



Government Policy on Adult  
Education and Continuing  
Education and Training



Learning  
throughout life



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## MESSAGE from the Ministers

There is a consensus on two key ideas concerning adult education and continuing education and training: the need to clarify the orientations of Québec society on this important issue, and the need to establish a culture of lifelong learning in Québec. These two ideas have led to the development of the present policy. The policy is intended to bring together, mobilize and provide structure; it proposes an evolution in keeping with the needs and aspirations of Québec society. It is based on many consultations that showed a strong consensus on several points.

One of these was that Québec society does not place enough importance on lifelong learning and that individuals and businesses should become more involved in it in order to adapt to the fast pace of change in our knowledge-based society. Furthermore, a background of basic knowledge has become indispensable for active participation by citizens in Québec's social, economic and cultural life. For these reasons, we must eradicate illiteracy and fill in gaps in basic education, and, by doing so, combat poverty and exclusion. That is also why we must at the same time help adults who need them obtain the essential tools that provide access to the riches of Québec culture, whose vitality is the bedrock of our identity.

In addition, the aging of the active population in Québec and the drop in the birth rate make it more difficult to renew the labour force; Québec's economic growth thus depends in large part on maintaining and enhancing the competencies of its active population.

In this context, employment-related adult education and continuing education and training are responsibilities shared by various players not only in education but also in the community sector and the economic, cultural, scientific and other sectors. There is a corresponding diversity of types and methods of education and training. Hence this is a government policy and a policy of partnership that sets out a mobilizing collective endeavour based on the renewal and strengthening of the synergy among the players in lifelong learning. We would like to thank all those who have contributed to this policy, and in particular our colleagues François Legault and Jean Rochon, who initiated it when they were respectively Minister of State for Education and Employment and Minister of State for Labour and Social Solidarity. This partnership is necessary because the challenges involved in establishing a true culture of lifelong learning in Québec are considerable and they require the determined and sustained involvement of all of us.

This government policy and the accompanying action plan are important steps in the development of a culture of lifelong learning in Québec. They mark our intention and that of the government to ensure that Quebecers continue to learn throughout their lives.



Sylvain Simard  
Minister of State for Education and Employment



Agnès Maltais  
Minister for Employment



*Learning*  
throughout life

## A crucial issue for Québec

People's access to knowledge and learning throughout their lives is one of the conditions for cultural, social and economic development. The actions undertaken by the government to combat poverty and social exclusion can have lasting effects only if people enhance and update their competencies, especially when their basic education is lacking.

From this perspective, the adoption of a government policy aimed at lifelong learning is of strategic importance for Québec. The new individual and collective challenges that adults face in the knowledge society and the changes that are currently taking place demand immediate and energetic action. The globalization of markets, the speed and ease of communications, the rapid pace of change in knowledge and technology, the accelerated rate of social change, the need for job market retention or reentry, and the increasing complexity of social life are all factors that require adults to have adequate basic education and to update their competencies in order to adapt.

When this was relatively uncommon elsewhere in the world, Québec set up adult education services as part of its school system. The diversification of types of training and places where this training was provided gave rise to autonomous formal and informal learning models independent of recognized educational institutions. Thus we saw the development, in addition to public adult education services, of distance education, services to businesses, on-the-job training and community-based education. While we can be proud of the existence of all these possibilities for adults to complete or continue their education, certain elements need to be improved, particularly as concerns the expression of educational needs and the adaptation of the supply to these needs.

Other ministries and government organizations, the community sector and the private sector are also involved in providing adult education services. However, collaboration requires greater coherence in actions taken. Today, many players share this field of action in the educational mission and have contributed to defining it. First of all, there are manpower development activities, which have profoundly changed the landscape of adult education. There is also the implementation of cultural policies as well as sectorial actions in health, agriculture, trade, industry, public security and other areas. The cooperative movement, the union movement, the voluntary sector and other elements of civil society that are involved in adult education and lifelong learning have also made major contributions. In short, this policy brings together a number of partners working in adult education and lifelong learning.



## **Definitions and principles that provide guidelines for actions**

In this policy, the government is building on definitions and principles that give meaning to the orientations set out and that give rise to actions based on these orientations. These fundamental definitions and principles, which are in keeping with the Declaration of the Fifth UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education, which Québec endorsed, have strong support in Québec society.

### **Lifelong learning**

The objectives of learning as a process that goes on throughout life are to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of individuals and communities, to enable them to deal with changes in the economy, in culture and in society as a whole, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in society, in short to enable individuals and communities to take control of their destiny and that of society in order to face the challenges ahead.

It is essential that approaches to adult education and lifelong learning be based on people's heritage, culture, values and personal experience and that they be carried out in such a way that they enable and encourage citizens' active involvement and expression.

### **Adult education and lifelong learning**

These two related terms refer to the learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society.

The concept of education covers more academic learning, while that of training has a socio-economic connotation and covers employment-related learning as it exists in Québec in the context of labour force development. In this policy, the term lifelong learning covers both of these concepts, which are aspects of a single phenomenon, the common denominators being adults and the key idea that learning takes place throughout life.

In any case, in adult education and continuing education and training, all the needs of the adults, whether they are work-related, cultural or personal, should be taken into consideration.

To these definitions, which already provide guidelines for this policy, may be added some principles on which there is a consensus among the players in adult education and employment-related continuing education and training and which constitute the foundations of this policy aimed at lifelong learning.

- **Access to knowledge for all and sharing of knowledge are factors in personal growth, economic development and social cohesion.**
- **Initial education and lifelong learning are the two cornerstones of a single learning process that extends throughout people's lives.**
- **The right to education must translate into actions that give rise to a demand for lifelong learning and encourage success in educational endeavours.**
- **The state must take central responsibility in adult education and continuing education and training while stressing concerted action and partnership.**
- **The state, organizations and networks of institutions are not the only parties responsible for implementing adult education and continuing education and training. People who benefit from them, their teachers, professional associations, trade unions and socio-economic organizations, employers and citizens in general are also responsible.**

**An approach focused on individuals in all their dimensions, with special concern for certain groups**

The necessity for lifelong learning applies to all citizens alike. This necessity concerns public authorities and the private sector as well as adults themselves as the persons with primary responsibility for their learning.

The organization of services should, as far as possible, meet the needs expressed by individuals who, out of personal interest or need, would like to acquire or develop knowledge or competencies in fields of their choice. **This underscores the *multidimensional* nature of adult education and continuing education and training, which encompass individuals in all their dimensions. To this multidimensional nature of the content of the learning is added the diversity of types of education and training.**

While lifelong learning concerns everyone from the beginning of initial education, which should be a preparation for it, there are certain groups that have special difficulties requiring support better adapted to their needs. In the action plan for this policy, the government will pay special attention to these groups.

### **Young people under 30 without qualifications**

More than seven out of ten people under the age of 30 who are receiving income security benefits have no diplomas. Lacking qualifications, they find themselves receiving income security benefits early in their adult lives, with little hope of escaping their economic dependence. These are often young people who have had problems or repeated failures in school, have broken with their families, and have had parental responsibilities at a very young age. Lacking qualifications, many adults in this situation have poor prospects in the job market, especially because their transition to the job market is made more difficult by their incomplete initial education.

### **People with disabilities**

People with disabilities are twice as likely as the rest of the population to have failed to complete their basic education, twice as likely to be unemployed and twice as likely to have a low income. The majority of them are ill-prepared for working life. This situation must change so that these people can contribute to Québec society and achieve personal fulfillment. The principle of *reasonable accommodation* should be applied to them, especially as concerns real access to education or training that takes into account their situation.

### **Immigrants**

From a demographic and socioeconomic point of view, **immigrants** are an asset to Québec society. They are often highly trained people with a great deal of occupational mobility or occupational qualifications that are in demand in certain sectors. For many immigrants, learning French is a prerequisite for integration into Québec society, the acquisition of new knowledge and entry into the job market. Many also need additional training in order to enter the job market; this may involve learning about laws and regulations, training to use new technologies, familiarization with the context of the occupation or the acquisition of other competencies.

### **Native people**

Dispersed throughout Québec, often far from urban centres, First Nations people often have special educational needs, especially as concerns basic education. The majority of them leave school without secondary school diplomas, and many adults have low literacy skills. In a context in which these communities are seeking to take charge of their own development, continuing education and training can be an important force for individual and collective growth.

