

L'intégration

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Equals in Every Respect. Adopted and launched!

- **The social integration of persons with disabilities: Milestones of the past 30 years**

Message from the Minister

Increase the social participation of persons with disabilities A government commitment

Our government has always affirmed that persons with disabilities are full-fledged citizens. In 2003, Premier Jean Charest made a government commitment to increase the participation and integration of persons with disabilities in the workplace, in educational institutions and in society as a whole. Since then, the Québec government has taken significant action, including the National Assembly's adoption on December 15, 2004 of a draft bill amending the 1978 *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*. The draft legislative made the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec the instance tasked with updating the 1984 *On Equal Terms* framework policy.

Last June 4, Cabinet adopted the *Equals in Every Respect* policy, a historic first in Québec. The policy is the culmination of an exhaustive process involving 12 government departments and 16 public agencies and the crystallization of the government's 2003 pledge.

The purpose of the policy is to significantly increase the social participation of persons with disabilities in feasible fashion over a ten-year timeframe by aiming for concrete outcomes on important fronts such as transportation, access to services, education and employment. We hope that adoption of this policy will contribute to vast improvement in the living conditions of persons with disabilities as an appropriate response to their needs.

With this policy, which supports the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*, Québec is at the forefront of government policies to foster the social participation of persons with disabilities.

It is therefore with great pleasure and pride that I present *Equals in Every Respect*.

Message from the President

A huge step forward!

Last June 4, an important page in the history of the social integration of persons with disabilities in Québec was written with the adoption of the government policy entitled *Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights Are Meant to Be Exercised*. On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors of the Office that I have the honour of chairing, thank you to the Minister for Social Services, Mrs Lise Thériault, and her Cabinet colleagues for having given the 750,000 persons with disabilities in Québec this landmark tool.

I also thank them on behalf of all those who have, for decades, worked on the social integration of persons with disabilities, those who headed the Office or sat on its Board, and those who acted within or alongside lobby and advocacy groups and other associations of persons with disabilities.

The *Equals in Every Respect* policy arises from a broad-based social consensus stemming from joint involvement by an impressive number of partners, government departments and agencies, and advocacy groups. Having been a member of the rank and file for over 30 years, I can attest to how much has been done in terms of the social integration of persons with disabilities within Québec society. The 1978 Act amended in 2004, the *On Equal Terms* policy of 1984, and the review leading to the new policy unveiled on June 6, along with the strategy for the job entry and retention of workers with disabilities, are important markers which I had the fortune to experience first hand. Last June 4, I had the honour and privilege of being part of the launch of this policy which I am sure will be a milestone in the history of the social integration of persons with disabilities in Québec.

I am taking this opportunity to tell Quebecers with disabilities that my colleagues on the Board of Directors, the Office staff and I will support this policy. Not only is *Equals in Every Respect* consistent with the values of solidarity and social justice that characterize Québec society, but it also opens a new chapter in the story of their social integration, a chapter that we will author together and that will make Quebecers with disabilities equals in every respect.

Message from the Director General

Adoption of Equals in Every Respect **An end and a beginning...**

Adoption of *Equals in Every Respect* last June 4 will forever be considered a defining moment for persons with disabilities and for the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec. It is the final phase of a process by all the partners, whether government departments or agencies, representatives of the independent community action movement, or members of the Office, who have put their heads together in the past few years. The result is well worth the effort, and there is reason to rejoice in knowing that Quebecers with disabilities will reap the benefits.

But we must also look ahead, and that entails having a clear understanding of the challenges that come with *Equals in Every Respect*. The Office will be there to promote the policy and put it in the public eye, oversee its implementation, and continue to increase public awareness of the issues surrounding the social participation of persons with disabilities, new and indispensable assignments that the Office intends to commit to entirely.

As indicated in the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*, the Office will continue to monitor and advise the organizations concerned with enforcement of the Act and implementation of the *Equals in Every Respect* policy.

This policy will be the reference to go to in stepping up implementation of the Act, completely overhauled in 2004, which sets out the positions that the Office, government departments and their networks, and public and private agencies must use as guidelines. The *Equals in Every Respect* policy identifies the challenges and the priorities for action that social players and Québec society as a whole must tackle to defeat persistent barriers to the social participation of persons with disabilities. These challenges and priorities will be useful points of reference for the annual action plans that government departments, public agencies and municipalities subject to the Act are required to produce so that they can take stock of what they have done to foster the social participation of persons with disabilities and to record what has been accomplished.

