



Chapter 6

Promoting the Identity and Culture of Québec

Globalization favours the clash of ideas, lifestyles and identities and, while it has allowed humanity to make significant progress, it has also increased interdependence within the international community. Thus, globalization brings peoples of the world closer together while highlighting their diversity.

Forged by history, language, and culture, identity is also defined by a society's collective choices. In Québec, these choices are reflected in such principles as the rule of law, the status of French as an official language, equal rights for women, condemnation of violence, separation of church and state, respect for diversity, balanced labour relations, and sustainable development. They are also embodied in the overriding social consensus that has emerged over the years in support of universal health care, access to higher education, and solidarity with those most in need.

When the Government of Québec is involved in promoting its interests internationally, it does not set aside these choices and values that make up Québec's identity. On the contrary, it reflects these choices and values, and ensures that decisions made elsewhere do not limit the ability of the Québec society to live and prosper in a manner consistent with the choices it has made.

Among Québec's unique features, the use of the French language has a far-reaching influence on social organization and on the development of institutions specific to Québec, particularly with respect to the education system, culture, the administration of justice, the means of communication and governance. The government plays a decisive role in preserving and promoting these unique features of Québec's society while simultaneously encouraging its outreach to the world.

French as a Living Language

Francophones are a minority within Canada and make up only 2 percent of the North American population. In 1974, the National Assembly of Québec designated French as Québec's official language and subsequently adopted the Charter of the French Language, which is the cornerstone of Québec's language policy.

The success of this policy resides in the fact that it has been able to strike a balance between clearly affirming the French character of Québec's society and respecting the Anglophone and Aboriginal communities as well as Allophones that form an integral part of it. This language policy has allowed French to become Québec's primary language in the workplace, for business and trade, in education and in administration. This has unquestionably been one of Québec's great achievements.

Around the world, an increasing number of countries and communities are striving to achieve similar results, by balancing concerns regarding identity and openness to others. A total of 287 states and territories, in over 180 countries, have adopted policies to promote one or many languages. In this century, language planning has become a widespread rather than an isolated phenomenon.

What has been accomplished in this field should by no means eclipse the fragile nature of those gains. Promoting and fostering the French language remains an essential part of the Government's international policy.

Québec lends its support and expertise at forums of La Francophonie and is in a position to play a key role in developing French-language tools of learning and knowledge. Home to the French presence in North America, Québec hopes to develop closer ties with French-speaking communities in Canada and in the United States and to the development of the French language and culture in the Americas.

The role of French in emerging technologies is another major point of interest. The Government of Québec will work actively with regulatory bodies that establish international linguistic parameters in information technologies. Québec also wishes to collaborate with its partners in La Francophonie to make more Francophone content and Francophone works available in digital format.

Developing reference tools dealing with the French language will be an ongoing activity as well. Québec has made substantial international headway in this area. Language instruction is crucial to the expansion of French and should be bolstered by a strengthening of the global network of French instructors. Québec will support initiatives in this regard.

Promoting the French language has never meant that other languages should be neglected. In fact, Québec has the largest bilingual and multilingual workforce concentration in North America. Québec's European roots, North American lifestyle, and desire to live in French make it an impassioned defender of linguistic diversity.

Today, a large segment of Québec's population is bilingual. The younger generation has moved toward mastery of a third language, particularly Spanish. This undeniable advantage has already given Québec an edge in the Americas. In linguistic as well as cultural matters, Québec intends to assert its identity while at the same time remaining open to other languages and cultures. This principle forms the basis of Québec's international stance on cultural diversity and is a guiding social principle.

Québec's Culture on the International Scene

Cultural activities alone represent 2.3 percent of Québec's GDP. That figure rises to 7.7 percent when the communications sector is included. Over half of Canadian artistic performances abroad are produced by companies from Québec. The high number of artists and cultural exports from Québec on the international scene is all the more remarkable, given its relatively small population.

