroad and in Québec in the area of humanitarian immigration

5. Accelerate and personalize the integration process
6. Facilitate and ensure recognition of skills acquired abroad
7. Encourage businesses and public organizations to receive and retain a diversified labour force

8. Accelerate French learning
9. Increase francization by adapting services to need

10. Increase openness to diversity by encouraging intercultural contacts and dialogue
11. Fight discrimination and intercommunity tensions

12. Promote immigration as a development strategy by establishing action plans adapted to regional specificities

MEASURES

- 1.1 Expand and refine promotion and information initiatives abroad
- 1.2 Support post-secondary educational institutions in the regions in their efforts to promote and recruit foreign students
- 1.3 Strengthen prevention and supervision measures relating to the activities of immigration consultants
- 2.1 Update guidelines for selecting skilled workers based on Québec's present and future needs
- 2.2 Match vacant positions in Québec with foreign candidates whose professional profiles meet the needs expressed
- 2.3 Review the guidelines for the immigrant investor program
- 2.4 Review the guidelines for the immigrant entrepreneur and self-employed worker programs
- 2.5 Improve the functioning of the *Live-in Caregiver Program* and better protect the women under this program
- 3.1 Reduce the sponsorship period for young sponsored adults
- 3.2 Review the procedure for processing undertaking application for family reunification in order to reduce waiting periods
- 3.3 Supply sponsored immigrants or those awaiting sponsorship with the information and tools they need to prepare for settling in Québec
- 4.1 Improve the selection and reception of refugees and facilitate the integration of individuals admitted on humanitarian grounds
- 4.2 Review and promote group sponsorship

- 5.1 Offer personalized guidance to immigrants
- 5.2 Improve response to the needs of newcomers and members of visible minorities by drawing on Emploi-Québec's employment services
- 6.1 Create a working group composed of parliamentarians mandated to identify the difficulties related to skills and training recognition and to propose solutions
- 6.2 Intensify and better orchestrate the MRCI's interventions and those of its government partners with regard to evaluating diplomas and intervening with regulatory bodies
- 7.1 Study the possibility of creating a program to assist in the employment integration of immigrants and visible minorities
- 7.2 Mobilize employers around the issue of employment integration

- 8.1 Review the guidelines for francization services in order to accelerate learning
- 8.2 Create a network of foreign partners to offer teaching adapted to the needs of future immigrants to Québec or to evaluate language levels for selection purposes
- 8.3 Make French learning tools accessible online
- 9.1 Improve pedagogical strategies, evaluation methods and services to better respond to employment integration needs and to client profiles
- 9.2 Make interventions that are adapted to the specific needs of certain clientele in order to promote French learning
- 9.3 Adapt francization services to the specificities of the Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions

- 10.1 Designate, within the MRCI, an officer acting as liaison between each cultural community and the government
- 10.2 Support projects in civic and intercultural relations
- 10.3 Create a centre of expertise in intercultural relations
- 10.4 Increase the employment representation of Quebecers from cultural communities
- 10.5 Reach out to immigrant women or women from cultural communities who are isolated
- 10.6 Prevent conjugal violence and sexual aggression towards immigrants or members of cultural communities and provide support to victims
- 10.7 Promote intercultural learning among youths in school
- 10.8 Mobilize institutions and organizations in the Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions around intercultural issues
- 11.1 Promote the contribution of immigration and cultural communities
- 11.2 Raise awareness among landlord associations
- 11.3 Prevent racial profiling

- 12.1 Organize activities designed to raise public awareness in the regions of the contribution of immigration and the potential contribution of immigrants
- 12.2 Develop and implement regional action plans, in partnership with socioeconomic actors in the regions, including cultural community organizations

Third pillar

Learning French: a gauge of success

The French language is an integral part of Québec identity and a source of pride, but its capacity to flourish within the North-American continent remains a constant concern.

Through its various actions, particularly the adoption of the Charter of the French Language in 1977, the Québec government has succeeded in integrating immigrants into francophone society. For these newcomers, language is a vital tool for communicating with Quebecers of all origins.

In addition to increased immigration of French-speakers, the francization of immigrants without sufficient knowledge of French is one of the strategies put forward by the Québec government to ensure the continuity of the French language as well as the successful integration of newcomers to its territory.

The increasing complexities of the job market have created new needs among the immigrant population to master French. In addition, immigrants with higher levels of education must also acquire a high level of French in order to utilize the full potential of their professional skills.

These various changes have led to an increased demand for francization services and longer waiting lists. To remedy this situation, measures such as self-study and online training have become flexible and versatile tools that reach a larger number of people while giving them an opportunity to become more familiar with Québec society.

