

**HIGHLIGHTS  
WOMEN AT WORK  
CLOSING THE GENDER GAP**

**EMPLOI-QUÉBEC'S INTERVENTION STRATEGY  
FOR THE FEMALE LABOUR FORCE**

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Emploi-Québec  
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale

**Publication**

Direction des communications  
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale

This document is available on the Emploi-Québec website:  
[www.emploi.quebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.emploi.quebec.gouv.qc.ca)

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Emploi-Québec's 2009 *Intervention Strategy for the Female Labour Force* was developed in response to changes in the labour market since the adoption of the 2001 strategy and the results of the actions it contained. It is also part of the government action plan to implement the policy for gender equality *Turning Equality in Law into Equality in Fact*.

The actions of the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale are aimed primarily at helping narrow the gaps between women and men in the labour market.

To that end, the Ministère introduced measures to provide women with more ongoing support. A report outlining the results of Emploi-Québec's 2001 strategy for the female labour force was published and now the Ministère is following up on that report by:

- updating the strategy to reflect new labour market realities, challenges and issues;
- banking on expertise and action, in particular those of organizations in Québec that specialize in female labour force development;
- taking into account regional disparities that play a role in the problems faced by female workers;
- designing new approaches and projects to help women who face major obstacles to job entry enter the labour market;
- raising awareness among women about the range of career options available to them so as to improve their job prospects;
- mobilizing all economic partners in achieving gender equality in Québec.

Since the adoption of the 2001 strategy, the Québec government has taken several steps to foster female participation in the labour market. To mention a few:

- **Ma place au soleil**, a measure intended for young female heads of single-parent families who voluntarily enrol in training programs that fit their needs and will help them find employment;
- the *Commitment for Employment*, a strategy that, among other things, increases the employment-assistance allowance for heads of single-parent families;
- the **Québec Parental Insurance Plan**, which promotes work-family balance;
- the granting of financial assistance to **Québec organizations that specialize in female labour force development** under the government policy *Turning Equality in Law into Equality in Fact*, as announced by the Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity in June 2007;
- participation in the **Hats Off to You!** contest and implementation of the work force integration aspect of the contest, which targets females who have returned to school in a traditionally male-dominated program.

The Ministère is proud to be a foremost leader in the integration and retention of women in the labour market, giving special attention to the most vulnerable female groups, including immigrant women, women with disabilities, female heads of single-parent

families, Aboriginal women, female seniors, women caught up in the criminal justice system and women with minimal education.

**Sam Hamad**

Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity

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This strategy was developed in consultation with all partners concerned by the status of women, in particular the women's advisory committee Comité consultatif femmes. It is founded on three core principles, namely:

- full participation of women in the labour market;
- greater action to foster the integration and retention of women who face major obstacles to labour market entry or who are at risk of underemployment;
- concerted action by partners.

## CHANGE IN THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

While significant progress has been made in recent decades, gender gaps persist in the labour market.

### Economic vulnerability of certain groups of women

#### Certain groups of women still participate less in the labour market or are at risk of underemployment.

In 2007, 69% of women aged 15 to 64 were employed, compared with 41% in 1976 and 62% in 2001. The gap between the female and male participation rates narrowed from 35 percentage points in 1976 to five percentage points in 2007. However:

- **Less-educated women have a very low labour market participation rate.** In 2007, only 29% of women with 8 years of schooling or less had a job, compared with 46% of men with an equivalent level of education.
- **Less than 50% of single mothers with children under 3 years of age are employed.** By comparison, in 2007 the employment rate of mothers in two-parent families with young children was 73%.
- **Women aged 55 to 64 still lag far behind men.** Although their employment rate had increased faster than that of men, only 44% of women in this age group worked outside the home in 2007, 12 percentage points below the male employment rate.
- **Fewer immigrant women, even highly educated ones, enter the labour market.** In 2006, 46% of immigrant women who had been in Québec for five years or less were employed, more than 15 percentage points below the employment rate for male newcomers (62%). Even immigrant women with a university degree have a significantly lower employment rate than male immigrants. In 2006, the employment rate for all immigrant women with an undergraduate or graduate degree was 66%, versus 76% for men.
- **Women from visible minorities have a low employment rate.** In 2006, 55% of women from visible minorities worked, compared with 67% of men from visible minorities.
- **Aboriginal women have a low rate of participation in the labour market.** In 2006, 54% of Aboriginal women were employed. While this is a lower employment rate than for other women, it is similar to the rate among Aboriginal men (57%).
- **Few women with disabilities have gainful employment.** In 2003,<sup>1</sup> 51% of women with disabilities worked, versus 71% of non-disabled women. These rates are relatively lower than those for men: 57% for men with disabilities versus 79% for non-disabled men.