### **People aged 45 or over in the job market**

Special attention should be given to workers aged 45 and over. In Québec, **in 1998, more than one quarter of workers aged 45 to 64 had not finished secondary school.** Among those aged 55 to 64 years, this was true for 40 per cent. The literacy level of older workers is also particularly low. They participate very little in training activities when they are employed, or in active measures when they are not employed. Given the aging of the population, lifelong learning for the aging labour force should be supported, because these people will increasingly be expected to extend their working life.

The distribution of workers in different jobs, the large number of women who are self-employed, working in nonstandard employment, or employed in small businesses, and the inequality of remuneration between the sexes make it clear that **the supply of education and training services should be differentiated by sex.**

### **A general aim: to encourage the expression of the demand for learning**

The expression of learning needs is a key element of this policy. Managing the demand for education and training well involves, first, creating the conditions for the expression of learning needs in all their diversity and, second, ensuring that the supply of training corresponds to the individual and collective aspirations expressed.

In a context of lifelong learning, it is no longer sufficient simply to meet the explicit demand. Appropriate mechanisms must be found to stimulate the demand.

Encouraging the expression of the demand and meeting this demand are the keys to raising awareness of the importance of basic education and lifelong learning. Consequently, services must be adapted to the needs and the specific situations of individual adults and communities.

Stressing the expression of needs will lead to greater flexibility in the supply of educational services and to consideration of the diversity of types of services and places where these services are provided, broadening the field of action in education and making it possible to reach people in their immediate living and working environments. Thus the exploration and use of on-line learning activities and different forms of collaboration or partnership with businesses or the community should be maintained and increased.

### **An approach based on partnership**

The Québec government has opted for a policy on adult education and lifelong learning that involves all government and socioeconomic partners in the field.

We do not have to start from scratch—far from it. Rather, we have to build on what already exists, consolidate certain facilities and change the orientations of others or inject new energy into them, and innovate. We need less to add to the existing services than to adopt a coherent approach adapted to the diverse needs of individual adults and various groups.

It is only by acting together that we will be able to establish a culture of lifelong learning in Québec, starting by adapting the supply of educational services and training support to the various contexts in which adults live and work.

### **Four structuring, mobilizing orientations**

On the basis of the current issues, the definitions and principles adopted, and the concerns it addresses, this policy centres on four main orientations that are closely related and that define priorities for action:

- **to provide basic education for adults**
- **to maintain and continually upgrade adults' competencies**
- **to acknowledge prior learning and competencies through official recognition**
- **to remove obstacles to access and retention**

### **A policy and an action plan**

This policy presents the government's orientations in adult education and continuing education and training. The government's vision is expressed more explicitly in the accompanying action plan. The policy identifies the issues and establishes orientations that aim to mobilize the partners concerned. These orientations lay the foundation for an action plan that sets out the priority structuring measures to establish a culture of lifelong learning in Québec.

### Basic education: a major and urgent challenge

According to Statistics Canada data from 1996, there are in Québec almost 1.5 million people aged between 15 and 64 who do not have a diploma, having attended school for less than 13 years; 41 per cent of them (611 000 people) attended school for less than 9 years. This can be explained in part by the fact that, before the major education reform of the early 1960s, access to education, especially after elementary school, was limited.

Since "adult" enrollments in general and vocational education in school boards in 2000-2001 totalled some 80 000 people between 20 and 30 years of age (and some 230 000 over 16 years of age), it must be concluded that far too few of the large number of people who lack sufficient basic education are pursuing educational activities to remedy their situation.

Despite their efforts, school boards and independent community action groups have been able to reach only a small percentage of the population with literacy needs. There were only slightly more than 18 000 enrollments in literacy training in 2000-2001: some 12 000 in school boards and the rest in community-based literacy groups.

This is a worrisome situation, because insufficient education has consequences for both individuals and society in the short as well as the long term. Thus, more than seven out of ten adults under the age of 30 receiving income security benefits left school without finishing their basic education and earning a diploma, and the proportion is even higher among people in their early twenties.

In an information-based society and economy, the lack of basic education is a cause of social and economic exclusion; it discourages active citizen participation in social life and limits access to culture.

Furthermore, people with jobs who have reading or writing difficulties are at risk of losing their employment while others are excluded from the job market because of employers' educational requirements, which are rarely less than a secondary school diploma, now a condition for almost any job. For businesses, employees' training is a key factor in performance.

Many single mothers do not have enough education to contribute as much as they would like to their children's educational success or to develop their own potential. As well, in addition to the general problems faced by immigrants, many newly arrived women immigrants experience problems because they have little education. Native women also experience this type of problem.

Many people with disabilities also have insufficient basic education, which makes social integration and job entry more difficult for them.



Given this worrisome situation within the context of our knowledge-based society, it is urgently necessary that we meet the major challenge of adult education and continuing education and training, which is to provide the greatest possible number of citizens with the knowledge and competencies that are essential for their social and economic integration and that serve as the basis for lifelong learning.

Meeting this challenge demands a variety of actions geared to the difficulties faced by people with little education. Aggressive action to eradicate illiteracy is a priority. The amount of catching up that is needed and the serious consequences of this problem for Québec's development justify a clear commitment by the government to develop and put in place strategies and methods adapted to the situations of those concerned and the nature of their needs.

But more needs to be done; we must aim to provide for the greatest possible number a rich and diversified basic education leading to a diploma that facilitates social integration and job entry.

That is one of the major orientations of this policy: **every citizen of Québec who has the ability should have a basic education that meets social standards.**

Encouraging adults with little schooling to complete their basic education is a considerable challenge for Québec; not only must the number of adults already doing so be maintained, but more adults must be persuaded to complete their basic education, given the extent of the needs and the catching up required. This is where we see the importance of encouraging the demand for education; we must invest the time and energy to develop new ways to convince more adults to complete their basic education.

In the long term, actions targeting basic education for adults and youth will allow Québec to position itself most favourably on the world chessboard of the knowledge-based society and economy.

For this reason, **all socioeconomic players must join forces** to reach those who do not have sufficient basic education, encourage them to engage in learning and provide them with concrete support until they obtain a solid basic education, the passport to economic and social integration. In addition, the knowledge and competencies that adults with little schooling have acquired since they left the school system must be officially recognized while these adults are given access to training that will complete their knowledge and competencies in ways that take into account their needs and specific situations.

### The components of basic education

In Québec, learning certified by a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) or a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) is the social benchmark for defining the basic education to be acquired by all Quebecers who have the ability.

**Basic education consists, first of all, of the general, core competencies that normally require nine years of schooling and that include, but go beyond, literacy learning. This is**

**followed by diversified general education equivalent to two further years of schooling.**

Basic education includes a first occupational qualification for job entry, which may be obtained either following a secondary school diploma or as part of studies toward the diploma, either through a work-study program or on the job.

In today's societies, all these elements of a basic education are indispensable for full participation in social life, satisfying employment and further learning. Thus basic education is the foundation for lifelong learning and active citizenship.

The concept of basic education includes the dimension of citizenship, which, in the spirit of equal opportunity, fosters personal growth, social integration and participation in the democratic life of a law-based society such as that of Québec. This type of basic education encourages individuals and groups to take responsibility for themselves and contribute to social development. The concept of basic education also includes the cultural dimension of social and personal life, which involves access to and appreciation of cultural products and contributing to the vitality of Québec culture, a vital part of our collective identity.

For some people, however, despite all the support provided, acquiring all the elements that make up a basic education may represent an insurmountable challenge. The supply and content of basic education must be adapted for these people, whose needs are greater than those of most, and their experience and prior learning must be taken into account, regardless of how such learning was acquired. In this case as in the case of other adults and young people, an appropriate combination of basic general and occupational competencies favouring social integration and job entry is the best option.

### **The components of basic general education in adult education**

Adult education must take into account the characteristics and needs related to the situation of this specific group. It is clear that adults do not learn in the same way as children do, nor do they have the same relationship to knowledge, work or life, if only because adults' roles and responsibilities are not the same as those of children. Adult learners possess a background of experiences that constitute opportunities for formal or informal learning. As well, for adults, school is not a life environment as it is for young people; on the contrary, for many adults with little schooling, school is seen as being disconnected from "real life" and brings back painful memories. Not only do adults have to be taught by being addressed as **adults but, in addition, the content of the learning itself must be adapted to the realities of today's adults.**

To start with, it appears necessary to redefine the concept of *literacy*, which until recently has been narrowly defined as the ability to read, write and count. We must now take into account the context of today's knowledge-based society, globalization, technological change and the increased complexity of social and working life. Hence, basic education should also enable people to:

- understand and use written information in their everyday activities at home, at work and in the community to attain their objectives and expand their knowledge and abilities
- communicate effectively with peers and with society in general
- use information and communications technologies for learning, recreation and other purposes
- participate actively in the development of society by exercising all the roles of citizens

The curriculum in basic general education should also provide competencies that will allow adults to adapt to changes in their immediate environment, fulfill their potential throughout their lives and exercise their social roles.

