

Structures for the governance of immigration and immigrant integration in Quebec

Executive Summary

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This research report examines the current structures for the governance of immigration and immigrant integration at the provincial level. It is divided into six sections which outline how immigration and immigrant integration is administered in the province. It describes 1) the constitutional accords, 2) the legislative framework, 3) policies/strategies/action plans, 4) government institutions (secretariats, ministries and other government organizations), 5) committees/working groups/councils/provincial agencies, and 6) programs/initiatives for immigration and immigrant integration. Each section presents, when relevant, data on immigration as well as the historical and political context for the making of policies and accords, the establishment of institutions and committees and the development of initiatives and programs.

Immigration and immigrant integration have undergone an early and progressive devolution of federal jurisdiction towards the provincial level in Quebec. That has given the province a level of autonomy much greater than that of the other provinces. The government made immigration an issue of societal and cultural sustainability in the late 1960s. It made immigration a subject for constitutional negotiation in the 1980s and signed successive accords with the federal government, each of which gave it more powers over immigrant recruitment, selection and integration. The signing of the Gagnon-Tremblay/McDougall Accord in 1991 was a decisive step in this process, guaranteeing that Quebec will receive a share of immigration proportional to the size of its population within Canada and giving it exclusive responsibilities for the number of immigrants received, the selection of candidates for immigration and the integration of newcomers. Today, many actors, both governmental (ministries, governmental organizations, institutions) and non-governmental (private and community organizations) are involved in the governance of immigration and immigrant integration in Quebec.

The recruitment and selection of candidates for immigration is carried out in accordance with the constitutional and humanitarian obligations of the province and government immigration policy. Under the Gagnon-Tremblay/McDougall Accord, Quebec has exclusive responsibility for

the selection of government-assisted refugees settling on its territory, which are to be received in numbers proportional to its overall share of immigrants. Selection is based on the nature of their refugee claim, their language proficiency, their human and social capital and the prospects for their integration into society. The province does not have jurisdiction over the selection of refugees recognized locally or over family class immigrants.

The provincial government has continually considered immigration to be an engine for economic and demographic development. The current strategic plan of the Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration (MIFI) is based on the coupling of the selection of candidates for immigration and the immediate labour needs of the whole of Quebec, as well as the sustainable settlement of immigrants in all of the regions of Quebec.

In order to support provincial economic and demographic development, in particular in non-urban communities, the MIFI collaborates with different private sector actors, which play an increasingly important role in the recruitment and selection of foreign, generally temporary, labour. It channels for example permanent and temporary economic immigration via different programs, some of which involve employers. That is the case for the largest program for permanent economic immigration in Quebec, the *Regular Skilled Worker Program* (the equivalent of *Express Entry* in other provinces), which favours candidates who (among other criteria) have received a job offer. Employers who want to meet labour needs can also recruit workers through the *Temporary Foreign Worker Program* and the *International Mobility Program*, which are managed jointly with the federal government. They can also participate in the selection of immigrants by offering full-time employment (in a predetermined area) to those with a temporary status, allowing them to apply for permanent residence under the Quebec Experience Program.

Among other private sector actors, the MIFI also enlists partners specialized in recruitment abroad which participate in the elaboration and implementation of a provincial strategy for the recruitment of foreign labour and businesses. This strategy involves a definition of the objectives of recruitment, the development of recruitment services abroad for Quebec businesses and a policy of prioritization of certain sectors needing foreign labour.

Besides the private sector actors, the MIFI enlists other ministries in the process of economic immigrant selection in Quebec. The Ministry of Economy and Innovation (MEI) is in charge of administering the immigrant investor program. It also participates in the selection of candidates for immigration under the *Entrepreneur Program*, which is intended for foreign nationals who want to come to Quebec to set up a business.

Finally, the personnel of the MIFI based in various branches of the immigration services also participates in the recruitment of labour coming to Quebec. They establish partnerships with various local actors, including educational institutions and sectorial networks, and organize recruitment events on site.

Along with foreign labour, international students are a desirable clientele for Quebec. The recruitment of these temporary immigrants, whose selection comes under both the provincial and federal governments, is mainly carried out by postsecondary institutions (universities, cegeps and private colleges). These institutions develop various strategies to attract students, organize recruitment missions abroad and collaborate with different actors which play the role of intermediary between Quebec institutions and the students' societies of origin.

The settlement, integration and francisation of immigrants has been under the exclusive jurisdiction of the province since 1991. This field brought together, in the 1970s, several non-governmental actors, mainly community and faith groups, with very little or no funding from the state. The relations between the community sector for settlement and integration, more experienced, networked and with a certain expertise, and the provincial government, involved more recently in the development of programs and the structuring of services for settlement and integration (and the principal funder since 1991), have slowly evolved towards an institutional recognition of the community sector and its expertise. Since 2002, community organizations working in various social fields, including immigrant settlement and integration, have benefited from stable funding associated with their mission and the recognition of their expertise by the ministry with which they are linked.

Today, government action on settlement, integration and francisation is embodied in financial support for partners which are the actual providers of services. In the area of settlement and integration, these partners are community agencies (constituted as not-for-profit agencies) and territorial entities (municipalities, cities, Regional County Municipalities). The community agencies and territorial entities can obtain funding through the three flagship programs of the MIFI for settlement and integration: the mission support program (PSM), the program for integration support (PASI) and the community support program (PAC), which provide services based on immigration status.

The ministries of Health and Social Services (MSSS) and of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity (MTESS) are also partners of the ministry in the fulfilment of its mandate to settle and integrate immigrants. In fact, the MIFI earmarks, under an annual agreement, an amount that it transfers to the MSSS to provide services tailored to the needs of immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. The regional program for the reception and integration of asylum-seekers (PRAIDA), the community agencies in Montreal which work in the area of the health of immigrant women and families as well as the intercultural training given in the health care community are all funded through this interdepartmental agreement.

The MIFI has the same type of agreement with the MTESS, to which it transfers funds for a range of integration and employment services provided to immigrants who have settled in the province less than five years before. It should be noted that the ministry of immigration has no program or services for economic and professional integration. This has been the exclusive responsibility, since 2012, of the MTESS, which has the mandate to meet the needs of the population as a whole, including immigrants, for assistance in the labour market.

Francisation has been for decades the cornerstone of the policies and programs for immigrant integration in Quebec. The MIFI has a well-funded francisation program, the Program for linguistic integration of immigrants (PILI), which is entirely delivered by the partners of the ministry. Added to this is the Program of financial assistance for the linguistic integration of

immigrants (PAFILI). Unlike settlement and integration, francisation is largely carried out by institutional actors (schools, cegeps, centres for professional or adult training, centres for educational services, universities), while community agencies play a much more limited role. The Ministry of education and higher education (MEES) is also a major player in francisation. It receives a transfer of funds from the MIFI (the amount determined through an annual agreement) so that it can participate in immigrant francisation by offering services for integration, French courses, referral and support services for youth and adults as well as special training. The MEES also allocates part of its own funds to immigrant francisation. It develops and offers, for example, francisation and special education programs and funds certain targeted services in school environments.