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<sup>1</sup> **Source:** *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, Statistics Canada. Data are for people aged 16 to 64.

## Situation of working women

Even though an increasing number of women work full time and women are more present in all sectors of activity, they still hold the majority of part-time jobs (less than 30 hours a week), still work primarily in traditionally female-dominated fields and occupations and still earn less and have lower incomes than men.

## Types of jobs held by women

- **Nearly one quarter of women aged 25 to 54 work part time because of personal or family responsibilities (children, parents, etc.).** Less than 5% of men in this age group work part time.
- **Women still dominate in some traditionally female occupations.** In 2007, women still held the majority (over 70%) of jobs in the health and financial sectors, clerical and other administrative positions, office and office supervision jobs, and family support and child care worker jobs.
- **Conversely, women still hold less than one quarter of the jobs in traditionally male-dominated fields,** i.e. natural and applied sciences and commodity production.

## Economic status of women

- **Women still earn less per hour than men.** In 2007, women aged 15 to 64 with full-time jobs earned an average hourly wage of \$19.20, or 11% less than the \$21.60 earned by men in the same age group. In 1997, the gender wage gap was 15%.
- In 2007, **nearly one in five women earned less than \$10 an hour.** This proportion was considerably higher than the proportion among men (12%).
- **Women continue to have lower annual incomes than men.** In 2005,<sup>2</sup> the average annual income for women was 29% less than that for men.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: *Survey on Labour and Income Dynamics*, Statistics Canada.

# **THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE**

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1**

### **Knowledge, recognition and consideration of the problems faced by female workers**

#### **Thrust – Improve knowledge about the problems faced by:**

- female groups that are under-represented in the labour market;
- working women on the job, with respect to integrating and keeping jobs in traditionally male-dominated trades.

#### **Emploi-Québec, in cooperation with its partners, will:**

- reaffirm the expertise of organizations that specialize in female labour force development;
- foster the sharing of expertise between organizations involved in developing the employability of various client groups.

#### **Thrust – Encourage recognition and consideration of the problems faced by:**

- making the strategy part of Emploi-Québec's Québec-wide action plan as well as its regional action plans;
- disseminating the strategy and making managers, employees and partners (e.g. sectoral workforce committees, outside resources, etc.) aware of its importance;
- providing greater support to the network of regional responders;
- offering training sessions on gender-based analysis throughout the hierarchical levels;
- conducting gender-based analyses during the formulation of policies, strategies, programs or measures.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2**

### **Reduction of barriers to the integration and retention of women in the labour market**

#### **Thrust – Foster access to specialized services in all regions by:**

- ensuring access to this type of service and approach specific to female workers in all regions, supporting organizations that already offer such services and supporting the establishment of these services as a priority in other existing organizations.

#### **Thrust – Raise awareness, among women facing major obstacles to entering the labour market, of Emploi-Québec services and the measures under the *Commitment for Employment* by:**

- supporting the network by always making timely information available and supplying it to our partners.

#### **Thrust – Combat poverty and social exclusion**

**All of the actions identified in the strategy are designed to help fight poverty and social exclusion by pursuing the primary objective of promoting the full participation of women in the labour market and thereby ensure their financial independence.**

#### **More specifically, the goals of this thrust will be achieved by:**

- including gender-based analysis in the formulation, implementation and assessment of some of the measures contained in Québec's next government action plan to combat poverty and social exclusion;
- encouraging women who face major obstacles to labour market entry to participate in social assistance and support programs.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 (cont.)