This basic education should also stress the acquisition of competencies focused on the adults' cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development, the use of communication tools and problem solving in everyday life. It should introduce the adults to the social sciences, science and technology, culture and citizenship. Finally, although it essentially targets the same competencies as the youth sector curriculum, the basic education curriculum for adults should be distinguished by content related to the roles of adults in our society.

### Acting in partnership

Important work is being done by school boards and independent community action groups in research and development on pedagogical tools and adaptation to the needs of adults. The Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale and its public employment services and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux are also active in literacy and basic education, because the lack of basic skills has a direct impact on social and occupational integration, employment, the economy and the health of the population. The Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration and the Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance are also key partners in this vital area. **The objective of providing a basic education for all adults necessitates greater consistency and complementarity among actions taken by the government and the socio-economic sector.**

The coordination and evaluation of actions to be undertaken in basic education and literacy training will be the responsibility of the Ministère de l'Éducation in close collaboration with the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale and in association with other ministries, including the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration, the Ministère de la Science et de la Technologie and the Ministère de la Sécurité publique, with special collaboration by school boards and community-based education groups (independent community action groups).

**The Ministère de la Culture et des Communications plays an important role in basic education by making available basic cultural products such as books and facilitating the production of various cultural products and making them accessible through support, for example, to libraries, community media, museums and recreational scientific activities. To do so, it**

establishes and implements cultural policies whose aim is to increase the democratization of access to culture through the use of tools such as reading, first of all, and information and communications technologies. In pursuing these objectives, this ministry has various partners, the main ones being the municipalities, which are among the important players in the area of culture and recreation.

The Office des personnes handicapées also has an essential role to play in promoting basic education for this group and in contributing to the adaptation of the supply according to the principle of reasonable accommodation.

In short, all the important players in Québec in every area, including the economic sector, are called on to take up the challenge of basic education.

### **Improving prevention**

In literacy as in other areas, it is important to take action early, that is, in early childhood, in school itself and in children's families and communities, in order to reduce the risk of illiteracy and prevent the situation from being reproduced. In fact, the new Québec Education Program includes competencies and broad areas of learning that promote a culture of lifelong learning, in particular as concerns work methods, information processing, critical and creative judgment, and teamwork; it also includes citizenship education. There have also been interesting initiatives concerning dropout prevention. While the Ministère de l'Éducation has a clear responsibility in this area, the mobilization and collaboration of partners in the education, sociocultural, socioeconomic and community sectors are equally essential for dropout prevention, not to mention the fundamental role of parents and the community in supporting young people in continuing their education and acquiring a basic education.

Basic education is thus a cornerstone of adult education and lifelong learning, and the first challenge to be met.

**MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF BASIC  
EDUCATION MEANS TAKING ACTION:**

- TO COMBAT ILLITERACY AND RAISE THE LEVEL OF BASIC EDUCATION OF THE QUÉBEC POPULATION
- TO ENRICH THE CURRICULUM IN BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY TRAINING
- TO STIMULATE A DEMAND FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- TO ADAPT THE SUPPLY OF SERVICES TO THE NEEDS AND SITUATIONS OF ADULTS, COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS WITH SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES
- TO CONSOLIDATE AND DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS AND TO WORK IN SYNERGY AND COMPLEMENTARITY
- TO SUPPORT ADULTS IN THEIR TRAINING PROCESS
- TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS USING LIBRARIES
- TO IMPROVE DROPOUT PREVENTION

# 3

Maintaining and Continually Upgrading  
Adults' Competencies  
**THE CHALLENGE OF ESTABLISHING  
A CULTURE**  
of Lifelong Learning

Like basic education, which makes them possible, the updating and improvement of competencies plays a major role in the necessary ongoing adaptation to the change that marks our time. Furthermore, deficient or obsolete competencies lead to a serious risk of exclusion. There is also a context of labour shortages in many fields, which make high-quality competencies for people who are employed even more necessary. Given the many challenges of the future, **adult education and continuing education and training are key assets for personal, social and economic progress.** It is important that everyone share this conviction.

While education is first an individual responsibility, it is also in large part a collective responsibility. At the outset, the years of compulsory schooling for young people should inculcate a desire for lifelong learning. Later, continuing education and training should be favoured and promoted in relation to employment, everyday life and the exercise of citizenship. We must aim to have all adults, whatever their situation with respect to the job market, feel truly encouraged to pursue lifelong learning and feel supported in their efforts to do so. The state has a responsibility to address existing inequalities with respect to labour, businesses or the adult population in general.

In fact, the implementation of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* is one of the most notable advances in the development of a culture of lifelong learning in Québec. The result of a consensus established between Québec and its partners in the labour market, it introduced or reinforced the practice by businesses and organizations of providing continuing education or training. It affects 85 per cent of the workers in Québec, and hence is very important.

By way of illustration, the 45 professional orders in Québec, whose members make up nearly eight per cent of the active population, have made continuing education an important part of their rules of functioning as defined in the Professional Code. Given the mandate of public protection entrusted to them by the state, the professional orders have created definitions of core occupational competencies in order to verify the qualifications of people who wish to practise their respective professions. They give their members information on relevant educational activities, offer training jointly with educational institutions, or organize activities themselves. Finally, members of professional orders are responsible for their professional development throughout their working lives.

A second illustration of this development is the committees formed under the sectorial action policy. Grouped in these sector-based committees, representatives of employers' associations, trade union organizations, businesses and workers' organizations contributed significantly to the development of continuing education and training through their support, in 1995, of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*, and they participate actively in the identification of the competencies needed for exercising an occupation and of the associated training needs.

Nevertheless, we still have some way to go, as Québec is far from a leader in this area. Government action to date has focused on the organization of the supply of training. **It is important now to take action earlier in the process and to create mechanisms for the expression**



of training needs and for meeting these needs. The social demand for education and training should determine the supply, and not the opposite. Establishing a culture of lifelong learning requires strong motivation, sustained interest and voluntary action by adults.

### **Employer-sponsored training activities: a cornerstone of lifelong learning**

As a determining variable of economic development, manpower training should receive sustained attention based on the needs of people and businesses. On one hand, people in the work force must have the possibility of developing or enhancing their competencies so as to be able to find or keep a job, improve their working conditions, advance in their career path and maintain mobility in the job market. On the other hand, employers must be able to count on a qualified labour pool capable of meeting the requirements of production and competition, or on measures to adapt the competencies of the available work force to the evolution of the economic situation.

These are major challenges for Québec, which explains why the government adopted the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*, whose aim is to raise the qualifications of the labour force in Québec through concerted action by partners in the labour market and increased investment in training. Employers subject to the Act are required to invest the equivalent of at least one per cent of their total payroll in personnel training annually.

The Act marks a change and provides a model of intervention unique in North America, in that the government entrusted the drafting of the regulations to its socioeconomic partners through the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail. The evaluation of the effects of this still recent law is in progress; after the evaluation has been completed, reporting to the National Assembly will take place every five years. The government and its partners thus have the opportunity to modify the Act according to the needs of the labour market and the results obtained.

In 1999, employers subject to the Act spent more than one billion dollars on personnel training. In addition, nearly \$32 million was contributed to the Fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre by employers that did not invest the amounts prescribed in the Act. Still in 1999, Québec employers invested about 1.56 per cent of their total payroll in personnel training. In comparison, the average contribution of employers in the European Union was slightly more than two per cent. In the 1998-1999 budget year, Emploi-Québec spent nearly \$400 million from the Fonds de développement du marché du travail on training for job seekers, thus allowing nearly 125 000 adults to take part in job-related training activities.

However, there is room for improvement. Certain administrative formalities pose problems for small and medium-size businesses, for whom this type of difficulty can be significant. They do not always have the expertise to define the training needs of their personnel, their economies of scale are less than those of larger businesses, and the demands of production restrict the possibilities for training during working hours. The orientations of the Fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre attempt to redress this situation by taking into account the context of smaller businesses.

