



## Community action

A crucial contribution  
to the exercise of citizenship  
and social development in Québec

The representatives of the Comité aviseur de l'action communautaire autonome and those of the Comité interministériel de l'action communautaire have participated in all the various policy development phases of the community action recognition and support policy.

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**PUBLISHED BY:**

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

September 2001

This document is available on the Internet

[www.mess.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca)

*Ce document est disponible en français.*



# A WORD

## FROM THE MINISTER

I am very pleased to present the government's community action recognition and support policy entitled *Community Action: A crucial contribution to the exercise of citizenship and social development in Québec*. In providing Québec with a community action recognition and support policy, we are affirming the place of community organizations at the centre of the renewal of Québec's social policies. Indeed, it is a way of fully recognizing their role in the social and economic development of Québec.

Through the adoption of this policy, the government recognizes two essential criteria: respect for the independence of community organizations in the many social roles they are asked to accept and the need for adequate support of community action in citizenship.



This policy is based on experience, serious thinking and constructive exchanges with community organizations and offers guidelines for government initiatives to assist the community sector in consolidating its action and sphere of influence. It involves a revision of government funding practices, particularly to build structured bases, accountability, openness and confidence and thus maintain free and voluntary lines of communication that are sound and productive between government and the community sector and, at the same time, support the overall mission of community organizations.

I am convinced that with this policy, the Québec Government is laying the important groundwork for the recognition and support of community action. The policy sets the stage for continued dialogue and for the development of promising new practices.

**The Minister for the Elimination  
of Poverty and Exclusion,**



**Nicole Léger**

# MAIN THRUSTS

## OF THE CHANGES UNDER THE COMMUNITY ACTION RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT POLICY

### PREAMBLE

- All government departments and agencies have been working together closely for over three years.
- The community sector has rallied around the draft policy and was consulted by the Comité avisier de l'action communautaire autonome and by the government.
- The policy will prove beneficial for the community sector and the government. It responds to the main needs expressed by the sector and provides guidelines for government department initiatives.
- It is designed to generate structured support for citizenship and social development in Québec.

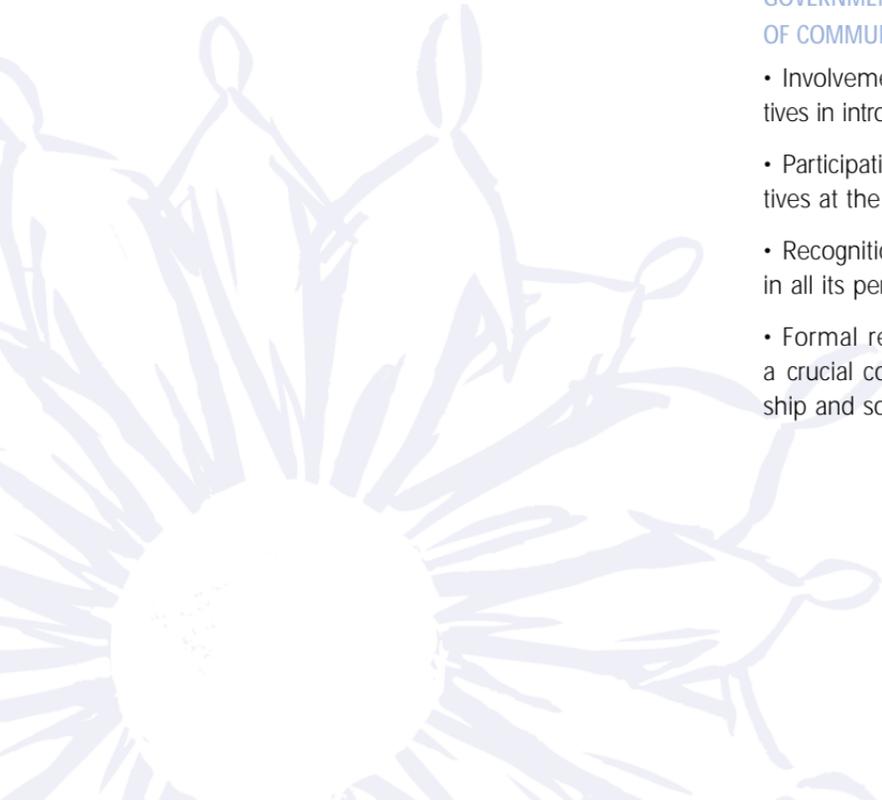
### THE MAIN CHANGES AS A RESULT OF THE POLICY ARE THE FOLLOWING:

#### ADMINISTRATION:

- Harmonization of the mechanisms for access to funding, using a three-year timeframe.
- Harmonization of accountability mechanisms and requirements based on the size and budgets of the organizations concerned; streamlining of procedures, etc.
- Crafting of management monitoring models that respect the mission of government bodies and the autonomy of community organizations.
- Fuller grasp of the ins and outs of community action and its role in the development of Québec.

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY ACTION:

- Proposal of three government funding approaches:
  1. Financial support for the overall mission.
  2. Service agreements.
  3. Financial support for specific activities or for ad hoc or short-term projects.
- Explicit recognition of the role of rights advocacy organizations and refocusing of the Fonds d'aide in order to support those organizations.
- Recognition of the role of umbrella organizations; government departments are called upon to support the umbrella groups in their field of endeavour.
- Commitment to support recruitment, training, and volunteer guidance and supervision, and to promote recognition of the skills developed through volunteering.
- Institution of a program to promote innovation and research in community action.
- Recognition of the training needs of members of boards of directors, administrators and other players in addition to volunteers.



## GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY ACTION:

- Involvement of community sector representatives in introducing and implementing the policy.
- Participation of community sector representatives at the forums where policies take shape.
- Recognition of the contribution of volunteering in all its permutations.
- Formal recognition of community action as a crucial contribution to the exercise of citizenship and social development in Québec.

### CHAPTER ONE – PERSPECTIVES, DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION, BASES, SCOPE

Chapter one discusses the importance ascribed to the third sector or the voluntary sector elsewhere in the world and provides an overview of community action in Québec. It describes the goals the government is pursuing through the adoption of an official policy as well as the bases for the policy, which highlight the importance of community action in citizenship and social and economic development, as well as the crucial issue of the autonomy of community action organizations, in other words, the necessary distance between them and the government. Respect for the independence of the community sector is a leitmotif that runs throughout the policy.

Chapter one also explains the scope of the policy:

- The government acknowledges community action in the broad sense; the policy is therefore intended for the community sector as a whole.
- The government also recognizes independent community action and the features specific to it; it expressly supports the resulting alternative services by instituting a funding mechanism tailored to its features.

The policy then goes on to specify the criteria applicable to community action organizations within the broad meaning of the term, as well as the additional criteria that apply specifically to independent community action organizations.

The organizations excluded from the policy are those not involved in community action, such as professional associations, unions or religious organizations, as well as foundations whose sole purpose is to raise and allocate funds.

## CHAPTER TWO – RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY SECTOR, SUPPORT MEASURES AND STRUCTURE-INDUCING INITIATIVES

Chapter two of the policy presents the mechanisms for recognition, that is, the type of working relations the government wishes to have with the community sector, as well as the support measures it intends to make available to it. In order to harmonize government department and agency practices, it has been proposed that existing models be progressively restructured to fit three funding formats:

> Funding for independent community action: a tool for promoting and supporting independent community action

This funding format is a key element of the policy proposal in support of the overall mission of independent community action organizations. It is in the form of a lump sum that takes into consideration all aspects of the endeavours of these organizations. This amount does not necessarily cover all operating costs, but, rather, a basic threshold representing a sizeable portion of the costs deemed allowable. This financial support is complementary to the contribution of the community and various other sources of funding could be taken into account, such as membership fees and drives, private sector support in the form of access to goods or services, and volunteering.

> Funding aimed at collaboration in developing services that complement public services: service agreements

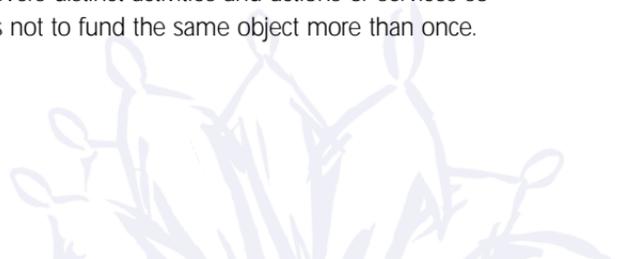
Services can be provided by organizations whose activities are basically complementary to public services, or by independent community action organizations that already receive funding for performance of their overall mission. In the latter case, service agreements are used in tandem with other funding. The rationale for service agreements differs markedly from that of funding for the overall mission of community organizations insofar as they are contracts specifying the mutual commitments of the parties concerned.

> Funding for ad hoc or short-term projects or activities

In addition to funding for the mission of independent community action organizations and service contracts, funding for ad hoc activities or projects is also possible. Each government department or agency would maintain responsibility for the terms and conditions governing access to this kind of financial support and for assessing the relevance of the projects. The general costs for realizing projects would be included in the allowable costs.

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Thus, each of the three funding approaches covers distinct activities and actions or services so as not to fund the same object more than once.



> Other configurational initiatives

Supportive measures other than funding include:

- support for recruitment and guidance and supervision of volunteers as well as for recognition of the skills developed through volunteering;
- support for the training and professional development of salaried staff within community organizations;
- adaptation of procedures according to the funding formats and the features of the organizations (size, budget, etc.) and harmonization of accountability procedures;
- harmonization of the other administrative procedures applicable to community organizations;
- collaboration with the community sector in crafting evaluation means, mechanisms, procedures and indicators.

### CHAPTER THREE – IMPLEMENTATION: SACA, THE COMITÉ AISEUR DE L'ACTION COMMUNAUTAIRE AUTONOME, THE COMITÉ INTERMINISTÉRIEL AND A REFOCUSED FONDS D'AIDE À L'ACTION COMMUNAUTAIRE AUTONOME

This chapter discusses implementation of the policy. It defines the role and the mission of the Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome du Québec, e. g. coordination of the work entrusted to the Comité interministériel as part of the implementation process. The mandates of the Comité interministériel and of the Comité aiseur de l'action communautaire autonome du Québec are also described. A consultation and coordination table that brings together all community organizations will be asked to take part in the work to implement the policy.

Chapter three also deals with the mission of the Fonds d'aide à l'action communautaire autonome and the move to refocus it towards support for organizations whose primary mission is rights advocacy. This is how the policy recognizes the role played by these organizations and the need for distance between them and the government departments and agencies they are called upon to scrutinize as social critics.

The final section addresses the financial ramifications of the policy, specifically, that its implementation will require supplementary budgetary appropriations on a recurrent basis, and that government department and agencies will have to evaluate the resources needed to continue instituting the various means and measures.



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