

ENSEMBLE POUR LES GÉNÉRATIONS FUTURES

QUÉBEC YOUTH POLICY
Consultation document

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Secrétariat à la jeunesse

Ministère du Conseil exécutif

875, Grande Allée Est

Édifice H, bureau 1.801

Québec (Québec) G1R 4Y8

Telephone : 418 643-8864

Fax : 418 646-8104

www.jeunes.gouv.qc.ca

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A WORD FROM THE PREMIER OF QUÉBEC AND MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUTH ISSUES



For many decades, Québec has been a society focused on its future and its calling. Youth has been and still is a top priority. It was the impetus for the Quiet Revolution. Government after government has tried to find the best way to leave our youth a healthy, prosperous Québec free to make its own choices. This government is no exception.

Our first order of business upon assuming office was the restoration of balanced public finances. This necessary exercise has set us on a sustainable path of rigorous public resource management. Now that Québec will stop accumulating deficits that increase its debt, it can finally see a future with more freedom to choose public policies adapted to the 21st century.

I want youth to be one of the first areas where this greater latitude is exercised. The Québec Youth Policy will be renewed to ensure its priorities reflect not only the challenges facing Québec youths, but also the opportunities available to them, today and in the years to come.

I therefore hope this consultation will give a voice to our youths, their representatives and the people who work with them every day, so together we may attain our objective: a more prosperous Québec that makes the right choices for the Quebecers of today and tomorrow.

Philippe Couillard

Premier of Québec and Minister responsible for Youth Issues



A WORD FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANT TO THE PREMIER



For decades, the Québec government has fostered the continuous advancement of Québec's youth. Since 2001, the Québec Youth Policy has been guiding some of its actions in this area. It is now time to renew this policy and make it relevant for youths today.

In 2013, a preliminary consultation was launched, giving many Québec youths the opportunity to express their needs, as well as their expectations of the government and its institutions. The current government is listening and analyzing how it can best respond, taking into consideration its means and the situation of Québec society as a whole. This consultation document presents our initial proposals.

The document's purpose is to invite reflection ahead of a round table taking place in September. The government will take the ideas expressed at the round table into consideration when drafting the next Québec Youth Policy.

The first Québec Youth Policy was embodied in three action plans, including the 2009-2014 Youth Action Strategy, which presented concrete measures to implement the principles set out in the Policy. In the future, the same structure will be used: once the new Québec Youth Policy is released, a new Youth Action Strategy will soon follow.

I look forward to hearing what you have to say about the proposals in this document, and I know that, together, we can develop a Québec Youth Policy worthy of our youths' promise.

Caroline Simard

Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier
(youth and early childhood, anti-bullying)



INTRODUCTION

The Québec government has begun a process to develop a new Québec Youth Policy. The consultation for which this document was prepared is an important step in renewing the Policy.

The Québec Youth Policy proposes objectives and principles that guide the entire Québec government in its youth initiatives.

The related youth action strategies set out more specific measures to help young Quebecers aged 15 to 29 be healthy, pursue their education, have a job that suits them and contribute to their communities. These measures are consistent with the Policy's objectives, and round out the programs and services offered by the different departments and bodies to attain these objectives.

The first Québec Youth Policy was released in 2001. It was followed by the 2002-2005 Youth Action Plan, the 2006-2009 Youth Action Strategy and the 2009-2014 Youth Action Strategy.

For the past 15 years, these documents have supported the Québec government's youth-related actions. They have helped tens of thousands of youths achieve social and professional independence, and contributed to building a welcoming society that gives young people the desire and opportunity to play a role in modern Québec.

The context that the Policy and its strategies described and that influenced the actions they contained has changed significantly; it is important to acknowledge this. The youngest of those aged 15 to 29 in 2001 will soon no longer be a part of this age group, and the oldest are now in their mid-40s. Furthermore, the situation of the Québec government and of Québec youth as well as the global context have also evolved in the last 15 years. In particular, the aging of Québec's population, which was mentioned in the last Youth Policy, is now well under way.

We must pay attention to these developments; the government needs to take them into consideration when planning its service offer, in order to respond to the needs of young people and Québec society in general. It is therefore necessary adopt new orientations, in a document that, like the 2001 Youth Policy, reaffirms each person's contribution to developing Québec youth and serves as a reference to all those who feel young people should be able to achieve independence and realize their full potential for many years to come.



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

This document proposes four areas of intervention, drawn from assessments of the first Youth Policy and the youth action strategies that followed, previous consultations of young people in various Québec regions, and analyses conducted by the departments and bodies.

The purpose of these areas of intervention is to prioritize government action, so young people can be successful in their transition to personal, professional and societal independence, start working on their life goals and get involved in developing their communities.

The first area of intervention centres on adopting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle and good habits, in beneficial and safe environments. It covers eating habits, physical and sport activities, mental health, risk behaviours, and harmonious interpersonal relationships and egalitarian relations.

The second area of intervention is school retention and success. It touches on two reinforcing factors for school retention, i.e. extracurricular activities and educational counselling, as well as on promoting vocational and technical training, and access to education.

The third area of intervention involves economic life and presents the following themes: the employability of youths who are unemployed and not in school, and of young people in difficulty; working conditions for these young people when they find a job; conditions for young people who want to start their own business or take over an existing business, such as a family business; the importance of balancing work obligations with other life domains, in particular family; and the advantages of interregional, pan-Canadian and international mobility.

The fourth area of intervention is the promotion of active and participatory citizenship. It addresses civic participation, volunteering and cultural participation, youth access to decision-making entities, dialogue and collaboration across generations, and the importance of environmental responsibility.

This document asks questions for each of the consultation's areas of intervention; the groups and people who have an interest in this consultation have until October 1, 2015 to give their opinions in response to these questions.



CONTEXT

BACKGROUND AND RENEWAL PROCESS

As the 2009-2014 Youth Action Strategy was coming to an end, the Québec government asked the Secrétariat à la jeunesse to conduct an initial consultation, with a view to renewing the Québec Youth Policy. This preliminary consultation was conducted simultaneously online and through a consultation tour in the regions, and gave young people, advocates and citizens interested in youth issues the opportunity to be heard. The departments and bodies that provide direct and indirect services to young people also pooled their knowledge. This document is partly based on the results of the initial consultation phase.

The document also takes into consideration the new government directions set since April 2014. To restore order to public finances and give Québec the possibility of once again choosing its priorities with respect to public policies, we must re-examine the overall functioning of the government, its programs and its relationships with its partners. The measures implemented by the government must have an impact on youth, be relevant to young people and be the most efficient way for them to attain their objectives.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

Young Quebecers receive government services from a wide variety of departments and bodies. Most of these services are provided through permanent, universal programs and establishments: secondary schools, continuing education and vocational training centres, colleges and universities, establishments in the health and social services network, student financial assistance, and labour market information services.

The Québec Youth Policy does not override these services or the departments' and bodies' directions regarding the way they are delivered. Rather, it is complementary to their actions, highlighting certain government priorities to facilitate young people's transitions to independence. Departments and bodies are expected to refer to it in planning and coordinating their own policies and measures, when changes are made.

As in the past, the new Québec Youth Policy will lead to a Youth Action Strategy, which will contain additional measures for young people whose needs are not fully met by the other departments and bodies, or who are seeking to give existing measures and programs a specific focus. It will be implemented by the Secrétariat à la jeunesse, in partnership with the Québec government's departments and bodies, as well as organizations that work with Québec youth.



INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Québec's youth policy approach is inspired by the directions and objectives of the United Nations' World Programme of Action for Youth and the Stratégie jeunesse de la Francophonie.

Internationally, two youth policy practices exist: the first focuses on making declarations of principles, which are then implemented by government bodies; the second focuses on developing an action plan that brings together measures affecting youth.

Québec merges these two practices, with a dual policy-action plan structure: the Québec Youth Policy presents the broad directions that must guide youth-related government action, and the Youth Action Strategy identifies specific actions for young people. Québec further sets itself apart in that the Minister responsible for Youth Issues is also the government leader.

The Québec model has been successful in the past and has captured the interest of several governments and international organizations; in fact, Québec's expertise was recently recognized by the International Organisation of La Francophonie when the Organisation signed an agreement with the Québec government on June 10, 2015.

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

When the government refers to youth, it means citizens aged 15 to 29¹ who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

During this period, most people complete their education and enter the labour market for the first time. They leave a relatively protected and structured environment, and become free to make their own choices.

These choices often include choosing a home, starting a family, acquiring property, starting a company—crucial decisions that will affect their resources for most of their active lives. These decisions are influenced by family status, health, education, employability, and the rights and duties of each and every citizen.

1. GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC (2001). *Québec Youth Policy: Bringing youth into Québec's mainstream*, p. 14.



THE CURRENT SITUATION OF YOUNG QUEBECERS

Young Quebecers are not the same as when the 2001 Youth Policy was released, both literally and figuratively. Their lives and the world in which they are growing have changed, sometimes quickly. Young people no longer have the same interests or perspectives as they did 15 years ago, which changes their relationship to society.

In this spirit, the Secrétariat à la jeunesse asked the Institut de la statistique du Québec to update the statistical portrait of youth, summarizing the data that illustrates the situation of young people today. This portrait can be completed by the Institut's demographic projections, which make it possible to interpret the data with a longer-term perspective.