**Employer-sponsored training is now one of the cornerstones of lifelong learning in Québec.**

It entails mobilizing employers to maintain and enhance their workers' competencies; this is a challenge that must continue to be met collectively. It already has an important place in the development of a culture of lifelong learning because of the leverage it produces, since employer-sponsored training covers all training activities for which the employer assumes responsibility, whether they take place within or outside the business, whether they are taken for personal reasons or to fulfill needs related to the job.

**Meeting the needs of labour and business in a coherent way**

In the context of in-house training, Québec has a number of instruments and sources of funding, including the Fonds national de formation de la main-d'œuvre, various qualification and apprenticeship schemes, the whole range of measures funded through the Fonds de développement du marché du travail, which is managed by Emploi-Québec, and the sector-based manpower committees. The *Act to foster the development of manpower training* has the effect of structuring employers' and workers' habits with respect to continuing education and training. It makes effective tools available to businesses and organizations to support the development of a culture of lifelong learning and increase the scope of actions in this area. However, there should be more concern for ensuring equal access to this employment-related education and training, because some categories of workers do not receive the training they need.

**In a context in which it has become clear that the competencies of the active population can be maintained and enhanced only if the diversity of types of educational services and places where these services are provided is concretely recognized and encouraged, training in businesses is an essential one of the many types of services, formal and informal.**

Occupational practices provide a type of training that has long been recognized. Indeed, technological change and occupational practices drive learning, and new knowledge often emerges in and through action.

The multiplicity of activities and the substantial growth of the market in private and public training in recent years are advantages. However, the coherence, synergy and recognition of the various efforts should be of concern, so that the actions reinforce and complete one another and are even more valuable for both individuals and society. The sectorial approach in employment-related education and training favours such coherence; it makes it possible to appropriately meet the need for upgrading for workers in a specific industry and it helps businesses that lack the resources to develop, finance and organize continuing education and training for their employees. The partnership required in the sectorial approach leads to greater theoretical and practical coherence among the actions of individual businesses, while allowing for economies of scale with respect to the challenges these businesses face in providing qualifications for their workers.

In addition to seeking this overall synergy, it is also important to make the active population and employers realize that existing competencies must be regularly updated and constantly improved

so as not to become obsolete. This is why it is important to ensure that the existing services are capable of meeting the needs of all categories of people in the work force and of all types of businesses.

### **More support for small business, self-employment and nonstandard employment**

In targeting employers with a total annual payroll of \$250 000 or more, the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* leaves aside small and very small businesses, much of farm labour, self-employed workers, workers in many types of nonstandard or unstable employment and others. But these realities have significant effects on the labour market in Québec, making it more flexible and contributing to a competitive economy.

Job creation in Québec owes a great deal to small businesses and self-employed workers. Self-employment has undergone rapid expansion in the past ten years and now represents nearly 15 per cent of the labour force in Québec. Self-employment has traditionally had a significant impact in certain industries or sectors of activity; this is the case in agriculture, culture, personal and domestic services, construction, and management support services such as information, legal, accounting and advertising services. The proportion of women in these sectors is very high.

Small businesses, self-employed workers and workers in nonstandard employment are not exempt from technological change or from the need to update, develop and enhance competencies. In principle, there are a variety of possibilities for training support, and various ministries provide support measures for continuing education and training in their respective sectors of activity. In practice, however, the situation is often complicated.

Thus the Fonds de développement du marché du travail, which is managed by Emploi-Québec, places a priority on actions with adults receiving employment insurance or employment assistance.

Among other ministries, the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications is involved in the training of professional artists through its support for arts and crafts and assistance to performing arts and visual arts associations, as well as by providing fellowships for research, creation and professional development. In addition, the Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce contributes to the training of business leaders and workers in occupations considered strategic, and the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation provides support for continuing education and training in this area as part of its mission.

Employees of small businesses, self-employed workers and workers in nonstandard employment can always turn to the public adult education system. However, the supply of public training services to meet the demand for services to individuals is limited. While universities, because of their autonomy, their rules and their financial basis, are able to meet some of the demand for individual training, secondary schools and colleges have more difficulty in doing so. At all levels of

education, there is a problem of adaptation of the supply of part-time courses, which are of particular interest to adults who are employed, and of access to these courses. Immigrants also encounter obstacles to the acquisition of the components of training they need in order to obtain authorization to exercise their profession or trade. While these limitations are in part explained by the existing budgetary rules and the terms and conditions of student financial assistance, some of the obstacles to part-time studies should, with creativity and determination, be eliminated in a context in which the decrease in enrollments in the youth sector makes it possible for the adult population to take greater advantage of existing educational resources.

Some people who are employed also have additional difficulties that make it all the more necessary for them to maintain and enhance their occupational competencies or even, in some cases, their basic competencies; this is the case for immigrants and people with disabilities, people over 45 years of age and women in some job categories as well as people under 30 years of age with little schooling.

The government intends, in cooperation with its labour market partners, to meet the challenges of establishing a culture of lifelong learning and stimulating a demand for training by small and very small businesses, self-employed workers and workers in nonstandard employment.

### **High-quality, qualifying, transferable training**

It is important to ensure that this training is qualifying. The extent to which a culture of lifelong learning is established in business is not only measured quantitatively, in increased funding or numbers of persons or businesses involved. The responsibility of the government also extends to the quality of training.

Without denying the inherent value of all learning activities or questioning the autonomy of employers in identifying their personnel training needs or choosing ways of meeting these needs, it is nonetheless important to exploit the ripple effect of continuing education and training on the whole of Québec society and the economy. Continuing education and training indeed improve workers' basic competencies. They maintain workers' employability and improve the performance of businesses and make them less vulnerable to changes in markets. But the higher quality of the Québec labour force should translate into higher qualifications. The qualifying effect of employer-sponsored training is one of the major problems arising from the implementation of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*. Positive efforts result when the training is qualifying and transferable to various situations. Training that satisfies these two quality criteria is characterized by an organized, progressive, supervised process that is related to predetermined learning objectives. It also includes activities to evaluate the learning acquired.

The qualifying nature of the training is reflected both in the relevance of the learning to the situation occupied or the tasks carried out and in the recognition the training activities lead to, which may be granted by authorities in either the labour market or the education system. The

transferable nature of the training entails mobility either within a business or toward employment by another employer, in the same or another sector of activities.

### **Updating qualification and apprenticeship schemes**

For a long time, a variety of government bodies in Québec involved in manpower development, employment or labour have been responsible for administering the provisions of laws or regulations on qualification and apprenticeship in the context of their respective missions, generally in close collaboration with the Ministère de l'Éducation.

Examples of this include the qualification scheme and the apprenticeship scheme as well as the apprenticeship and qualification programs in regulated trades, such as those in the construction industry. These mechanisms are aimed at encouraging training introduced in businesses for the salaried employees, mainly by making available training measures to help the businesses meet the challenge of improving competencies. These measures are being reengineered and they will provide useful tools for fostering the development of training in small or large businesses.

Some programs are older than others, and although certain of them have had their share of difficulties, this approach is still valid for the acquisition and development of competencies by adults, and the training methods used in many industrialized nations are still pertinent. These methods concretely demonstrate the value of the diversity of types of training and places where this training is provided, and they should be consolidated and improved.

For this reason, a new framework for training in the workplace has been defined; the existing qualification scheme will have to adopt this framework and be integrated into it. The qualification scheme for regulated trades will take into account the measures for providing training in the workplace while pursuing its own objectives.

### **Ensuring a good match between training and jobs**

The diversity and quality of the initial education provided by the three levels of the public education system allow it in part to meet the needs of labour and employers. Furthermore, the process used to develop vocational and technical education programs takes into account the requirements of jobs in the related fields. Various collaborative bodies made up of labour market partners and

people from the world of education contribute actively and officially to the development of the programs of study, thus ensuring a better match between training and jobs. Among these collaborative bodies, the sector-based manpower committees deserve special mention.

**However, changes in the job market necessitate an ongoing and immediate response in the supply of training services.** As in part-time training, current methods of pedagogical organization in the public education system do not facilitate the adaptation of content or timetables to the specific needs of individuals or employers, thus limiting access to continuing education and training.

