





*Don't leave
anyone out!*



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A word from the Ministers

If we are to continue to develop as a society, ensuring that all Québec citizens are equipped to make choices and participate in the life of their communities, we have to be sure that *we don't leave anyone out*. We would like to share this conviction with people living in poverty, as well as with those who work each day to fight poverty in the various regions and local communities, through preventive actions, efforts to alleviate the effects of poverty, and actions aimed at helping people enter the job market. Through the *orientations and perspectives for action to fight poverty* that we are proposing as a basis for discussion, we hope to create conditions that will mobilize all social stakeholders to help people in need. These stakeholders are private, public and social-economy businesses, unions, community organizations, regional coordination authorities, local governments and citizens. Reducing poverty is not only desirable, it is possible if everyone pulls together. In this collective effort, we have to pay particular attention to our children and young people, who are the future of Québec.

The Government of Québec intends to assume its responsibility by deploying the most effective approaches to fight poverty. In the scope of this vast operation, you will be invited to draw up an inventory of the best ways to continue the battle against poverty and exclusion at both the regional and local levels.



This operation will also help us identify objectives and tools for measuring progress, and enable us to determine the best ways to associate target groups in follow-up and ongoing efforts to fight poverty. More than ever, we have to make this fight a lasting priority for our government, in order to ensure that our economic and social progress is based on the values of justice, equity and solidarity, which are so dear to Quebecers. We will undertake this approach with all the attention and openness necessary to achieve a stronger consensus on the importance of this fight and greater synergy among all parties involved.



Jean Rochon

Minister of State for Labour, Employment
and Social Solidarity



Nicole Léger

Minister for the Elimination
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Identifying a common objective

As underlined in the *Rapport mondial sur le développement humain 1997*¹ prepared by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) “the eradication of poverty worldwide is more than a moral obligation or a commitment in favour of human solidarity: it is a practical possibility.” Almost all of the countries in the world committed themselves to this objective during the World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995.

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— UNDP

It is in this context that in 1997 the Conseil de la santé et du bien-être organized a forum on social development, in collaboration with various social and economic stakeholders. This forum generated input from all regions of Québec. In the scope of this initiative, the regions deployed a variety of efforts, particularly actions aimed at fighting local poverty.

More recently, during the swearing-in of the Cabinet, the Premier confirmed the importance that the government places on eliminating poverty: “All members of the government, regardless of the sector they are called on to serve, will have to put their shoulder to the wheel. The new Minister of State for Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity (...) will coordinate this systematic offensive, assisted by the Minister for the Elimination of Poverty and Exclusion.”

Poverty is more than financial and economic: as underlined by the United Nations Development Program, it can also be defined in terms of human development, i.e., “deprivation of individuals’ ability to make choices and profit from opportunities allowing them to lead a decent life.”

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Don’t Leave Anyone Out! is a call for all partners and civil society to join forces in order to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged members of society, to favour their autonomy, and to ensure that everyone has the means to make choices and participate in the life of his or her community. The government cannot, however, achieve this objective alone.



¹ All excerpts from this and other publications have been translated into English from the French-language version of the document.

Don't leave anyone out! is a call for all partners and civil society to join forces in order to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged members of society, and to ensure that everyone has the means to make choices and participate in the life of his or her community.

It has to be able to count on regional efforts and cooperation by companies and unions aimed at facilitating access to skills and helping people enter or re-enter the labour market, and work closely with community organizations committed to easing the effects of poverty, whose members work with poor people on a daily basis. Furthermore, the government intends to invite the new cities created by municipal mergers to participate in the fight against poverty and exclusion, by making this battle a development priority. Interested individuals and organizations are thus invited to join in this far-reaching operation leading to the development of a national strategy to fight poverty.

While the government alone cannot significantly reduce poverty, it must “create a stimulating environment that can rally broad political support and conducive to alliances in favour of the poor” (UNDP). Indicating its commitment to act on all aspects of poverty, the government announced in the budget speech that additional measures would be deployed, and that \$815 million would be allocated to these measures over the next three years.

These actions include the following essential approaches for reducing poverty: changes to the tax system will mean that more than 160,000 low-income Quebecers will no longer pay income tax; financial assistance programs for the most disadvantaged citizens will be improved, with a 2.5% increase in employment-assistance benefits in June 2001; employment will be made more attractive through the Action emploi measure; in the area of local development, a \$100-million fund will be created to implement formative initiatives in areas of concentrated poverty and new funds will be injected to support local initiatives in vulnerable rural and urban areas; preventive action for children will be deployed in the area of education, with the injection of additional sums for the Agir tôt pour réussir program; and in the field of social services, additional funds will be invested to consolidate preventive services for children and youth.

