



Bringing **youth**
into **Québec's**
maintream

Summary

This version is an English translation of the Québec youth policy *La jeunesse au coeur du Québec*, an original French language publication.

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Preamble

Whereas a mutually supportive society must assume its responsibilities toward current and future generations;

Whereas a democratic, fair society encourages its citizens to participate fully and entirely, regardless of their age, gender, origin or living conditions;

Whereas a responsible society guarantees equal opportunity and fights against social, cultural, and economic exclusion of its citizens;

Whereas it is important to rise to the challenge of including the values and aspirations of young people in the society of today and tomorrow;

Whereas it is important to ensure the continuity of Québec's human, social and material progress in a changing world;

Whereas all young people must be able to benefit from conditions conducive to achieving their full potential;

Whereas it is important for Québec to become more open to the world and take its place among nations that can influence major world trends;

Whereas young people are central to the renewal of our social and cultural dynamics through their creativity and their ability to be in touch with new cultural trends;

Whereas it was the consensus at the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse that there is a need to ensure consistent youth-oriented action by the government and to enrich Québec with a youth policy that has a long-term vision.

Consequently, the Québec youth policy aims to encourage active citizenship for all young people in Québec and invites society as a whole to:

- Inject a genuine culture of generational renewal into the activities and workings of Québec society and consolidate bonds of solidarity between the generations;
- Ensure development of the full potential of all Québec's young people, whatever their social, economic, or cultural realities, their area of residence, their degree of independence, their gender or their sexual orientation;
- Define strategies to deal with certain specific realities experienced by young people, recognize the different forms of social participation of young people in their communities, and ensure equitable living conditions;
- Ensure the full, complete participation of young people in the renewal of Québec society, particularly by integrating them harmoniously into the job market and through the quality of their working life;
- Enable young people to reconcile their personal and collective identities in a society that accepts the diversity of young people;
- Enable young people to become more open to the world and help spread universal values that Québec society subscribes to, such as solidarity, democracy and human rights;
- Introduce a lasting youth vision into government action and the action of all partners, with due respect for Québec's specific regional and cultural characteristics.

Presentation

WHY A QUÉBEC YOUTH POLICY ?

The world is changing

Young people are directly concerned by changes to Québec society, especially those involving demographics, territorial development, family and youth, globalization and work.

Combining prosperity and solidarity

Québec is a dynamic and creative nation. Ensuring the vitality of the Québec of tomorrow, is to care about the place of young people in society today. Choices need to be made so that all young citizens become active partners in developing Québec. This means enabling each young person to achieve his or her full potential. Intergenerational solidarity is an essential condition to having a modern and open Québec.

Stepping up coordinated and concerted action

The Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse, held in February 2000, stressed the need to go beyond a piecemeal approach and give Québec a youth policy. The partners agreed that such a policy would take a comprehensive, integrated approach and would guide all youth-oriented actions. The Québec youth policy is an important step toward better coordinating government action when it comes to youth issues.

A FRAME OF REFERENCE

Ensuring that actions converge...

The objective of the Québec youth policy is to have each young person feel and act like an active citizen in Québec society. To reach this objective, the policy serves as a frame of reference to ensure coherent government action and to guide the actions of all partners who are involved with adolescents and young adults.

... with regard to all Québec's youth...

All young people are included in the policy, regardless of where they live, their ethnic or cultural origin, degree of functional independence, socioeconomic status, gender or sexual orientation. However, beyond the general policy orientations, situations requiring special strategies are indicated. Implementing this policy will require much flexibility so as to cope with these different situations and adapt to the various realities that young people experience at local, regional and national levels.

... and throughout time

The action plan will set out the respective actions and responsibilities of the partners and the government. Updated every three years, it will bring the strategies in line with the changing situation of Québec's young people.

FOR AN ACTIVE YOUTH CITIZENSHIP

Ultimate aim of the Québec youth policy: helping all Québec's young people become active citizens

The notion of active citizenship not only directly refers to the full, complete participation of citizens in the life of a society and their commitment to it, but also to their capability to do so.