### **Thrust – Foster access to the Manpower Training measure by:**

- reaffirming the aim of the **Manpower Training measure** whereby women who are underemployed or at risk of losing their job, women going through a family crisis (that interferes with their job) and women who wish to change careers and have the necessary autonomy and personal capacity to do so may be eligible for this measure even if they are employed in an in-demand job field;
- consolidating the **Ma place au soleil** approach by reviewing the communication tools and making the **Youth Alternative Program** available to more young parents.

### **Thrust – Foster manpower qualification and skills recognition by:**

- continuing efforts to promote manpower qualification (Emploi-Québec staff, outside resources, businesses and the public);
- implementing work-study pilot projects and opening them to people over 25;
- raising awareness among staff, partners and potential client groups about the **workforce skills development and recognition framework** as a good tool for:
  - supporting women in getting training and working in traditionally male-dominated trades,
  - helping them qualify for and get their skills recognized in trades and occupations where they are more present.

### **Thrust – Provide more support to women having trouble entering and remaining in the labour market by:**

- encouraging the participation of women with disabilities in Emploi-Québec measures and programs, in particular the **Contrat d'intégration au travail** (employment integration contract) and the **Grant Program for Adapted Businesses**;
- offering, in cooperation with organizations that specialize in female labour force development and other organizations involved in developing employability, personalized coaching during and following participation in measures and programs, in particular to women who face major obstacles to entering the labour market, especially women with disabilities, and women who choose a traditionally male-dominated trade;
- collaborating with organizations that work with female groups that are under-represented in the labour market to conduct projects aimed at helping these women enter and remain in the labour market;
- implementing, in partnership with the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtone (association of Native Friendship Centres), projects for Aboriginal women.

**Thrust – Step up actions targeted at immigrant women and women from visible minorities by:**

- increasing awareness about Emploi-Québec measures and services among immigrant women and women from visible minorities;
- informing them about the realities of the Québec labour market;
- increasing participation in the **Employment Integration Program for Immigrants and Visible Minorities** and the **Wage Subsidy** measure;
- continuing efforts to make businesses aware of the advantages of a diverse workforce that reflects a diverse society.

**Thrust – Encourage the diversification of career choices by:**

- supporting women who choose a traditionally male occupation or trade so as to help them land a job and remain employed;
- supporting businesses in integrating and keeping female workers in traditionally male occupations and trades, particularly in the context of *Commitment for Employment* regional committee activities;
- continuing to promote trades and occupations that offer good job prospects and informing women of the opportunities these trades offer and the skills required to work in them;
- updating and continuing to disseminate the guide *I'm here to stay! Getting the training... Getting the job*;
- reading the findings of the status report by the Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT) on women's place in male-dominated jobs, studying the recommendations and taking the appropriate action to implement them.

**Thrust – Foster a family-work-study balance by:**

- stepping up efforts to raise awareness among businesses and in the workplace about family-work-study balance, in particular the advantages for employers of introducing measures to help balance work, family life and studies;
- maintaining the assistance and support provided to female heads of single-parent families by Emploi-Québec measures.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY**

Emploi-Québec will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of its *Intervention Strategy for the Female Labour Force*, while the regional offices will be responsible for implementing the actions identified in the strategy and taking the strategy into account in regional action plans.

When the strategy is fully implemented, Emploi-Québec will report on the results of the activities conducted in the regions as well as all other work carried out under the strategy. In the years thereafter, Emploi-Québec will suggest adjustments to the strategy as needed. A section will also be added in the report to highlight “local and regional best practices”. Among other things, the report will make all partners more dynamic by highlighting their joint efforts to help women integrate or re-enter the labour market in jobs that fulfil their aspirations.

Furthermore, a follow-up committee will be formed to ensure implementation of the strategy. The committee will be composed of representatives from the following organizations:

- the Ministère de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, including Emploi-Québec;
- the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (CPMT);
- the Comité consultatif femmes (CCF).