Statistical overview of youth

In 2014, at the request of the Secrétariat à la jeunesse, the Institut de la statistique du Québec published *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse*, which presents many details on the situation of Quebecers aged 15 to 29 and how it evolved from 1996 to 2012.

This document contains a treasure trove of information on the youth demographic in relation to Québec's population, young people's integration into the labour market and entrepreneurship, their education, their health, and their economic situation. It is an invaluable reference to interpret the portrait of young Quebecers in the early 2010s and gain an understanding of the trends that influence them.

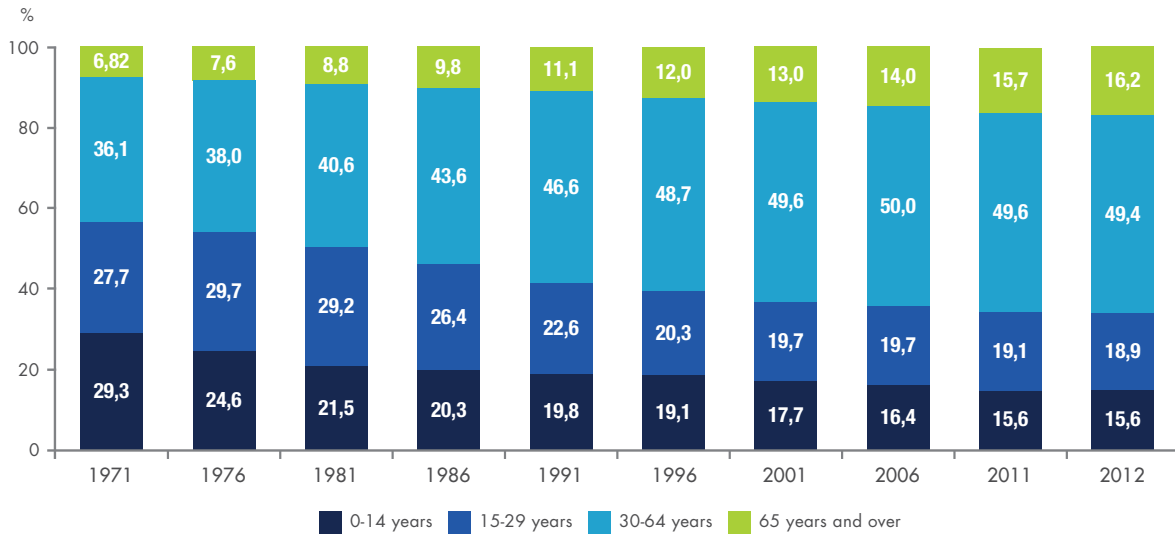
Unless otherwise indicated, the statistics in this document are from *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse*.

You are invited to consult it at

www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/statistiques/conditions-vie-societe/regard-jeunesse_an.html.

In 2015, the social impacts of population aging are a major consideration in the reflection on Québec's youth. As in most Western societies, the proportion of young people in the population of Québec has been steadily declining since the 1980s, and this is expected to continue in the future. This proportion, which was 19% in 2012, should drop to approximately 15.7% toward the end of the next decade.²

Figure 1
Distribution of population by age group, Québec, 1971–2012



Source: INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014).
Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012.

There are approximately 1.5 million young people aged 15 to 29 in Québec. This number has been relatively stable since the 1990s, whereas total population is on the rise.

INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014).
Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012.

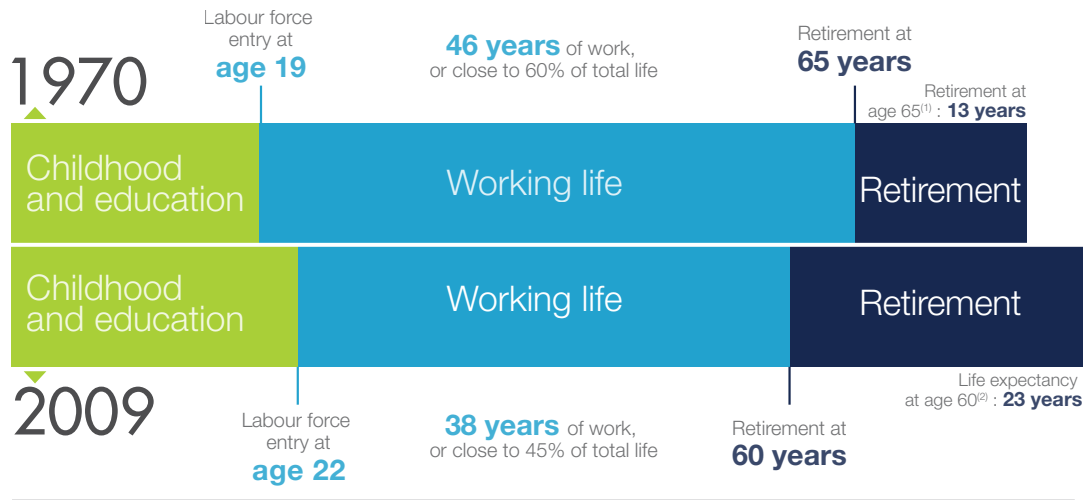
The inversion of the population pyramid will have repercussions on the labour market. The working-age population, i.e. people aged 15 to 64, will reach its peak in 2015³ and slowly decrease thereafter. There will be more people retiring than young people entering the labour market.

2. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). Demographic prospects, reference scenario.

3. Ibid.



Figure 2
Change in the duration of an individual's working life between 1970 and 2009



⁽¹⁾ Life expectancy for men is used here to better reflect the composition of the labour force. For women, life expectancy at age 65 in 1970 was 17 years.

⁽²⁾ Life expectancy for men is used for comparison with life expectancy in 1970. For women, life expectancy at age 60 in 2009 was almost 26 years.

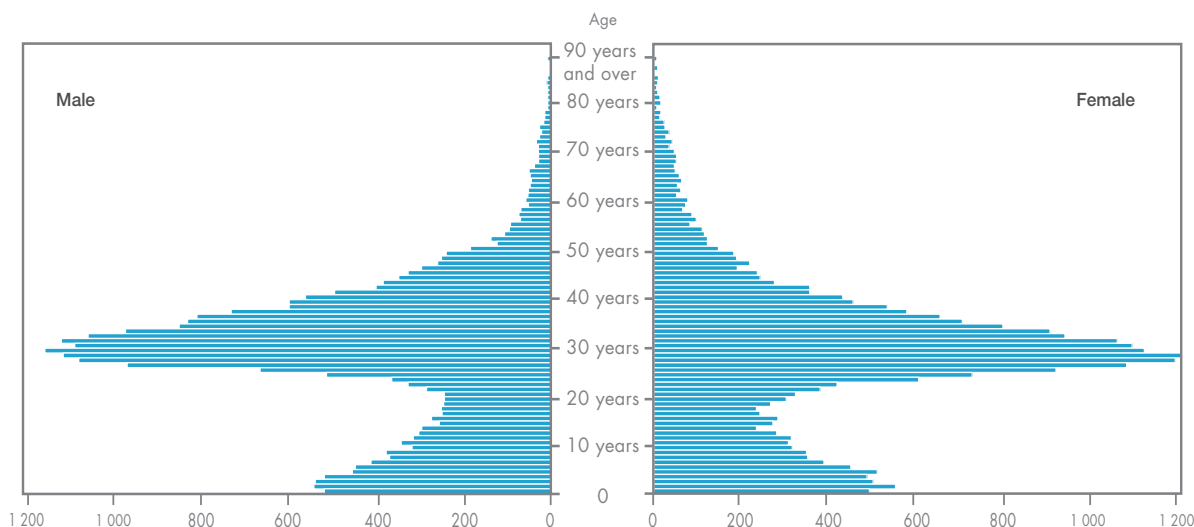
Source: A. D'AMOUR et autres (2007). *Innover pour pérenniser le système de retraite*.

These developments may have several effects on Québec society. A smaller workforce makes it challenging to maintain and improve the standard of living and prosperity. Furthermore, the cost of services and public plans, such as health care for senior citizens and pension benefits, is expected to increase.

Such demographic changes will have varying impacts on Québec's different communities. These effects will be amplified or mitigated by past and future interregional and international migrations. For example, in 2011, 29.3% of the people who immigrated to Québec were aged 15 to 29.⁴ From one region to another, the social and economic challenges will arise at different intensities.

4. MINISTÈRE DE L'IMMIGRATION, DE LA DIVERSITÉ ET DE L'INCLUSION.

Figure 3
Age pyramid of immigrants to Québec, 2011–2012



Note: This is the age at the beginning of the period. Children born abroad who immigrated during the year are added at age 0.

Source : INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014).

Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012.

Also, today, through technology, young people have immediate access to more information than ever before, cultural products and new ideas from all over the world. While such access is an undeniable asset, we must nevertheless find a way to reconcile the vastness of these new horizons with the importance of contributing to the vitality of local communities. Young people's participation in elections, either as electors or candidates, is proof that this is not a given.

The current environmental context also comes with its fair share of challenges for young Quebecers. Climate change is the leading phenomenon that will increasingly affect their lives, but preventing water, air and soil contamination, preserving ecosystems and biodiversity, and reducing, reclaiming and managing waste are also pressing issues.

