

Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale

PLANNING, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2006
2009



With less poverty,
all of us stand to gain immeasurably

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MESSAGE

FROM THE CHAIR

When I was approached to chair the Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale, I was somewhat taken aback. After 25 years of witnessing the consequences of poverty and social exclusion first-hand in my job, I wondered what another committee could possibly do to deal a debilitating blow to the causes of this affliction that enfeebles all of our society.

Then, when I became aware of the central role of the Comité consultatif, I realized that this place of exchange and deliberation had the potential to achieve the objectives written into the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* and to improve the situation of needy individuals, families and communities in a real way.

When I met the 16 other members of the Comité consultatif, hailing from various places and walks of life, rich in lived experience and commitment and sparked by the same desire to act effectively for the poor and their families, I knew that this committee could get things moving. I knew it could, by its very nature, help to steer government decisions in the direction intended by the Act, and rally the social players concerned around the attendant objectives. After having worked a few months with the Comité consultatif, I am entirely convinced of its ability to fully play a leading role in the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.

This document describes the Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale's planning, aims and objectives for 2006-2009. It is our way of sharing with our fellow stakeholders and with Quebecers at large our vision of our mission and of the values that underpin our work, our grasp of the context and issues that will shape the action aimed at combatting poverty and social exclusion, and the major focuses the Comité has chosen. We intend to be innovative in our proposals and in the means used to foster and implement them, starting with a solid foundation, with a view to building a poverty-free and more inclusive Québec.



Tommy Kulczyk
Chair

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A photograph of four people standing in a row, seen from behind. They are standing close together with their arms around each other's shoulders, suggesting a sense of unity or support. The person on the far left is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt. The person next to them is wearing a light-colored t-shirt. The person in the center is wearing a plaid shirt. The person on the far right is wearing a dark-colored long-sleeved shirt. They are standing in front of a bright, hazy background that looks like a beach or a body of water under a bright sky. The entire image has a warm, orange-brown color overlay.

Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté
et l'exclusion sociale

MISSION

OF THE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DE LUTTE CONTRE LA PAUVRETÉ ET L'EXCLUSION SOCIALE

The Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale is a public agency whose main mission is to advise the Minister responsible for application of the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the action introduced under the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The primary role of the Comité consultatif is advisory. Composed of members who represent groups or organizations involved in the movement to combat poverty and social exclusion, including persons directly affected by these problems, and individuals from various sectors of civil society, the committee is a reflection of Québec's geographic and demographic diversity. Its purpose is to better understand the causes and consequences of poverty and social exclusion and to jointly decide on the best ways of achieving the objectives defined by the Act. The Comité consultatif is empowered to influence government decisions and action by social groups that work to eliminate poverty and social exclusion.

Its centrepiece is the Preamble to the Act, which states that persons in situations of poverty and social exclusion are the first to act to improve their situation and that of their families, and which calls upon Québec society as a whole to act in a coordinated manner and pursue a course of action designed to combat poverty and social exclusion. The Comité consultatif is a place where constructive dialogue and active listening can occur, with special emphasis on what persons in situations of poverty have to say. Its recommendations, presented in official opinions, reports, and briefs, are in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Act. The Comité ensures that its recommendations are tailored to Québec's particular economic and social features, that they contribute to eradicating prejudices and to enhancing the solidarity of the individuals affected by poverty and social exclusion, and, lastly, that they help to more closely ally the various social players in this challenge.

The primary role of the Comité consultatif is advisory.

The Comité consultatif is a place where constructive dialogue and active listening can occur, with special emphasis on what persons in situations of poverty have to say.

In addition to the advisory component of the Comité consultatif's mission is its mandate to monitor government policies that have an impact on poverty and social exclusion.

In addition to the advisory component of the Comité consultatif's mission is its mandate to monitor government policies that have an impact on poverty and social exclusion. The Comité consultatif therefore maintains ongoing contact with the Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion (CÉPE) in order to have access to the indicators needed to measure the inroads made in preventing the causes and mitigating the effects of poverty and social exclusion and to examine the means employed to counter social exclusion and move towards the goal of a poverty-free Québec. The Comité's approach involves the pooling of knowledge and the use of diversified sources of information, and the same regard for life experience as for scientific data or expert opinions. Constituted to consult, the Comité intends to add to the body of knowledge and the society-wide discourse on questions related to poverty and social exclusion.

The Comité consultatif must set targets for improving the income of persons in situations of poverty and determine the most effective means for achieving them.

As specified in the Act, the Comité consultatif must set targets for improving the income of persons in situations of poverty and determine the most effective means for achieving them, with the goal, as explicitly stated in the Act, of progressively making Québec one of the industrialized nations having the least number of persons in situations of poverty by 2013.

Lastly, the Comité consultatif supports the formation of partnerships likely to foster improvement of the lives of persons affected by poverty and social exclusion.

VALUES

OF THE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF

The Comité consultatif is a major moving force for the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* and a tool for participatory citizenship whose values are consistent with its mission. Equality, participation and confidence are the cornerstones for its deliberations and action.

If, to quote from the Preamble of the Act that serves as a template for the work of the Comité consultatif, "respect for the dignity of human beings and recognition of the rights and freedoms they possess constitute the foundation of justice and peace," then the quest for **equality**, equality of rights and the right to equality, is central to the action aimed at bettering the economic situation of persons living with poverty and social exclusion and improving their ability to act. One of the main goals of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion is to reduce the disparities that can hinder social cohesion, beginning with income gaps, which generally translate into unequal access to education, jobs, housing, recreation and culture, health, and well-being. This pursuit of equality is the basis for all efforts aimed at preventing poverty and social exclusion.

Convinced of the importance of the **participation** of every individual and group in actions to make Québec poverty-free and more inclusive, the Comité consultatif conducts its business so as to foster participation. Firstly, it seeks the participation of people personally affected by poverty and social exclusion and whose experience and input must be put to use in producing imaginative solutions and new approaches in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Alongside this imperative is that of making all social players aware of the need for them to commit to the cause, join forces, and present a united front.

Lastly, the Comité consultatif affirms its **confidence** in the will of people in situations of poverty and social exclusion to be the primary movers in changing their situation and that of their families. Strengthening the ability of individuals and communities to be proactive in developing their full potential will make society as a whole all the richer and foster lasting development.