This international presence is vital to Québec's outreach and provides a source of stimulation and inspiration. New opportunities outside Québec mean more work and income for artists and for workers in cultural organizations and businesses. They extend production runs and increase sales of cultural products. They also foster partnerships and co-productions that allow for financial risk-sharing. Creativity builds as cultural exchanges grow. Every culture becomes enriched by another's artistry as it absorbs those cultural influences. Interaction with artists from abroad ultimately results in new audiences for new creations.

Four Major Challenges

Although Québec has gained exposure on the international stage, the cultural sector faces four major challenges.

First, the vibrancy of the international cultural market raises standards for quality and originality, while requiring more investment for artists to succeed away from their home base. Technical advances and the fading boundaries between artistic disciplines are changing the creative process and forcing artists to adapt and create new material more rapidly.

Second, cultural networks have changed, and new types of alliances are seeing the day. For example, certain networks, rather than being national in nature, are being created in cities, towns and regions, according to artistic or professional affinities. These cities and regions acquire international recognition through specific cultural events, such as the International Jazz Festival in Montréal, the Avignon Theatre Festival, the Frankfurt Book Fair, the Guadalajara Book Fair, and the Cannes Film Festival. They in fact become strategic crossroads for the presentation of first-rate cultural productions and places where international success and notoriety are achieved. In short, cultural activity also keeps pace with globalization. Every year, Québec hosts numerous artists, writers and producers from outside its borders, which shows that it is fully integrated in the major international distribution networks. Its presence abroad is based on reciprocity, which means that it is well organized to host foreign artists during international festivals and events taking place in Québec.

Third, new information technology, such as digitalization, is radically changing ways of creating, producing, distributing and accessing cultural products. This is affecting established practice in many areas, threatening intellectual property, raising concerns about the protection of artistic works, and diversely impacting major producers.

Fourth, accessing international markets has gotten more difficult. New border-crossing controls often impede the activity of artists and artistic groups who plan to perform outside Québec. Obtaining visas and other permits requires more effort, and fiscal constraints continue to grow. Certain institutional rigidities and the preferential

treatment afforded local artists create additional barriers that cultural excellence and innovation alone cannot always easily overcome.

New Leverage

This situation makes it imperative for Québec to make choices, exert consistent effort, and use new leverage to its best advantage. The development of markets abroad also requires new, more diversified skills and knowledge, especially in the areas of management and marketing. More efforts must be devoted to the acquisition of this expertise, while preparing the coming generation to provide leadership in this area.

For Québec's artistic companies and cultural enterprises, this means:

- Targeting initiatives and markets more efficiently, in terms of whether they are established or emerging;
- Perfecting specific market development tools and expertise;
- Developing a better understanding of foreign markets and audiences;
- Conceiving collaborative, well-planned, and ongoing steps for cultural initiatives outside Québec.

The arts and cultural industries must participate more fully in new international networks. To do so, they will have to rely on their individual strengths, but also seek to establish partnerships in Québec that will make it possible for them to participate in these transnational networks.

The originality of Québec's model also generates increasing interest internationally and will benefit from being even further enhanced. In fact, Québec has a number of strengths to draw from: a public system for supporting the fine arts, performing arts, literature and cultural industries, legislation on the status of artists, a policy to protect and affirm the French language, support for emerging artistic endeavours, and the experience acquired in management of the cultural sector. These tools must, from now on, be better integrated into Québec's international cultural outreach, and contribute to its influence abroad.

Promoting Québec's Cultural Interests

While it is aware that further trade liberalization plays a role in prosperity and development, Québec advocates a form of globalization that is respectful of cultures and diversity in artistic expression. Cultural goods and services have a double nature: they are vectors of identity and values that are also objects of commerce. Recognizing this duality, the Government of Québec strives to maintain its capacity to support cultural industries and artists.

Along with the federal government, with the backing of the cultural sector in many countries and thanks to the concerted efforts of La Francophonie, Québec encouraged the negotiation of the international *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* under the auspices of UNESCO. It is Québec's responsibility to continue this commitment by promoting the Convention's ratification and implementation by as many countries as possible.

More and more areas of cultural activity are becoming the focus of international instruments. Some multilateral forums have already begun drafting global standards for digital publishing and information technologies. Other organizations are interested in knowledge sharing and the development of projects related to cultural policy, as well as intangible heritage, and intellectual property.