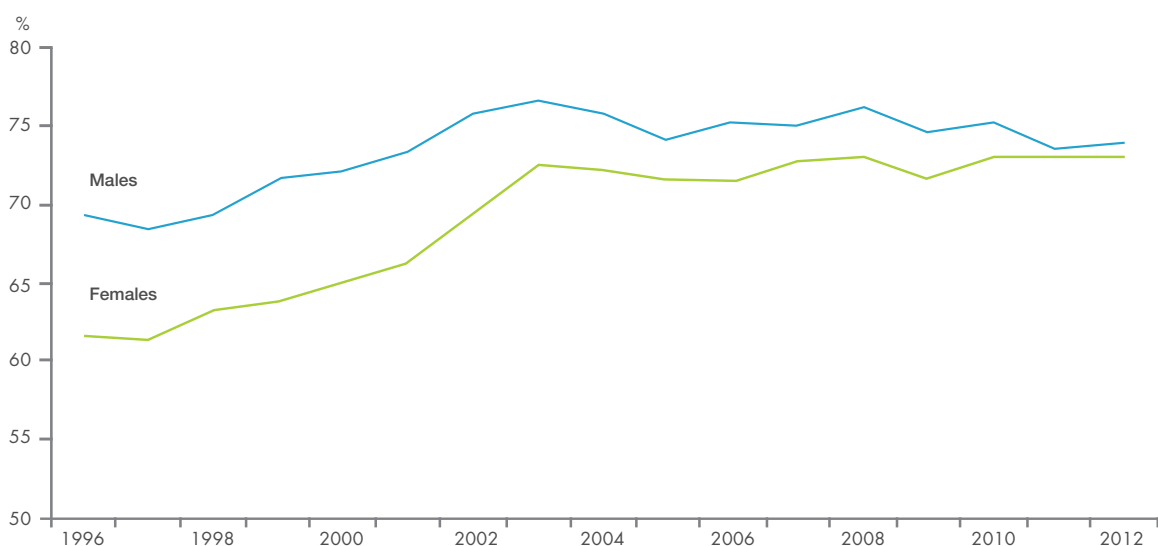
With respect to health, the general situation of young Quebecers has improved: physical activity has increased slightly, and less than 20% of young people report that they are sedentary.⁵ Young people are smoking less, but alcohol consumption is on the rise. They report decreasing daily stress levels and good social support, which means suicide is a less frequent cause of death. Nevertheless, overweight remains a problem and is worsening over time, as is the prevalence of blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections.

5. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*, table 4.2, 2009-2010 data.

The graduation rate is on the rise, both from secondary and post-secondary studies. More and more young people are working while in school, although the average number of hours worked remains relatively stable.⁶

The labour market activity of young people has remained at a high level for the 15 years studied. The employment rate of young men has remained quite stable, while that of young women has continued to advance, surpassing that of men in recent years. Unemployment among young people has not changed much, and indicates a generally successful insertion into the labour market.

Figure 4
Participation rate for people aged 15–29 by sex, Québec, 1996 to 2012



Source: INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*.

Finding work remains an inescapable challenge for young people who are visible minorities, as their unemployment rate is close to twice that of the general population, whether they are immigrants or not.⁷

The sections below will further delve into the situation of young people and the challenges they face. It is nevertheless encouraging to see that Québec can continue to build on solid foundations, with a wealth of advancements for young people, which have continued to this day.

6. Approximately 15 hours a week. Source: INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*, table 3.7.

7. Statistics Canada data, reported by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion.

The situation, challenges and opportunities of young Aboriginal persons in Québec

Among the different realities that characterize Québec youth, that of Aboriginal youths holds a special place.

Demographically, the Aboriginal population's profile is the opposite of the rest of the Québec population's profile, characterized by the significant proportion of young people. The average age of the Aboriginal population is 27, and young people aged 15 to 34 represent approximately 30% of the total population.⁸

During the Secrétariat à la jeunesse's consultations in Aboriginal communities or of their representatives, people spoke at length about the challenges they face and for which they sometimes feel ill-equipped. In their home communities, many young people suffer from learning problems, dropping out of school, and serious psychological problems that can lead to suicide. When they settle outside their communities, Aboriginal youths often face prejudice or discrimination and are among the most vulnerable young people.

Yet Aboriginal youths clearly want to contribute to the development of Québec and take part in the discussions on the future of young Quebecers.

A major theme: Culture

Culture is a major theme mentioned by the Aboriginal youths consulted by the Secrétariat à la jeunesse. While they may not have the same history or make up a culturally homogenous group, Aboriginal youths are united in expressing their concerns regarding their cultural future and that of Aboriginal nations.

Aboriginal youths fear their languages will disappear, as well as their customs and knowledge relating to hunting, spirituality and the land. Many feel projects to recognize these cultures and languages are a priority.

In the next Youth Policy, Aboriginal persons will hold a special place that is fitting to their unique circumstances. The areas of common ground, where they exist, will be highlighted, but adjustments will be made to reflect the many viewpoints and realities of Aboriginal youths, who are strongly encouraged to take part in this consultation, so this particular and important aspect of the next Youth Policy may be documented.

8. SECRÉTARIAT À LA JEUNESSE (2014). Livre blanc sur la Politique québécoise de la jeunesse.



KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE FUTURE QUÉBEC YOUTH POLICY

The Québec Youth Policy and its components shall be guided by the following principles:

- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall seamlessly tie into the current operations of the departments, bodies and institutions that provide services to young people. The Policy shall support and guide the government in the development and assessment of these services, putting forward guiding principles and priority issues, but shall not override the departments and bodies in their areas of expertise.
- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall respect the logical structure of Québec government public policies. It shall therefore take into account the directions of related fields and the full range of government actions, in particular in the areas of budgetary discipline, administrative simplification and accountability.
- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall be forward-looking, to help young Quebecers cope with the foreseeable transitions they will face. Thus, the Policy shall place special emphasis on the demographic transition and environmental changes.
- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall especially seek to equip young people for smooth transitions to independence in the professional, personal, family and public spheres. The Policy shall concern itself with young people whose transitions to independence present difficulties that may not be addressed by existing department and body actions, and shall call for joint initiatives.
- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall reinforce intergenerational solidarity and raise awareness in Québec society of young people's needs and the importance of responding to them.
- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall promote establishing and maintaining egalitarian relationships among citizens, regardless of socioeconomic background, colour, ethnocultural or linguistic community, sex, gender or sexual orientation. It shall challenge sexual stereotypes and seek to promote measures that favour gender equality.
- ▶ The Québec Youth Policy shall recognize that Québec is home to several nations, including the Québec nation, which is made up of a Francophone majority and many minorities. These include an Anglophone community and several ethnocultural minorities who contribute to its social and cultural fabric, at times through a long shared history. The measures put forward by the Youth Action Strategy shall take into account the specific realities of the Anglophone minority and cultural communities.



Québec also includes the 11 Aboriginal nations⁹, whose cultures and realities enrich it and who face challenges that at times are different from those faced by citizens who are not part of these nations. Aboriginal nations are invited to share the objectives put forward in the Policy and, in time, develop their own approaches to implement measures supporting youth.

The Policy shall favour social cohesion and respect for diversity, as well as pride in the different heritages that contribute to Québec's sociocultural wealth.

The three proposed directions for the future Policy

1. Support young people in the many transitions on their path to independence, to help them achieve personal success.
2. Foster young people's contribution to Québec's development, and the preservation of a fair and harmonious social structure.
3. Direct government action with respect to youth toward certain targeted and complementary areas of intervention.

9. Abenakis, Algonquian, Attikameks, Huron-Wendats, Innu, Malecites, Micmacs, Mohawks, Naskapis, Crees and Inuit.

AREA OF INTERVENTION



AREA OF INTERVENTION I

A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Health and well-being contribute to the personal development of youths and all other sociodemographic groups.

Long defined as the absence of illness, physical and mental health is now viewed as a form of personal and social capital that helps people attain their objectives and fulfill their aspirations, much like other forms of capital.¹⁰

In general, youth is a group with considerable health capital. Young people aged 15 to 29 mostly consider themselves to be in excellent or very good physical and mental health, more so than those aged 30 and up.¹¹

The Québec government deploys large-scale interventions to ensure individual and societal health and well-being are maintained and improved. It is proposed that the Québec Youth Policy address the topic of youth health in terms of individual and environmental actions favouring health and well-being.

During childhood, health is influenced by the family environment in particular, but young people have more freedom to make choices in this area. Usually after age 15, most people begin choosing the sports and physical activities they wish to add to their schedules and their everyday means of transportation, and do their own groceries for the first time.

These behaviours form the basis of habits that sometimes last a lifetime. If someone eventually starts a family, he or she is likely to pass these habits on to the children, starting a virtuous cycle.

Many factors affect young people's health capital in addition to the socioeconomic environment: overweight or obesity, risk behaviours, and psychological distress, such as depression or anxiety.

10. An Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services describes health as follows: “the physical, mental and social capacity of persons to act in their community and to carry out the roles they intend to assume in a manner which is acceptable to themselves and to the groups to which they belong.” (Section 1)

11. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*, table 4.1.