These measures are in addition to the substantial efforts devoted to job creation, which remains the primary means of ensuring all citizens choices and possibilities for a better life. Among other targets, job-creation efforts are aimed at developing the economies of resource regions, which have not benefited as much as other regions from the upturn in the economy. The efforts are also designed to boost the development of the social economy.



Building a consensus on inclusion

Don't Leave Anyone Out! is a tool for validating the strategies and priorities proposed for discussion by the government with a view to supporting efforts to reduce poverty. This validation process will also review the anti-poverty actions deployed in the various regions of Québec.

During the fall, people in each region will be invited to describe the characteristics of local poverty and to set priorities for actions aimed at deploying a societal project founded on the inclusion of all citizens. Each group of society will be asked to clarify its contribution to this common project of offering all individuals the means to make choices and participate in the life of their community. The validation process is aimed at identifying a consensus on objectives, actions and results.

The government will continue to its efforts in the fight against poverty, in order to do a better job of fulfilling its role in this area. To this end, task forces have been assigned the mandate of proposing better ways of integrating and harmonizing government actions to help the groups and areas most affected by poverty, and to adapt our social safety net to today's poverty.

Between now and the beginning of 2002, these efforts will lead to a global approach mobilizing all sectors of society around a consensus on how to reduce poverty and exclusion. The approach will become part of a Québec strategy integrating the multiple dimensions of social development.

Based on a solid consensus and on a better understanding of each person's contribution, a medium-to-long-term action plan will be proposed, along with additional resources. Tools will also be proposed in order to set a time frame

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for the fight against poverty and to ensure target groups' support in assessing and continuing the process. All options are currently open concerning the means for implementing the government's priority of reducing poverty, including possible recourse to legislation, as well as with respect to the structures to be implemented in order to involve interested groups in these efforts. The action plan and tools will also provide regions and communities with support in deploying strategies adapted to local contexts.



Together for sustainable development

Economic progress has accelerated in Québec in recent years. This has led to the lowest unemployment rate since 1976 and a 33% reduction over the past five years in the number of households including an adult who is fit to work that receive social assistance. We have to build on these achievements in order to create wealth and find better ways to distribute it.

However, ensuring economic prosperity does not make sense unless it gives each and every person the means of making choices and offers citizens real possibilities for participating in society. For there to be lasting progress, economic growth must go hand-in-hand with social development. As stressed by the UNDP, “The main challenges are to ensure employment for all individuals; to see that everyone has access to viable social security, retirement and health-care systems; and to enable a more equitable sharing of household tasks and professional activities between men and women.”

Furthermore, poverty and exclusion generate social and economic costs and have an impact on the health and well-being of those affected. Québec society needs the contributions of each and every person in every region. For demographic, social and economic reasons, no one should be left out. Everyone must be part of and benefit from the new economic prosperity, by contributing, according to his or her means, to ensuring that this prosperity takes root.

Obviously, Québec is not the only modern society faced with the challenge of poverty. Elimination of poverty and exclusion is a major challenge for all societies, including developed nations. The growth in poverty in industrialized countries in the early 1990s “reminds us that the fight against poverty must be permanent, and that countries must adapt their preventive mechanisms and safety nets to changing economic realities.” The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) understands this imperative, and recognizes that fighting poverty and stepping up social development are essential for sustainable economic growth.

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To fight poverty effectively, we have to create synergy between economic development and social development. This synergy has to favour social cohesion and involve partnerships with the various groups in society, from private businesses to community groups and unions. We also have to build on the achievements of the social economy and community efforts, among other factors.



Efforts so far to tackle poverty

Need to promote local development

Twelve years ago, noting that “in our society, even though it is one of the most egalitarian in the Western World, there are pockets of poverty and under-employment in downtown areas and in certain rural municipalities,” the Conseil des affaires sociales² stressed the importance of local development and greater participation by all citizens in the creation of wealth. “There is a risk that economic growth that does not give everyone who is able an equal opportunity to participate in the creation of collective wealth will lead sooner or later to its own demise.”

While poverty exists in all regions and localities, there is a higher concentration in certain areas. For the more affected areas, the document prepared by the Conseil proposes that Québec implement the required means for community action in social services, education and employment, with a view to favouring local development.