Equality, participation and confidence are the cornerstones for its deliberations and action.

CONTEXT

AND ISSUES

A globalized economy: The dangers of the global village

Increasingly fast movement of capital and the liberalization of trade, that have made it possible for manufacturers to set up operations where substantial savings in labour costs can be realized, limits the leeway that States have for keeping their social safety nets intact. Anti-globalization proponents have argued loudly that the liberalization of trade will bring social conditions down to the lowest common denominator. Given the weakness of social protection in most of the countries in the Americas, a sizable part of the opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is based precisely on this concern.

Despite these changes, Québec remained committed to solidarity, as evinced by its array of public services and social safety mechanisms that were more highly developed than in most neighbouring States.

In the European Union, like in Québec, a new trend was taking shape. The development of a Social Europe alongside that of an Economic Europe helped to improve social safety nets in Southern European countries (Italy, Greece, Spain) and led to joint action on the anti-poverty and social exclusion front.

As the 20th century drew to a close, economic liberalism became predominant. With the values of individual responsibility and personal initiative trumpeted far and wide, criticism of social protection programs was rekindled, the most serious threat being disenchantment with governments, especially by the younger generation. The more it went, the more doubt grew as to the ability of the State to support economic development and social development at the same time.

In the 1990s, most member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) experienced high unemployment rates, often in excess of 10%, and an increase in the proportion of persons in situations of poverty. In the late 1990s, the European Commission estimate for European households with incomes 50% lower than the national average was 17%. The same was true for Québec and the rest of Canada.

In Canada, the proportion of low incomes after taxes reached 15.7% in 1996¹ and then dipped due to the economic prosperity of the next decade.

1. Statistics Canada, *Low Wage and Low Income*, 2006.

In almost every developed country, the tendency was for measures that were more targeted, the idea being to channel resources towards those who needed them most. What happened instead was greater disparity expressed as a wider gap in income quintiles.

During this period, the social safety net was called into question. Access to employment insurance² and social assistance was tightened. In almost every developed country, the tendency was for measures that were more targeted, the idea being to channel resources towards those who needed them most. What happened instead was greater disparity expressed as a wider gap in income quintiles.

A changing Québec

Québec has undergone sweeping changes since the 1970s:

- In the structure of its economy and control of its development.
- In the internal and external environment in which this economic development can occur.
- In the level of schooling of Quebecers and in workforce qualification.
- In social organization (rapid demographic change and the changing family).
- In land base habitation and use.
- In the role of the State and its leeway, due to the extension of collective services, the debt load and greater continental integration as the result of greater market access.

A rapidly aging population may mean a deeper divide in Québec

The impact of population aging on pension plans, health, and other components of the social safety net has been heavily documented. Observers have found that an impressive number of countries have managed to ensure the sustainability of their pension systems, thereby reducing the risk of bitter intergenerational conflict in the 21st century.

Retirement funding aside, there are also concerns about what it means to be retired. The massive inroads made by women into the labour market, smaller households, more education and lifelong learning, and the fact that, generally, today's seniors are in better health than those of a generation ago all add up to a situation that calls for the redefinition of retirement and an approach more centred on the cycles of life.

2. In Canada, only a minority of the people who paid into employment insurance were eligible for benefits when they became jobless.

The future of health care systems seems much more difficult to predict. Given population aging, it is safe to say that health care costs will rise, but will simple projections from the current situation suffice? For example, what effects will preventive measures (anti-smoking, screening tests, better nutrition) have? We know that health care expenses rise significantly in the last two years of life. Long-term eldercare is therefore becoming a major issue for all countries, regardless of their level of development.

In some countries, there are systems that cover the cost of long-term health care through private or public insurance plans that holders pay into. With the changes being made to pension plans, this issue will be at the heart of the debate about the future of the social safety net in the next few years and will pose a particular challenge for people in situations of poverty.

Between 1961 and 2001, the proportion of seniors in Québec more than doubled (from 5.5% to 13%³), while that of persons younger than 20 was halved (from 44.3% to 24%). By 2026, the proportion of elderly Quebecers will have doubled again, accounting for more than one fourth (26.6%) of the total population of Québec. Most developed countries are grappling with this problem, but it is happening more quickly in Québec, which is second only to Japan for the speed at which the phenomenon is occurring.

The causes for this are threefold: a gradual decline in the birth rate, higher life expectancy at birth, and the problem attracting immigrants to Québec and keeping them here. Québec's net migration⁴ has been on the rise only since 1997. In 2002, it was plus 30,500. Two thirds of recent population growth is due to net migration. Despite this, Québec's proportion of immigrants is substantially lower than it is elsewhere in Canada, in fact, three times lower than in Ontario and two times lower than the Canadian average.

According to current projections (and there is little to suggest we will be able to stem the tide to any significant extent), there will be population decline as of 2032. The resource regions are already feeling this downturn.

Between 1991 and 2001, these regions lost 2.8% of their population,⁵ with the working-age population (20 to 64 years old) bearing the brunt of this decrease. In 1971, the ratio of working-age citizens to seniors was 8 to 1, in 2001, it was 5 to 1 and in 2031, it will be a mere 2 to 1.

Regional variations in demographic change will be considerable. By 2026, the decrease in the working-age population in the resource regions will range from

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3. Demographic data collected by the Conseil exécutif for the *Forum des générations*.

4. Difference between the total number of persons arriving and the number leaving.

5. *Briller parmi les meilleurs*, p. 47.

20% to over 35%,⁶ compared with Montréal and the adjoining regions, which will post a slight increase. There is every reason to believe that immigrants to Québec, whose numbers will have to rise in order to stave off demographic decline, will continue to flood into the Greater Montréal area.

On the one hand, a metropolitan region with more and more people and dealing with wide-ranging integration problems, and on the other, resource regions in decline and without the most important resource of all in a knowledge-based economy, human capital. A Québec split down the middle... A fact in the making? Only time will tell...and what we do with our future collectively.

While population aging raises concerns and poses challenges, it can be turned into an asset if we recognize what seniors have to offer and adapt our social instruments to the reality of these people who now have longer and healthier lives and who are custodians of knowledge and experience that Québec must tap into for its continued development.

If strength lies in numbers...

