

Job seekers



Quebec City: room to develop your talents

**PRATICAL
IMMIGRATION GUIDE**

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Foreword

Why create a guide for immigrants?

This guide compiles information from various sources and presents it in a practical format.

Québec International, the official economic development agency for the Quebec City region, promotes the development of high-growth companies in regional sectors of excellence (e.g. applied technologies, health/nutrition and manufacturing) and helps them meet the challenges posed by the regional shortage of qualified workers. Focusing on employment and the labour market, this guide is designed to facilitate the immigration process for qualified workers and their families who relocate to the Quebec City region to work and live.

Supporting business growth and development is our paramount concern, particularly in terms of companies' efforts to find qualified personnel to undertake their proposed projects. Recruiting immigrant workers and giving them the tools to achieve a successful social and professional integration are thus key priorities for all regional economic stakeholders.

The main goals of this guide are to compile essential information in a single document, to assist prospective immigrants and to identify organizations and institutions working to facilitate immigrants' integration. You'll also find testimonials by other people who, like you, decided to immigrate to the Quebec City region and who discuss the keys to their success.

Produced in association with the main regional and government immigration stakeholders and written by a team of specialized immigration and human resources consultants, this guide will hopefully prove helpful during your move to the Quebec City region and as you embark on the integration process.

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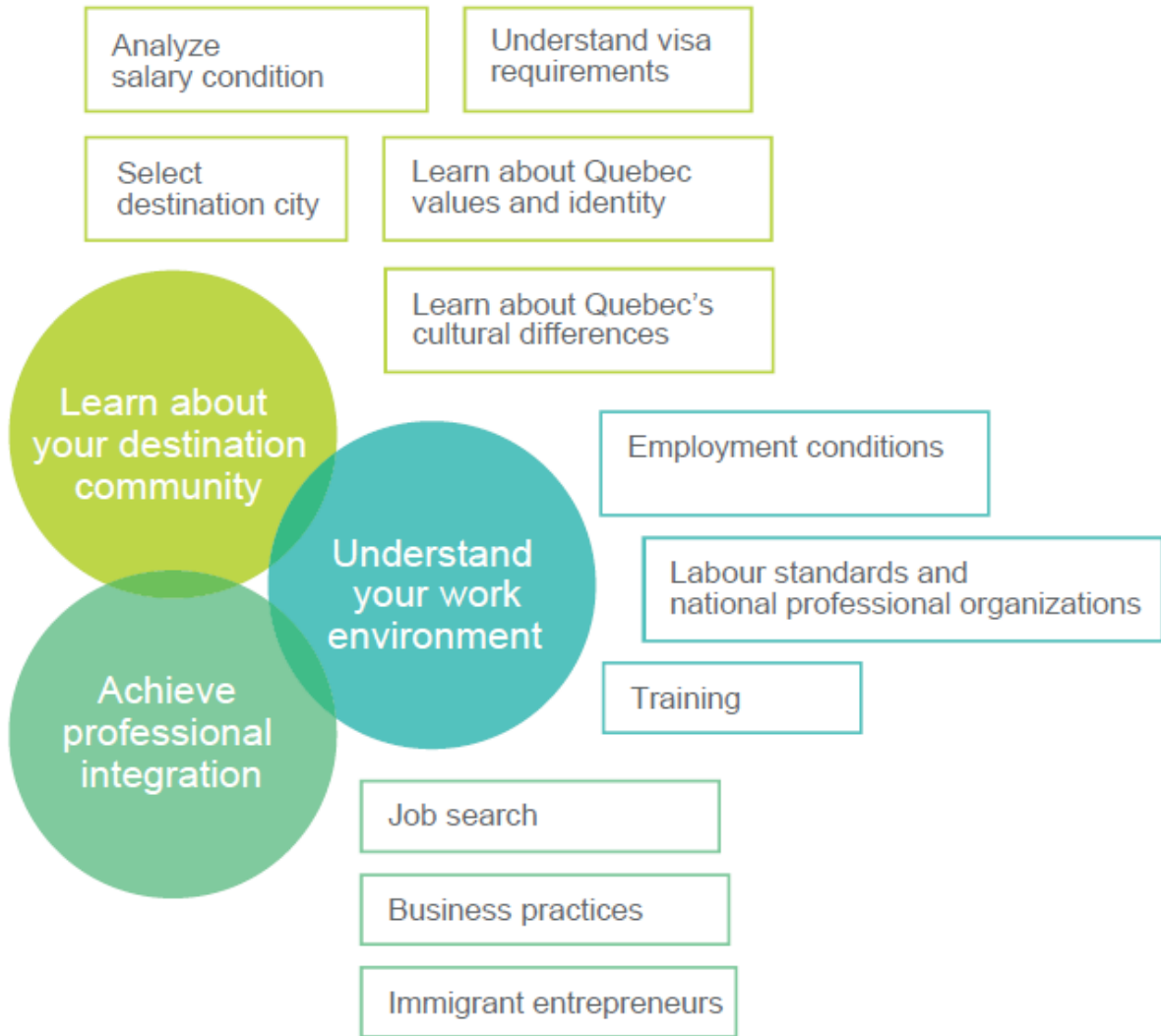
Project manager: Québec International

The information in this guide was compiled from multiple sources and updated in October 2009. It is in no way intended to replace any legal requirements, policy statements or official programs. This guide may not be modified without the complete approval of Akova Inc. and Québec International.