Successful implementation of *Equals in Every Respect* is a major social issue. The Office will exercise its role as an evaluator conscientiously and will fulfil its commitments in terms of policy implementation. It will monitor the commitments made by the various government bodies in order to measure achievement of the targeted results and to assess the progress made, which we hope will surpass our expectations.

Launch

***Equals in Every Respect* Adopted and launched in June!**

Last June 4, midway into Québec's week dedicated to persons with disabilities, Cabinet adopted the *Equals in Every Respect* policy, the result of extensive consultation and joint action involving a host of partners and aimed at increasing the social participation of persons with disabilities over the next ten years.

Two days later, on June 6, 2009, the Minister for Social Services, Lise Thériault, was delighted to be in Sainte-Thérèse to launch the policy as part of the *Invitation Kiewit 2009* event, a gathering of athletes organized by the Association québécoise des sports en fauteuil roulant.

Here are a few excerpts from the speeches given and some accompanying photos.

LISE THÉRIAULT, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

The Minister began by saying that she was thrilled to be launching the policy and then went on to express what it meant to the government: "The launch of this policy gives us the momentum to continue fighting for recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities and empowers us to better meet their needs. [...] The policy calls on 16 government departments and 12 agencies to work together so that action by the government as a whole, as opposed to one department only, is coordinated and the right hand knows what the left hand is doing."

Madame Thériault gave a few examples of recent investments announced by the government, including one of \$110 million over three years from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux under the service access plan for persons with special needs which has enabled "re-organization of the network and access to rehabilitation services in all our institutions within a reasonable timeline." She continued as follows: "There's no lack of action by the government. Could there be more? The answer is yes."

Next she talked about some of the commitments by various government departments and agencies with a view to implementing the policy, pointing out that "the policy will dovetail with other government action undertaken in recent years, such as the policy on access to documents and services, the education action plan, hefty investments in rehabilitation, the access plan for persons with special needs, and so forth."

The Minister also drew attention to the innovativeness of the policy, "a historic first in Québec that puts our society at the forefront internationally and that fits in with other far-reaching action by our government, such as the fight against poverty and social exclusion, the youth strategy, and the policy on the academic success for students with disabilities, to name but a few."

Madame Thériault closed with these words: "I'm confident that this policy, our policy, YOUR policy, will contribute to significant improvement of the living conditions of persons with disabilities so that they are equals in every respect citizens in Québec."

**MARTIN TRÉPANIÉRI,
CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE OFFICE**

Martin Trépanier said he was happy to attend the launch in his capacity as the Chair of the Board of Directors, "but also as part of the rank and file." He acknowledged the many collaborating partners and the will of the government that had enabled this long process to bear fruit. His emphasis then turned to the importance of the policy: "Today, June 6, 2009, is a headliner in the history of the social integration of persons with disabilities. The *Equals in Every Respect* policy is not only a great leap ahead, but is an invitation for all of us to go forward together."

He dwelt on the need for as many social and economic partners as possible to get involved so that the policy will succeed: "It's the combination of all these elements that will make *Equals in Every Respect* the instrument of social change that it was intended to be and that, in turn, will make all the difference to thousands of persons with disabilities in Québec in terms of better quality of life and a full response to their basic needs. Coherence and unity are the priorities for the next decade!"

The Chair then talked about major government action other than adoption of this policy carried out in recent years—amendment of the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights* and adoption of the workplace entry and retention strategy. In recalling the role that the Office would play with regard to the policy in the coming years, he added: "Rest assured that my colleagues on the Board of Directors, Office administrators and staff, and I will answer to the call of helping to build a Québec where no one is left out and everyone has the opportunity to develop his or her full potential according to his or her aspirations and abilities."

Martin Trépanier feels that the *Equals in Every Respect* policy is a wide-ranging challenge that the Government of Québec bids all Quebecers to take up. He wrapped up by indicating that "all of us can and must do so" and that "where there is a will to make it happen, everything becomes possible for persons with disabilities and their families."