In order to allow communities and regions to take charge of their own development and adapt government policies and programs to local needs, Québec has adopted a policy for supporting local and regional development. The policy enables better interdepartmental planning at the regional level, through regional administrative conferences. By confirming the role of regional development councils as the government's main go-betweens in the regions, this policy designates the regional level as the level for planning, harmonization and preparation of development strategies. The policy has also enabled the creation of local development centres, which offer technical and financial support services based on the needs and distinctive features of local populations. The development of an anti-poverty action plan will be an opportunity to take stock of actions aimed at eliminating poverty at the regional and local levels.

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– Conseil des affaires sociales



2. Now called the Conseil de la santé et du bien-être.

Making employment more attractive

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A few years ago, the authors of a white paper on the personal income tax system³ pointed to the need for better integration of the tax system and income transfers, in order to encourage people to seek employment and avoid creating a trap of poverty and unemployment.

Soon after the publication of the white paper, an innovative income support program was launched. Called the Parental Wage Assistance (PWA) Program, this initiative is aimed at making low-paid employment more attractive than social assistance, and encouraging low-income parents with dependent children to enter or to remain on the job market. The PWA Program thus helps improve the situation of adults with low-paid jobs and dependent children.

Government action since 1994

Efforts to involve local populations and to make employment more attractive than social assistance have been ongoing features of government action in favour of social development since 1994.

Over this period, the government has adopted a series of measures in line with its focus on social solidarity. Some of these measures are described in the appendix.

A number of reforms and policies have been aimed at enhancing employment and ensuring greater equity between income security recipients and low-income workers. Other measures have been designed to prevent poverty and promote equal opportunities. The current efforts to fight poverty will include an analysis of the impact of these reforms; where appropriate, corrective measures will be proposed.



The Government of Québec has deployed these efforts in a context of Canadian centralization and a fiscal imbalance in favour of the federal government. This situation limits Québec's ability to act. The provinces provide the population with priority services in areas like healthcare and education, the costs of which are spiralling. Paradoxically, the federal government collects more revenue than the provinces in order to fulfil less costly responsibilities.

This fiscal imbalance has been exacerbated by cutbacks further to the employment insurance reform and by substantial reductions in federal transfer payments to the provinces. The latter cuts continue, despite certain federal announcements. For example, even with the additional \$21 billion that Ottawa recently granted the provinces for the next five years, federal funding for basic social programs will not be restored to the 1994-1995 level until 2002-2003. As for Québec, even after all of the announced federal reinvestments, the federal contribution will be \$500 million lower in 2005-2006 than it was in 1994-1995. This situation has been denounced by all of the provincial governments.

In spite of this, the Québec government has restored a balance to public finances after three decades of budget deficits. Substantial efforts were devoted by all groups of society. One of the government's objectives is to reduce the tax burden in order to avoid a negative impact on Québec's competitive position and, by extension, on job creation. Tax reductions have already been granted, and \$3.5 billion in additional reductions were announced in the most recent budget speech.

Special efforts have been deployed for low- and medium-income families and taxpayers. The tax system has been made more progressive. The government has also allocated the major part of its surpluses for the past two years to higher investments in areas such as health and education.

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While the elimination of poverty starts with job creation and reductions in unemployment, it also requires measures in favour of individual and community development, as well as investments in the social safety net.

Over the past ten years, substantial efforts have been devoted to economic and social development. The results are encouraging, even though they are not as impressive as hoped. While the elimination of poverty starts with job creation and reductions in unemployment, it also requires measures in favour of individual and community development, as well as improvements in the social safety net. The OECD has highlighted the need for policies centred on employment, aimed at lowering unemployment, reducing dependence on social assistance and avoiding poverty.



The faces of poverty today

The North American economy has been growing for over nine years. As it took some time for this upswing to reach the Québec economy, the impact on the job market here has been visible mainly since 1998, with the creation of more than 300,000 jobs over a four-year period. In 2000, the employment rate for the population aged 15 to 64 reached 67.3%, an all-time high for Québec, compared with just 61.1% in 1981.

But Québec cannot stop here. With an average rate of unemployment of 8.4% in 2000, part of Québec's productive potential remains idle. This human and economic waste is intolerable in a modern society like ours. Unemployment figures hide deeper realities, which we have to tackle even more energetically.