Citizenship develops progressively through different experiences within the family, at school, during leisure time and at work, for instance. Today, the traditional support frameworks are themselves being redefined along with the conditions for the participation of young people in society. In this changing context, society must be able to echo the ways of life and aspirations of young people. The notion of citizenship will need to comprise values that foster the civic and social involvement of young people.

Citizenship is closely related to the fostering of a close-knit, inclusive and fair society

Two key approaches will ensure that all actions converge on a common goal. A collective approach will foster changes in mentalities and behaviours with a view to bringing young people into the development of Québec society on a lasting basis. An approach aimed essentially at the individual will enable each young person to achieve his or her full potential. This requires from all, young and adults alike, an openness to differences and a firm belief that each one can and must contribute to the development of society and that everyone must work together for the sustainable and harmonious development of Québec.

The four main orientations of the Québec youth policy

In response to social, economic and cultural changes, Québec society must rise to new challenges. It must give itself concrete means so that, as of today, young people can fully participate in the development of their society.

Four policy orientations will guide the actions to meet the challenges of active youth citizenship, both in an individual sense and a collective one.

- Engaging society in a culture of generational renewal
- Ensuring young people achieve their full potential
- Facilitating access to the job market and improving the quality of working life
- Developing a sense of belonging

These four policy orientations were chosen and defined following public consultations and in close cooperation with young people. The action plan will provide the opportunity for the government, regions, municipalities, communities, individuals, families, educational institutions, unions, businesses, community-based organizations and associations, the media and all young people themselves, to rally around this social project so important for the future of Québec: a strong and committed youth.

FIRST ORIENTATION: Engaging society in a culture of generational renewal

Young people contribute to the vitality and renewal of Québec society. They are essential to its development. From a standpoint of sustainable development, it is important not to compromise the capacity of future generations to meet their needs. To care today about the place of young people and their heritage is a matter of being responsible for a vibrant Québec society. One of the challenges will be to truly include young people's aspirations so they become active, responsible partners in today's society and tomorrow's—when changing demographics will tend to give more weight to the more immediate interests of older people.

Strengthening intergenerational solidarity and developing a true culture of generational renewal are fundamental issues. Québec society must recognize the importance of concrete action to share the social, cultural, economic and environmental values of the different generations living throughout Québec.

This policy orientation aims to instil a true culture of generational renewal into the workings of Québec society and strengthen the bonds among the generations. To this end, the lines of action are:

- education and training – a collective priority;
- generations with joint responsibility;
- sustainable development – a key component;
- the place of young people in circles of influence and decision making;
- planning the workforce and integrating a new generation of workers;
- culture, creativity and innovation;
- a new generation of scientists.

SECOND ORIENTATION: Ensuring young people achieve their full potential

Young people must each be able to develop their full potential, their personal identity and their capability to take an active place in society. This also means becoming independent and responsible for their situation and their future. Concretely, individuals must be given the opportunity to fully exercise their citizenship.

Education is more than ever a deciding factor in each individual's future and in society's. After the family, school is one of the first living environments of young people. It prepares them for citizenship by enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills and by exposing them to culture. The objective of training 100% of young people according to their potential is a major challenge.

A mutually supportive society cares about offering each young person an equal chance to develop and become independent. It must be recognized that poverty, especially, has a direct bearing on the physical and psychological health of young people, on their social integration and on their choosing to stay in school. One of the challenges is to support young people in their diversity, recognize the different forms of social participation they develop in their respective living environments, and ensure equitable living conditions. It is also important to be attentive and open to the different forms that families may assume today and adapt services to young families accordingly.

This policy orientation aims at ensuring that all young people in Québec achieve their full potential, regardless of their social, economic or cultural backgrounds, the area where they live, their degree of independence, their gender or their sexual orientation. To this end, the lines of action are:

- an equal chance for all young people;
- the importance of young families and support for parents;

- partnership between schools and communities to help young people thrive;
- recreation, sports and volunteer work as complementary paths to development;
- a personalized and concerted approach to prevention and healing.