For this reason, more flexible training activities are increasingly being offered by educational institutions. Possibilities for training designed and adapted for an adult clientele should be broadened at all levels of education. This is also why the services to businesses offered by educational institutions, because of their expertise in providing customized training, must meet the needs of employers and workers. Similarly, the services to businesses offered by educational institutions and the services to employers offered by Emploi-Québec should consolidate their role as intermediaries ensuring a good match between training and jobs.

Private training institutions also play a strategic role in supplying continuing education and training to businesses, in that they offer products and services of quality that meet the requirements of employers and people who are employed.

**To make informed decisions on manpower training, reliable, up-to-date qualitative and quantitative information on labour market trends in general or those concerning particular job functions must also be available.** With respect to manpower needs, the emerging jobs and competencies must be identified, the trades and occupations in demand must be known and labour shortages must be prevented. For these purposes, Québec has a model created jointly by the public education system and the public employment services. This model, whose aim is to ensure a good match between training and jobs, is based on both the structure of the labour market and forecasts for the development of employment in different occupations, in Québec as a whole and in the various regions. This is an invaluable tool for planning the supply of initial training and updating.

In short, existing systems for the observation, analysis and monitoring of the provincial and regional labour markets need to be improved in order to track economic and technological changes. Desirable improvements concern the competencies actually required to practise occupations, some of which change rapidly, local characteristics of the labour market and the capacity for analyzing this type of data with respect to certain situations or clienteles (women, in particular) or to the supply of training.

## **UPGRADING ADULTS' COMPETENCIES MEANS TAKING ACTION:**

- TO MAKE EMPLOYERS AND LABOUR IN GENERAL AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES FOR OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE
- TO ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR ALL WORKERS
- TO GAIN GREATER SUPPORT FOR PERSONNEL TRAINING BY SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE BUSINESSES
- TO PROVIDE GREATER SUPPORT FOR TRAINING TO VERY SMALL BUSINESSES AND TO SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS AND WORKERS IN NONSTANDARD EMPLOYMENT
- TO ENSURE THAT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE THE LATITUDE THEY NEED TO QUICKLY AND FLEXIBLY MEET REGIONAL MANPOWER TRAINING NEEDS
- TO FACILITATE PART-TIME TRAINING IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM
- TO ASSIST GROUPS THAT HAVE ADDITIONAL DIFFICULTIES IN SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND JOB ENTRY
- TO HELP BUSINESSES, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE SAME SECTOR, JOIN TOGETHER TO PROVIDE TRAINING
- TO CONSOLIDATE THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM IN THE WORKPLACE
- TO ACCENTUATE THE QUALIFYING AND TRANSFERABLE NATURE OF TRAINING IN THE WORKPLACE

# 4

## Acknowledging ADULTS' PRIOR LEARNING AND COMPETENCIES Through Official Recognition

Learning, especially adult learning, may occur in various places and various ways. This diversity of types of educational services, learning paths and places where services are provided permits greater flexibility and dynamism, making it possible to respond rapidly and in the most appropriate way to the educational needs of adults and employers. **At the same time, the existence of these different ways of learning clearly raises the question of the official recognition of learning and competencies.**

Moreover, as societies make the shift to a knowledge-based economy, the qualifications required by the job market increase, driving adult education and sometimes even exercising pressure on it. In this context, the official recognition of adults' learning and competencies is even more important, in order that they may be properly acknowledged and taken into account by employers and the education system. Official recognition provides a clearer indication of the level of competency and complexity attained by Québec's labour force.

By attaching value to knowledge acquired, the recognition of learning and competencies plays a structuring role in enhancing adults' competencies. It ensures greater continuity in the learning process, facilitates leaving and returning to training, makes it possible to connect different learning experiences, gives people clear indications of their level of competency and the learning objectives to be attained, helps adults envision their future, and makes it possible to transfer the learning acquired from different experiences. Above all, it makes it possible for people to avoid taking unnecessary training for competencies or knowledge they already possess in whole or in part, in general education or occupational training. The recognition of learning and competencies has impacts in terms of social equity and economic development.

For all these reasons, **the recognition of learning and competencies appears to be a major lever in the dynamics of lifelong learning.** Therefore the government is making it a cornerstone of its policy on lifelong learning. Energetic action on this appears essential in order to ensure greater participation by adults in lifelong learning. If one of the main concerns in this area is to ensure that the process of recognition of learning focuses on individuals, another concern is to substantially increase the number of people who benefit from it, which calls for a marked change in this situation in Québec.

The following three principles will guide future action in the recognition of learning and competencies in the context of education and training:

- **Individuals have a right to the formal recognition of learning and competencies corresponding to components of qualifying training insofar as they are able to provide evidence that they possess them.**
- **Individuals do not have to redo in a formal educational setting any learning they have already acquired in other contexts or other ways.**
- **Individuals should not be obliged to seek recognition again for competencies or prior learning that has been properly evaluated and certified by an official system.**



### **Increasing access to the recognition of prior learning and competencies**

In the past 15 years, progress has been made in the recognition of prior learning by the education system. Various instruments have been developed and made available in general education and vocational education, especially as concerns the evaluation of prior learning. The use of information and communications technologies for this purpose has been explored. In spite of all this, there are still serious problems that limit access to the recognition of prior learning services offered by educational institutions, including access to missing components of education that are needed for that recognition. For example, the process is complicated and simply obtaining this type of service is difficult.

People who use recognition of prior learning services have various objectives and very different profiles and needs. This is true, for example, of those with disabilities. Some would like to return to school; others want to enter the job market as quickly as possible; some who are employed want to change occupations or need to improve their competencies to keep up or advance in the job market. Finally, many undertake the recognition of prior learning process without knowing whether they want to go back to school.

The situation of immigrants should be stressed, because their social integration and job entry depend on the full recognition of their prior learning and competencies by the education system, the professional orders and the workplace. Too often the lack of recognition of their prior learning condemns adult immigrants to practise trades well below their real competencies. But often these people need only some supplementary training to acquire competencies related to the laws and regulations and the technology used here, or to adapt their qualifications to the specific features of the practice of their profession or trade.

### **Increasing access to missing components of education or training**

**The question of missing components of education or training is central and must be at the heart of the reexamination of the recognition of prior learning. The use of distance education, information and communications technologies, self-teaching and part-time training, and grouping services and clientele are measures that should be consolidated. The logic of collaboration and complementarity applies to the process of recognition of prior learning, especially when requests for this recognition come from groups of people in similar situations.**

Partnership and a common will are called for in this whole area, which concerns the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration—which, on request, provides comparative evaluations of studies done outside Québec—and educational institutions at the secondary, college and university levels, as well as the Ministère de l'Éducation, the professional orders that regulate access to the professions, the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale and the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail and the sector-based manpower committees, including the one working with immigrants, CAMO-Immigrants.

In the context of accessibility, it is essential that educational institutions be given the support necessary to develop appropriate services, for example, with respect to missing components of education or training and guidance for people in the process of recognition of prior learning.

The acknowledgment and recognition of prior learning and competencies call for harmonization at various levels: harmonization among levels of education with respect to terms and conditions, services and recognition granted, and harmonization among the different mechanisms of recognition in order to facilitate reciprocity between the labour market and educational institutions.

This is a major challenge to be overcome in order to find ways to develop a response that is truly adapted and focused on the demand.

In addition to immigrants, the recognition of prior learning and competencies is especially important for other groups in the population; these include people with disabilities, women with little schooling working in certain job categories and people over 45 years of age in a job market in constant change.

Along with basic education and the constant improvement of job-related competencies, the recognition of learning and competencies is thus a major element of this policy.

### **Diversifying approaches to the recognition of learning and competencies**

Adopting a perspective of qualifying and transferable training requires official recognition of competencies in relation to socially established standards, specifically but not exclusively as concerns programs of study. There are already other approaches to this, designed especially to acknowledge and promote adult education (for example, education or training credits). Despite their interest, however, these approaches to the recognition of learning remain marginal in relation to the standards of schools, with the exception of the standards for entry into occupations regulated by the professional orders. Among these other approaches, **the acknowledgment and recognition of competencies in the job market seems promising and timely.**

This mechanism of recognition of competencies is based on standards for core occupational competencies, i.e. those competencies required for the practice of a trade or profession. These core competencies, which are the result of a consensus among the partners in a sector of economic activity, serve as guidelines for the establishment of occupational qualifications and certification based on the standards of the job market. These occupational standards also serve to define the learning objectives to be attained in order to obtain occupational qualifications certified by the state, which are issued by Emploi-Québec and the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail.