A FEW REACTIONS

We caught up with Richard Lavigne, Director General of the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN), as he emerged from the launch. This is what he had to say.

"This is the first comprehensive and cross-cutting policy in Québec that will enlist not only the government, but hopefully, all Quebecers. It's the end of a long process that was fairly complicated but highly stimulating. From now on, this policy will be a bible for making Québec an inclusive society and for fostering the social participation of all Quebecers."

"COPHAN is very happy because now we have a tool for action. With the Office and government departments and public and private agencies working together, we're going to show that the sky's the limit! The policy gives us the basis for action, the fact that persons with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as everyone, and even if we knew this already, now we have it in writing. We need means for being full-fledged citizens. We at COPHAN endorse this policy and will work with everyone to get it off the ground. To add to what the Minister said a few minutes ago about the policy having a ten-year shelf life, we hope that there will be marked progress in the social participation of persons with disabilities over the next decade."

"Throughout the lengthy exercise leading up to *Equals in Every Respect*, there was genuine mobilization and you could see that everyone wanted it to work. We have to keep people interested so that the esprit de corps continues."

"I believe that anything having to do with implementing the policy will be the purview of the Office. For example, the policy will give the annual action plans under section 61.1 coherence and make it possible for everyone to pull in the same direction. I think that with this policy, unilateral action will be a thing of the past and that we'll work together from now on."

A few organizations issued press releases. Here is a sample of excerpts.

Joint COPHAN-Association du Québec pour l'intégration sociale (AQIS) press release (2009-06-06)

"Adoption of this policy should send a clear and unequivocal message in favour of the inclusion and social participation of hundreds of thousands of people who traditionally have often been excluded from Québec society."

Jean-Marie Grenier, President, COPHAN

"This policy should create greater uniformity regarding the content of the annual action plans that government departments and agencies and the municipalities and other players are required to submit under section 61.1 of the Act adopted in 2004."

Diane Milliard, Director General, AQIS

Association des établissements de réadaptation en déficience physique du Québec (AERDPQ) press release (2009-06-06)

"The *Equals in Every Respect* policy calls on all instances to work together to ensure a better response to the needs of persons with disabilities. Physical rehabilitation centres will continue collaborating with their partners to help improve the social participation of people with physical disabilities."

Luc M. Malo, President, AERDPQ

Fédération québécoise des centres de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle et en troubles envahissants du développement (FQCRDITED) press release (2009-06-06)

"This policy will be an important template in our common pursuit of the social participation of the 200,000 people with intellectual impairments and the 12,000 people with pervasive developmental disorders."

"The policy dovetails with the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*, but from now on, we have the obligation to work together coherently so that persons with disabilities are citizens in full. CRDITEDs will continue working to ensure that they help to develop all the potential of the people they serve so that they can play their rightful role within society."

Diane Bégin, Director General, FQCRDITED

Alliance québécoise des regroupements régionaux pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées press release (AQRIPH) (2009-06-11)

"AQRIPH and its members feel that this policy provides hope and will empower all Quebecers with disabilities and their families to enjoy significant progress in exercising their rights and freedoms. The policy will be a beacon for the action and action plans of all government sectors."

AQRIPH

By Micheline Thibault

Overview of the policy

Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights Are Meant to Be Exercised

In the past 30 years, Québec has posted tremendous gains in terms of the social integration of persons with disabilities due to instruments such as the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights* and the 1984 *On Equal Terms* policy.

Every society must at some point in its history take stock of its situation and make the changes that will enable it to move on to the next level. This is what happened on December 15, 2004, when the National Assembly of Québec passed the *Act to amend the Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights and other legislative provisions* that gave all public and private players more responsibility in this area.

Under one of the provisions of the Act, the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec was explicitly tasked to update the *On Equal Terms* policy by no later than December 17, 2007. Throughout 2006 and 2007, the Office carried out a comprehensive research, joint action and consultation operation on the regional and provincial level leading to tabling of a draft policy with the Minister responsible for enforcing the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*. After making its way through the proper decisional channels, the policy, the first intersectoral policy designed to foster the social participation of persons with disabilities, was adopted by Cabinet on June 4, 2009.