The main challenge for Québec and any other society dealing with the problem of an aging population is to strike a balance between economic development and the social protection of all citizens. The hardest thing about doing this is footing the bill for the social safety net given a demographic scenario in which population aging has an impact on State revenues and expenditures alike.⁷

Demographic change could adversely affect Québec's economic growth and development and therefore challenges us to do the following as a society:

- Increase the labour force participation rate and, among other things, ensure that no one is put aside.
- Improve workforce qualification by reducing the incidence of dropping out and enhancing professional development.
- Increase immigration and foster more seamless integration of immigrants.
- Develop a policy aimed at better use of Québec's land base and at regional development in order to counter the downtrend.
- Renew consensus on the funding of social programs and the need for a new fiscal arrangement between Ottawa and Québec.

6. Except for the Nord-du-Québec region.

7. See *Agir maintenant pour le Québec de demain*, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006.

Assets of worldwide value

To meet these challenges, Québec has an economy that compares favourably with that of most OECD countries. In terms of jobs, the unemployment rate has dropped significantly since it peaked during the economic crisis of the early 1990s. In 1993, the average monthly unemployment rate was 13.3%, but by 2003, it had dropped to 9.1%.⁸ Even though it continues to hover above the Canadian average, it has more or less remained at 8% since the beginning of the new millennium, a performance unmatched in the past 30 years.

The proportion of working-age persons who have a job, in other words, the employment rate, has risen markedly in recent decades, from 60% in 1976 to 70% in 2005, a record thus far. Slightly below the Canadian average, Québec's employment rate exceeds the average for OEDC, G7 and European Union countries.⁹

Owing to sizable investments in education, Québec has a qualified workforce it can rely on. Between 1990 and 2003, the proportion of workers with a post-secondary education in relation to the total labour pool increased greatly, from 42% to more than 58%.¹⁰ Québec is on the cutting edge in a number of high-tech sectors (pharmaceutical industry, aerospace industry, information technology). It has also maintained its status as a major player in the field of natural resources (paper, mines, hydropower and aluminum).¹¹

Job prospects as analyzed by Emploi-Québec are good. The forecast is for more than 650,000 jobs to fill over five years. In the vast majority of cases (370,000), these positions will open up due to retirements in the near future. In addition is the creation of 285,000 jobs during the same period.

These data inspire hope for a poverty-free Québec. However, they come with their own set of challenges, such as fostering equal opportunity in accessing qualifying training and ensuring that work is truly an escape from poverty.

Currently, three quarters of Québec's jobs are in the service sector. Between 1990 and 2002, tertiary sector jobs grew by 20%¹² due to new technology and development of human services. What we are seeing is, on the one hand, an increase in the number of jobs that require high qualifications and, on the other, an increase in the kinds of jobs, such as fast food services and home help services, that become necessary when both partners work outside the home (the case in most households) and there is an aging population.

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8. Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.

9. *Pour un Québec confiant dans son avenir*, government plan for employment, draft document, p. 10.

10. *Briller parmi les meilleurs*, p. 116.

11. *Op. cit.*, p. 113.

12. *Pour un Québec confiant dans son avenir*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

In recent decades, non-traditional (atypical) jobs have enjoyed continuous growth. The proportion of this type of job has more than doubled, from 16.7% of total jobs in 1976 to 36.5% of jobs as a whole in 2002.

We would not be mistaken in thinking that the number of unskilled manufacturing jobs (high-density manufacturing concerns) will continue to drop as emerging economies in Asia (China and North and South Korea) and the southern part of the Americas (Mexico) continue to develop apace.

In recent decades, non-traditional (atypical) jobs have enjoyed continuous growth. The proportion of this type of job has more than doubled, from 16.7% of total jobs in 1976 to 36.5% of jobs as a whole in 2002. In 2002, there were 650,000 part-time jobs, 450,000 temporary jobs, and 475,000 self-employed workers in this category.¹³

This segmentation of the job market is likely to persist in the coming years, leading to what some economists call a "double labour market," characterized by good jobs that require high education and that offer good working conditions and sound social protection and, conversely, low-skill jobs that offer little in the way of stability.

Since the latter market is the only one available to persons in situations of poverty, who are often undereducated, this brings us to the challenge of making work more lucrative and its conditions more decent and of establishing genuinely equal opportunity for young people, regardless of their background. The increase in atypical jobs and reduced access to employment insurance are far from unrelated to the increase in the number of poor workers.

The family redefined: Breaking from the past

Over the past 30 years, family and social structures have undergone swift change in industrialized countries. These changes include the presence of more women in the labour market, higher life expectancy coupled with a lower birth rate, more diversity in family types, and a widening gap between two-income and single-income households.

All these factors have meant that successfully blending work and family has become a central focus of social policy, leading to the institution of a vast array of parental leave policies and services for workers, male and female alike, with dependent children. In most industrialized countries, maternity and paternity leaves are longer now and transfer payments greater.

Given an aging population, care for frail seniors is an increasingly significant issue. Up until now, families, women in particular, have provided this care. This extra responsibility weighs most heavily on people in the 45-65 age group who,

¹³. Op. cit., p. 7.

in addition to caring for their elderly parents, are still bringing up their children. Measures to assist these caregivers have been implemented in the Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

Québec is no exception. The concept of family has changed with the advent of common law unions, blended families, same-sex couples and childless couples. Changes in the unit called the family, which is the centrepiece of social development, the speed with which families merge and split, smaller households, and the increase in the number of unattached adults are phenomena that will strongly influence social policy.

In 1971, unattached adults represented 12.1% of the population. In 2006, the percentage was 28.8%. The proportion they account for in relation to the overall population has more than doubled in 30 years, a trend likely to intensify not only because of population aging, but also because of changing lifestyles and the lower profile of families within support systems. It is no coincidence that unattached adults aged 45 to 59 form the group most affected by chronic poverty. In Québec, between 1980 and 2002, the number of unattached individuals under age 65 without employment income swelled from 114,000 to 257,000,¹⁴ an increase of more than 225%.

Not only are there more unattached persons, but household size continues to dwindle and more quickly. In 1971, households with two people at most accounted for slightly more than one third of all households in Québec (35.2%), but in 2001, the figure had increased to nearly two thirds (62.6%). Inversely, the proportion of households with four persons or more (the traditional family of two parents and two children) fell by more than one half (from 48.8% to 21.1%¹⁵) in the same period.

