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## The 37 recommendations in the final report of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission

**Montréal, May 22, 2008** – The Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences (CCPARDC) today made public the 37 recommendations in its final report, which are listed below.

### A) Learning diversity

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

A1. the Québec government provide much more extensive funding to organizations with a mandate to inform and protect citizens. We are thinking, first and foremost, of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse and the Conseil des relations interculturelles;

A2. the government encourage projects and initiatives that enable members of the ethnic minorities to make themselves more extensively seen and heard by the general public through radio or television programs, theme days, and so on;

A3. the government increase financial support for organizations such as the Fondation de la tolérance, the Institut du Nouveau Monde and Vision Diversité. It should also encourage the creation of other similar projects throughout Québec devoted to information, training, intercommunity action, intercultural debate and the dissemination of pluralism;

A4. the government also increase its support for similar, equally promising initiatives already under way or in preparation in the education and health sectors.

### B) Harmonization practices

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

B1. the government broaden its efforts to promote the common civic framework or what we have called common public values in institutions and among Quebecers in general;

B2. the managers of public institutions step up their efforts to:

- adapt to their milieu and express in concrete directives the key guidelines governing the management of adjustment requests;
- pursue the implementation of the so-called contextual, deliberative and reflexive approach;

B3. in keeping with the objective of dejudicializing the handling of accommodation requests, the government foster the accountability of interveners in institutions by ensuring that they have received adequate training. Some examples are the modification of the training program for future teachers to include additional instruction time devoted to intercultural questions and the organization of specialized sessions for current teachers;

B4. the government ensure that health care establishments have sufficient funds to cover their needs for interpreters' services;

B5. the government implement the necessary mechanisms to:

- establish in each institution practical expertise in the realm of the handling of adjustment requests;

- disseminate in each establishment, in particular among new employees, the knowledge that interveners have accumulated;
- implement exchange and cooperation initiatives between units in a given establishment or between establishments in the same sector;
- better inform newly arrived immigrant parents about adjustment practices and the operation of the school system.

B6. The Co-Chairs approve of the initiative now under way in the National Assembly to introduce into the Québec Charter an interpretation clause that establishes gender equality as a core value of our society.

Moreover, the Co-Chairs recommend that:

B7. the government establish an Office d'harmonisation interculturelle, a paragovernmental body that reports to the Conseil des relations interculturelles, which works in tandem with other agencies in related fields. This body would, in particular, play a role with respect to information, training, coordination, advice, and research centred on intercultural harmonization practices, including interdenominational practices, in our society.

B8. Religious holidays:

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

- the government encourage public and private administrators to adopt paid leave with compensation accompanied by possibilities for adjustment;
- the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse produce an advisory opinion that establishes practical reference points for managers in all work environments, including an explanation of the legal framework, the elaboration of tools to rule on requests for religious holidays and the proposal of an array of formulas in keeping with previous court decisions and adaptable to each workplace;
- as regards problems stemming from the system of religious holidays in force in the school boards, i.e. extra paid leave, that the government set up a select panel to find a fair solution that conforms to the current legal framework of the system of religious holidays, following consultation with the key interveners concerned;

B9. the government highlight excellence in the realm of harmonization practices in the workplace by:

- encouraging big government-owned corporations to assert leadership in this field;
- publicly honouring public- or private-sector employees who have distinguished themselves through their integration and harmonization efforts.

### **C) The integration of immigrants**

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

C1. from the standpoint of the planning of immigration rates, the government make sure that the number of immigrants admitted corresponds to the reception resources available, especially in respect of labour market integration and francization;

C2. in order to overcome a serious deficiency that is now apparent, the government increase funding for community groups and other front-line organizations devoted to welcoming and integrating immigrants, in particular to consolidate and develop the existing network of organizations while avoiding a piecemeal approach;

C3. the government step up its efforts in respect of the francization and integration of immigrants by:

- ensuring better coordination between the government departments concerned of francization programs for immigrants;
- establishing a task force to review the entire question of the under-representation of members of the ethnic minorities in positions in the public administration and designing a more effective approach in this respect;
- achieving more concerted management of government integration programs and measures, more specifically between the ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, the ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, and the ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale;
- better aligning immigration and integration policies with Québec's economic and social development objectives;
- seeking vigorously to reduce the extremely high unemployment rate among Quebecers born in Africa and who have lived in Québec for less than five years;

C4. the government step up measures to accelerate the process of recognizing skills and diplomas acquired abroad. Among the urgent measures, we recommend:

- the establishment of an independent fact-finding committee with a mandate to shed light on the practices of the professional orders with respect to the recognition of diplomas;
- the establishment of an independent body to which immigrants can submit complaints and request reviews of the decisions reached by the professional orders;
- the clarification of relations between the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Office des professions du Québec and the professional orders, on the one hand, and universities, Cegeps and the Office québécois de la langue française, on the other hand, to resolve the stalemates that are hampering efforts to follow up on the

retraining requirements imposed on immigrants;

C5. the government step up its efforts to foster the regionalization of immigration. In this spirit, it would be advisable to:

- implement incentives for businesses that recruit immigrants, such as fiscal measures, in order to foster the regionalization of immigration;
- provide *ad hoc* funding to the municipalities and the many organizations that welcome and support immigrants that have been established outside Montréal to bolster the existing network;
- pay special attention to the Capitale-Nationale to make it a second urban reception centre for newcomers;
- ask the regions to make known their needs and elaborate projects that rely on immigrant workers;
- encourage and broaden agreements governing student training sessions and exchanges such as those between France and Québec, which bring foreign students to Québec's regions;
- delegate broader responsibilities to regional authorities;

C6. to facilitate the integration of newcomers, the ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles create for them an interactive portal in order to centralize all information on resources and institutional services, including municipal and community resources and services, with respect to employment, housing, health, education, and so on;

C7. the government increase funding for organizations that support immigrant women;

C8. the ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles adopt the appropriate measures to make the most of Québec volunteer work for the purpose of welcoming and integrating immigrants, in particular to enable them to gain access to social networks;

C9. the government department now responsible for immigration be renamed the ministère de l'Immigration et des Relations interculturelles.