REASONS FOR A POLICY

Statistics from 2006 show there are approximately 750,000 persons with disabilities in Québec, or 10% of its total population, and that the proportion increases with age. The most recent data indicate that it is 7% in 15 to 64 year-olds, but 28% in people age 65 and over. In people 15 years old and over, there are more women with disabilities than men, and this difference widens with age.

For many persons with disabilities in Québec, social participation remains an ongoing challenge even to this day. Overall, they are poorer, have less formal education, are underrepresented in the workforce, have poorer health and are more socially isolated than other citizens. These adverse socioeconomic conditions impinge on their social participation, proving the extent to which these factors interact. While great strides have been made in recent years, substantial gaps persist between persons with disabilities and other Quebecers in terms of social participation (school, work, leisure, mobility, etc.). There is plenty of catching up to do.

Currently Québec has more than 200 measures specifically for persons with disabilities and for their families. These investments are hefty, but disparities in accessing them, in their funding and in their complementarity reduce their optimization.

Considering the State's limited resources and the aging of our population, which will surely cause an increase in the number of persons with disabilities, it is crucial that from now on, their needs and those of their families be taken into account

systematically so as to satisfy these needs adequately and curtail costs. This issue must be moved up on the scale of social priorities if we are to avoid more serious and pressing problems.

This is why it is imperative to guide all of Québec society and come together to introduce innovative, sustainable and appropriate solutions based on anticipated needs. These changes will benefit all Quebecers because a more inclusive society is a better society for everyone.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

In keeping with the Act, the ultimate goal of the policy is to ensure that the equality in law of persons with disabilities means equality in fact. This hinges on the will to see to respect of their rights and freedoms by offering them conditions under which they can exercise them and, when necessary, to protect them should they find themselves in situations of vulnerability.

More specifically, the aim of the policy is to increase the social participation of all persons with disabilities, regardless of sex, age, disability, impairment or place of residence, over a ten-year timeframe.

The policy concerns all people with disabilities and all government departments and agencies. It is not intended to replace other sector-based policies, thrusts or strategies or strategies for specific groups of persons with disabilities, even though its intersectoral approach may influence the development of these other sectors. What the policy does do is to establish the intersectoral priorities for action for the coming years.

The policy also has a wider social scope. Its adoption by the government should prompt voluntary involvement by non-government partners. In addition, the policy was designed to complement other government policies such as the plan to combat poverty and social exclusion, the gender equality policy, and the sustainable development strategy.

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

The groundwork carried out made it possible to identify the leading challenges that had to be addressed, namely, the need for an inclusive society, a unified and more equitable society, and a society that respects the choices and needs of persons with disabilities and of their families.

The first challenge (an inclusive society) is to systematically take into account persons with disabilities and their families from the blueprint phase of any action taken with regard to the physical and social environment. It bears repeating that this is essential given the State's limited resources and the predicted increase in the number of persons with disabilities due to the greying of our population. The idea here is to build-in inclusivity from the ground up, rather than resorting to adaption after the fact, which is generally a more costly proposition.

The emergence of an inclusive society hinges on action against prejudice and discrimination and all forms of exploitation, violence and mistreatment. It also depends on the presence of barrier-free laws, policies, programs and services, and on

systematic factoring in of the diverse day-to-day lives of persons with disabilities in producing family policy. It also requires environments accessible to all citizens.

The second challenge (a unified and more equitable society) attacks the factors associated with the poverty of persons with disabilities and of their families, including income and the extra expenses arising from their special needs. The second challenge also has to do with improving the coherence of all measures by reducing disparities in service provision. Current organization of the many existing measures has to be optimized by providing better and more seamless access to them. To act against poverty is to invest in human capital by acknowledging the worth of persons with disabilities in the workplace while at the same time responding to the challenge of the workforce shortages that loom ahead.

The third challenge, a society that respects the choices and needs of persons with disabilities and of their families, is aimed at fostering their participation in decisions that concern them, and at giving them structured support services, in other words, translating the will of the government to make its services citizen-centred into measures that are right for persons with disabilities and for their families. Enhancing personal independence, while preserving the family environment as the primary setting for integration, also means preventing institutionalization and the resulting higher costs.