All excerpts from this guide must cite the source.

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Immigration essentials at a glance



Essential guides, tools and documents

Learning about Quebec: Guide for my Successful Integration – Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC)

Guide de l'immigration au Québec - Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) [French only]

Your Complete Job Search Guide - Emploi-Québec

L'immigration au Québec – Partage des responsabilités Québec - Canada – Statuts des personnes se trouvant au Québec – Immigration categories - Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) [French only]

Pour enrichir le Québec - Intégrer mieux – Mesures pour renforcer l'action du Québec en matière d'intégration en emploi des immigrants - Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) [French only]

Quebec at a Glance – Department of International Relations (MRI)

Portrait économique de la Région de la Capitale-Nationale – Regional administrative conference – August 2007 – National Capital Bureau (BCN) – Emploi-Québec – Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (MDEIE) [French only]

Quebec Handy Numbers, 2008 Edition – Quebec Institute of Statistics (ISQ) [French only]

Guide du Centre syndical et patronal du Canada sur l'intégration et la pénurie des compétences – Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC) [French only]

Immigrants in the Hinterlands - André Bernard – January 2008 - Statistics Canada

Information Technologies – Québec International

La planification de l'immigration au Québec pour la période 2008-2010 – Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) [French only]

S'installer et travailler au Québec – 5th edition – 2009-2010 – Laurence Nadeau Collection: Express Emploi [French only]

Useful websites

Emploi-Québec: www.emploiquebec.net

Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC): www.micc.gouv.qc.ca

City of Quebec: www.ville.quebec.qc.ca

Quebec City Chamber of Commerce: www.ccquebec.ca and www.emplois-immigrants.com

Voice of English-speaking Québec: www.veq.ca

Orientation and Integration Service for Immigrant Workers (SOIT): www.soiit.qc.ca

Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (MDEIE):
www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca

Akova blog: www.akova.wordpress.com

French Immigration and Integration Office (OFII): www.ofiicanada.ca
Special feature “S’installer au Canada”, *Express* magazine: www.lexpress.fr/emploi-carriere/canada [French only]

1.1 Relocating to Quebec: Quebec City highlights

Quebec City, capital of the province of Quebec, is renowned for its liveability and numerous advantages.

Designed on a human scale, Quebec City has slightly more than 500,000 inhabitants; approximately 700,000 people live in the greater metropolitan area. It is the second largest economic hub in the province of Quebec and the seventh largest in Canada.

With over 300 km of express lanes and an efficient road network, Quebec City is virtually free of traffic problems. Driving across the city is hassle-free, even during rush hour.

A great place for sports and nature lovers

Adjoining the St. Lawrence River and the Laurentian Mountains and dotted with lakes, rivers and forests, Quebec City and the surrounding areas offer a wide range of sports and outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, skiing, dog sledding, cycling, snowmobiling, boating, hunting and fishing. Outdoor enthusiasts can reap the benefits of outstanding natural settings all year round.

A growing and diversified economy

In recent years, Quebec City's economy has grown significantly and become more diversified. The labour market is in excellent shape and unemployment is very low (less than 5% in September 2008). Each year, hundreds of millions of dollars are invested in research and development throughout the region, which has one of the highest GDP growth rates in North America. Large numbers of jobs have been created in the past five years, while annual investment growth has held steady at nearly 9.5%, nearly double the Canadian average of 5%.

Qualified workers

Quebec City is home to a large-scale university network, in addition to professional training centres, technical colleges and specialized institutes. Laval University, founded in 1852, was North America's first francophone university and is the continent's second oldest postsecondary institution after Harvard.

The University of Quebec, founded in 1967, has 10 campuses provincewide. It is headquartered in Quebec City, along with the National Institute of Scientific Research (INRS), the National School of Public Administration (ENAP) and Tele-University (TELUQ). Thanks to its large student population, Quebec City reflects a sense of youthful vitality. And with its highly trained and specialized workforce, Quebec City ranks among the best places in the world to live.