The government's consultation addresses five health-related items :

- ▶ Eating habits
- ▶ Physical and sport activities
- ▶ Mental health
- ▶ Risk behaviours
- ▶ Harmonious interpersonal relationships and egalitarian relations

Eating habits

Quebecers' diet is a longstanding government concern. Every day, food gives people the nutrients and energy they need to live and go about their activities. Over time, the quantity and quality of food consumed have an impact on health, preventing or contributing to conditions like obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.

Overweight and obesity are the most common diet-related problems experienced by young people, and they are getting worse. Food insecurity, that is, problems related to access to food, is also on the rise. Financial constraints and a low-quality diet often go hand in hand.


Close to one third of young people are overweight, and the latest trends indicate the phenomenon is on the rise.

STATISTICS CANADA (2010). *Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009-2010*.

Three eating habits seem to be the main factors linked to diet-related physical health problems: consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, consumption of commercially prepared foods¹² and larger portions. These three behaviours increase energy intake, and in recent decades, their increased prevalence coincides with a rise in overweight, not only in Québec but also in most countries.

Commercially prepared foods, fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages are often referred to as “junk food,” and several proposals have been made to limit their consumption. Some target secondary school students, whose food and drink choices are often affected by limited transportation options and budgets. Some movements aim to renew interest in cooking and the joys of eating a variety of foods, for example, slow food.

12. From 1986 to 2001, the consumption of ready-to-eat meals went up 470%. Source: MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX (2009). *Cadre de référence à l'intention des établissements du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux pour l'élaboration de politiques alimentaires adaptées*.



Food preferences are shaped by our surroundings: previous personal experiences, the social environment, and the accessibility and price of food. Nevertheless, food choices also depend on individual tastes, and the government's possible interventions in this area are limited; the influence of advertising on young people's food choices has been the subject of few scientific studies.

Physical activity

Along with food, physical and sport activities play an important role in countering the overweight and obesity problem. Such activity is also crucial for overall health, both physical and mental. Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality, partly because it is a risk factor for many chronic diseases.¹³

The World Health Organization (WHO) has made recommendations on the amount and intensity of physical activity children and adults need. While young Quebecers have been doing more physical activity in the last decade, there is still a significant gap with the WHO recommendations, which are 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week for adults, and a higher 60 minutes a day for children and teenagers.¹⁴

While participation in physical and sport activities has increased somewhat among young people in recent years, sedentary activities, such as the hours spent in front of a screen, are also on the rise.¹⁵ Young people are different from their elders in that they spend more time in front of the computer than the television. For the first time, computers, smartphones and tablets are used twice as much as television for sedentary activities.

One in three young people is sedentary or not very active.

STATISTICS CANADA (2010). *Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009-2010*.

The contrast between physical and sedentary activities highlights an important point: physical activity takes time, and Quebecers of all ages feel their use of time is subject to more and more constraints. For young people, studies, work, leisure activities and time with family are sometimes difficult to balance, and chip away at the time available for physical activity.

To improve the level of physical activity among young Quebecers, it is necessary to take these constraints into account and promote activities that make it possible to attain several objectives at once, for example, active transportation.¹⁶

13. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (2010). *Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health*.

14. Ibid.

15. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2015). "Les activités sédentaires chez les jeunes : qui les pratique et quelle en est l'évolution depuis 2007 ?" *Zoom Santé* bulletin No. 50.

16. Ibid.



Mental health

Young people differ from other age groups in that they are generally in very good physical health. However, when it comes to mental health, there are many signs that young people are a particularly vulnerable group. Childhood and adolescence are crucial periods during which children and young people may go through personal and social difficulties, experience trauma or begin showing signs of mental disorders.

Young people become more independent in all life domains, but these transitions are rarely smooth. The necessary adjustments can cause significant stress in certain youths and cause or exacerbate anxiety or depressive disorders. These can sometimes lead to suicide, although there has been a significant drop in this cause of death among people aged 15 to 29 since 2000.¹⁷

Close to 4% of young people consider their mental health fair or poor.

STATISTICS CANADA (2010). *Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009-2010*.

These difficulties have consequences on young people's well-being, their productivity at work or school, their relationships with family and friends, and sometimes even their very lives.

Sometimes, mental and physical health can influence each other, and mood disorders can have indirect effects on physical health. Eating disorders, for example, which are more prevalent among young people, are at the intersection of mental and physical health.

Many stereotypes must be dispelled in the area of mental health, which, unlike physical health, is kept private and not discussed, in particular because of prevailing social norms and values, and the isolation of certain people in our society. It is time for a change in social norms in this regard.

Risk behaviours

Youth is a time when identity is built and autonomy is affirmed. Young people seek to assert their independence in the eyes of their peers and older adults. In youth, everyone has new experiences, without, however, being in full control of their impulses and inhibitions.

Risk behaviours are one expression of this reality. In some respects, they can be markers of the development of the self. However, some of these behaviours, which can at times be habits, increase the probability of adverse physical, social or psychological effects. In some cases, they can even endanger the health and safety of others.

17. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*, figure 4.1.

The most common risk behaviours engaged in by young people are tobacco and drug use, excessive alcohol consumption, unprotected sexual intercourse and dangerous driving.

**One in three young people drinks heavily on a regular basis.
Fifteen years ago, it was one in four.**

STATISTICS CANADA (2010). *Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009-2010*.

The trends in some of these behaviours suggest that significant progress has been made. Although young drivers are still overrepresented in traffic accidents, the rate of death or serious injury among young people aged 15 to 24 decreased by 61% from 1990 to 2010.¹⁸ The rate of death and serious injury among pedestrians and cyclists has also improved over the last decade.

These are not the only risk behaviours that have trended downward: for example, tobacco use by young people is decreasing.¹⁹

However, the trends in some habits are worrying. The rate of regular or excessive alcohol consumption among people aged 15 to 29 has increased. People in their mid-twenties are especially affected, men more so than women.²⁰ Excessive alcohol consumption is associated with other risk behaviours, such as dangerous driving, delinquency and unprotected sexual intercourse.

As before, a minority of young people engage in numerous risk behaviours on a regular basis, but young people in difficulty are especially involved. Experience with respect to risk behaviours engaged in by young people suggests that, by emphasizing prevention and promoting healthy behaviours, public policy can help reverse trends and reduce adverse effects on the health and well-being of young Quebecers.

Harmonious interpersonal relationships and egalitarian relations

The Québec Youth Policy seeks to foster harmonious relationships between all citizens in their daily lives. Accordingly, it should promote egalitarian relationships free from stereotypes based on gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status or origin, and from behaviours—such as bullying or the hypersexualization of young girls—that stem from such stereotypes.

18. SOCIÉTÉ DE L'ASSURANCE AUTOMOBILE DU QUÉBEC.

19. MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX.

20. INSTITUT NATIONAL DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE DU QUÉBEC.



The inversion of the population pyramid and the consequences of that inversion underscore the need to establish respectful intergenerational dialogue. The contributions to society by citizens of all age groups must be recognized in order for people to be able to realize themselves as equals in dignity and rights. Conversely, prejudice between age groups can lead to relationships marred by conflict, to everyone's detriment.

Close to one in three people who immigrate to Québec is 15 to 29 years old.

STATISTICS CANADA. *Demographic Estimates.*

For many Quebecers, youth is when the first romantic feelings appear and sexual intercourse begins. Interpersonal relationships of this kind must be respectful, and partners need to feel they are equals. This includes concern for each other's physical and mental health. On such terms, these relationships can be among the most positive experiences of human existence.

Harmonious interpersonal relationships also require the prevention of bullying. Bullying is a behaviour, comment, act or gesture of a repeated and most often deliberate nature that causes feelings of distress, and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes. Such behaviour can be direct or indirect, and can occur online. Bullying takes place in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned. It is a source of suffering for victims and their loved ones.

Studies have shown that not only victims, but also bullies themselves can have issues of low self-esteem, academic demotivation or depression. Young people who are bullied are often more isolated, rejected and without friends. The people who witness bullying are key players in the dynamic. It is important for them to know they can play a valuable role and are able to intervene.

Bullying can be tied to broader-ranging phenomena, such as interpersonal violence, abuse, neglect, sexual assault and conjugal violence.

Fighting bullying is a government priority; a consultation forum was held on the subject in October 2014. The Secrétariat à la jeunesse and several government departments and bodies documented the kinds of bullying that affect young people in every environment. Various studies have shown that bullying can occur in schools, at work and online.

The government is preparing a coordinated action plan to prevent and counter bullying. Certain elements of this youth-related action plan may also be included in the next Québec Youth Policy.



CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

- 1** Should the Youth Policy for the next 15 years focus on the priorities established by the government in this area of intervention?
 - 2** How can the Québec government and its partners influence young people's habits with regard to nutrition, physical activity, risk behaviours and mental health problems?
 - 3** Which risk behaviours should the next Youth Policy prioritize?
 - 4** Does the promotion of harmonious interpersonal relationships—through efforts to counter sexism, racism and homophobia, for example—help all young people with their integration in school, the workforce and society in general? How so?
 - 5** Which are the best ways to encourage young people to adopt a healthy lifestyle?
-



AREA OF INTERVENTION II

AN ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS

For most young people under 20, school is a primary living environment. In 2009–2010²¹, close to three in four 19-year-olds were attending an educational institution. School is much more than a venue for developing skills and transferring knowledge; it is also a place where people socialize, and where values and ways of life are transmitted.