#### **D) Interculturalism**

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

D1. the government launch a vigorous campaign to promote interculturalism in Québec society to broaden awareness of it;

D2. to better establish interculturalism as a model that prevails over intercultural relations in Québec, the government enshrine interculturalism in a statute, a policy statement or a declaration and that this initiative include public consultations and a vote in the National Assembly;

D3. the government encourage all forms of intercultural contact as a means of reducing stereotypes and fostering participation in and integration into Québec society. In this spirit:

- implement immersion, mentoring and tutoring programs and sponsorship and twinning, in particular based on the model of the former program devoted to exchanges of students between Montréal and the regions. In the same spirit, broaden intercultural educational practices, municipal initiatives and existing programs;
- encourage all forms of intercommunity action;
- emphasize efforts to promote regional tourism among members of Montréal's ethnic minorities;

D4. a Fonds d'histoires de vie des immigrants be established, to be managed by the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec;

D5. the government pay close attention to testimony presented concerning so-called ethno-denominational schools.

#### **E) Inequality and discrimination**

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

E1. the government seek to better understand and combat the different forms of racism, especially ethnism, found in our society. In this spirit:

- special attention should be paid to the fight against hate crimes and the protection of all individuals subject to multiple discrimination, e.g. homosexuals and the disabled;
- the Québec Charter should prohibit public incitement to discrimination;
- exceptional measures should be taken to combat Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and the discrimination to which all racialized groups, especially Blacks, are subject;
- the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse should be given more extensive resources and means;

E2. government mandataries and agencies be responsible for their results in respect of the fight against racism and

discrimination and that accountability mechanisms be introduced for this purpose based on performance indicators;

E3. the National Assembly follow up on a recommendation made by the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse aimed at strengthening the economic and social rights recognized in sections 39 to 48 in the Québec Charter:

"The Commission recommends that the economic and social rights recognized in sections 39 to 48 of the Charter be strengthened in light of:

- the inclusion of a general provision, before section 39, stipulating that legislation must respect the essential content of economic and social rights;
- the extension to sections 39 to 48 of priority over legislation stipulated in section 52 of the Charter;
- the gradual coming into force of such priority, initially limited to subsequent legislation then extended to existing legislation."

#### **F) The French language**

The report does not contain any formal recommendation since the CCPARDC deemed this theme to be on the margin of its mandate. That being the case, the Co-Chairs have reviewed the situation in their report.

#### **G) Secularism**

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

G1. the government draft a white paper on secularism in order to:

- define secularism in light of its four principles, two of which reflect its profound purposes (the other two are reflected in essential institutional structures);
- review the major choices that Québec has made in respect of secularism;
- defend the conception of open secularism adopted and implemented by Québec;
- clarify and submit for public debate questions on which a consensus has yet to be reached;

G2. with regard to the wearing by government employees of religious signs:

- judges, Crown prosecutors, police officers, prison guards and the president and vice-president of the National Assembly of Québec be prohibited from doing so;
- teachers, public servants, health professionals and all other government employees be authorized to do so;

G3. measures be adopted to bring certain practices in public institutions into line with the principles of open secularism. Consequently, in the name of the separation of the State and the churches and in the name of State neutrality, we recommend that:

- the crucifix above the chair of the president of the National Assembly be relocated in the Parliament building in a place that emphasizes its meaning from the standpoint of heritage;
- municipal councils abandon the saying of prayers at their public meetings;

G4. the government vigorously promote the new ethnics and religious culture course that is to be introduced in September 2008;

G5. the government produce and disseminate every year among the managers of institutions and public or private organizations a multid denominational calendar that indicates the dates of religious holidays.

#### **H) Research to be conducted**

The Co-Chairs recommend that:

H1. the government free up additional research funds that would be earmarked, in particular, for the study of:

- the state of interculturalism;
- the dual relationship among immigrants to their culture of origin and the host society's culture;
- changes in ethnocultural concentrations and their meaning in terms of integration or compartmentalization;
- the state and impact on integration of intercommunity action;
- the elaboration of indicators that measure the impact of numerous government programs pertaining to reception, employment, the fight against discrimination, and social and cultural integration;
- the situation and path followed by disadvantaged sub-groups such as young people from racialized minorities, immigrant women, and others;
- the change in the social bond in neighbourhoods where immigrants are heavily concentrated;
- forms of Islamophobia and the remedial measures to be adopted;
- displays of anti-Semitism and the remedial measures to be adopted;

H2. the government set up a special grant fund reserved for universities and Cegeps in the regions to fund applied research devoted to the general theme of immigration and integration in the regions.

### The Commission

At the request of Premier Jean Charest, the CCPARDC took stock of accommodation practices, conducted a public consultation throughout Québec and examined the attendant questions.

Individuals, groups and associations submitted over 900 briefs and 241 people testified during the 31 days of hearings. All told, 22 regional forums attracted 3 423 participants and over 800 people took part in four province-wide forums. Moreover, 13 research projects conducted by specialists from Québec universities were commissioned and 31 focus groups were organized throughout Québec in which participants came from varied backgrounds.

When it concludes its activities in June, the CCPARDC will have spent \$3.7 million of a total budget of \$5.1 million. The final report and related documents can be consulted online ([www.accommodements.qc.ca](http://www.accommodements.qc.ca)).

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