Despite certain signs of a continental economic slowdown, to which we must give our full attention in the interest of ongoing economic progress, the dynamism of the Québec economy offers us an opportunity to better support groups that have not benefited from the fruits of economic growth in the last few years. These groups consist of people who are more vulnerable to poverty, including low-income households:

- Children are over-represented in poor families requiring preventive efforts. Indeed, social disparities in health and well-being are particularly clear during the perinatal period and infancy;
- Undereducated youth: Nearly 70% of young people receiving employment-assistance benefits have not completed their secondary education, and more than 50% of youth under 21 years of age who begin receiving social assistance are still receiving benefits 18 months later;
- Low-income families, particularly single-parent families: Close to 30% of all heads of single-parent families have an income below the low-income cutoff;

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- Certain recent immigrants experiencing problems in entering in labour market: The proportion of recent immigrants with permanent resident status who receive employment-assistance benefits was approximately 18% in September 2000. The percentage appears to have been considerably higher for refugees;
- Visible minorities: The unemployment rate for visible minorities is nearly double that for the general population;
- People with handicaps or with major limitations to their socio-professional integration, including the homeless: The number of people with severe limitations to their capacity for employment has increased, despite the reduction in the number of employment-assistance recipients. The proportion grew from 19.4% of adult social assistance recipients in 1994 to 27.2% in 2000. Close to 30% of handicapped persons in Québec live below the low-income cutoff;
- Native people: Aboriginals make up 1% of the population. There is a high incidence of poverty in this group.

Poverty among women in many of these categories is significantly higher.

Poverty is more concentrated in certain geographical areas: vulnerable districts of large cities, weakened rural municipalities, resource regions.

- Resource regions have a higher unemployment rate (average of 12% in 2000, compared with 8.1% in other regions) and account for a greater proportion of long-term social assistance recipients: 50.9% of recipients in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region and 44.8% in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region have been receiving benefits for ten years or longer, compared with an overall average of 36% for Québec.

These factors have a cumulative impact. Exclusion from the job market can lead to housing problems, food insecurity, poor health and increased violence.



Poverty also imposes other costs on society. In addition to costs directly related to income support programs, which in 2000-2001 totalled \$2.8 billion, and despite the substantial decrease in the number of social assistance recipients, poverty continues to have an impact on health and social services, education and the justice system. It also has a negative effect on economic growth. In addition, it engenders costs in terms of unused human resources, particularly qualified recent immigrants. Other negative repercussions are felt in the area of social cohesion, as poverty undermines society's ability to rise to challenges. It also has an adverse effect on participation in the democratic process and equal opportunities, due to its impact on young children and families. Poverty is strongly inter-generational.

More than ever, the desired synergy between economic development and social development, which will help us eliminate poverty and enable us to live better together, “consists of giving women and men the means to control their own destiny, guaranteeing their participation in decisions with an impact on their lives and enabling them to acquire skills and resources” (UNDP). This implies an impressive range of efforts: preventive measures aimed at encouraging young people to stay in school and favouring equal opportunities through support for early childhood development; employment-assistance measures (a priority approach in Québec for helping people become autonomous); measures targeting concerted action by key local stakeholders; actions aimed at developing the social capital of people who are unable to work; etc.

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Proposed approach and orientations

Based on an analysis of anti-poverty strategies proposed by various international organizations, we have identified a model for action. This model, or approach, will guide Québec's choices in a number of areas. The focus is on tangible efforts at the local and regional levels. The approach features perspectives for action and orientations that, following input from Quebecers, may be used to define future actions.

If we are to reduce poverty and build a society where everyone has a place and can make a contribution, these orientations should be seen as a starting point for a global approach for fighting poverty. The orientations can be grouped together under seven broad headings. In line with international experience, they take into account progress so far and may be used to mobilize society. The orientations also incorporate a series of perspectives submitted by the Collectif pour une loi sur l'élimination de la pauvreté.

The primary tools for eliminating poverty are creating and sharing wealth and developing employment.

Employment continues to be the primary means by which an adult can acquire autonomy and participate in society. Québec must therefore continue its efforts to make its economy more competitive and, in fighting poverty, give priority to approaches that favour the development of full employment in all regions, make employment more attractive and facilitate access to training, while continuing to lighten Quebecers' tax burden.

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Make employment more attractive and focus on the potential of individuals and communities.