Dedicated to service and innovation

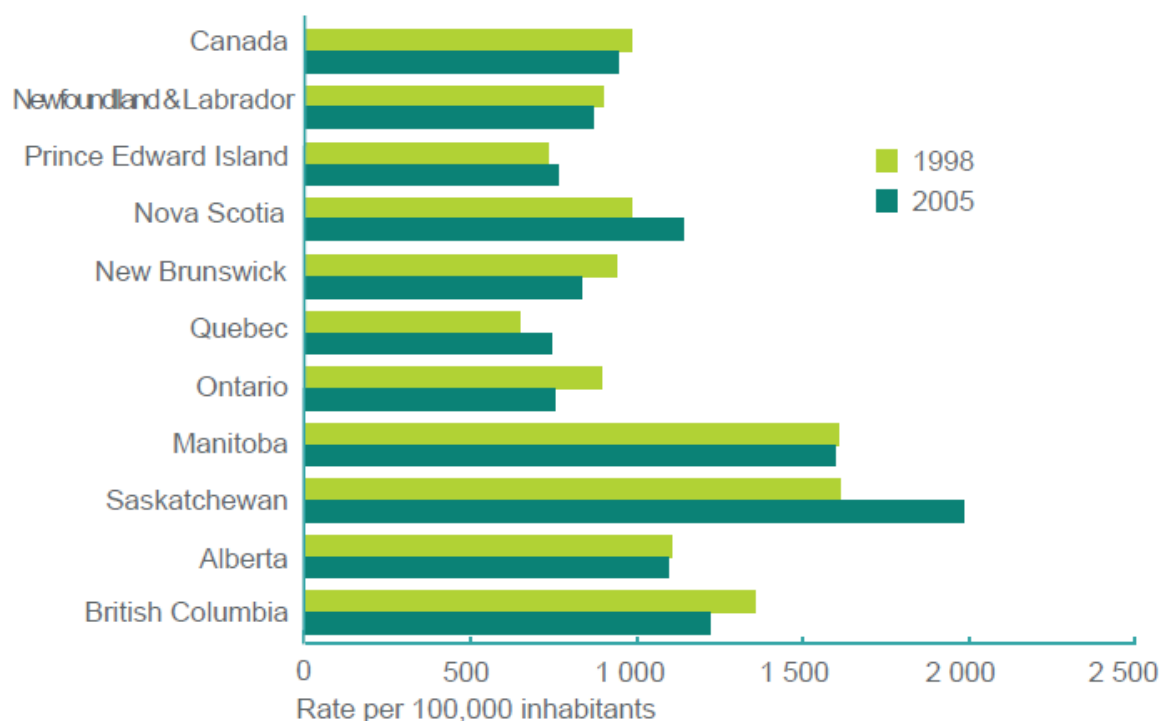
Quebec City has made extensive efforts to diversify its economy and develop various industries (e.g. professional services, science and technology, tourism and information, culture and recreation). In addition to the manufacturing sector, emphasis has been placed on industries with highly skilled workers. To encourage further diversification and economic development, regional stakeholders have identified a number of sectors of excellence that will be developed from the perspectives of competitiveness, innovation and exports. These sectors include life sciences, health and nutrition, applied technologies, processed materials, tourism and insurance. The efforts to diversify the economy in recent years have begun to pay off. Today, Quebec City and the surrounding areas boast a growing number of new technology companies, supported by dynamic and world-renowned research facilities.

The regional economy is underpinned by the services industry, which accounts for nearly 85% of total employment. Consistent with Quebec City's role as the provincial capital, the public and parapublic sectors make up 30% of the urban workforce.

Where safety is the norm

Quebec's capital and its suburbs are well known for their safety, with one of the lowest crime rates in North America. *Today's Parent* magazine ranked Quebec City as the best urban area in Canada to raise children. When viewed from this perspective, Quebec City offers outstanding quality of life.

Table 7.1 Violent crime rates by province



Source : Statistics Canada, CANSIM : table 252-0013.

Did you know?

Quebec is the safest province in Canada and has one of the lowest rates of crimes against persons in the industrialized world – fewer than 700 crimes per 100,000 inhabitants in 2007.

Quebec City is among the safest places to live in North America.

Affordable real estate market

Real estate prices in Quebec City are among the lowest in Canada and are still affordable despite a marked increase in recent years.

Average house sale prices (CDN\$)

Quebec City	239,688
Montreal	303,707
Toronto	410,995
Vancouver	680,782
Provincial average	252,165
Canadian average	324,928

Source: Canadian Real Estate Association, August 2010

A clean city focused on sustainable development

In recent years, Quebec City has developed a sustainable development policy and has drawn up action plans to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2007, it received a pollution prevention award from the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

Quebec City has adopted an environmentally responsible transportation approach, with dedicated carpool lanes, an extensive bike path system (271 km) and a public transit network.

In 2008, Quebec City was classified as a “green municipality” in the listings published by *Corporate Knights* magazine. In the category of medium-sized metropolitan areas, it was ranked as the Canadian city showing the greatest concern for sustainable development.

Since Quebec City’s economy is so strongly service-oriented, there are very few high-pollution industrial sites. The natural environment is unspoiled, with good air quality, wide-open spaces and lots of parks and green space.

A French-speaking city

French is the official language of Quebec and is the language of government, work and instruction. More than 80% of Quebecers speak French at home. However, bilingualism is a definite asset in some sectors of the labour market.

So think things through before deciding on which city you would like to relocate to. It's an important decision that will have major consequences in terms of quality of life and your family's well being. Weigh your options and gather together all the information you'll need. If you decide to move to Quebec City, you can count on access to employment and genuine quality of life.

"The impression made upon the visitor by this Gibraltar of America: its giddy heights; its citadel suspended as it were in the air; its picturesque steep streets and frowning gateways; and the splendid views which burst upon the eye at every turn: is at once unique and lasting."
Charles Dickens - *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842).

Source: [City of Quebec website](#)

Useful links:

www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/immigrants

www.quebecinternational.ca/choose-quebec

Quebec Handy Numbers, 2008 Edition, Quebec Institute of Statistics (ISQ)

1.2 Understanding Quebec values and identity

Can Quebec values and identity be defined?

If immigrants to Quebec are seeking to adapt and integrate smoothly, it is absolutely essential that they gain an understanding of the values underpinning Quebec society.

As a francophone (French-speaking) society in the heart of North America, Quebec has developed a profound attachment to its culture, which reflects its French roots and First Nations heritage. Due to its geographic proximity, Quebec is also strongly influenced by American culture, as evidenced in aspects of day-to-day life such as housing, employment, social interactions and money. To fully understand Quebec culture and society, the contributions of its multicultural communities must also be taken into account.

Quebec is proud to have developed its own culture. It is a reflection of its unique reality, history and population and is based on a set of core values: male/female equality, the rule of law, secular government, freedom of expression and association, French as the common language of all Quebecers, mutual respect of rights and freedoms and a pluralistic and democratic society.