In recent years, the proportion of single-parent families and of common-law parents has continued to climb. In 1986, families composed of two married parents with children represented three quarters of families with children (73.5%). In 2001, the figure was 52.9%.¹⁶

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14. Statistics Canada, *Income Trends in Canada, 1980-2004*.

15. *Annuaire du Québec 2004*, p. 163.

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

Housing: A distinct Québec... but how much longer?

The cost of housing eats up the lion's share of personal income, especially in the case of low-income households. When it comes to housing, Québec would indeed appear to be a distinct society. Even if the proportion of homeowners has increased (from 47% in 1971 to 58% in 2001),¹⁷ it is still much lower than elsewhere in Canada (67%). Québec is also different in that there is much lighter concentration of rental unit ownership. Barely 9% of rental unit owners have 200 units. Most rental unit owners have five rental units at most.

This, combined with the rental control measures instituted in the 1990s, is a possible explanation for the lower cost of apartments in Québec. A two-bedroom apartment costs an average \$600 a month in Gatineau, Québec City or Montréal. A similar apartment costs \$900 in Ottawa and \$1000 in Toronto. This is an important factor to take into account when using low-income thresholds largely based on the share of income spent on housing to determine poverty levels.¹⁸

In spite of Québécois' relatively low personal incomes compared to the Canadian average, it is the province where the fewest people spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Due to a boom in the economy and jobs, between 1996 and 2001, the share of households that needed 50% or more of their income for housing decreased by 20% in Québec (from 273,000 to 218,485).

However, when the construction bubble for residential housing burst in the 1990s, shortages became more acute. It would be 2002 before, for the first time in many years, the number of construction projects would outpace the rise in the number of households. Nevertheless, in 2003, the vacancy rate in Québec's metropolitan areas was the lowest recorded for Canada's 28 metropolitan census areas.

Demographic analyses indicate that the current housing shortage will level off and peter out between 2007 and 2010. This optimism is due to expected growth of less than 1% a year in the number of households in Québec. Note, however, that growth will vary widely from region to region.

Despite all of this, for people with low incomes, adequate housing continues to be a problem. There is a good chance that in the next few years, the cost of housing will rise as Québec plays catch-up with the rest of Canada. In addition, the increase in the number of households with only one breadwinner and the fact that families that rent instead of buy tend to be in the low-income bracket makes it safe to assume that housing needs will continue to exert pressure on social programs.

17. All data in the section on housing was taken from *Vers une Politique québécoise de l'habitation*, Société d'habitation du Québec, March 2004.

18. This is the case with the low income cut-off.

A two-bedroom apartment costs an average \$600 a month in Gatineau, Québec City or Montréal. A similar apartment costs \$900 in Ottawa and \$1000 in Toronto.

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This is why the trend towards conversion of older rental units into co-owned units in inner cities is worrisome. Given high construction costs, new units become unaffordable for low-income households.

We can expect that demographic change will also mean major changes in:

- The types of housing that will be in demand in the aftermath of the decrease in household size and the increase in the number of seniors.
- Access to adequate housing for immigrants and large families in urban areas.

Poverty: Hard to pin down

Poverty spawns numerous limitations in terms of what the people affected by it have, know and control, and these limitations impinge on the well-being of individuals and communities alike. Section 2 of the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* defines poverty as:

...the condition of a human being who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain economic self-sufficiency or to facilitate integration and participation in society.

Neither Canada nor Québec has a recognized poverty line or consensus on how to measure this complex reality that spills over into areas other than economic.

In May 2006, when Canada appeared before the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it was reprimanded for not having an official poverty line.

In Québec, the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* provides for a process that should lead to the definition of poverty indicators. The Act empowers the Observatoire de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale to propose these indicators. The Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion (CÉPE), in compliance with the requirements of the Act, will table poverty-indicator proposals and the Comité consultatif will also be involved in the overall process. Pending the government's decision as to its official poverty indicators, the current unofficial indicators are used to describe economic poverty trends.

These indicators can be broken down into two groups: relative indicators, which establish a low income cut-off based on society-wide standards and that, in point of fact, are indicators of disparities, and absolute indicators, a misnomer because they are based on the estimated income required for individuals to meet their basic needs, live with dignity and be socially integrated.

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The three most common low-income indicators are:

- Low income cut-offs (LICOs), the most frequent point of reference for anti-poverty groups. This measure sets the income threshold under which individuals spend 20 percentage points or more than the average on the three subsistence needs – food, shelter and clothing. LICOs can be before-tax or after-tax, depending on whether the effects of redistribution via taxation are taken into account.
- Low income measures (LIMs), used most often in comparing countries. This relative measure sets a percentage of less than 50% of median family income as the low income cut-off level. There are before-tax and after-tax LIMs.
- Market Basket Measure (MBM), an absolute measure that establishes low income based on the basket of goods and services required for meeting subsistence needs and for being integrated socially. The measure, set a few years ago by Statistics Canada after extensive consultation, enables a low income cut-off that makes it easier to quantify progress, even if the measure is more complicated to construct and must be adjusted over time. Goods considered to be non-essential today may become tomorrow's prerequisites for social integration. There is much interest in the MBM.

The three measures, when tailored to the Québec context (cost of living and effects of redistribution via taxation), yield strikingly similar results and reveal the same trends for the proportion of people in situations of poverty and for low income cut-offs.

Other indicators factor in the social dimensions of poverty and social exclusion.¹⁹ The Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion (CÉPE) is mandated to propose indicators that will equip Québec to measure the multiple aspects of the disparities that hinder access to full social participation and that breed isolation.

An overall decrease in poverty in the past decade

In tracking poverty in Québec over the past 25 years, the first two indicators (LICOs and LIMs) were used because the MBM has existed only since 2000. Regardless of the measure used, and, slighter variations in the case of LIMs notwithstanding, the proportion of people in situations of poverty followed the trajectory of the prevailing economic cycles and an upward trend until the mid 1990s, which explains why, at that point in time, the problem took on an entirely

19. Poverty index for living conditions, human development index, deprivation index, etc. See the *Inventaire des indicateurs de pauvreté et d'exclusion sociale*, Institut de la statistique du Québec and Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, October 2005.

different complexion in Québec and elsewhere. Most industrialized countries experienced greater inequality and poverty in the 1980s and 1990s, which glaringly brought home the fact that economic development alone could not eradicate poverty. Unemployment and reliance on social assistance also rose during this period.