THIRD ORIENTATION: Facilitating access to the job market and improving the quality of working life

Through work, the exercise of citizenship finds one of its most concrete forms of expression. The persisting lack of job security faced by younger generations constitutes a challenge for society. Young people need to have access to steady and decent jobs that meet their expectations and qualifications. Openness to the next generation and intergenerational solidarity in the job market are measures of a society's success in terms of balanced and dynamic development.

This policy orientation aims at promoting the full and complete participation of young people in the renewal of Québec society, especially by helping them easily enter the job market and having a good working life. To this end, the lines of action are:

- preparation for a working life;
- job access and retention;
- employment-related conditions;
- reconciliation of family life with school and work.

FORTH ORIENTATION: Developing a sense of belonging

A firm commitment to open the doors to young people in all areas of community life will enable young people to be an integral part of the development of their respective environments and society as a whole—an essential condition to developing a sense of belonging.

Certain conditions are conducive to this sense of belonging. Young people must find a place in their community, be heard, have the opportunity to pursue projects and get involved. Society also needs to be open to the diversity and aspirations of young people. In a society increasingly open to the world, young people must also find opportunities to strengthen their collective identity, to share common social and human values, and to increase their influence.

This policy orientation aims to enable young people to reconcile personal identity and collective identity in an inclusive society open to the diversity of young people. To this end, the lines of action are:

- young people in an inhabited and vibrant Québec;
- young people active in and committed to their community;
- an inclusive society open to the diversity of young people;
- young people in a Québec open to the world.

Levers for implementing and following up the Québec youth policy

Through the various levers designed to implement the Québec youth policy, the government intends to support the efforts put forth, reinforce concerted action with young people and bring together the interested parties from Québec's various sectors.

Through flexible implementation, the policy will be able to meet the different needs of young people and adapt to their changing condition. This flexibility will notably be made possible by action plans to be updated every three years, thus keeping the policy viable as time goes on.

Implementation of the Québec youth policy will have two major objectives:

- to **coordinate government action** on youth-related issues;
- to permanently introduce a **youth vision** into government action and into the actions of all partners of civil society.

Better coordination of government action

The Québec youth policy will be implemented mainly through government departments and agencies. At both the political and administrative levels, implementation will be harmonized with existing policies and programs that, to varying degrees, serve young people.

The policy will also serve to impart a youth dimension into the very design of government policies and programs. Action, with respect to government activities, needs to be taken earlier on, before decisions are made.

To this end, the main levers identified are as follows:

- ◆ The follow-up to the Québec youth policy is entrusted to the minister responsible for youth.
- ◆ A departmental committee on youth will be mandated to ensure that government youth-related policies, initiatives and actions are coherent.
- ◆ A youth impact clause will be introduced into position papers presented to the Conseil des ministres, with respect to matters having a major impact on young people. This section will indicate whether the measures being proposed have any impact on today's or tomorrow's young people.
- ◆ The Secrétariat à la jeunesse (SAJ) will remain under the authority of the minister responsible for youth and be overseen by a government administrator. Furthermore, its mandates, resources and powers will be extended, notably by including the duties of the Secretariat of the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse and the follow-up duties for commitments made at the Summit. The SAJ will be mandated, among other things, to prepare, in the year following the adoption of the Québec youth policy, a first three-year action plan on youth.
- ◆ The integration of a concern for youth issues into the departments' strategic plans.
- ◆ The development of a youth component within the framework agreements between the government and the regions.

SUMMARY

A youth vision in government action and in the action of all civil society partners

To bring a youth dimension into the workings of government and society on a lasting basis, concerted action is required among young people themselves and with young people on national, regional and local levels. A better understanding of their day-to-day lives is also necessary.

To this end, the main levers identified are as follows:

- ◆ The creation of a follow-up committee for the Québec youth policy that will take over the mandates of the follow-up committee of the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse and which will be made up exclusively of young people.
- ◆ The maintaining of the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse in its current mandates and its participation in the Québec youth policy follow-up committee.
- ◆ The strengthening the mandates of the regional youth forums, at the regional and national levels.
- ◆ The continuation of comprehensive knowledge of youth issues, especially by funding youth-related research.