As the official language, French is the common language of public life in the province of Quebec. Quebecers are deeply committed to defending, preserving and promoting the French language, which is not only a means of communication: it is also a powerful symbol of allegiance. Promoting the use of French, however, does not affect individuals' right to use their preferred language in private communications.

A pluralistic society: individuals are free to choose their own lifestyle, values, opinions and group affiliations within the limits of the law.

A democratic and secular society: the independence of political and religious power is a core value of Quebec society (the separation of church and state is a fundamental principle).

Male/female equality: men and women have the same rights and responsibilities. The government has enacted legal protections ensuring equal opportunity in the workplace, in the justice system and within the institution of marriage. Among other things, Quebec's *Civil Code* stipulates that married couples must retain their respective names. Violence towards other people is strictly prohibited.

Quebec society places great emphasis on accommodation, compromise and consensus. Openness to diversity, tolerance and respect are also key interpersonal values. Conflict resolution is primarily based on negotiation. The violent expression of ethnic, political or religious differences or prejudices is strictly prohibited.

Children's rights: children also have rights in Quebec. Parents are responsible for raising, protecting and caring for their children. The *Youth Protection Act* seeks to guarantee minors' rights. Wrongfully injured minor children may require the assistance of the Director of Youth Protection.

Right to education: schooling is mandatory until age 16 in Quebec and pre-college education in the public system is free of charge (see Chapter 2.2 "Quebec's education system").

Right to healthcare services: healthcare services are regulated by the provincial government. Universal coverage is provided under the provincial medical insurance plan. Services are free of charge for Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Immigrants generally qualify for coverage after they have been in the country for three months. All eligible individuals are issued a medical insurance card providing access to healthcare services.

Racism is strictly prohibited in Quebec. Quebecers undertake to encourage the full participation of all persons in the province's economic, social and cultural development, without regard to their skin colour, religion, ethnic origin or nationality.

Today, Quebec society is a mosaic of approximately 100 cultural communities, languages and religions. These communities make key contributions to the province's social, economic and cultural development. They coexist peacefully and are encouraged to maintain harmonious relations with other cultural communities.

When communicating and forming relationships, Quebecers take a straightforward approach. Their communication style is usually quite direct, explicit and to the point. They normally maintain a certain physical distance when speaking with others. In Quebec French, the use of the informal "tu" form for "you" (as opposed to "vous") is very common between young people and other persons in the same age group.

Quebecers usually take their time commitments very seriously. Punctuality is required for all types of meetings, whether private or professional.

When waiting to be served in public, Quebecers usually follow the "first-come first-served" rule. People line up in stores, banks and cinemas and at bus stops. Those who flout this rule face being reprimanded.

Environmental protection: Quebecers are deeply concerned about the environment and about day-to-day measures designed to protect the environment.

Sources:

- *Learning About Quebec: Guide for My Successful Integration* – May 2007– www.apprendrelequebec.qc.ca
- *Guides to Immigration Procedures (MICC) – Unit 5* – Reference manual - October 2006

Testimonial

When we left Belgium and relocated to Quebec City in 2004, we had no idea that moving would be the best decision we'd made in a long time. Of course, there's always an element of luck when things go right. But having the right attitude is very important as well.

First of all, you should research the essentials thoroughly BEFORE you leave: driver's licence, medical insurance, opening a bank account, etc. With the Internet today, you can no longer say you "didn't know". When you arrive, refrain from comparing your new home with the "old country". Get rid of any "better vs. worse" thinking, which will prevent you from putting down roots. And don't over-rely on immigrant groups, no matter how friendly and useful they may be. We developed an obsession with meeting as many Quebecers as we could. Seize every opportunity you can to improve your understanding and appreciation of Quebec society and to find your social niche. Networking is important, particularly in Quebec City, where everyone knows everyone else.

Our integration was so successful because of the attitude we adopted—a mixture of humility, curiosity and determination. The jobs we have today are very satisfying and our daughters feel optimistic about their future prospects—an optimism that would be envied by many Belgians. And for good reason: everything is possible here, provided that you have the energy and the determination.

Isabelle and Vincent Vermandele (Belgians who immigrated to Quebec in 2004, working respectively as a translation project manager and as a planning and emergency communications consultant/Laval University instructor.)

1.3 Understanding cultural differences

1.3.1 The French language in Quebec

French has been the official language of Quebec since 1974: it is the language of government, communications, business, schooling and is the usual language of the workplace.

As stipulated in the *Charter of the French Language* (known as Bill 101), French is the official language of Quebec. In addition to protecting and promoting the use of French, the Charter:

- Guarantees the right to an English-language education for the anglophone (English-speaking) minority of Canadian origin.
- Recognizes that anglophones are entitled to receive healthcare services in English.
- Also recognizes that the First Nations peoples (e.g. Amerindians and Inuits) are entitled to maintain and develop their original languages and cultures.

As a regional variant of the French language, Quebec French has developed a unique vocabulary.

Quebec is a francophone society and most people speak French at home (only 10% speak English at home).

Quebec French has a number of unique features and expressions, as well as numerous local and regional varieties. In your initial contacts with Quebecers, you may need to get used to words or expressions that you may not understand or be familiar with. However, you'll adapt to Quebec French without too much trouble.