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Our efforts to reduce poverty have to be in keeping with the quest for equity that has characterized the “Québec model.” They also have to allow us to meet the goals of the reforms launched since 1994, aimed at making employment more attractive and enhancing support for local development. In the framework of the fight against poverty, all of our choices have to encourage individual and community autonomy, so that individuals and groups can develop their strengths and, as a result, be in a better position to make choices and develop.

Favour local empowerment and mobilize civil society behind the fight against poverty.

While the government must provide leadership, efforts must be designed and deployed by the regions, regional county municipalities and newly merged cities.

While the government must provide leadership, efforts must be designed and deployed by the regions, regional county municipalities and newly merged cities. People and organizations targeted by the fight against poverty must also be involved in developing, implementing and evaluating efforts. The government has to create a favourable environment for this mobilization in favour of the neediest members of society, and join forces with private companies, social economy businesses, unions, community organizations and individual citizens.

Deploy cross-sectoral efforts to tackle all dimensions of poverty.

To be effective, we have to offer people afflicted by poverty access to opportunities for employment, education and skills, housing, culture, etc.

Don't Leave Anyone Out! defines poverty as the deprivation of choices and opportunities that allow individuals to lead a decent life. To be effective, we have to offer people afflicted by poverty access to opportunities for employment, education and skills, housing, culture, etc.



To attain this objective, we need to emphasize and upgrade all Quebecers' skills throughout their lives, make employment more attractive through measures aimed at supplementing work income, reduce inequalities in health and well-being, rethink our social safety net with a view to preventing the poorest members of society from becoming even poorer, encourage community support in disadvantaged areas, enable access to affordable housing, etc.

Prevent poverty through early efforts aimed at children.

Targeting children for early efforts is without a doubt the strategy most likely to have a long-term effect. Children and teenagers are not only Québec's future: reports on intergenerational poverty show that another "quiet revolution" is needed in order to renew our ability to rise to the equal-opportunity challenge. Preventive measures must also include teenagers and pre-teens in poor families, with a view to supporting them, encouraging their development, preventing teen pregnancies and combatting the worrisome phenomenon of intergenerational poverty.

... the strategy most likely to have a long-term effect.

Adapt and improve the social safety net.

There is a strong consensus that developed societies need to adapt their social safety nets to the new economic context. In light of experience, we must continually strive to improve the system: despite the progress we have achieved, the challenge of ensuring equal opportunities — e.g., equal access to information and skills, access to social and health services — has yet to be met.

... we have to focus on help for needy individuals and families, equal access to training and skills, as well as access to social and health services.

In improving income security measures, we have to focus on help for needy individuals and families. We also have to continue to improve labour standards, particularly standards designed to protect workers and provide a framework for non-traditional employment. In addition, we need to look at ways to supplement the earnings of low-income workers, in order to achieve an ongoing reduction in the incidence of poverty among people who are employed.



Target the most disadvantaged individuals, groups and geographical areas, and adapt our efforts accordingly.

Several task forces will be adapting, harmonizing and integrating approaches aimed at the groups most affected by poverty.

Over the next few months, several task forces will be adapting, harmonizing and integrating approaches aimed at the groups most affected by poverty, with a view to ensuring these approaches are coherent with other government policies and strategies, including the Québec policy on youth, the policy for supporting local and regional development and the soon-to-be adopted policy for recognizing and supporting community action. All departments and agencies will be involved in these efforts, and they are invited to encourage participation by the groups and organizations that make up their respective networks.

The following topics are proposed to guide the task forces' work with respect to the groups most affected by poverty:

Low-income families

- Availability of services conducive to successful socio-professional integration.
- Non-interruption of education for teenaged parents.
- Services favouring equal opportunities and child development.
- Social assistance framework for parents of pre-school-aged children.

Undereducated youth

- Impact of Solidarité jeunesse.
- “Upstream” income security measures aimed at preventing early school-leaving and favouring socio-professional integration for young people at risk.

Recent immigrants experiencing special problems in entering the labour market

- Quick access by certain recent immigrants (particularly refugees) to socio-professional integration measures.
- Recognition of experience and adaptation of skills.



Visible minorities

- Fight against systematic discrimination.
- Deployment of projects combining the various facets of job integration.

People with major limitations to their capacity for employment, including people with handicaps

- Reconfiguration of employment-assistance and social-integration services.
- Development of people's "social capital."
- Prevention of the deterioration of quality of life for people unlikely to regain their financial autonomy.
- Compensation for expenses related to handicaps.
- Efforts targeting homeless people.