From 1997 to 2004 (the last year for which complete data are available²⁰), the proportion of people under low income cut-off levels (in some cases qualified as the poor) decreased steadily. Based on the before-tax LICO, the proportion of people with low incomes in Québec went from 24.1% in 1997 to 15.8% in 2004, and based on the after-tax LICO, from 19.3% to 11.2%.

During the same period, the proportion of women with low incomes remained much higher than that of men (after-tax LICO of 11.8% for women versus 10.7% for men in 2004).

When using age as a factor, the most remarkable statistics concern children. In Canada, the proportion of children under 18 years of age living in poor families (based on the after-tax LICO) decreased starting in 1997 (17.8%) and has remained relatively stable since 2000 (12.8% in 2004). In Québec, this proportion has dropped steadily (from 22.4% in 1997 to 10.9% in 2004).

As pointed out before, when a low income measure (LIM) is used, low-income rate results are similar. However, variations are not as acute, which is normal because this measure is related to median income, and in the 1980s and 1990s, almost every segment of the population got poorer, with only the richest fifth increasing its share. In 2003, the low-income rate (based on the after-tax LIM) was 13.2% for Québec, with appreciable variations depending on the type of household.

The incidence of low income was considerably lower for two-parent families (4.9%) and childless couples (6.1%) and markedly higher for unattached adults (22.4%) and single-parent families (23.7%).

Data for assessing progress on the anti-poverty front stops with implementation of the Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion. We can assume there was continued progress, especially for the families for whom the action plan was primarily intended.

Based on the before-tax LICO, the proportion of people with low incomes in Québec went from 24.1% in 1997 to 15.8% in 2004, and based on the after-tax LICO, from 19.3% to 11.2%.

...the proportion of women with low incomes remained much higher than that of men.

The incidence of low income was considerably lower for two-parent families (4.9%) and childless couples (6.1%) and markedly higher for unattached adults (22.4%) and single-parent families (23.7%).

20. Most of the data in the section on poverty was taken from the *Recueil statistique sur la pauvreté et inégalités au Québec*, Institut de la statistique du Québec and Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, 2006.

*In other words,
half of the
employable poor
are poor workers.*

Unequal progress and greater fragility for certain groups

How does one account for the discrepancy between the progress suggested by the main low-income indicators and the situation observed by individuals and anti-poverty groups and organizations? First, we must bear in mind that low-income measures are static indicators that do not provide for the persistence or severity of poverty. One possible explanation is that, in the case of more heavily stricken groups, other economic and social problems, such as separation, disabled dependents, debt, job instability, and compulsive gambling, aggravate their situation.

The face of poverty has changed²¹ and employment is less and less of a guarantee of a poverty-free life. A recent report by the National Council of Welfare²² found that the poor who derived 50% of their total income from work represented half the able-bodied poor under age 65. In other words, half of the employable poor are poor workers.

To come back to the question of the persistence of poverty, the general rule is that poverty is temporary. As shown by the data given in the policy statement tabled with the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion*,²³ in Canada, certain groups are more susceptible to chronic poverty. Over a five-year period, 33.9% of unattached individuals aged 45 to 59, 31.1% of recent immigrants, 30.7% of single-parent families, 27.5% of persons with disabilities, and 15.6% of off-reservation Natives²⁴ remained poor, compared with 4.4% of the poor as a whole.

Based on the poverty-severity indicators available, the low-income gap (average gap between the annual income of the poor and the threshold set by the after-tax low-income measure) is an average \$3778. For the unattached poor, the figure is \$4251.

This difference is immense and indicates that for many of the poor, a poverty-free life is almost completely out of reach and that their income is far below what they need for genuine empowerment and dignity. Cases in point are unattached last-resort assistance recipients with no severely limited capacity for employment. Their benefits are only partly indexed and the likelihood of their improving their lot dwindles with age (the mean age of this category of recipient

21. Factors include immigration and the attendant integration problems.

22. National Council of Welfare, *Poverty Profile 2002 and 2003*, 2006, p. 3.

23. Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, *The Will to Act. The Strength to Succeed*, Policy Statement, June 2002.

24. Low-income data do not take into account Native people living on reservations, whose poverty is even more conspicuous (a low-income rate, or before-tax low income cut-off, of more than 60%).

is ever on the rise) and the amount of time they remain on last-resort assistance (which is also on the rise).²⁵ The result is that they sink deeper into poverty.

The same facts emerge when the MBM is used to determine the gaps that exist between income and the low income cut-off. On average, the income of low-income individuals is 30% below that needed to buy the basket of goods and services that would enable their social integration.

Increases in government-controlled rates make low incomes shakier

In the past two decades, increases in government-controlled rates have eroded the purchasing power of low-income consumers. From 2004 to late 2006, individuals with low incomes paid 11% more on average for electricity, 40% more for childcare, 18% more for urban public transit and 35.5% for rural transportation (gas). This trend is worrisome because it will probably not slow down any time soon. Energy costs continue to rise and major hikes in the cost of car registration and driving licences are on the horizon.

These increases are shredding the social safety net mended by Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion measures and certain measures by the federal government during this period. Furthermore, the effects of these increases are being felt the most keenly by the people who gained the least from the measures, namely, low-income individuals without children.

Despite the lack of specific data at the moment, we do know that there are two groups that are particularly ill-served by these increases:

- Unattached last-resort assistance recipients with no severely limited capacity for employment, whose benefits are only partly indexed to the cost of living. Given their resources, the likelihood of their escaping the clutches of poverty is slim indeed.
- Low-income workers, who are more likely to have to travel to get to work and send their children to daycare. As a result, these increases, which are tantamount to regressive taxes, make their situation even shakier.

On average, the income of low-income individuals is 30% below that needed to buy the basket of goods and services that would enable their social integration.

²⁵. See the section on the impact of increases in government-controlled rates.