School is also an environment conducive to experimentation: during their studies, young people get to know themselves better, explore their potential and develop their interest in lifelong learning. School enables them to develop abilities and attitudes that help them better understand the world around them, and prepare them to be active citizens and workers.

While learning can and should be pursued throughout one's life, almost everyone devotes more time and effort to studies during their youth.

Since schooling became compulsory, and even more so since the Parent report was released, the Québec population's schooling rate has been increasing steadily. In 1996, slightly less than 20% of young people aged 25 to 34 held a bachelor's or graduate degree, whereas in 2012, this proportion had increased by more than 50%, to 31.2%.²² The proportion of young students leaving general education with no diploma or qualifications has also decreased significantly, from 21.9% in 1999–2000, to 15.3% in 2012–2013.²³

These improvements should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that student retention and success, particularly at the secondary level, remain an important challenge for society, especially in a context where young people represent a decreasing share of the overall population, and the working-age population is dropping. Persistence in school and academic success are also important personal challenges, given the serious consequences associated with dropping out of secondary school: employment instability and increased risk of marginalization in the labour market, decreased participation in civic life, greater risk of depression, shorter life expectancy, etc.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche is closely monitoring the issue of student retention and success.

21. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*, table 3.2.

22. Ibid., table 3.5.

23. MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE (2014). *Indicateurs de l'éducation*, 2014 edition.

In particular, the government's consultation involves the following themes :

- ▶ Student retention
- ▶ Two factors that encourage student retention: extracurricular activities and educational counselling
- ▶ Promoting vocational and technical training
- ▶ Access to higher education

These themes are intended to make school a stimulating and appealing living environment for young students.

Student retention

Academic programs, especially at the secondary level, are built on the assumption that they will be pursued without interruption until a diploma is obtained.

Many young people do not conform to this path, either because of circumstances beyond their control or because they give up on school, temporarily or permanently.

Thus, considerable effort will be needed if we are to achieve the 80% graduation or qualification rate for students under 20 set as a target by the Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche²⁴ for 2020. The fact that significant disparities exist between girls and boys with respect to academic success, in almost all areas, makes this challenge even more difficult. In addition, the dropout rate among students who are more vulnerable,²⁵ including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, is higher than that among as students from privileged backgrounds.

74% of boys and 80% of girls obtain their secondary school diplomas.

MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE (2012).

The issue of student retention and success is complex and multidimensional; a wide range of factors can be involved, including personal considerations, family situations, cognitive or academic factors, lifestyle, health, and socioeconomics.

24. MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT (2019). *I care about school! All together for student success.* Action Strategy on Student Retention and Student Success.

25. Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche definition: students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities, students with academic delays, immigrant students or students from cultural communities, and Aboriginal students.



Interrupting one's studies creates a risk of not getting a diploma, and the career prospects of young people without a diploma or qualifications are more limited.

Some regions have higher dropout rates than others, for example regions experiencing a period of prosperity where young people without a diploma or qualifications can easily find work. All areas of Québec could well be in such a situation soon, as the relative scarcity of labour in relation to the number of vacancies makes the labour market more accessible and appealing to young people. For many, these opportunities may be a trap: a seemingly well-paid job might await them before they even get their diploma.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche has many student retention and success follow-up measures. However, its involvement is focused on what is happening in schools, mainly with respect to dropout prevention.

To complement its specific actions, the department supports a vast independent network of community action organizations that work to keep students in school or help them return to school. These organizations adopt a comprehensive approach and address all factors that promote student retention.

Extracurricular activities

One of the avenues recommended by the Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche in its Action Strategy for Student Retention and Student Success, *I care about school! All together for student success*, was an increase in the number of sports and cultural activities available. Indeed, involvement in such activities has indirect but positive effects on determinants of student retention and success, suggesting that efforts to make school more appealing and diversified are a preventive factor for young people.

Extracurricular activities have positive effects on school climate, school pride, and student self-esteem and motivation. They can also help students develop abilities and skills that are not included in the school curriculum.

Close to one in three students attending secondary school in a disadvantaged neighbourhood is involved in an extracurricular activity.

GUJAY, F. (2010). *Les activités parascolaires : leurs caractéristiques gagnantes pour lutter contre le décrochage scolaire et favoriser les aspirations professionnelles de jeunes issus de milieux défavorisés.*

Certain factors can be barriers to extracurricular activities. For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, high costs can limit access. For other young people, who must balance studies, family, personal life and part-time work, it is a question of time and priority management: extracurricular activities for which they get no recognition may seem superfluous.

Therefore, the Secrétariat à la jeunesse would like to explore avenues to foster participation in extracurricular activities, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ideally, such activities would be offered at a low cost and would enable students to acquire new abilities, skills and experiences, encourage them to stay in school and succeed there, and perhaps even equip them for future employment. Existing activities, such as the *Agir autrement* intervention strategy, can also serve as inspiration in this regard.

Educational and career counselling

Young people are faced with a multitude of study options, educational pathways, trades and professions; it can be a challenge for them to make informed decisions while they are still developing who they are. Many young people are undecided about their future career. For some, it is even one of the main reasons for giving up on their education. According to one study, more than half (52%) of students who dropped out reported dissatisfaction with or lack of interest in their program of study, or lack of career objectives.²⁶

Half all people who drop out of school report a lack of motivation with respect to their program of study or a lack of career objectives as the reason for leaving.

BERGER, J., A. MOTTE and A. PARKIN (2007). *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*.

It therefore appears important to offer young people tools adapted to their needs, to help them better understand labour-market needs and future job openings, and to demonstrate the connection between the available training and the career opportunities ahead.

Even for young people who are not considering a hiatus in their studies, having tools that help them better understand who they are, and that enable them to explore their areas of interest and find out more about employment opportunities, can help them avoid detours that are costly in dollars, time and energy. Changing from one study program to another generally increase the duration of studies, which is also associated with a greater risk of losing motivation and engagement in studies, and even dropping out. Only 52% of college students obtain a diploma in their initial program of study; more than a quarter get a diploma in another program, and roughly one in five does not complete any program.²⁷

26. J. BERGER, A. MOTTE and A. PARKIN, eds. (2007). *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, 3rd edition, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

27. MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE. 3rd edition, Canada Millennium



The Secrétariat à la jeunesse hopes to better identify and address career counseling needs, not only in schools, but also outside the school setting, to reach young people who have left the education system.

Vocational and technical training

The government has sought to promote secondary-level vocational education programs and college-level technical programs for many years. In fact, this was one of the orientations of the 2001 Québec Youth Policy and the youth action strategies that followed.

Today, this objective is being pursued in a different context—a context in which the government has committed, from the outset of its mandate, not only to promote vocational and technical training, but also to adapt such training so that it better meets the needs of students and the businesses interested in hiring them.

The rate of access to vocational training for people under 20 was 19% in 2011–2012.


MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE (2013). *Education Indicators*.

Changes have already begun. The 2015–2016 budget announced several initiatives to align training with the needs of businesses by favouring business internships. For example, the government has announced experimental projects inspired by the German “dual” model, aimed at improving current internship processes. The budget also announced a larger income tax credit for practicums in the workplace. The work done by the interdepartmental round table tasked with the implementation of these measures continues. If deemed advisable, the Québec Youth Policy could contain supplementary measures to support the new measures put in place.

Access to higher education

Since Quebecers do not have a longstanding tradition of high enrolment in higher education, demystifying these institutions and breaking down the barriers to entry have been central concerns since the Quiet Revolution. Accordingly, the issue of access to education, especially higher education, was addressed in the first Youth Policy, in support of the movement to democratize access to education launched by the Parent report and continued in subsequent government directions.

Higher education, at both the college and university levels, is a powerful tool in the fight against poverty and for equal opportunity, provided young people with the potential and desire to pursue such studies have the opportunity to do so.



Unemployment among young people is inversely proportional to their educational attainment.

STATISTICS CANADA (2015). *Labour Force Survey*, table 282-0004.

Several factors influence the accessibility of higher education, including finances. In Québec, equal opportunity is favoured, first and foremost by free tuition for full-time vocational and college students and by some of the lowest university tuition fees in Canada.²⁸ The student financial assistance plan and several tax measures also take the financial needs of students into account, both during and after their studies. Thus, Québec's Loans and Bursaries Program favours access to higher education and reduces debt.

In a territory as vast as Québec, geographic accessibility can be a daunting challenge, though new information technologies have increased opportunities for distance education and access to formal and informal knowledge. Cultural issues, including issues related to family, linguistic or social characteristics, can also have a positive or negative influence on access to education.

Access to higher education has taken on an additional dimension over time, as employers are increasingly recruiting workers with a college diploma or university degree for positions that traditionally called for lesser qualifications. Educational attainment has a direct effect on income: according to the Conference Board of Canada, a university graduate earns \$138 for every \$100 earned by a secondary school graduate.²⁹ In this context, access to higher education can be seen as a logical extension of the emphasis on student retention.