EVALUATION OF THE POLICY

Policy evaluation has been entrusted to the Office, which will work with its main partners to devise monitoring mechanisms. Evaluation will be two-pronged—evaluation of implementation, and evaluation of expected outcomes.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

At the Minister's request, the Office will work with the government departments and agencies concerned to coordinate the drafting of a first comprehensive implementation plan for the policy by involving them in intersectoral initiatives alongside their respective sector-specific actions. The annual action plans prescribed in section 61.1 of the Act, the government strategy for getting persons with disabilities into the workplace and keeping them there, government departments' and public agencies' strategic plans, sector-based policies and action plans, and other public and private initiatives are the preferred means for implementing the policy.

The government will promote the policy to all the players concerned in all the spheres of action covered by the policy.

MEASURING OUTCOMES

The policy must generate significant improvements in the daily lives of persons with disabilities and of their families that have a tangible effect on their living conditions, on the response to their basic needs, and on their parity with other citizens in the exercise of their roles within society. A series of indicators will be used to assess the extent to which measures have succeeded. The Office will report periodically on how policy implementation is faring and on the achievement of the expected outcomes.

By Michael Watkins

The policy in brief*

POLICY SUMMARY

GOAL: INCREASE THE SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WITHIN THE NEXT 10 YEARS
LEGAL BASES: RIGHT TO EQUALITY AND PROTECTION, LEGISLATION AS AMENDED IN 2004
CONCEPTUAL BASES: DISABILITY CREATION PROCESS

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Towards significant improvement of the living conditions of persons with disabilities

- Improve the income of persons with disabilities
- Improve the health of persons with disabilities
- Improve the educational level of persons with disabilities
- Reduce the social isolation of persons with disabilities

Towards complete fulfillment of the basic needs of persons with disabilities (everyday activities)

- Offer persons with disabilities the possibility of fully carrying out the activities that allow them to live at home
- Offer persons with disabilities the possibility of being housed adequately according to their specific needs, in a place of their choosing
- Offer persons with disabilities the possibility of expressing themselves and communicating adequately with those around them, whatever means of communication are used
- Offer persons with disabilities the possibility of being mobile without added accessibility, time or cost constraints, no matter the place or the means used

Towards parity between persons with disabilities and other citizens in the exercise of social roles in conditions equivalent to those of others

- Increase the participation of children with disabilities in educational daycare services and in school environments
- Increase the participation of students with disabilities at all levels of basic and continuing education
- Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the workplace, without discrimination
- Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in recreational, sports, tourism and cultural activities
- Increase the civic participation of persons with disabilities in their community

EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF EXPECTED OUTCOMES THROUGH INDICATORS

FOCUS OF ACTION

3 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND 11 PRIORITY THRUSTS

For an inclusive society, the priorities are to:

- Act against prejudice and discrimination
- Act against all forms of exploitation, violence and mistreatment
- Devise barrier-free laws, policies, programs and services
- Take into account the diversity of family structures in drafting family policy
- Design accessible environments.

For a unified and more equitable society, the priorities are to:

- Act against the poverty of persons with disabilities and their families
- Aim for adequate compensation for additional costs associated with deficiencies, impairments and handicapping situations
- Increase access to and dovetailing and coordination of programs and services.

For a society that respects the choices and needs of persons with disabilities and of their families, the priorities are to:

- Make individualized and coordinated service planning standard practice
- Support the exercise of family and social roles by families
- Make structured accompaniment services accessible to persons with disabilities and their families

EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN THROUGH INDICATORS

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Regarding policy implementation

- Enhance, develop and use existing intersectoral coordination mechanisms
- Task the Office to spearhead and support the required intersectoral action
- Consider the annual action plans prescribed in section 61.1 of the Act, the National Strategy for Labour Market Integration and Maintenance of Handicapped Persons, government departments' and agencies' strategic plans, and sector-based policies and action plans as the preferred means for implementing the policy
- Task MSSS with assessing application of section 61.2 of the Act within the framework of its health impact assessments

Regarding policy promotion

- Promote the policy to all the players concerned in all action areas concerned.