A radically different client base for last-resort financial assistance programs

Québec has changed, but so have last-resort financial assistance recipients. The system, born in the late 1960s and designed for people with limited capacity for employment, was directly at the mercy of the social changes and economic cycles that triggered an explosion in the number of recipients, with record highs recorded in the wake of the two economic recessions that marked this period (424,977 households in April 1985 and 485,068 in February 1996). In these trying economic times, more and more able-bodied people were forced to rely on last-resort financial assistance. With the high unemployment rates of the 1980s and 1990s, the profiles of last-resort assistance recipients increasingly resembled those of the unemployed.

More recently, the decrease in the unemployment rate, with the resulting drop in the number of last-resort assistance recipients, has meant that, generally speaking, remaining recipients face particularly challenging circumstances, a change which, as we will see, is gaining momentum and demands that serious thought be given to the role of a last-resort assistance system and the principles stemming from it.

The driving force behind the reforms undertaken since 1969 has been changes in the composition of recipient cohorts. These shifts intensified with every economic recession which, each time, gave rise to the main reforms made to the system thereafter. The process leading to the new statute of 1989 began in 1986, when the number of recipients reached an unprecedented level. Similarly, the 1999 Act was in response to the conditions that prevailed in 1996. For its part, the *Individual and Family Assistance Act* is an offshoot of the Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Fewer recipients and a lower assistance rate

In January 2006, 340,893 households were on employment-assistance,²⁶ with 503,518 Quebecers relying either completely or partly on last-resort financial assistance to cover their subsistence needs for varying periods of time. Children accounted for 24.4% of this group.

Since February 1996, the number of recipients (adults and children alike) has moved down steadily, for an overall reduction of 38.3%. This trend is expected to continue for the next few years, but with ebbing strength. However, only people

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alike) has moved down
steadily, for an overall
reduction of 38.3%.*

26. Unless otherwise indicated, most of the data in the following sections is taken from official statistics published by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale.

capable of working have benefited from this phenomenon because the main contributing factor was economic growth. Other factors in this sizable decrease included more stringent control measures and the effect of employability measures, measures for assisting low-income workers, and family assistance initiatives.

The social assistance rate, or the number of last-resort assistance recipients in relation to the number of individuals under age 65, was 7.7% in January 2006, the lowest rate since the late 1970s. Like the incidence of poverty, this rate varies widely depending on the region, from 4.5% in Laval and 4.6% in Chaudière-Appalaches to 10.3% on the Island of Montréal, 11.2% in Mauricie and 11.4% in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine. On the Island of Montréal, the assistance rate for children reached 15.2% in January 2006, more than twice that of most of the regions, which means that child poverty is concentrated in Montréal.

The social assistance rate was 7.7% in January 2006, the lowest rate since the late 1970s.

Today's last-resort assistance recipients: A more burdened clientele

Since 1996, that is, in fewer than 10 years, the profile of last-resort financial assistance recipients has changed radically. In contrast to the good news about decreases due to the sound performance of the economy during this period, there is the increase in the incidence of heavy cases involving multiple problems and characteristics that make social and economic integration more difficult. Between 1996 and January 2006, the proportion of:

- Adults with severe limitations rose from 19.8% to 33.6% (according to the forecasts, the proportion will have more than doubled in 2008-2009 to 39.5%).
- Older adults (45 years of age and more) increased from one third (33.3%) to nearly half (49%).
- Unattached adults went from a little over half (55%) to two thirds (66.4%).
- Adults on assistance for a cumulative total of ten years or more rose from one third (33.7%) to over half (53.9%).

The proportion of recipients born outside of Canada also increased during this period, and hence, the issue of the integration of immigrants. From March 1996 to January 2006, there was a three percentage point gain (15.8 % to 18.5%). This may seem a trifling amount, but given the demographic changes underway, the phenomenon is a cause for concern, especially in light of the fact that the social assistance rate of immigrants quadrupled in less than a quarter-century (from 3.1% in 1981 to 12.7% in March 2001).

In March 2006, 26% of individuals without limitations to employment were immigrants to Canada.

...the proportion of job-ready individuals aged 45 years and over and of employable individuals who had been on assistance for a cumulative total of at least ten years increased substantially (from 27.8% to 41.4% and from 24.8% to 42.3% respectively).

In March 2006, 26% of individuals without limitations to employment were immigrants to Canada. This suggests there is a gap between what immigrants have to offer to Québec and Québec's ability to make them a genuine part of our society.

For "able-bodied" recipients, more obstacles in accessing the workplace

Data on persons classified as "able-bodied" suggest that they are likely to have more obstacles in accessing the workplace, a situation that has changed drastically in the past decade and that raises questions about the differentiation written into the current system. According to data from January 2006, during this ten-year period, the proportion of job-ready individuals aged 45 years and over and of employable individuals who had been on assistance for a cumulative total of at least ten years increased substantially (from 27.8% to 41.4% and from 24.8% to 42.3% respectively).

Employability assistance: Facts not for the faint of heart

Given the trend towards worsening of the problems that last-resort assistance recipients face, the health, or lack thereof, of budgets earmarked for employability assistance raises the spectre of society's inability to help these people. The Canada-Québec Labour Market Agreement imposes restrictions regarding the use of monies from the Employment Insurance Account. One of the consequences is that only Québec funds can be used to fund participation in active employment measures for individuals unready for the job market in the short term, which is the case for most last-resort assistance recipients.

In step with a trend that dates to the last decade, since 2000, Québec's employability assistance funds have dropped by 16.6%. In a scenario in which measures cost more, and more support is needed if participants are to enter the labour market for good, it stands to reason that fewer recipients will have access to them.

Evaluation studies conducted by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale show that the net effects of active employment measures are generally greater for the persons farthest from entering the job market, namely, last-resort assistance recipients. These effects are even stronger in the case of recipients hired and trained through subsidies, measures that are among the most unwieldy of all.

It therefore comes as no surprise that, in the past ten years, the decrease in the number of last-resort assistance recipients is due more to fewer entries, demographic change, and the extended period of economic growth enjoyed by Québec than to an increase in the number of recipients who exited the system. Without concerted efforts to help those whose employability will probably worsen without the appropriate support, an entire cohort risks exclusion at a time when Québec cannot afford to leave anyone aside.