Several experiments involving the establishment of occupational standards by sector-based manpower committees have already taken place. The Commission des partenaires du marché du travail is monitoring them in order to validate their adaptations, and most of the funding comes from the Fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre. The time has come to gradually move forward on this path, which meets needs of the labour market as well as social needs of a more general nature.

### **Harmonization and reciprocity of systems of recognition**

The path of lifelong learning is a nonlinear one, in which education or training may be alternated with work or other ongoing activities involving learning or may take place in parallel, throughout a person's lifetime. In this context, it seems desirable that people should be able to accumulate learning and competencies and that official recognition by one system should be accepted by the other without any loss or penalty for adults who go from one system to the other.

This raises the question of reciprocity between different systems, essentially the one used in the formal education system and the one associated with the world of work. The mutual respect for the recognition of learning by these systems can be a problem. The interests of the people concerned should come first, the objective in this case being that people whose learning has been recognized under one of these systems should have that learning be recognized by the other system. Thus, the two systems should gradually be harmonized and should be able to translate into one another. This may be done through various organizational and technical measures as necessary, using a list of competencies matching the core competencies of the Québec and other school systems with the occupational standards of the job market.

While harmonization and reciprocity in recognition are called for between the education system and the labour market system, they are equally necessary among educational institutions offering related programs and among different levels of education offering training in the same occupational field or discipline.

**ACKNOWLEDGING AND RECOGNIZING  
LEARNING AND COMPETENCIES MEANS  
TAKING ACTION:**

- TO ENCOURAGE ALL FORMS OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND OFFICIAL RECOGNITION FOR ADULTS' EFFORTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- TO INCREASE ACCESS TO MECHANISMS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF LEARNING AND COMPETENCIES AND FOR THE ACQUISITION OF MISSING COMPONENTS OF EDUCATION OR TRAINING
- TO IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCIES BY THE LABOUR MARKET
- TO DEVELOP MECHANISMS OF RECIPROCITY BETWEEN SYSTEMS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF LEARNING AND COMPETENCIES
- TO INCREASE ACCESS TO MECHANISMS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF LEARNING AND COMPETENCIES AND FOR THE ACQUISITION OF MISSING COMPONENTS OF EDUCATION OR TRAINING
- TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SETTING UP RECOGNITION SERVICES, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH RESPECT TO MISSING COMPONENTS OF EDUCATION OR TRAINING, AND TO PROMOTE HARMONIZATION AMONG DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION
- TO DESIGN APPROACHES FOR THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES THAT ARE SIMPLER AND MORE FLEXIBLE AND THAT ARE FOCUSED ON PEOPLE AND THEIR NEEDS
- TO ASSIST GROUPS THAT HAVE SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES, SUCH AS IMMIGRANTS

*Learning*  
throughout life

While basic education, upgrading of competencies and their acknowledgment are orientations with a structuring effect on the establishment of a culture of lifelong learning in Québec, some corrections are also needed to the existing mechanisms, mainly in relation to access and retention in the achievement of training plans undertaken by adults. The common denominator of the actions to be taken to stimulate a demand for education and training is that **the supply must be adapted to the needs, and not the opposite**. This is even more important for certain groups identified from the start of this policy and throughout its orientations as those people for whom there are, more than for others, obstacles to access and retention that must be eliminated.

For these people as for the population as a whole, the various components of the supply of training and the key elements of the system become parameters to be reexamined in the action plan for this policy.

### Preparation for instructors and teachers

The instruction provided for adults must respect quality standards. Pedagogical approaches should take into account the characteristics of an adult clientele. On one hand, initial competencies must be adequate, and on the other hand, pedagogical and professional development activities must be made available for teachers at all levels of education and for instructors. It is also important to be able to provide an appropriate response to the needs of certain groups of people, which requires knowledge and competencies with respect to the problems faced by these groups.

### Reception, referral, counselling and support services

Whether they are returning to studies or want to improve their competencies, adults need help in clarifying their training plans and learning about possibilities that may meet their aspirations. These services help adults to return to studies and they contribute to retention. The same is true for all types of employers and for groups of individuals that want to include continuing education or training in their own activities. While a certain diversity in entry points for these services seems appropriate, **there must be very close relations between the education system and the public employment services and collaboration must take place on a daily basis among the different points of service, while respecting their specific features**.

Educational institutions should provide this type of service throughout their territories and should balance their functions so that adults have access to resource persons to help them.

The public employment services should take a broad view of the educational services available in Québec, according to the short- and longer-term needs of individuals; they should also work in close coordination and collaboration with the education system and the community sector.



## Distance education and on-line instruction

Information and communications technologies increase the amount of knowledge available and improve its quality by providing access to rich and varied sources of information, and they increase the autonomy of adults who use them in constructing their knowledge. Moreover, the information highway has enormous potential for adults' self-instruction. **Since it is broadly accessible, it pushes back the traditional limits in education and training. It offers a place where the adult population in general can exchange ideas and discuss social issues, encourages the development of content and practices for use in communities, makes available works belonging to our national and international cultural heritage and contributes to the vitality of democracy, as well as adding to the competencies sought that of using technology to find useful information.**

**Adults must be able to take advantage of information and communications technologies, a modern means for the dissemination of knowledge.** These technologies contribute to the diversification of types of training and places where this training is provided and reduce the organizational, financial, and time and space constraints for adults. Since they are accessible at any time, distance education and on-line instruction education helps people organize their time and especially their schedules of studies.

**But, despite its expertise in multimedia and in the field of education, Québec is behind in distance education and on-line instruction,** including providing content in French. The use of distance education is little developed in vocational and technical education. The same applies, generally speaking, to the integration of information and communications technologies into instruction, which is part of a pedagogical approach similar to that of distance education. One of the reasons for this is probably that the schools, despite a good student-computer ratio and definite interest on the part of teachers, need to be connected to each other by more powerful, high-bandwidth telecommunications tools to speed up data transmission. In short, there is a need to stimulate research, cooperation and local dynamism in order to take better advantage of the pedagogical potential of information and communications technologies both for lifelong learning and regular instruction.

This method of instruction may also be less costly to use than more traditional approaches, because it makes it possible to meet a high demand by individuals dispersed over a large area. It can also play a strategic role in meeting the need for missing components of education or training identified in the recognition of prior learning process and for sector-based in-house training. In certain regions, distance education and on-line instruction are additional means of ensuring the accessibility of education and training.

Despite the virtues of distance education, there are some pitfalls associated with it, which can limit its effectiveness in meeting adult education needs. Among the factors that should be

watched is the effect of isolation on learners' motivation. The development or encouragement of this type of training should be accompanied by special support measures in order to minimize the number of dropouts or failures.

**The potential of distance education should thus be developed;** to do so, it will be important to pool our energies, act collaboratively, reach a critical mass of adults, modernize the supply of services and adopt an approach centred on the clients and their needs. In short, the supply must correspond to the real and potential demand.

### Recognition of independent community action groups

Many adults with little schooling **prefer to learn through action and through involvement in social action** rather than enroll in an educational institution. Over the years, independent community action groups (community-based education) have developed invaluable expertise and original training practices, especially in literacy training.

In keeping with its recently adopted policy of recognizing and supporting community organizations, the government hopes to recognize more explicitly the irreplaceable role these groups play in socioeconomic development in Québec. This type of nonacademic action in adult education should be officially legitimized and the status and situation of the community groups should be consolidated.

### Funding and accessibility

Public funding of adult education and continuing education or training, with respect to both the supply of training and financial assistance to individuals, must be designed in such a way that it gives adults access to services that provide a timely response to their needs without putting too many obstacles in the way of their training plans. Justice, equity and equality are three principles among which there is tension, and which must be reflected more concretely in all measures. Since investing in education is profitable for all, **it is important to maintain a balance between contributions by the state, employers and individuals, while countering obstacles to equitable access to training and reducing the differences in the advantages given to different people.**

The Ministère de l'Éducation already allocates substantial resources to adult education, of which nearly half goes to vocational education and general education and the rest is divided between college and university education. However, the funding of adult education is subject to variations and methods of allocation that may limit the supply and delivery of services in addition to being complicated and sometimes lacking a useful flexibility.

The same is true of the public employment services, which fund many training activities for their clientele and for workers receiving income support who are referred for training. This is also the case for private and public enterprises, which invest large sums in personnel training.