It is important to remember that you should never point out or "correct" a word or expression that may seem incorrect to you in French. Although such words or expressions may not be considered correct in the French spoken in your country, they are perfectly acceptable in Quebec. Quebecers do not appreciate it when people attempt to correct their French.

The historical roots of Quebec French lie in *le français populaire*—the informal form of the language spoken in the 17th and 18th centuries. The first settlers came from various regions of France and spoke several different dialects. By the time the *filles du Roy* arrived (female orphans sent to New France to marry and boost the colony's population), *le français populaire* was the dominant form of French in Quebec. Quebec French began to become more standardized following the British Conquest in 1763.

Over the years, Quebec French has adapted and evolved into a dynamic regional variant of European French.

Surrounded by a sea of English-speakers, Quebecers have always faced the threat that their language might one day become extinct. For that reason, the Government of Canada adopted a policy of official bilingualism covering federal government services (signs, labels and packaging of goods and services) in response to French-speakers' lobbying and advocacy efforts.

Accents

Quebecers are sometimes told that they have an accent—but remember that a Quebecer may well think that you're the one with the accent!

Use of informal “tu”

The informal form “tu” (you) is commonly used by Quebecers in a wide range of contexts (known as “tutoiement” in French); calling someone “tu” may be inappropriate or much less common in other parts of the French-speaking world. In Quebec, calling someone “tu” in a friendly way is seen as quite polite and opens the door to new relationships more quickly and directly. Some Quebecers will address complete strangers, even clients, as “tu”—so please don’t be shocked or surprised! In Quebec, the more formal form “vous” is often used when speaking to older people. If you feel uncomfortable calling someone “tu”, use “vous”, but be sure to explain why to the person you’re speaking to.

Swearing

Known as “sacres” in French, swearwords in Quebec include terms such as “calice”, “hostie” or the infamous “tabarnak”. These terms, which were borrowed from the Catholic liturgy, are a key part of Quebec French. But be careful: they may have negative or vulgar connotations! Their use reflects the Catholic Church’s profound historical influence on Quebec culture and society, extending into the 1960s. These swearwords are also used to express emotion, anger or surprise.

Interrogative particle “tu”

When people ask a direct question in informal contexts, the particle “tu” often functions like an interrogative or exclamatory adverb. You’ll often here questions like “C’est-tu loin, ça?” (“Is it far?”), “Ça vous tente-tu vraiment d’y aller?” (“Do you really feel like going there?”) or “Ça va-tu?” (“How’s it going?”).

Anglicisms

Quebecers care deeply about preserving their language, which is a key symbol of their identity. Due to historical reasons and its specific geographical context, Quebec in some ways resembles a French-speaking island drowning in a sea of English-speakers! As a result, Quebecers are always on the lookout for anglicisms (English words or expressions used in French). For example, Quebecers say “fin de semaine” instead of using the English word “weekend”, which is very common in many other parts of the French-speaking world. Quebec French, however, has borrowed a large number of English-language expressions, although these are often adapted into French with changes in meaning, spelling and/or pronunciation. Quebecers wouldn’t say “Vous êtes tombé amoureux du Québec” (“You have fallen in love with Quebec”), but rather “Vous êtes tombé en amour avec le Québec” (patterned on the English expression “to fall in love”). So be forewarned that you run the risk of being corrected—firmly but politely—if you use anglicisms when speaking French in Quebec!

Feminine forms of nouns

The trend of creating feminine forms of certain nouns (e.g. names of trades, professions and job titles) has caught on across the French-speaking world. Quebec has the most extensive experience in this area of linguistic diversification, known as “feminization”. The use of special feminine forms is well established in current usage. First and foremost, this trend aims to fully reflect woman’s roles within society. For example, certain trades and professions were once reserved exclusively for men but have subsequently opened their doors to women. These social changes have led to the creation of new words to designate women’s new roles.

Did you know?

In Quebec French, people say “Bonjour!” to mean hello as well as goodbye. The three meals of the day are “déjeuner”, “diner” and “souper” (in that order). And after being thanked, people will respond with “bienvenue” (“you’re welcome”), instead of “de rien” or “il n’y a pas de quoi”.

Straightforward, direct and to the point

Quebecers communicate in a very straightforward and direct way, so striking up a conversation is very easy. However, unlike certain African or European cultures, becoming a part of Quebecers’ private lives can be more difficult—it may take time and you’ll have to develop trust.

Political correctness

Quebecers consistently use expressions of respect that indicate their commitment to “politically correct” language. For example, people use the term “minorités visibles” (“visible minorities”) rather than “minorités raciales” (“racial minorities”).

Consensus and conflict resolution

Dialogue and consensus—not direct confrontation—are the preferred ways to resolve conflicts. Quebecers prefer discussing and negotiating to achieve the necessary compromises and reach an agreement. You are thus advised to avoid direct conflicts and confrontation. Quebecers dislike controversy. Reprimands are relatively infrequent and are certainly not used in public (e.g. a professional setting) or even privately (e.g. when talking to children).

Talking about money

As in the rest of North America, Quebecers are not embarrassed to talk about money: your car is worth however much, you make \$X per year, etc. Money is a topic of conversation like any other, and some Quebecers just love talking about it. You don’t have to follow their lead, but don’t be surprised when you hear about it!

1.3.3 Rules of conduct, networking and protocol

Quebecers are usually friendly when approaching someone or striking up a conversation. They won’t be shy about calling you by your first name, even if they’ve just met you!