In the Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, the Government of Québec states its intent to step up employability assistance, in particular for the groups most affected by poverty. It intends to negotiate broader access to Employment Insurance Account funds and to maximize the funds allowed under the *Employment Insurance Act*. Clearly, these demands are legitimate, but the government would still be well advised to increase its own investments given looming labour shortages that could compromise the future development of Québec.

STRATEGIC THRUSTS,

AREAS OF ACTION AND OBJECTIVES

Instituted in March 2006, the Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale has produced a strategic plan for carrying out the mission and tasks entrusted to it under the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion*.

The plan will cover the period ending March 31, 2009. To contribute to achieving the goals of the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion,²⁷ the Comité consultatif has chosen three strategic thrusts:

- Propose action for improving the economic situation and empowerment of individuals and communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- Provide a deliberative context that fosters action, partnership and mobilization of all social players in the cause of bettering the lives of individuals in situations of poverty and social exclusion.
- Help ensure that the life experience and input of individuals in situations of poverty and social exclusion are taken into account in the government decisions that concern them.

Propose action for improving the economic situation and empowerment of individuals and communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

As part of this first strategic thrust, the first area of action will complement the areas of action addressed by the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.

²⁷ The goals of the National Strategy are:

- 1) to promote respect for and protection of the dignity of persons in situations of poverty and combat prejudices in their regard
- 2) to improve the economic and social situation of persons and families in situations of poverty and social exclusion
- 3) to reduce the inequalities that may be detrimental to social cohesion
- 4) to encourage persons and families in situations of poverty to participate in community life and social development
- 5) to develop and reinforce the sense of solidarity throughout Québec so that society as a whole may participate in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

As indicated in its mission statement, the primary objective of the Comité consultatif is to:

- Advise the Minister on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the action introduced under the National Strategy.

In order to improve the economic situation and empowerment of individuals and communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion, the second objective of the Comité consultatif will focus on defining income improvement targets for people in situations of poverty and on finding the most effective means for reaching these targets.

To do this, it will:

- Foster consensus on poverty indicators.
- Propose income improvement targets for ensuring the dignity and inclusion of all people.
- Propose means of reaching these targets that are tailored to the situation of individuals, to their abilities, and to the context in Québec.
- Propose a minimum last-resort assistance benefit that will, first, enable recipients to fulfil their subsistence needs and, second, enable them to achieve self-sufficiency commensurate with their abilities.

As regards this first strategic thrust, the Comité has decided to concentrate on impediments to the empowerment of individuals and communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion. To do this, the Comité consultatif has set two specific objectives:

- Better understand the impediments to the empowerment of individuals and communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- Propose ways of eliminating these obstacles and of enhancing the capacity of individuals to change their situation, that of their family, and that of their community.

Provide a deliberative context that fosters action, partnership and mobilization of all social players in the cause of bettering the lives of individuals in situations of poverty and social exclusion.

This strategic thrust involves two areas of action, namely, making the players concerned aware of the importance of the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and forging partnerships at every level of action. A social will, eradication of prejudices, local accountability and empowerment, and participation of all stakeholders are the keys to successful action on this front.

So that this action is made a priority, the Comité consultatif intends to:

- Work to convince all social players of the need to present a united front in favour of individuals in situations of poverty and social exclusion, with a view to the lasting development of Québec.
- Establish ties with the organizations and groups capable of facilitating achievement of the goals of the Act and of contributing to rallying the social players concerned.

Help ensure that the life experience and input of individuals in situations of poverty and social exclusion are taken into account in the government decisions that concern them.

As part of this third strategic thrust, the Comité consultatif intends to improve the understanding of reality as experienced by individuals in situations of poverty and social exclusion. To do this, the Comité consultatif has selected the following objective:

- Co-author, with the Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion (CÉPE), an annual report on the situation of persons affected by poverty and social exclusion.

For the members of the Comité consultatif, the presence on the committee of people dealing first-hand with poverty is a priceless asset and lends special value to the exchange that occurs. The Comité considers it very important that the point of view of persons living in situations of poverty and social exclusion be taken into account in the action undertaken by the committee.

To foster this, the Comité consultatif has set the following objective:

- Regularly consult anti-poverty organizations and ensure that the persons affected by poverty first-hand be consulted.

Lastly, the Comité consultatif considers it crucial that public authorities be made aware of the consequences of their decisions on the people in situations of poverty and social exclusion. It has therefore established the following objectives:

- Make the government and the social players concerned aware of the consequences of government decisions on persons in situations of poverty and social exclusion.
- Propose ways of mitigating the possible negative effects of decisions on the income and living conditions of persons in situations of poverty and social exclusion.

CONCLUSION

In this its first publication, the Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale stated its mission, which is directly inspired by a statute of which all Quebecers can be proud, the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion*. The Comité consultatif also presented its values and its vision of the context and issues it intends to share with everyone who cares about eradicating poverty.

Lastly, the Comité consultatif has presented the strategic thrusts for its first term of office and the objectives it pursues in achieving its mission. Vanquishing poverty is not a utopian dream. With less poverty, all of us stand to gain immeasurably.

APPENDIX 1

MEMBERS OF THE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DE LUTTE CONTRE LA PAUVRETÉ ET L'EXCLUSION SOCIALE

Voting members

Damien Arsenault

Mayor of Saint-Elzéar, County of Bonaventure

Marie-Andrée Beaudoin

Social Development Coordinator
Executive Committee, City of Montréal

Lucie Bélanger

Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté
Fédération des femmes du Québec

Michel Bellemare

Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté
Regroupement pour la défense
des droits sociaux de Shawinigan

Pascale Caron

Research and Development Adviser
Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins
Vice-Chair, Comité consultatif

Édith Cloutier

Director General
Centre amitié autochtone de Val-d'Or

Daniel Germain

Founding Chair
Club des petits déjeuners

Tommy Kulczyk

Assistant to the Vice-President, Director,
Emergency Services, Sun Youth
Chair, Comité consultatif

Richard Lavigne

Director General, Union francophone des aveugles
President, COPHAM

Jeanne Lavoie

Adviser, Community Relations
Alcan

André Mignault

President, Comité d'action contre la pauvreté
Steering Committee, Centraide Québec

Réjeanne Pagé

Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté
ATD Quart Monde

Anne-Marie Rodrigues

Director General
Centre d'action socio-communautaire de Montréal

Monique Toutant

Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté
Association de défense des droits sociaux du
Québec métropolitain