Areas of concentrated poverty

- Reinforcement of community networks and group services.
- Housing, along with the revitalization and improvement of living conditions in areas of concentrated poverty.
- Public transportation in rural areas.
- Development of integrated approaches adapted to the reality of under-privileged communities.



Formative investments, immediately

The proposed approach is aimed at a wide validation of the orientations and efforts suggested by all socio-economic partners, leading up to the preparation by early 2002 of a national strategy for the fight against poverty. The government must nevertheless continue to fight poverty in the meantime. One of the measures announced during the last budget speech was the creation of a \$100-million reserve to fund formative investments in fighting poverty.

In the course of the next few months, this \$100-million social solidarity reserve will be used for investments conducive to development and to reducing poverty in disadvantaged areas. Through these investments, the government hopes to bring about a leverage effect, i.e., to ensure that its investments are complemented by money from other sources. It also plans to place priority on the creation of projects that meet local needs with respect to the fight against poverty.



Toward a national strategy to fight poverty

The proposed approach is based on dynamic input from people in all regions, who will be invited to join forces in order to define priority actions aimed at reducing poverty and identify ways of creating a stimulating environment conducive to their efforts.

As underlined by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), efforts to fight poverty have to focus not only on what needs to be done, but also on how it is done. In this sense, it is important that interested individuals and groups in each region play a role in defining actions and, on a more global scale, participate in follow-up.

Don't Leave Anyone Out! marks the start of this process, which will culminate in early 2002 with the adoption of a national strategy for the fight against poverty. Between now and then, interested groups across Québec will be asked for input and be invited to identify regional priorities for reducing poverty in the light of the proposals contained in the document. They will also be able to refer to efforts in their respective communities, particularly those launched in the wake of social development forums.

The results of these efforts will then be integrated into a national strategy to fight poverty. Upon adopting this strategy, the Government of Québec will devote the required means for deployment, with a view to equitable sharing of collective resources.

The strategy will also require indicators enabling us to measure progress in combatting poverty — i.e., improvements in social and human development.

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The government intends to involve groups concerned by poverty and exclusion, and to encourage research aimed at making anti-poverty measures more effective.

The government intends to involve groups concerned by poverty and exclusion in the efforts to monitor progress in reducing poverty, and to encourage research aimed at making anti-poverty measures more effective. For inspiration, we can look to the United Kingdom and the State of Oregon, where experts, organizations and citizens in general play a role in defining indicators, and where poverty-reduction efforts and results are outlined in an annual report.



A collective challenge

The approach and orientations described in this document represent the first step in defining a national strategy to fight poverty, in collaboration with people who work on a daily basis to improve the situation. The approach is aimed at improving the living conditions of the neediest members of society and at favouring their autonomy, and involves working with people who live with poverty, as well as with society's driving forces across Québec.

On the one hand, the approach is based on the deeply held conviction that Québec needs everyone in order to develop and for all of us to live better, together. At the same time, the approach is based on the need for new synergy between economic development and social development. If the creation of wealth and jobs is the leading motivation for government action, the fight against poverty is a moral imperative.

Don't Leave Anyone Out!: a challenge and a prerequisite for building a better future for all citizens.

Québec needs everyone in order to develop and for all us to live better, together.



APPENDIX

Examples of measures deployed since 1994

Employment

- increased support for the development of social economy enterprises;
- Act respecting income support, employment assistance and social solidarity, which tightens the links between employment assistance and financial support;
- a youth fund to support initiatives targeting social, community, cultural and vocational integration for young people aged 15 to 29.

Disadvantaged people

- a “zero-impovertism” clause for some 120,000 Quebecers who, for physical or psychological reasons, are unable to access the job market;
- creation of the Fonds de lutte contre la pauvreté par la réinsertion au travail, which aims at integrating the most economically disadvantaged members of society into labour market.

Families and children

- new family allowance program;
- implementation of educational childcare services requiring a lower contribution from individuals.

Women

- facilitation of support payments;
- Pay Equity Act.

Education

- support for Montréal schools (special measures for schools located in underprivileged neighbourhoods);
- implementation of the “Agir tôt pour réussir” project aimed at improving the education of young children (kindergarten and first cycle) in elementary schools located in underprivileged neighbourhoods.

Health and social services

- new prescription drug insurance plan ensuring basic coverage for the people most in need;
- health, social and educational support programs for young parents who are poor and vulnerable.

Housing

- government action plan in the area of housing;
- new shelter allowance covering all households receiving social assistance, as well as low-income households.