Other ministries or sector-based government organizations reserve part of their budgets for training for certain groups in the adult population. And there are also other sources of funding for adult education in Québec, including monies invested by the adults themselves, professional and trade associations and others.

Many people receive financial assistance of various kinds for their training. Among the better-known measures is the loans and bursaries program of the Ministère de l'Éducation. This system is designed primarily for young people and people studying full-time toward a diploma; its underlying logic is not well suited to the diverse situations of adults and the difficulties they face. This aspect of the situation should be improved in order to provide better access to part-time training.

The public employment services also provide financial support to help adults continue their studies or pursue further training. Social integration and job entry in the relatively short term are the more specific aims. Unemployed people taking part in these training activities receive income support and make no personal contribution and incur no debts; the terms and conditions of the support provided depend on whether they are receiving employment assistance or employment insurance. People who are employed also have access to financial assistance of various kinds to help them fulfill their training plans: employer-sponsored training, tax credits (for practicums, for example) and savings plans. In the first case, wages paid by employers for training leave are accepted as admissible expenses under the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*, but nothing is done to promote the use of this provision. Here again, there should be greater coherence among the various existing measures, better structuring of actions and more complementarity among actions.

Despite the efforts already made, access to training remains an issue for some adults and some businesses in Québec. Québec is not alone in facing these situations or in seeking innovative solutions and effective incentives. The United States and some countries of the European Union are currently exploring the concepts of the personal development account and the personal training account, measures that encourage personal saving for training by providing a contribution by the state.

## Databases and research

**The management of all the components of the adult education system requires data** that are reliable, compatible, and broken down by sex, as well as indicators that permit informed judgments of the results obtained. Decision making must continuously be fed by research, studies, analysis and experimentation, so that all partners can adjust to the changing situation.

At the present time in Québec, there are gaps in the data on adult education and continuing education and training and there is not much reliable research.

In the public education system, there is no system of information on school enrollments and funding allocations based on a single model. The data are entered and processed differently at each

level of instruction. In addition, the data gathered and used by the various ministries and government bodies cannot easily be combined, since the databases are often incompatible. Consequently, the creation of performance and quality criteria that are appropriate for continuing education and training and adult education is complicated and does not permit the necessary corrections to be made quickly and efficiently. As well, other useful information from a variety of sources should be integrated into the data.

In short, the development of continuing education and training in Québec must be based on a better understanding of adults' needs and their characteristic learning processes. Decision making in adult education and continuing education and training must be founded on research results and conclusions. **The government therefore hopes to be able to have more material for consideration and to base its decisions on research** in adult education and continuing education and training, an area that is currently not very developed.

### **Coordination, concerted action and partnership**

Adult education and continuing education and training in Québec, viewed as a broad system, is characterized by a complex set of mechanisms and subsystems that respond to diverse learning situations, make it possible to attain a variety of objectives, and comprise a multitude of different players. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of the players intersect and often overlap, even within a single organization. This diversity has certain advantages; however, **coherence, synergy and complementarity in the actions of different partners are essential conditions for meeting some crucial challenges in adult education and continuing education and training.**

### **The fundamental responsibility of the state**

All the mechanisms of lifelong learning cannot work harmoniously, effectively and efficiently without coordination, concerted action and partnership. **The state has a major role to play** in this respect, a role that confirms its fundamental responsibility in adult education and continuing education and training. Concretely, its role should be the following:

- main architect of the orientations, their application and the subsequent evaluation
- catalyst in relation to the various players and partners
- guardian of equity by virtue of its fundamental responsibility for the redistribution of resources and the protection of the social fabric
- defender of the quality of training by virtue of its responsibility with regard to market dysfunctions
- service provider for more general and more easily transferable types of training

The responsibility of the state is given in part to the Ministère de l'Éducation, which has a mission to impart knowledge and provide qualifications to citizens of Québec. While the Ministère must now place more importance on adult education and continuing education and training in carrying out this mission, and must make its actions in this area more coherent, it cannot meet all adults' needs single-handedly. Rather, it has to work at and in partnership, and act as coordinator of the policy and the action plan. The public educational institutions cannot limit themselves to the role of providing adult education services. In the perspective of lifelong learning, they are called on to be proactive and, with the public employment services, with which they share key areas of jurisdiction, to become agents of change in their communities and leaders in implementing regional and local strategies.

The Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale has a responsibility, with the public employment services and, especially, in collaboration with the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail, to develop orientations and policies and implement measures to develop the competencies of the labour force. In addition to making forecasts concerning labour and labour needs, this ministry thus has a fundamental role in employment-related education and training.

Other ministries and bodies also have roles to play in lifelong learning. The Ministère de la Culture et des Communications has a mandate to increase access to cultural products such as books; the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration facilitates immigrants' social integration, for example through francization. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux provides support for community-based adult education activities, manpower planning and continuing education and training for personnel in the field and managers, more particularly. The Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale plays a vital role through a variety of actions of an educational nature aimed at social and economic integration; the Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce trains business leaders and strategic workers on best business practices; and the Ministère de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie is involved in the general and targeted development of scientific thought. The professional orders, to which the state has given a mandate of public protection and which thus monitor the quality of their members' competencies and provide them with updating, also play a role.

It is in this perspective that the government plans to provide more structure in the coordination of adult education and lifelong learning and to continually adjust to the evolution of the needs in this area. It will do so by ensuring contributions by its partners in civil society and government organizations; for this purpose, a monitoring and implementation committee will be set up for the policy and action plan on adult education and continuing education and training; responsibility for the committee will be shared by the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale.

The action plan on lifelong learning will provide concrete expression of this desire to work together in the application of the policy, and this will henceforth be reflected in the structures that bring together the key partners.

**REMOVING OBSTACLES TO CONTINUING  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING MEANS  
TAKING ACTION:**

- TO CONSOLIDATE GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES TO CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- TO CONSOLIDATE, MODERNIZE AND DEVELOP DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ON-LINE INSTRUCTION
- TO INCREASE, IMPROVE AND HARMONIZE RECEPTION AND REFERRAL SERVICES
- TO IMPROVE COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES
- TO PROVIDE LEGAL RECOGNITION FOR INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS WORKING IN EDUCATION
- TO CREATE A DATABASE AND STIMULATE RESEARCH ON ADULT EDUCATION
- TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION PROVIDED FOR ADULTS
- TO PROVIDE ONGOING MONITORING OF THE POLICY AND ACTION PLAN AND OF THE COHERENCE OF ACTIONS ON ADULT EDUCATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*Learning*  
throughout life

## CONCLUSION

### Time to Take Action

As a nation that is part of the knowledge society, Québec has to meet the challenges of providing everyone with the basic education needed to participate actively in social life and pursue further studies, maintaining and improving the competencies of the labour force, acknowledging and recognizing adults' prior learning and competencies, and improving the existing facilities for adult education and lifelong learning. To successfully meet these challenges, the government must be able to depend on the involvement of all interested partners—representatives of educational institutions, employers, trade unions, private training providers, community groups and, especially, adults themselves.

In addition to providing occupational and economic benefits to workers and employers, the implementation of the policy on adult education and continuing education and training will play an essential role in helping all Quebecers achieve their full potential. "All educational and cultural policies that attach value to knowledge, those that facilitate access to knowledge and those that inspire a love of knowledge or a desire to learn and to understand create an environment conducive to the development of adult education and to the renewal of individuals and of our society. Learning must be lifelong because we must constantly adapt and evolve. But why is it necessary to learn in order to change? Because to learn is always to change. To learn is always to be led to change. To love learning is thus already to be willing to change."<sup>1</sup>

**But the challenge of establishing a true culture of lifelong learning does not stop with the adoption of the present policy. It is important to define the concrete results sought; the action plan accompanying the policy describes what means the government intends to adopt to promote *lifelong learning*, what steps will be taken and how their results will be monitored.**

The action plan, which is an integral part of this policy, covers five years and focuses on implementing new tools but also on developing existing projects and consolidating existing measures. It is also intended to initiate or accelerate the changes sought, without claiming to cover all of continuing education and training, which will likely be done in a time frame of ten years.

In keeping with this policy and with the general consensus that emerged during consultations, the initial five-year action plan places special emphasis on the following areas:

- **the acquisition by the largest number of adults possible of a basic education that enables them to carry out their basic roles in society, as individuals, parents, workers and citizens**
- **the expression of learning needs**
- **the adaptation of the supply to the needs and the focusing of approaches and services on adult learners**

1. Paul Inchauspé, *Pour une politique de l'éducation des adultes dans une perspective de formation continue* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 2000), p. 131 (translation).