28. STATISTICS CANADA, *The Daily*, September 11, 2014.

29. M. GRANT (2014). *The Economic Impact of Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Conference Board of Canada.



CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

AN ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES STUDENT RETENTION

- 1** Should the Youth Policy for the next 15 years focus on the priorities established by the government in this area of intervention?
 - 2** Are students more likely to stay in school if school becomes a more complete and stimulating living environment for young people?
 - 3** Can extracurricular activities help make school an appealing environment and stimulate young people's commitment to their communities and Québec society? If so, how?
 - 4** What can be done so that more young people include vocational or technical training in their educational and career plans?
 - 5** Which are the best ways to encourage young people to stay in school?
-



AREA OF INTERVENTION III

YOUNG PEOPLE READY TO WORK, AN ECONOMY READY TO WELCOME THEM

After completing years of education, entering economic life is a major milestone for young people. They go from being compared with other students in the same programs to competing with workers who may have been in the labour market for years, even decades.

Entering the job market or, for some, starting a first business is a major rite of passage, with the potential for considerable satisfaction, but some stress as well.

The Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale is the main entity responsible for the employment integration of all Québec citizens who are part of its target clientele, including young people. The Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et des Exportations oversees the main entrepreneurship development measures. The Ministère de la Famille helps people balance family and professional responsibilities.

These departments have the support of several other departments and bodies, such as the Ministère des Finances, the Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, the Commission des normes du travail and the Secrétariat à la jeunesse.

In the current demographic context, the successful integration of young people into the labour market is of historic social importance for Québec, as the number of people leaving the labour market will soon exceed the number entering it. Emploi-Québec estimates more than 1.36 million job vacancies by 2022 due to the combined effect of 1.1 million retirements, and the creation of 260,000 jobs. According to Emploi-Québec forecasts, young people will make the largest contribution to the labour market supply when it comes to filling those 1.36 million positions from 2013 to 2022. They will fulfill more than half (58%) the demand for workers.

This dynamic is a thread that runs through each section of this area of intervention, making it particularly topical.

The area of intervention therefore addresses the following themes :

- ▶ Employability of youths who are unemployed and not in school, and of young people in difficulty
- ▶ Working conditions for youth
- ▶ Conditions for young people who want to start their own business or take over an existing business, such as a family business
- ▶ The importance of balancing work obligations with other life domains, in particular family
- ▶ The advantages of interregional, pan-Canadian and international mobility

Employability of youths not in employment or in education, and of young people in difficulty

Going from school to work is one of youth's most important transitions, but this near universal change can be very different from one person to the next. Individuals' school path, family and socioeconomic status, physical and mental health, and peer support are just a few of the many factors that influence the search for a first job and integration into the labour market. Immigration and visible-minority status are others.

While this transition is momentous for young people, most succeed by overcoming obstacles which ultimately prove to be temporary. However, numerous young people experience difficulties that thwart their attempts to enter the labour market and find themselves struggling with employment instability or marginalization with regard to the labour market.

Although close to 74% of young Quebecers aged 15 to 29 are considered active, 200,000 are neither employed nor in school.

INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2013).

“Les jeunes qui ne sont ni au travail ni aux études : une perspective québécoise.” *Flash-Info travail et rémunération.*

This is especially true for young people who have more than one characteristic making them less attractive to employers: basic schooling not completed, time spent on social assistance, recent inpatient status at a health and social service institution, time recently served in a detention facility, etc. Young people experiencing special difficulty or reduced employability require support adapted to these circumstances, so they can make the transition to employment.



A 2013 Institut de la statistique du Québec study estimated that approximately 200,000 young people are not in school, at work or in employment training.³⁰ Such young people are commonly designated by the acronym NEET.³¹

Two in five NEETs are unemployed, that is they are young people who do not have a job but are actively seeking employment. Statistics show that while youth unemployment remains higher than unemployment among older people, it has been trending downward over the last 20 years. Similarly, long-term unemployment is not currently an endemic problem for young people.

However, three in five NEETs are inactive, that is, they do not have a job and are not looking for one. Although some have constraints that make access to employment difficult, such as a severe physical disability or major family responsibilities, others are discouraged about the opportunities available to them in the labour market or are convinced they do not have the necessary skills to seize them.

Some of these young people are receiving last-resort financial assistance or going through major personal difficulties. Others are experiencing employment instability, characterized by short-term jobs that often are part-time or have irregular schedules, periods of unemployment, and withdrawal from the labour market. Early-career instability can become a rut that has a lasting negative impact on a young person's career path, one that is difficult to overcome without assistance—and that assistance may not be within reach.


For young people facing special difficulties, it is important to implement interventions early on, even before adulthood. For young people over 18, the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale has recently redefined its partnership with the *carrefours jeunesse emploi*, to refocus employability services for young social-assistance and employment insurance recipients, with modalities that vary depending on regional needs. The Secrétariat à la jeunesse rounds out this service offer through youth employment centres, which develop certain services for youths who are not receiving these forms of public assistance.

For its part, the Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, through its adult education centres, has a diversified education offer that meets a variety of needs, such as social integration and socioprofessional integration for young adults. The work of these centres is complemented by organizations that help people return to school, thereby supporting employability development.

These interventions seek to encourage young people to finish their basic schooling, if this has not already been done, and to give them the tools they need to join the workforce on a lasting basis or pursue higher education.

30. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2013). "Les jeunes qui ne sont ni au travail ni aux études : une perspective québécoise." *Flash-Info travail et rémunération*.

31. Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEEF in French).



Indeed, finding work remains the best way to ensure stable employment and long-term income growth, and reduces the risks of poverty and exclusion. Ultimately, this has a positive influence on health and life expectancy, and puts conditions in place that favour success for subsequent generations.

The current demographic situation makes this a particularly opportune time to enhance the employability of young people who are somewhat removed from the labour market, because the demand for labour should make it easier for them to find a job.

For Québec society, the high number of retirements highlights the importance of being able to count on all young people, to be in a position to maintain our standard of living and vitality in all fields, and ensure that all people have access to high-quality public services.

Working conditions for youth

Young workers have always had to gain experience and work their way up before achieving the pay levels available to more experienced workers. That is how the labour market works in unionized businesses and organizations; their collective agreements almost always provide for regular increases in pay and benefits in step with seniority.

In the early 1990s, differences in treatment through “orphan clauses” gained popularity in Québec. These clauses allowed businesses to reduce their costs by placing the burden on subsequent hires, who were often young people. Since 2001, the *Act Respecting Labour Standards* has prohibited the inclusion of most clauses like this in collective agreements, notably with regard to salary and annual leave. A 2006 monitoring report published by the Commission des normes du travail noted some of these clauses in collective agreements, but the businesses and unions concerned have generally been open to making the necessary corrections.

The average disposable income of Canadians aged 50 to 54 is now 64% higher than that of Canadians aged 25 to 29, versus 47% in the mid-1980s.

CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA (2014). *Trends in Income Inequality Between Generations*.

Other questions are now being asked about the weight of the contributions young people will have to pay for pension plans and government services in general, including workers' compensation, employment insurance and old-age security.



Working conditions associated with non-standard work, i.e. part-time work, temporary work and self-employment, are another topic of concern to the Secrétariat à la jeunesse. Young people are overrepresented in the first two categories. According to the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, the proportion of part-time employment among people aged 15 to 29 has increased by 4.4 percentage points from 1996 to 2012.³²

These jobs are often precarious and usually provide less of a social safety net than regular, full-time employment. Although some of this difference is normal and can be attributed to balancing work with other life domains or to having less work experience, the situation should be monitored to ensure that young people are not marginalized with regard to job opportunities in the traditional labour market or boxed into such conditions on a long-term basis.

Entrepreneurship culture and succession, notably in family businesses

The demographic changes in the years to come mean several small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) leaders will be retiring. Québec's industrial and commercial fabric relies on a business community that is 99% SME, so entrepreneurship continues to be a key factor in Québec's prosperity. In fact, 65% of private-sector employees work for an SME.

This development poses risks to the vitality of Québec's economy, because the new generation of business leaders will be smaller, and they will clearly be in high demand on the labour market.

Furthermore, Québec has long had a lower entrepreneurship rate than its Canadian neighbours. Based on certain population surveys, intention to start a business is increasing among young people; unfortunately, this intention does not necessarily translate into business creation. Indeed, entrepreneurship among young people aged 15 to 29 has been decreasing in Québec for several years.

Roughly 40% of people aged 18 to 34 are interested in starting a business, but only 14% take steps to do so.

FONDATION DE L'ENTREPRENEURSHIP (2014, 2015). *Indice entrepreneurial.*

Given that entrepreneurship creates and maintains jobs in every region of Québec, and that it stimulates innovation and improves quality of life, fostering youth entrepreneurship is crucial.

The Québec government has undertaken numerous initiatives to meet the specific needs of young entrepreneurs and successors. It is important to continue to support young people who wish to start a business or take over an existing one, in harmony with the various initiatives already in place.

32. INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*, figure 2.17.



Measures have already been implemented to facilitate business succession in the agricultural sector, making family transfers easier through increases in the availability of the tax credit on capital gains and in the support available from the Financière agricole du Québec. In addition, advice and consultation services for transferors and transferees are now being offered throughout Québec. The Plan d'action gouvernemental en économie sociale (PAGES), launched in May 2015, seeks to stimulate collective entrepreneurship, including business succession.