Quebecers show great respect for established rules of conduct, although they have little time for formalities and protocol—a tendency that cuts across all social lines. Tolerance, composure and reasonable behaviour are appreciated. Punctuality is very important: arriving late for an appointment (whether private or professional), even by a few minutes, is frowned upon. Punctuality is viewed as a sign of respect towards others and the time they are willing to commit to you.

Quebecers entertain at home less frequently than in some other cultures. However, when they do, you are advised to bring your hosts a gift of some kind (something from your home country would be especially appreciated; otherwise, flowers or a bottle of wine would be appropriate). You might even be asked to bring an appetizer or dessert.

Social networks

Networking is very common in Quebec. One of the explanations for this phenomenon is historical: when Quebec was founded, the colonists settled in villages in which the houses were separated by large distances. This meant that Quebecers needed to know their neighbour's business if they wanted to keep up to date on community life! It also encouraged mutual assistance in times of need. Given the daunting task of building New France and Quebec, the new settlers encouraged open lines of communication and extensive social contacts.

Developing a personal network is an important and natural part of embarking on a new life, but it requires patience and determination. The people in your network—someone experiencing some of the same difficulties as you, an immigrant in your cultural community who is already well established, perhaps a Quebecer with whom you share common interests—can provide you with support and encouragement in your various endeavours.

When you're ready to start creating your own network, a number of complementary approaches can be used.

Prior to leaving your home country, discuss your plans with acquaintances or friends who are already living in Quebec and become a member of various online communities.

Once you've arrived in Quebec, the following activities can help build up your network of contacts:

- Get involved in your neighbourhood by signing up for recreational, sports, social, cultural or community activities.
- Do volunteer work.
- Cultivate your relationships with friends, neighbours and acquaintances.
- Attend parents' meetings at your local school or daycare.
- Attend the information sessions offered by the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC).
- Sign up for a guided bus tour of Quebec City organized by the municipal international relations committee (Commissariat aux relations internationales):

The guided bus tour lasts half a day and encompasses the La Cité, Rivières and Sainte-Foy/Sillery districts, giving you a unique glimpse into life in Quebec City's various neighbourhoods. You'll learn about the various types of housing, businesses, recreational facilities and educational institutions. Please sign up by email at the following address: relationsinternationales@ville.quebec.qc.ca

1.3.4 Embracing risk and success

Unlike in some other parts of the world, the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Quebec. Indeed, it is the cornerstone of a shared value system, mentality and way of life.

Great emphasis is placed on daring to be different ("willing to try something new") and on practical knowledge ("learning by doing"). Quebec culture embraces risk and effort; failure is accepted, while success is valued highly. People who create wealth by taking on risk play key roles. They are fully accepted; they are never criticized.

Professional setbacks are tolerated in North America. Failed business start-ups are seen as a valuable learning experience or a stepping-stone to success in the next venture; they are not seen as a lifelong burden as they are in some other countries. That means that recovering from setbacks is much easier! This can-do attitude makes it easier for people to accept failure and to understand that we don't always make the right choices—and that questioning the choices we make is one way to encourage risk taking.

In Quebecers' minds, risk is closely associated with inventiveness and initiative. Each of us takes risks that we must evaluate and calculate. Needless to say, risk tolerance varies from person to person.

There is an element of uncertainty in all of the choices we make—although uncertainty can be transformed into a sense of confidence. This in turn increases our chances of success and fosters our creativity and willingness to undertake new ventures, to be proactive and to adapt.

There's one linguistic difference that reflects Quebecers' inherent optimism: people in France say "prendre un risque" ("to take a risk"), while people in Quebec say "prendre une chance" (based on the English expression "to take a chance").

1.3.5 Proving your worth

In Quebec, interpersonal skills are just as important as technical skills: your attitudes, conduct, achievements and competence count for more than your training, professional qualifications and the school you went to. Such factors are not seen as fundamental and are emphasized less than in other cultures. Quebecers are highly pragmatic; they value logic and facts. The notion of general knowledge is less important.

Most employers you'll meet won't be aware of the credentials, institutions or educational programs in your home country. They may have little knowledge of your experience and may not take it into account on your first job. Please do not take this personally.

Consequently, you may have to start out at a lower level than you did in the past and you'll be required to prove your worth. However, opportunities for career advancement will come quickly once you've demonstrated your "value-added" and your willingness to take on additional responsibilities. Employers in Quebec will be quick to offer promotions and review your salary conditions—but you're advised to be patient in the early stages.

1.4 Types of visas and processing times

1.4.1 Permanent resident visas

Immigration is a shared area of jurisdiction between the Quebec and Canadian governments. The Canada-Quebec agreement on immigration, which took effect on April 1, 1991, regulates the sharing of responsibilities. The immigration process is fairly lengthy: it takes from 12 to 18 months to obtain a permanent resident visa.*

*** This process may take longer for applicants from certain countries.**

The provincial government is responsible for:

- Determining the number of immigrants to Quebec
- Selecting candidates and defining the selection criteria
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants

The federal government is responsible for:

- Determining the total annual number of immigrants to Canada
- Defining and applying entrance and residency criteria
- Defining case processing standards and immigration categories
- Admitting immigrants into Canada

The permanent resident visa process may be divided into three stages subsequent to the preliminary evaluation.

Preliminary evaluation

You are advised and encouraged to complete the preliminary immigration evaluation form (évaluation préliminaire d'immigration/EPI), available online at www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca, in order to evaluate your chances of being selected by the Quebec government. You will get a faster response if you use this online tool.