- the acknowledgment and recognition of competencies by the working world and the reexamination of the recognition of prior learning in the education system
- support to small and medium-size businesses for personnel training, to be extended to very small businesses and to self-employed workers and workers in nonstandard employment
- pursuing the objectives of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*
- partnership and *shared management* by all players in adult education and continuing education and training, and recognition of independent community action groups in this context
- concern for certain groups that have special difficulties requiring support and solutions adapted to their needs: people between 16 and 30 years of age, immigrants, people with disabilities, people over 45 years of age and women with little schooling and in certain job categories
- making distance education and on-line instruction more dynamic
- bringing together the data on adult education and training in Québec
- reinforcing the incentives for continuing education and training while maintaining a balance between the responsibilities of the state, the workplace and the individual
- systematic monitoring and regular updating of the action plan
- reception, referral, counselling and support services

The time has now come to take action to establish lifelong learning solidly in the culture of the citizens so that Québec will be able to reduce poverty and exclusion and take its rightful place on the world chessboard of the society of knowledge and competency.

Learning throughout life means ensuring not only one's own future security but that of our society and of all of us who know that living and learning are inseparably connected.

## MAIN PARTNERS WORKING IN ADULT EDUCATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN QUÉBEC

### Services of other ministries

As stated in the policy, ministries other than the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale are concerned with education and training for individuals and groups in their areas of responsibility.

#### MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE ET DES COMMUNICATIONS

This ministry is involved in training professional artists. The training given does not concern adults alone, but they are an important part of the target clientele. The Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec offer professional artists grants for research and creation, including professional development.

The ministry establishes and implements cultural policies to increase the democratization of access to culture (museums, libraries, etc.) and the ability to use two tools that are factors in this access, reading and information and communications technologies.

#### MINISTÈRE DES RELATIONS AVEC LES CITOYENS ET DE L'IMMIGRATION

This ministry offers, among other things, integration and francization services that enable immigrants to find a place in the francophone networks of Québec society, fulfill their civic obligations and contribute to the development of their community. The following services are offered to permanent residents who have been in the country for less than five years:

- francization services on a full- or part-time basis, in partnership with colleges, universities, school boards and community organizations and, through direct delivery, from the Carrefours d'intégration
- support services for social and economic integration, including providing education credential evaluation reports or comparative evaluations of studies carried out outside Québec

#### MINISTÈRE DE L'AGRICULTURE, DES PÊCHERIES ET DE L'ALIMENTATION

Support for training is an element of the mission of this ministry, which administers two institutes of agri-food technology that provide college-level instruction (at Saint-Hyacinthe and La Pocatière) and funds MacDonald College. The programs offered by the institutes are approved by the Ministère de l'Éducation, which offers a program in farm management and technology.

The Forum des décideurs de l'agriculture et de l'agroalimentaire québécois recently adopted the development of human resources through training as a priority for increasing the competitive capacity of this sector of the economy.



## MINISTÈRE DE LA SÉCURITÉ PUBLIQUE

The École nationale de police, which comes under this ministry, has a mandate to provide initial and further training for police officers.

In addition, programs of study in secondary education (general education and vocational education) are provided for prisoners. The training is covered by a memorandum of understanding between the Ministère de la Sécurité publique and the Ministère de l'Éducation, and agreements between school boards and college-level educational institutions govern training given in detention centres. Another understanding allows for offenders in open custody or detention to receive employment assistance services from Emploi-Québec in order to enter the job market.

This ministry is also active, with various partners, in training related to different aspects of public security. As well as training firefighters, it provides, in partnership, initial training and updating in emergency preparedness.

### **Other ministries**

Various other ministries are active in providing training for their personnel and the population they are concerned with. They carry out their mandate in different ways, directly or indirectly, through raising awareness or providing information in their respective areas; they include the following:

- **Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune**
- **Ministère de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie**
- **Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce**
- **Ministère des Ressources naturelles**
- **Ministère des Transports**
- **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux**

### **The private training supply**

In contrast to the situation in other countries, the public supply of training in Québec makes up the majority of the supply of training for adults.

There are also 150 educational organizations not regulated by the Education Act, such as language schools.

There are private organizations accredited by the public authorities. **Thus the Ministère de l'Éducation supports:**

- **Independent community action groups: Nearly 900 groups are accredited.** Educational activities receiving financial support are designed to foster individual and collective responsibility for the living conditions of people participating in these groups.
- **Independent community action groups in literacy training: Nearly 130 groups are accredited** and receive financial support that was substantially increased in 2001. The activities of these groups improve the functional capacities of illiterate adults through the acquisition of reading, writing and arithmetic skills.
- Some private educational organizations regulated by the Education Act, some of which receive public funding: These organizations also offer educational services to adults.

#### **Other players and partners**

Among other players in informal continuing education and training are **private businesses** offering products of an educational nature. Many of them use the new information and communications technologies in this market niche, which often supplements formal education.

**Distance education** within the education system has a high potential for development for use, for example, in isolated regions. The Ministère de l'Éducation provides financial support for public organizations offering this service at the secondary and college levels, and for university education, in collaboration with universities and other ministries.

Other important players in adult education are **businesses, employers, trade unions and the professional orders.**

There are additional organizations that contribute to continuing education and training by ensuring that it meets the specific needs of certain groups; these include the Conseil du statut de la femme, which recommends an approach differentiated by sex, and the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, whose goal is the social integration of people with disabilities, particularly through action with ministries and organizations in the fields of education, employment and social services.

#### **Strategic partners in the area of work and social solidarity**

##### THE COMMISSION DES PARTENAIRES DU MARCHÉ DU TRAVAIL

*The Act respecting the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité and establishing the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail* gives the Commission a role in the drafting of government policies and measures in the areas of labour and employment.

The Commission fulfills the role set out in the Act, which is essentially:

- joint action with partners from the business world, the trade union movement, the community, the education system and the economy
- participation in labour force development activities of institutions regulated by the *Act respecting private education* and by university-level educational institutions

The Commission is made up of representatives of major employers' and union organizations, the education system and community organizations. The associate deputy minister in charge of Emploi-Québec is its secretary general. The deputy ministers of the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, the Ministère de l'Éducation, the Ministère des Régions, the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la Métropole and the Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce also sit on the Commission.

#### CONSEILS RÉGIONAUX DES PARTENAIRES DU MARCHÉ DU TRAVAIL

**In each of the 17 administrative regions of Québec, Emploi-Québec brings together representatives of the socioeconomic sectors in the Conseils régionaux des partenaires du marché du travail.**

#### SECTOR-BASED MANPOWER COMMITTEES

**Emploi-Québec supports 24 sector-based manpower committees, each made up of representatives of employers and unions who are acquainted with the situation and the problems in their sector as well as spokespersons for the ministries working in the sector.** The principal mandates of these committees are to define the specific needs of their respective sectors, propose measures to stabilize employment and reduce unemployment, and develop continuing education and training.

**In addition to the sector-based committees, there are two committees concerned with job entry and job retention for groups of people with special employment problems: immigrants and people with disabilities.**

Four advisory committees are concerned with problems of certain groups that are disadvantaged in the area of employment: young people, women, adults subject to judicial control and workers aged 45 and over.

#### Strategic partners in the education system

The Ministère de l'Éducation receives collaboration from many partners in the general area of adult education. The representatives of the various components of the education system play an essential role in this partnership; the independent community action groups also play an important role. The following are some of these partner organizations, though the list is not exhaustive.

- Alpha Laubach du Canada-Québec/Les Volontaires de l'alpha du Québec (ALC-Q/VAQ)
- Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDEACF)
- Centre for Literacy (CFL)
- Comité de liaison en formation à distance (CLIFAD)
- Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec (CREPUQ)
- Fédération des cégeps
- Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ)
- Fondation québécoise pour l'alphabétisation
- Institut canadien d'adult education (ICEA), which is also a community partner in the area of employment
- Mouvement d'éducation populaire et d'action communautaire du Québec inc. (MEPACQ)
- Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ)
- Provincial Organization of Continuing Education Directors English (PROCEDE)
- Quebec Literacy Alliance (QLA)
- Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG)
- Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation du Québec (RGPAQ)
- Regroupement des organismes volontaires d'éducation populaire inc. (ROVEP)
- Table des fédérations et organismes nationaux en éducation populaire autonome



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