Regarding policy evaluation

- Recognize the policy's expected outcomes as significant changes that Québec should aim for
- Task the Office to carry out two-pronged evaluation of the policy:
 - evaluation of policy implementation through systematic monitoring of annual action plans and other government department and agency plans, policies and strategies
 - evaluation of expected outcomes through indicators
- Better document the state of social participation

THRUSTS

AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

ACT AGAINST PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

- Public awareness
- Civic education for young people and adults
- Awareness-raising and training for anyone in direct contact with the public
- Accommodation measures and promotion of an inclusive approach
- Factoring in of cultural barriers in accommodation measures for persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities
- Documentation of the experiences of persons with disabilities from First Nations communities.

ACT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF EXPLOITATION, VIOLENCE AND MISTREATMENT

- Inform and train persons with disabilities, their families and significant others
- Design action tailored to the everyday lives of persons with disabilities and adapt it accordingly
- Monitor the quality of intervention in public living environments such as residences, shelters, or other similar institutions and in private caregiving situations
- Implement and promote the recourse provided under existing legislative provisions

DEVISE BARRIER-FREE LAWS, POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Implement and comply with existing legislative provisions
- Enforce the impact clause
- Awareness and training of staff who draft public legislation, policies and programs

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DIVERSITY OF FAMILY STRUCTURES IN DRAFTING FAMILY POLICY

- Bring the various stakeholders together
- Support for innovation given the new face of society and of the family

DESIGN ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENTS

- Improve physical accessibility
- Improve accessibility to transportation infrastructure
- Improve accessibility to means of communication
- Take the needs of persons with disabilities into account in designing consumer products

*** Note that in the official version of the policy, the expression "handicapped persons" and all its permutations (e.g. handicapped children) has been used instead of "persons with disabilities".**

A UNIFIED AND MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETY

ACT AGAINST THE POVERTY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OF THEIR FAMILIES

- Concerted action against poverty and social exclusion
- Greater income support
- Fewer disparities in terms of income support

AIM FOR ADEQUATE COMPENSATION FOR ADDITIONAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH DEFICIENCIES, IMPAIRMENTS AND HANDICAPPING SITUATIONS

- Full compensation of general additional costs
- Non-income based compensation of general additional costs
- Improved tax measures that more directly concern persons with disabilities, their families and significant others
- An improved public prescription drug insurance plan

INCREASE ACCESS TO AND DOVETAILING AND COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Improved general access to plans, programs and services
- Improved access to and adaptation of current services
- Strengthening of the fit between and the coordination of programs and services

A SOCIETY THAT RESPECTS THE CHOICES AND NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OF THEIR FAMILIES

MAKE INDIVIDUALIZED AND COORDINATED SERVICE PLANNING STANDARD PRACTICE

- Service plan use by all players
- A harmonized vision of the service plan and of the terminology used
- Confidentiality by all players
- A mixed model for service plan coordination
- Rules of consent for designating a service plan coordinator
- Recognition of the contribution of families and other natural caregivers to the planning and coordination of services

SUPPORT THE EXERCISE OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL ROLES BY FAMILIES

- Improve the support offered to families
- Innovation with a view to gender equality

MAKE STRUCTURED ACCOMPANIMENT SERVICES ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Accompaniment service development in every region
- Harmonization of accompaniment practices
- Recognition of accompaniment needs in the individualized and coordinated planning of services
- Better training and wages for attendants

Milestones

THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Important dates

Given the adoption of *Equals in Every Respect*, we thought it would be interesting to look back over the past 30 years by highlighting the events that left an indelible mark on the social integration of persons with disabilities in Québec. Here are a few of these defining moments.

AN AVANT-GARDE LAW

1978, which saw the unanimous adoption of the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights* by the National Assembly, was a pivotal year in the history of the social integration of persons with disabilities in Québec. This groundbreaking piece of legislation made the government and public service providers accountable for their action with regard to these citizens. The Act provided the required jump-start for developing programs, services and measures of all kinds to increase the social participation of persons with disabilities in Québec.

To go back a little further, in 1976, a first draft bill to protect persons with disabilities was tabled with a parliamentary committee by the then Minister of Social Affairs, Claude Forget. However, the draft bill's "protectionist" approach met with severe censure from lobby groups who argued for equal status for persons with disabilities in the exercise of their rights.