Encouraging youth entrepreneurship was an important component of the government's action on youth, particularly the 2009–2014 Youth Action Strategy. The expected results of this approach will be seen in the long term.

The current situation requires us to explore new avenues that could help young Quebecers realize their entrepreneurship potential when opportunities present themselves.

The trends observed suggest that active entrepreneurs help younger people realize their potential; this is an avenue not necessarily for the government to pursue, but entrepreneurs themselves, in assuming their leading role in Québec's economy.

Initiatives to promote work-life balance

The increase in the number of working women in the second half of the 20th century has brought about many changes to the organization of work and family life. When both spouses work, their respective careers may influence when they have one or more children, or whether they have any at all.

The participation rate of parents with young children is now equal to that of the general population and has grown sharply, from 65% in 1976 to 87.7% in 2014.

INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Bilan de l'année 2014*.

Measures implemented over the last 20 years to facilitate work-family balance, such as the creation of childcare centres and the Québec Parental Insurance Plan, have enabled thousands of parents to fulfill both family and professional obligations.

For many parents, the challenge is to reconcile their school schedules with those of their children. Others must care for an elderly parent, a situation that will become increasingly common as the Québec population ages.

Reconciling work with family life and other responsibilities requires flexibility, particularly in the workplace. Employers who put measures in place to facilitate work-family balance often report productivity gains, a decrease in employee absenteeism associated with family obligations, along with less stress and greater job satisfaction. Conversely, job seekers with major family



responsibilities may choose to work part time or opt for a job with a flexible schedule that better suits their needs, rather than a full-time position that does not allow them to fulfill their other obligations.

Reconciling work/family/school also requires greater flexibility in the services offered to families, such as childcare. Fixed childcare hours are often cited as difficult obstacles for families with non-traditional work or school schedules.

While major strides have been made in the area of work-family balance, major challenges remain. Appropriate and available measures remain a mystery, and many companies are asking for tools to help them make informed decisions. Disseminating best business practices in the area of work-family balance would encourage the adoption of measures that meet the needs of young and older workers alike.

With the growing shortage of manpower to fill new positions and positions vacated by retiring employees, businesses would benefit by enhancing their appeal to young and potential employees, and facilitating work-family balance; this would allow employees to better manage the time devoted to work and family.

Québec should therefore help its young people to find both career and family fulfillment by taking steps to ease or eliminate certain constraints or requirements in the workplace, allowing them to strike a better balance.

Interregional, pan-Canadian and international mobility


As mentioned earlier, for most young people, demographic dynamics in the years ahead will create many job opportunities, some in their own communities, others elsewhere in Québec. Sometimes, advancing their careers will mean taking a job in other parts of Canada or even abroad.

The Québec Youth Policy should promote the notion that experiencing life in Québec, Canada and abroad offers young people an unmatched form of enrichment, allowing them to relate to others, be they fellow Quebecers, Canadians or counterparts from other countries.

The exodus of young people from Québec's remote regions is not as pronounced as in the past. Young people are establishing roots in their communities, and fewer are inclined to change regions.³³

However, one can go a step further and envision that Quebecers from all regions and backgrounds view Québec as a good place to be, a place to call home, find a fulfilling job or start a business, and contribute to the vitality of their adopted communities. Mobility not only enhances the skills of those who move elsewhere, but also helps make host communities more accommodating and open.

33. For example: INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *La migration interrégionale au Québec en 2012-2013*.



The same thing happens when young Quebecers temporarily move abroad: what they experience and learn enriches the people around them as well, who then become more receptive to giving non-locals the same opportunity.

Compared with their counterparts in the rest of Canada, more Quebecers aged 18 to 35 are very interested in going abroad, i.e. 53% versus 44%.

LES OFFICES JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAUX DU QUÉBEC (2008).

La mobilité internationale jeunesse : un levier incontournable pour le développement et la formation de la main-d'œuvre.

By its very nature, international mobility is a powerful tool, not only for social development, by fostering the creation of contacts abroad, but also for cultural development, by giving young people a chance to expand their horizons and understanding of the world. Giving youths the opportunity to explore the world through a structured international experience can shape their view of the world and help them better grasp key international issues. The experience can also be enriching from a career perspective, allowing them to apply to the Québec labour market the tools and reflexes acquired during their internship abroad.

The next Québec Policy on Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion will contain thoughts on how to improve and speed up the integration of qualified immigrants into Québec society and its labour market. Québec has to address the following three issues: being an inclusive society that allows full participation through collective and individual engagement, ensuring that immigration is more reflective of society's choices, and securing the contribution and cooperation of all the actors concerned.

The Québec Youth Policy can strengthen these orientations by making mobility a key driver of educational and professional development, personal learning, and social cohesion within Québec, Canada and the world. All of Québec society would benefit from improved management of interregional, pan-Canadian and international internships.



CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

YOUNG PEOPLE READY TO WORK, AN ECONOMY READY TO WELCOME THEM

- 1** Should the Youth Policy for the next 15 years focus on the priorities established by the government in this area of intervention?
 - 2** What challenges and opportunities do you envision for young people entering a labour market characterized by massive retirements?
 - 3** How can we ensure that as many young immigrants as possible find jobs, and that their skills are recognized and valued?
 - 4** What should the government, the private sector, and colleges and universities do to encourage family/work/school balance?
 - 5** What are the best ways to develop youth employability?
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AREA OF INTERVENTION IV

ACTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP

One of the roles of the Québec Youth Policy is to make sure that Québec society welcomes, promotes and values the contribution of young people. As full-fledged citizens, young people must have a voice in their communities and be empowered to contribute to their development. In so doing, they will be able to help define a society that reflects who they are, nurture a lasting sense of belonging and build a legacy they will be proud to leave to future generations. Therein lies the key to social cohesion and “living together.”

People acquire social values and begin to understand how democracy works in adolescence. They learn about the institutions that make up society, start forming opinions and want to put them into practice. This is where civic engagement comes in.

When they turn 18, young people acquire the right to vote and run for election, giving them an equal voice, alongside the rest of the population, in the democratic debate, as well as access to one of the many facets of civic engagement. As a result of demographic changes, this generation of young people will have an increasingly strong voice in the democratic debate.

Several public bodies are committed to encouraging civic engagement among young people. The Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome et aux initiatives sociales, the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Occupation du territoire, the Secrétariat à l'accès à l'information et à la réforme des institutions démocratiques and the Secrétariat à la jeunesse each have a mandate to get young people involved in their communities. To this end, they are supported by a large number of municipal, federal and non-governmental organizations.

The Québec Youth Policy seeks to encourage youths to routinely get involved in their communities, with a view to fostering a sense of inclusion and ensuring their contribution is recognized. The Policy will therefore contain directions on the following:

- ▶ Civic participation, volunteering and cultural participation
- ▶ Youth access to decision-making entities
- ▶ Dialogue and collaboration across generations
- ▶ The importance of environmental responsibility



Young people's civic participation, volunteering and cultural participation

Civic participation has been an area of intervention in the government's youth efforts since the first youth action plans, which were implemented even before the 2001 Québec Youth Policy. In a context where the demographic weight of young people is decreasing and the challenges of succession are multiplying in various fields, it is essential to promote civic participation by all young people, in order to ensure that their ideas and interests are represented as well as cement their social engagement.

In addition to political participation, the social involvement of young people in community activities is instrumental to their integration, as it gives them a concrete grasp of the issues and future action to take.

Right in line with these objectives, cultural participation helps reduce isolation and build solidarity networks, resolve conflicts, foster tolerance, facilitate intercultural understanding, and create intergenerational contacts, and assists with the rehabilitation and social reintegration of marginalized individuals or groups.³⁴

Volunteering (without any financial compensation) or stipended volunteering (in exchange for symbolic financial compensation) is a way of putting the energy of young people to work for their communities, and providing them with a sense of accomplishment and recognition from those they help. These activities also offer them an opportunity to acquire and develop a variety of skills and even learn something about themselves.

While volunteering is more prevalent among young people aged 15 to 34 than those aged 35 and over, the former group spends fewer hours on average volunteering.

STATISTICS CANADA (2010). *Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation*.

Various avenues should be explored to address the issue of young people's civic engagement. The use of new information and communication technologies, smartphones and social networks in particular, is often cited as the key to reaching them. While not a miracle solution, the way these tools have prompted young people to get involved in other contexts can serve as an inspiration.

34. F. MATARASSO (1997). *Use of ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*.

Other innovative forms of participatory experiences are also worthy of note, for example, secondary school student councils and parliaments. These innovative forms also apply to cultural products, where across all platforms, consumption by young people has grown faster than for the general population.³⁵

Volunteering is one of the best ways for young people to get to know the members of their community. This is often what inspires youths to voice not only their own opinions, but also those of the fellow citizens who become important to them. In so doing, their civic participation takes on a deeper, more concrete meaning.

Civic engagement also helps the government gain insight into the wants and needs of young people and the population in general, leading to better decisions, policies and legislation that are more credible in the public eye.