Technological advances are likely to continue to change national and international cultural dynamics, adding still more complexity to the processes of creation, production, and distribution, as well as to the role of government regulation. New communication technologies will undoubtedly create the need for increased diversity in French-language content. This will require Québec's renewed involvement in joint projects with other members of the Francophone cultural community, because these changes affect Québec's distinct nature. This is why the Québec government intends to participate in international forums whose deliberations could affect cultural policies.

The Influence of Québec

A substantial part of what is written about Québec in the foreign press concerns its artists and creators, highlighting the excellence and innovative character of its cultural performances. These activities thus directly shape Québec's image and reputation abroad, and are among the major expressions of its identity.

It is to Québec's advantage to transpose that image of cultural excellence and innovation to other areas where it wishes to enhance its presence internationally. Developing a strong image abroad, reflecting its characteristics and strong points, contributes directly to the attainment of its international goals, whether economic, scientific or political. To that end, Québec intends to focus on the features that have contributed to its cultural influence, and use them support to its actions and its trade worldwide. Specifically, its efforts will focus primarily on four sectors:

- Attracting foreign direct investment;
- Positioning Montréal as one of the major cities of the world;
- Promoting tourism;
- Making Québec's education opportunities better known.

To secure the credibility of Québec and the stability of international perceptions about it, one must go beyond image; a second effort is required to ensure that opinion-leaders outside Québec, as well as the experts they consult, have a balanced understanding of various aspects of Québec society. To that end, the role of Québec's representatives abroad is a decisive one. Equally important is the increasing number of Québec studies programs that allow people abroad to learn about Québec. By supporting the development of Québec studies programs, the Government of Québec succeeds in stimulating interest among growing numbers of university researchers in the United States, Europe and other parts of the world. The International Association of Quebec Studies (IAQS) brings together 2200 researchers from 65 countries, representing 46 fields of interest. The two regions showing most interest are North America and Europe, although strong gains have taken place in Latin America and Asia as well. In the United States, the work of 15 centres for Canadian studies that have a

particular focus on Québec, is also worth mentioning. In all, 300 researchers are members of the American Council for Quebec Studies.

Developing an international image and shaping an accurate perception of Québec outside its borders will also require specialized internet applications. As a result, the international portion of the Québec government's internet portal will be improved, with online services increased in the areas of education and immigration. This evolution takes into careful consideration the whole new reality of online services, and work will therefore be done to adapt existing ways of doing things and to develop new tools for customer service. Similarly, these new programs must enable Quebecers to be better informed on the Government's activities and to take part in debates that will help define Québec's stand on international issues.

Priorities and Key Initiatives

OBJECTIVE **PROMOTING THE IDENTITY AND CULTURE OF QUÉBEC**

Priorities

- Support the worldwide promotion and recognition of the French language.
- Develop planning and organizational expertise to better market Quebec's cultural products and events abroad

Key Initiatives

Support the worldwide promotion and recognition of the French language.

- Participate in the work of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) regarding the use of French in information technologies
- Participate in working groups established at the World Summit on the Information Society and in the Internet governance forum, with the aim of monitoring questions related to linguistic diversity.
- Foster international recognition of Québec's linguistic expertise. Support the worldwide development of French language instruction.

Develop planning and organizational expertise to better market Quebec's cultural products and events abroad

- Develop statistical indicators for the purpose of tracking trends in Québec's international cultural presence
- In consultation with artistic and cultural communities, implement strategies for planning the deployment of Québec's cultural activities based on the world's most promising cultural poles
- Establish a system of international operators and representatives, particularly in the performing arts, aimed at creating a higher profile for artistic and cultural communities at leading international fairs and festivals
- Provide financial assistance to artists and cultural industries for the development of international marketing expertise and financial planning, to increase international circulation of artists and their productions, especially in the United States.
- Increase support for the translation of Québec works, particularly in English and Spanish
- Implementation of a concerted and reciprocal approach to hosting of international artists and institutions.