The next step occurred when Denis Lazure, the new Minister of Social Affairs, tabled a White Paper entitled *Proposition de policy à l'égard des personnes handicapées*, which made adults with disabilities its exclusive focus. In June 1977, he went on to present the draft *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*. Sixty-three briefs were sent to the Minister requesting that his Department organize a tour to inform and consult the organizations involved in promoting the interests of persons with disabilities, at a time when these lobby groups were just starting to emerge.

Groups representing the interests of persons with disabilities presented a common front and demands that included the production and genuine application of a comprehensive rehabilitation policy that ensured adequate and seamless services customized to the specific needs of the individual. This common front also called for provisions in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* prohibiting all forms of discrimination based on impairments or the use of orthotic devices or other means to compensate for a "handicap."

In response to the opinions expressed and the consensus reached, the Minister of Social Affairs overhauled the content of the draft bill, which was finally assented to on June 23, 1978. The common front had demanded that section 10 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* be amended to add "handicaps" to the list of grounds for

which discriminatory behaviour was prohibited, and the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights* made this possible. Clearly, this was the most important legislative change stemming from the Act because it became the legal basis for the right to equality of persons with disabilities. Numbers of other laws were also amended, including the *Municipal Code* and the *Cities and Towns Act* (accessible sidewalks and special parking spaces for vehicles used by persons with disabilities), the *Education Act* (schooling for persons with disabilities until age 21, where applicable), and the *Act respecting the Société d'habitation du Québec* (obligation to provide for adapted housing programs).

This Act also created the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec and tasked it with coordinating services for persons with disabilities, informing and advising them, and promoting their interests with a view to fostering their presence in schools, in the workplace and in society in general.

AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR

1981 was proclaimed the International Year of Disabled Persons by the United Nations. The Québec government marked this event by giving the go-ahead for a project to draft a comprehensive policy on the overall integration of persons with disabilities, a policy that the lobby groups had been clamouring for even before the Act was adopted.

In December of the same year, a conference on the socioeconomic integration of people with disabilities was held. It was the first event of its kind dedicated to a group of citizens in particular. This in turn paved the way for the first report on the integration of persons with disabilities in Québec and the first stirrings of structured joint action by the main partners concerned. One of the many benefits of the conference was acknowledgement of associations as invaluable peers.

A DECADE AND A POLICY

When it came to the social integration of persons with disabilities in Québec, 1984 was another year for the books. In December 1982, the United Nations declared the International Decade of Disabled Persons (1983 to 1992), and Québec undertook a far-reaching movement for joint action on the provincial, regional and local level. The Office spearheaded this operation that culminated in the publication in 1984 of the *On Equal Terms* policy and a conference to which all its socioeconomic partners were summoned to talk about their proposals for implementing the policy.

On Equal Terms had a tremendous impact on social integration and put Québec at the forefront internationally. Its aims and objectives and the action plans in its wake were completely consistent with the United Nations' World Programme of Action for the Decade. The policy stimulated the development of integration-related concepts such as the Disability Creation Process, which emphasized the physical and social environments of persons with disabilities in explaining their marginalization and social exclusion.

On Equal Terms was the template of choice for crafting policies and thrusts specific to persons with disabilities, and for developing and coordinating the programs and services designed for them. The policy advocated a new model for collective action and fifteen basic courses of action that were adopted by Cabinet in 1985 and

enshrined in 2004 in the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*.

PROGRAM TRANSFERS

With 1989 came the first wave of transfers of the programs established by the Office throughout the 1980s—a raft of programs created to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and of their families. On March 11, 1987, the Québec Cabinet asked the Office to transfer its material assistance programs to the agencies and service networks concerned. The decision was in line with the goals of *On Equal Terms* aimed at greater responsibility for government departments, agencies and their extensions regarding the services to be provided to persons with disabilities and their families.

The homecare services program was the first material assistance program that was transferred (July 1989), followed by the program covering special equipment and medical supplies for persons with motor impairments in 1998. This wrapped up the transfer of material assistance programs. With a view to greater responsibility for the players concerned, over the years the Office would transfer other programs, e.g. removable parking stickers, workplace entry contract (*Contrat d'intégration au travail*), and subsidies for adapted businesses.