One of the objectives of the Québec Youth Policy should be to create more opportunities for young people to get involved in their communities, so civic engagement becomes a habit as early as possible.

Youth access to decision-making entities

The other aspect of civic participation is young people's representation in Québec society's decision-making entities, whether in the public sector (legislative assemblies, municipal boards, political parties, crown corporation boards) or private sector (boards of directors and executive boards of corporations and non-governmental bodies).

While everyone has a voice in the democratic debate, those with a seat at the table are usually the ones who help shape the discourse and influence the details and particulars of the decisions made.

Few people under 35 can be found in the aforementioned decision-making entities, and even fewer if young women, young people from visible minorities and young Aboriginals are considered separately. For example, they make up only a tiny percentage of the boards of crown corporations. They fare better at the municipal level, where in 2013 they accounted for 8.2% of the elected candidates.³⁶ Of this percentage, 43% were young women.

35. From 1999 to 2009, the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 claiming to never read fell from 26.2% to 13.4%, while those claiming to read often or very often grew from 53.0% to 61.3%. The corresponding proportions for the general population in 2009 were respectively 21.8% and 55.0%. During the same period, young people aged 15 to 24 also attended more artistic performances (up from 25.2% to 47.6% for theatre, from 5.1% to 20.9% for classical concerts and from 13.3% to 25.5% for dance performances). Source: INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2014). *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – état et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans de 1996 à 2012*.

36. MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES MUNICIPALES ET DE L'OCCUPATION DU TERRITOIRE.



Percentage of young people aged 35 and under serving within decision-making entities: city halls (2.4%), members of the National Assembly (6.5%), public service executives (1.5%), Fédération des caisses Desjardins representatives (1.7%).

CONSEIL DU STATUT DE LA FEMME (2014). *Presence of women and young people within decision-making loci/entities.*

The Québec government wants to encourage efforts to increase the proportion of young people within decision-making entities. Some municipalities have already launched initiatives, such as youth committees, in order to begin integrating young people into the administrative and decision-making process. The government can also coach private bodies interested in diversifying the composition of their boards.

In fact, this is one of the paths recommended by the Canadian Board Diversity Council, which encourages their corporate members and employers to recruit outside their usual networks in order to diversify their organizations.

Although it seeks to increase the presence of young people within decision-making entities, the Québec Youth Policy acknowledges that most young administrators do not have the necessary training to discharge their duties when they first take on such a role. They must therefore be offered opportunities to acquire the qualifications that will turn them into effective administrators capable of making informed decisions.

Dialogue and collaboration across generations

The issue of civic participation by young people includes their relationships in the public sphere with other generations. While these relationships can be described in many ways, a fundamental concern of modern democracies is to ensure equitable treatment of their citizens over time, given the changing context in which social decisions are made.

The main issue in the matter of intergenerational equity is the demographic imbalance. Collectively, the elderly use more public services and receive more financial transfers than other age groups. Issues arise when their weighting increases while that of young people replacing them in the labour market decreases.

The government has taken many important steps to ensure a more equitable future for all generations and young people in particular. Through disciplined management, it has ensured the long-term viability of its social programs. It has also made contributions to the Generations Fund—the best way to offset the effects of Québec’s public debt—and taken steps to ensure the sustainability of its public pension plans. As a result of these initiatives, the government has secured the legacy that will be handed down to young Quebecers and generations to come.

In 2030, young people are expected to make up 16% of the population, compared with 25% for people aged 65.

INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (2009). *Perspectives démographiques du Québec et des régions, 2006-2056.*

However, the Québec Youth Policy should go further, by actively encouraging intergenerational dialogue and mutual support. It should also encourage projects that bring together people from all generations, seniors in particular, to share their life experiences and pass on their expertise, knowledge and know-how.

To this end, the projects arising from the Youth Policy will include, wherever possible, initiatives involving mentoring and coaching, assistance for the elderly by young people, as well as projects highlighting multi-generational contributions.

The government must use all the tools at its disposal to encourage each generation to contribute to Québec's development.

Environmental responsibility

There is no question that the state of the planet is one of the most pressing issues facing young people in Québec and elsewhere in the world. The Québec government recognizes that humans play a role in climate change, as described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,³⁷ and is concerned about its anticipated effects and the actions needed to minimize them.

Québec's participation in the Western Climate Initiative, along with California, Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba, illustrates the first component of its commitment in this regard. The 2013-2020 Climate Change Action Plan and Government Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation are the basis of the second component.

While it is by far the biggest and most challenging environmental issue, with the most serious potential consequences, climate change is not the only issue requiring our attention. Sustainable agriculture, the preservation of natural environments and wildlife, air and water quality, and waste reduction are also important matters that need to be addressed by citizens and the government.

Today's youth has grown up in a world where environmental concerns are the norm. These have been part of the school curriculum and have been the subject of specialized studies for many years now.

37. MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE, DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DE LA LUTTE CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES, *Plans d'actions contre les changements climatiques.*



Even so, in certain respects, young Quebecers are not much more environmentally aware than their elders; at the very least, they are having trouble transforming this awareness into action. Thus, according to various surveys, compared with other age groups, young people aged 18 to 29 are less likely to be proactive about energy conservation and recycling.³⁸ They do, however, perform better in the areas of buying local and sustainable transportation.

Overall, according to the Baromètre de la consommation responsable, people aged 45 to 64 are the Québec champions in environmentally responsible behaviour.³⁹

Although young people are the most motivated in terms of responsible consumption, they are the least likely to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours.

OBSERVATOIRE DE LA CONSOMMATION RESPONSABLE (2012, 2014). *Baromètre de la consommation responsable*.

Young people are also the most pessimistic about the environment. Although 75% consider the quality of their local environment acceptable, less than 50% believe it will be so 20 years down the road.⁴⁰ Furthermore, only 10% to 20% of youths consider the state of the global environment to be excellent or very good and believe it will remain this way.

This pessimism is reflected in their environmental behaviours; their political, community and personal responses are conditioned by the future state of the environment. In this regard, young people lag behind other age groups. Although the challenges are immense, history has shown that humanity can alter the course of its future when its citizens are engaged and responsible.

38. HEBDOS QUÉBEC (2011). *Découvrez le vrai visage du Québec*, 3rd edition, "Axe 3 – l'état d'âme de la jeunesse." Data drawn from the Enquête de Hebdos Québec, a poll conducted by Léger Marketing. The sample for total population was 29,016 people aged 18 and over, residing in 150 districts. Also OBSERVATOIRE DE LA CONSOMMATION RESPONSABLE (2012). *Baromètre de la consommation responsable*.

39. Developed in 2010, the Baromètre de la consommation responsable has been evaluating and measuring Quebecers' practices in terms of responsible consumption. Conducted by the Observatoire de la consommation responsable (OCR), based at Université du Québec à Montréal, the last survey was carried out in September 2014.

40. G. PRONOVOST et al. (2009), *Sondage sur les attitudes des jeunes à l'égard de l'environnement et de l'avenir*. Fondation Monique-Fitz-Back.



CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

ACTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP

- 1** Should the Youth Policy for the next 15 years focus on the priorities established by the government in this area of intervention?
 - 2** Ultimately, is volunteering or stipended volunteering likely to encourage young people to get involved in Québec's communities and institutions?
 - 3** What are the best ways to encourage open and productive intergenerational dialogue, and what forums should be used to this end?
 - 4** How can we promote environmentally responsible behaviours within the context of volunteering and stipended volunteering or intergenerational activities?
 - 5** What are the best ways to encourage active and participatory citizenship among young people?
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CONCLUSION

As this is the first renewal of the Québec Youth Policy, this consultation is important for Québec's youth. The government's aim is to give all young Quebecers, and the people and groups working toward their success, the opportunity to express themselves.

The opinions collected through this consultation will shape not only the direct measures in the next Youth Strategy, but also decisions made by the government in the longer term.

Based on its work, the government has defined four areas of intervention that it considers a priority, in order to best assist the young people of today and tomorrow with their transitions. These areas of intervention should not be viewed as mutually exclusive: they are all closely related, and this will be taken into account in the Québec Youth Policy.

The government is also aware that the issues raised may affect certain youth groups differently; for instance, student retention and workplace integration require different approaches depending on whether Francophones, Anglophones, Aboriginals or immigrants are involved. The realities of young people are also different depending on their age: the behaviours, needs, concerns and challenges of young people aged 15 to 24 can be different from those aged 25 to 29.

Faced with new challenges, societies must experiment with new initiatives and ways of thinking. Their futures depend on creativity—an indispensable condition for innovation. Fostering creativity at an early age is an issue for all modern societies. For creativity to thrive, it must be widespread in the population, since it manifests in myriad fields and contexts, such as art and design, but also science, technology and entrepreneurship.

You are invited to participate in this consultation and share your experiences as they relate to these four areas of intervention, as well as propose objectives for each one and suggest ways the Québec government can attain them.

Please submit your opinion or brief to the Secrétariat à la jeunesse by October 1, 2015.

By email: saj@mce.gouv.qc.ca

By mail:
875, Grande Allée Est
Édifice H, bureau 1.801
Québec (Québec) G1R 4Y8



**Ministère
du Conseil exécutif**

Québec