The selection factors for the qualified worker immigration program are as follows:

- Area and length of training and years of schooling completed
- Professional experience
- Age
- Knowledge of French and English
- Amount of time you have spent in Quebec and your kinship with a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Quebec
- Relevant information about your accompanying spouse (as applicable)
- Ability to support yourself financially (you will be required to sign a contract under which you undertake to provide for your own needs and those of your family for at least the first three months after you arrive in Quebec)

A) Selection by the Quebec government and the Quebec selection certificate (CSQ)

Quebec is responsible for selecting prospective immigrant workers. You are required to complete and submit an application form. If you are selected, you will receive an official Quebec selection certificate (certificat de sélection du Québec/CSQ), which is issued by the Quebec government and is valid for three years.

B) Visa applications and admission of workers by the Canadian government

Only prospective workers who have been pre-selected by the Quebec government will be permitted entry into Quebec by the Canadian government. To qualify, selected candidates must apply for permanent residency and must successfully complete the following requirements (as must all other family members):

- Medical exam: candidates must undergo a medical exam prior to leaving their home country, as must all of their dependents (even if they are not immigrating to Canada with the primary applicant).
- Criminal background and security checks: if you have a criminal record, you will not be permitted entry into Canada on the grounds that you are a national security risk.

If you wish to immigrate to Canada, you and the accompanying members of your family aged 18 and over must submit a police certificate to the Canadian Visa Bureau.

C) Confirmation of permanent residence

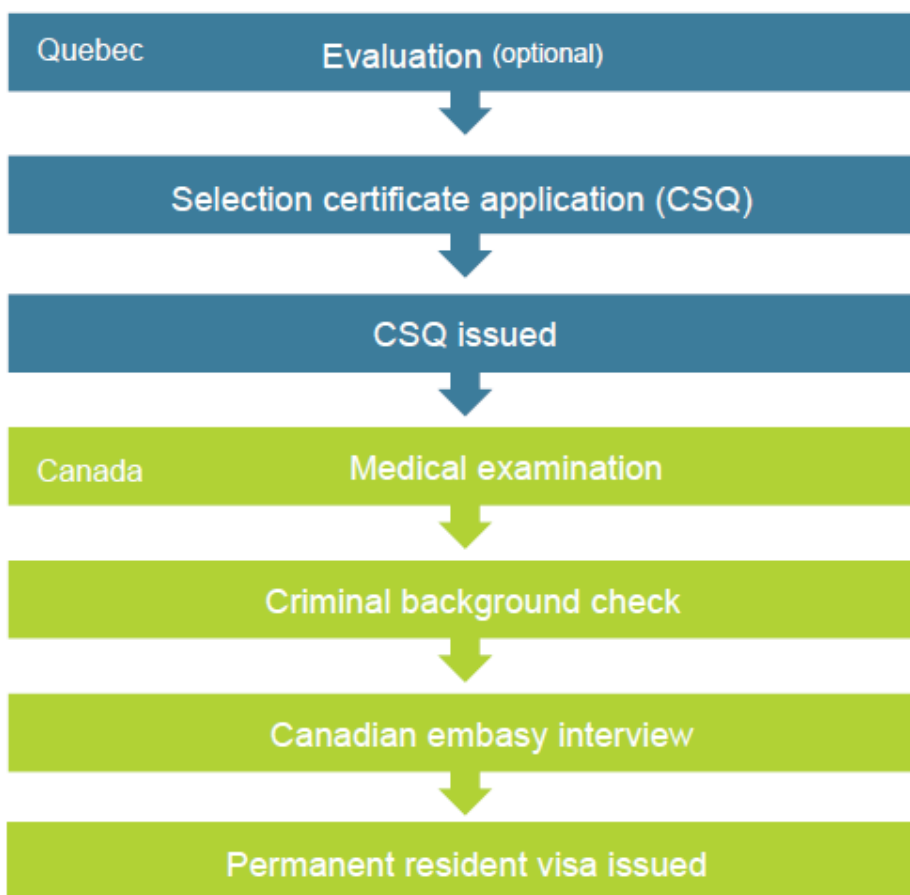
If your application is approved, the Visa Bureau will issue a permanent resident visa in your name. This visa includes your confirmation of permanent residence and your visa upon arrival in Canada.

Permanent immigrants may be divided into three categories:

- Family reunification immigrants
- Refugees
- Economic immigrants, including qualified workers, self-employed workers, entrepreneurs and investors

Source: [MICC website](#)

The visa application procedure consists of the following steps:



1.4.2 Temporary visas

Temporary immigration is also an area of shared jurisdiction between the Quebec and Canadian governments. The federal government's responsibilities are the same as for permanent visas.

The provincial government is responsible for:

- Jointly evaluating the proposed employment with the federal government
- Issuing the Quebec approval certificate (certificat d'acceptation du Québec/CAQ)

In association with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Quebec is required to issue a ruling on the proposed employment's impact on the labour market as part of the approval process.

Therefore, individuals may work temporarily in Canada with a temporary entry visa, although they must first obtain a job offer from a Canadian employer; this offer must then be validated by the

provincial and federal governments. Immigrant workers must also undertake to hold the position for the prescribed time period and must have the required skills.

Procedure for prospective immigrants

If you are a prospective immigrant, you must submit various documents so your prospective employer can have your temporary employment offer approved:

- A completed application form for the certificate approving your temporary employment in Quebec (certificat d'acceptation du Québec/CAQ).
- The supporting documentation required to process your CAQ application.
- Payment of the CAQ application review fee.