AN INTERNATIONAL DAY AND A QUÉBEC WEEK

The curtain dropped on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992 and to mark this, a first international scientific symposium on research into the social integration of persons with disabilities took place in Montréal. Organized by the Office, this event, themed *Dix ans de recherche à partager*, brought more than 500 people together and enabled the publication of 125 communications in symposium proceedings entitled *Élargir les horizons, perspectives scientifiques sur l'intégration sociale*.

The United Nations made December 3 of each year the International Day of Disabled Persons (later renamed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities) and urged the member States to celebrate this day in a special way so as to foster the social integration of these citizens. This is how Québec came to have a week dedicated to persons with disabilities. From 1996 to 1999, this special day was celebrated in December, but for practical reasons, it was switched to June starting in 2000.

AMENDMENT OF THE ACT AND OTHER IMPORTANT HAPPENINGS

When Cabinet approved the idea of amending the Act as a result of the transfer of programs and adjustment of the Office's roles further to these transfers, it also mandated the Minister to oversee drafting of a bill that would take these changes into account. The amendment process began in 1993 and it would take ten years to complete the job.

In October 1996, on the occasion of the Montréal economic and employment summit, the Office and the Ministère de la Sécurité approved a plan to create 1,050 jobs in adapted work centres and to back the creation of 900 others over three years. The instrument chosen was the *Contrat d'intégration au travail* program for persons with disabilities who were income security recipients under the financial support program.

The idea here was to transform benefits into wage subsidies issued to the businesses who hire persons with disabilities.

In 1998, the Institut de la statistique du Québec, in collaboration with the Office and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, published a survey on limitations (*Enquête québécoise sur les limitations d'activités - EQLA*). The data from this survey were used by the Office to produce statistical portraits by region published in 2004. These regional statistics were something that the partners had asked for repeatedly.

In June 2001, African, Belgian, French, Swiss and Québec representatives met in Casablanca to sign a cooperation agreement for standardizing French Braille. The agreement laid the groundwork for the 2008 adoption of the new standardized Braille code by all the Québec instances concerned.

A REVAMPED LAW AND THE UN CONVENTION

2004 came to a close with the adoption of Bill 56 which gave fresh momentum to the social integration of persons with disabilities and had a considerable impact on the Office. The Act made it possible to tailor the 1978 Act to the realities of the new millennium and to redefine the role of the Office. The *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration*, as the Act would be called henceforth, placed greater emphasis on making public instances more responsible with regard to the social participation of persons with disabilities. Built into the Act were a number of obligations such as mandatory action plans by government departments, government agencies, and bigger municipalities, and a government policy concerning access to public documents. The latter requirement was fulfilled by the prescribed deadline of December 12, 2006. The Act also ordered the production of a Québec labour market entry and retention strategy. This strategy was unveiled by the Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity on May 25, 2008.

Adoption of the draft bill also meant that the Office had to work with all relevant partners to update the 1984 policy (*On Equal Terms*). Throughout 2006 and 2007, a massive operation involving research, consultation and consensus was deployed across Québec, leading to the tabling on December 17, 2007 of the draft *Equals in Every Respect* policy. The Minister responsible for enforcement of the Act also entrusted the Office with coordinating all the government bodies in producing a comprehensive implementation plan to go with the policy. This plan was submitted to the Minister in June 2008.

On December 13, 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the first Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention, signed by 126 countries and ratified by 25 others, came into force on May 3, 2008. Yet again, Québec was in the vanguard. The *Equals in Every Respect* policy, and its creation, adoption, implementation and monitoring, are consistent with the Convention.

THE EQUALS IN EVERY RESPECT POLICY

2009 will go down in the history books as the year of the policy to increase the social participation of persons with disabilities was adopted. Last June, the Québec Cabinet ratified the policy entitled *Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights Are Meant to Be*

Exercised during Québec's week devoted to persons with disabilities. Insofar as it issues a call to action to all government sectors, the policy is the first of its kind in Québec. In 1985, only the aims and objectives of *On Equal Terms* were adopted by Cabinet.

The social integration of persons with disabilities has certainly moved ahead since the 1978 Act, but Québec must nonetheless use all possible means to become a more inclusive society. The Act, the policy, and the policy implementation plan are indispensable tools in taking up the challenge of the full participation of persons with disabilities in Québec society.

By Micheline Thibault