Nancy Villemure

Kawabunga Communications

Non-voting members

Marguerite Blais

President
Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance

Geneviève Bouchard

Associate Deputy Minister, Policy
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale

APPENDIX 2

COMITÉ CONSULTATIF TASK FORCES

Strategic planning and work plan

Marguerite Blais
Pascale Caron
Tommy Kulczyk › Chair, task force
Richard Lavigne
André Mignault
Monique Toutant

National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion: Update, implementation and evaluation - monitoring

Lucie Bélanger
Geneviève Bouchard
Richard Lavigne
Jeanne Lavoie › Chair, task force
André Mignault

Poverty in Native communities

Édith Cloutier › Chair, task force
André Mignault
Nancy Villemure

Impact of increases in government-controlled rates

Michel Bellemare › Chair, task force
Geneviève Bouchard
Jeanne Lavoie
André Mignault
Monique Toutant

Income improvement targets and means

Damien Arsenault
Lucie Bélanger
Pascale Caron › Chair, task force
Réjeanne Pagé
Anne-Marie Rodrigues

APPENDIX 3

CODE OF ETHICS

CODE OF ETHICS AND OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

OF THE MEMBERS OF THE
COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DE LUTTE CONTRE
LA PAUVRETÉ ET L'EXCLUSION SOCIALE

PURPOSE AND FIELD OF APPLICATION

1. The purpose of this code of ethics and of professional conduct is to preserve and strengthen the confidence of citizens in the integrity of the Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale (hereinafter called the Comité), to foster transparency within the Comité, and to ensure the accountability of its members.
2. The present code of ethics and of professional conduct applies to the members of the Comité.

PRINCIPLES AND GENERAL RULES

3. The members of the Comité are appointed to advise the Minister on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the action introduced under the National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion. In this capacity, they shall perform their duties in the public interest, by acting impartially and objectively, as required of all persons who carry out the mission of the State.
4. In the performance of their duties, the members of the Comité shall abide by the code of ethics and professional conduct defined in the *Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif* (R.S.Q., c. M-30) and the *Regulation respecting the ethics and professional conduct of public office holders* (Order in Council 824-98, 1988 GO 2, 3474) and the principles of the present code of ethics and of professional conduct. In the event of discrepancies, the stricter requirements shall apply.
5. During Comité sittings, the members shall act so as to foster the mobilization of all players concerned by the fight against poverty and social exclusion, so as to allow all members to express their point of view, and so as to ensure that all points of view are respected. In decision-making, the members shall strive for consensus, even in the case of majority decisions.
6. The members of the Comité shall strive to make recommendations likely to lead to real action and to foster reduction of poverty and social inclusion for all Quebecers.
7. The members of the Comité shall exercise discretion in their possession of the facts and information obtained in the performance of their duties, and at all times be required to respect the confidentiality of the information thus obtained. This obligation notwithstanding, the members who represent an interest group and who have ties with such a group may consult it or a member thereof and report to it.
8. In the performance of their duties, the members of the Comité shall not be swayed by partisan considerations or influenced by pressure groups.
9. Only the Chair may act or speak on behalf of the Comité or, barring that possibility, the duly delegated Vice-Chair or any other expressly mandated member. In keeping with standard practice, the persons authorized to speak on behalf of the Comité shall not comment on current events or on ministerial statements and shall limit their statements to explanation of the Comité's positions.

10. Members may express their dissidence regarding positions adopted by majority by the Comité. However, they shall exercise reserve and refrain from expressing dissidence until such time as the Comité publicly issues its opinion or position.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

11. The Chair shall notify the Secretary General of the Conseil exécutif before running for public office.
12. The Chair shall resign from the Comité if elected to a full-time elective position which he or she accepts.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

13. In the performance of their duties, the members of the Comité shall avoid situations in which their personal interests or those of the organizations or associations to which they belong are in any way in real or apparent conflict with the public interest.
14. Members who become aware during a sitting of the Comité or of a task force formed by the Comité that they have interests, direct or indirect, in an organization, enterprise or association whose interests are in conflict or are incompatible with their obligations shall inform the Chair verbally or in writing, and, where applicable, abstain from taking part in any decision-making on the file in question and leave the room while deliberations and a vote on the question are taking place. For purposes of transparency, the minutes must indicate that the member duly advised the Chair of the conflict of interest.
15. Defense of a position aimed at improving the income or living conditions of persons in situations of poverty by members who represent them does not constitute conflict of interest.
16. The Chair in real or apparent conflict of interest shall name another member of the Comité to chair the meeting during the deliberations and vote on the question that involves the instance of conflict of interest.
17. In the performance of their duties, the members of the Comité shall not make use for their benefit or that of a third party of confidential, unpublished or privileged information, unless expressly authorized to do so by the Comité. This prohibition also applies to members of the Comité whose term of office has expired.
18. To avoid any conflict of interest, the Comité is prohibited at all times from signing contracts with its members and from issuing remuneration for their services, with the exception of the remuneration provided for by Order in Council in the case of the Chair.
19. Members of the Comité are prohibited at all times from soliciting or accepting undue favours or benefits for themselves or for a third party, or from accepting gifts, hospitality or benefits, except small tokens and only within reasonable bounds.

APPLICATION MEASURES

20. The Chair is responsible for application of the present code and shall ensure that all members abide by its principles of ethics and professional conduct and shall, in situations in which it is breached, inform the proper authority, namely, the Associate Secretary General of Senior Positions within the Ministère du Conseil exécutif.
21. Members accused of breaches of the present code may be temporarily relieved of their duties by the proper authority pending the appropriate decision in emergency situations or cases of alleged gross misconduct.
22. The proper authority shall inform the member concerned of the alleged breach, of the disciplinary measures that could be imposed, and of the seven-day deadline for providing explanations and for a meeting, if so requested by the member.
23. On ascertaining that the member of the Comité has violated the principles of ethics and professional conduct of the present code, the proper authority shall impose a disciplinary measure (reprimand, suspension without pay for a maximum of three months in the case of the Chair, or removal). All disciplinary measures shall be confirmed in writing and the grounds for such action be explained.

Comité consultatif
de lutte contre
la pauvreté
et l'exclusion sociale

Québec



Paper containing
30% post-consumer fibres