Some immigrant groups have less knowledge of French and their participation in francization programs continues to remain small. Such is the case for refugees, those individuals accepted for humanitarian reasons and those immigrants, mostly women, admitted under the family reunification program. Learning French would help facilitate their integration and put an end to their isolation.

Objectives and actions

Intensifying and adapting francization programs for new immigrants is one aspect of the government's greater goal to assert French as the common language. Using French as the language of public life for Quebecers of all origins also contributes to enriching a shared heritage.

These are the objectives the Québec government is pursuing to ensure the continuity of French in Québec:

- Accelerate French learning;
- Increase francization by adapting services to needs.

The following key measures will be implemented to achieve these objectives:

- Review the guidelines for francization services in order to accelerate learning;
- Make French learning tools accessible online;
- Make interventions that are adapted to the specific needs of certain clienteles in order to promote French learning.

Fourth pillar

A Québec proud of its diversity

For decades, immigration has contributed to making Québec a modern State, open to the world and proud of its diversity. With time, the Québec population has changed considerably, particularly in the Montréal area. This growing diversification has become a major trend in Québec's demographic evolution.

All segments of Québec society must adapt to this growing diversity. Raising awareness of the contributions of immigrants and establishing concrete measures to promote equal access to employment will serve to increase the representation of Québec's cultural communities in the public sector.

Intercultural contacts within Québec society have grown, and occur in all milieus. They are generally harmonious thanks to the positive image of immigration as enriching for all.

This positive context, however, should not obfuscate the fact that problems exist, particularly exclusion based on ethnic origin or religion. These problems are not solely the result of discrimination but are due to a number of factors. Nevertheless, concrete action is required to remedy the problem.

Establishing partnerships with cultural communities and their organizations is crucial to welcoming new immigrants. These partnerships can also help to identify specific difficulties experienced by communities and to find solutions to reduce potential intercultural tensions. Therefore, the government will promote closer ties with cultural communities and their organizations.

Objectives and actions

These are the objectives the Québec government is pursuing with Quebecers so that, together, they can build an inclusive Québec proud of its diversity:

- Increase openness to diversity by encouraging intercultural contacts and dialogue;
- Fight discrimination and intercommunity tensions.

The following key measures will be implemented to achieve these objectives:

- Designate, within the MRCI, an officer acting as liaison between each cultural community and the government;
- Create a centre of expertise in intercultural relations;
- Increase the employment representation of Quebecers from cultural communities.

The other measures under the fourth pillar address specific situations affecting women, or seek to counter discrimination, particularly in the areas of housing and employment, and to prevent racial profiling.

Fifth pillar

The Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions committed to action

Close to 90% of immigrants in Québec have settled in the metropolitan Montréal region. This area continues to be a magnet for newcomers because it is home to most of Québec's cultural communities and their organizations. It also regroups a great number of persons and services useful to their settlement.

The urban concentration of immigrants continues to be an area of concern. One impact is that the responsibility of integrating new immigrants falls squarely on the shoulders of the residents of the greater Montréal area. In addition, this concentration deprives the other regions, particularly those facing labour shortages, of immigrants' economic and cultural contribution.

In the last decade, Québec has tried to regionalize immigration, seeking to promote a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrant populations. However, it has not been able to achieve its goal of doubling the number of immigrants settling in the regions over three years.

Efforts to regionalize immigration must continue, but on the basis of a new approach. One way is to build on past successes. Thus, in some municipalities, particularly the Capitale-Nationale, Gatineau and Sherbrooke, immigrant communities can serve to attract new immigrants.

Furthermore, immigration must become a major component of regional development. The regions must take charge of attracting, receiving and integrating new immigrants on the basis of their reality and their labour needs. At present, most regions are not very aware of immigration's contribution to regional dynamism. The government must therefore support the regions in their efforts to create an attractive environment for permanent immigration.

Objectives and actions

This is the objective the government of Québec is pursuing to promote the regionalization of immigration:

Promote immigration as a development strategy by implementing action plans adapted to regional specificities.

These action plans will contain specific measures to, among other things:

- Ensure close alignment between Québec's immigration services and those of Emploi-Québec;
- Establish partnerships with municipalities;
- Create partnerships with cultural community organizations and community service organizations.

The following measures will be implemented to achieve this objective:

- Organize activities designed to raise public awareness in the regions of the contribution of immigration and the potential contribution of immigrants;
- Develop and implement regional action plans, in collaboration with socioeconomic players in the regions, including cultural community organizations.