If your employer's job offer is approved, your employer will provide you with a copy of the letter confirming the offer, together with two copies of your CAQ certificate issued by the MICC (one copy is for you; the other is for Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

Procedure for prospective employers

The employer must:

- Complete the HRSDC's Foreign Worker Application and submit it together with the required supporting documents (as applicable) to the HRSDC-Service Canada centre (foreign workers).
- Submit the following documents to the MICC:
 - A copy of the foreign worker application submitted to HRSDC and the relevant supporting documents.
 - Payment of the fee for reviewing the temporary employment offer.
 - The Quebec government's application for certificate of acceptance for temporary work completed by the foreign worker.
 - The supporting documents required for CAQ application processing.
 - Payment of the CAQ application review fee.
- Submit a work permit application to the Canadian visa office serving your country.

A special category has been established for information technology (IT) workers. Due to an acute shortage of qualified workers in Canada's software sector, the federal government has simplified the admittance process for workers whose skills are in high demand by the IT industry.

For further information, please visit www.cic.gc.ca.

Once you arrive in Canada

If you find a job in Canada and are subsequently issued a work authorization and a temporary entry visa, you will be required to present both documents to an immigration agent upon your arrival in Canada. The agent will provide you with various forms that you must complete to obtain a social insurance card and social insurance number (SIN). Your SIN is an identification number that you must provide to your employer. If you have difficulty filling out the forms, assistance is available from an HRSDC agent.

Your employment authorization is not a contract. If your job duties change or if your employment is extended, your employer is required to contact Services Canada and the MICC in order to obtain the required authorizations.

Fees and processing times

- Labour market opinion: no fee (processing times may vary from region to region).
- Foreign worker application: \$177 (processing = 5 days)
- Application for certificate of acceptance for temporary work: \$177 (processing = 5 days)
- Work permit: \$150 (processing times may vary by visa bureau).

For further information, please visit www.cic.gc.ca.

Source: MICC website

1.4.3 Specific programs: working holiday program and youth mobility programs

The federal government has signed youth mobility agreements with various countries. Canada may issue a 12-month temporary work permit to young people from these countries. Each country has an assigned quota, which, in certain cases, is allocated to specific programs.

The following table indicates those countries that have signed bilateral international mobility agreements with Canada.

Country	Working Holiday Program	Young Worker Exchange
Australia	Yes	Yes
Austria	Yes	Yes
Belgium	Yes	-
Czech Republic	Yes	Yes
Denmark	Yes	-
France	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	Yes
Ireland	Yes	-
Italy	Yes	-
Japan	Yes	-
Latvia	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes	Yes
New Zealand	Yes	Yes
Norway	Yes	Yes
South Korea	Yes	
Sweden	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	No	Yes

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade website, *In the Interest of Canadian Employers: A Win-Win Situation*: www.international.gc.ca

Working Holiday Program

The Working Holiday Program (WHP) is an excellent opportunity for young people from foreign countries to come to Quebec or the rest of Canada for up to one year. It is geared towards young people seeking to engage in tourism and cultural discovery and hoping to gain work experience in Quebec or the rest of Canada. Eligible individuals under the program are issued an open temporary work permit that does not require a specific employer.

The WHP is not intended for student interns. Individuals can only take part in the program once; the work permit cannot be renewed or extended. Consequently, the work permit is not suitable for individuals seeking long-term employment contracts. Successful applicants are responsible for paying for their own airline tickets, insurance and all other travel and living expenses.

The procedures are straightforward: complete the appropriate form, submit the required documents (photos, photocopy of your passport, proof of financial stability, résumé (CV), letter of interest and statement of bank account information) and pay the application fee by bank transfer (approximately €100 or \$150).

Processing takes five to eight weeks. Successful applicants will receive a letter of authorization by email. You must then take out an insurance policy and present proof upon arrival in Canada.

Useful links

www.pvtistes.net
www.acs-ami.com

Youth mobility agreement: training-oriented employment or professional development

Additional agreements have been signed in the areas of youth mobility and young worker exchanges. These programs vary by country. The following website provides comprehensive information: www.international.gc.ca.

In France, for example, the training-oriented employment program (“emploi de perfectionnement”) is geared towards young professionals hoping to acquire professional experience in a job with a fixed-term contract (18 months maximum). www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca

In Switzerland, a professional development program has been established for young people who have completed at least two years of professional training and who wish to undergo additional technical or professional training in their field under an employment contract (18 months maximum). geo.international.gc.ca

For further information, please visit the embassy websites.

1.5 Salary conditions and living standards

1.5.1 Wages and taxes in Quebec

Pay periods: Pay periods are not necessarily monthly in Quebec. Most of the time, employees are paid every two weeks (26 pay periods annually). Sometimes they may be paid weekly.

Income taxes: Taxpayers are required to report their income and pay income tax in the province in which they resided on December 31 of the tax year. Tax rates increase as income rises (known as “progressive taxation”). The federal and provincial tax rates are cumulative (i.e. added together). Income taxes are deducted at source. Employers are responsible for deducting the prescribed amounts under the tax regulations.

2009 provincial income tax rates

Rate	Income bracket
16%	Less than \$38,385
20%	\$38,385 to \$76,770
24%	More than \$76,770

2009 federal income tax rates

Rate	Income bracket
15%	Less than \$41,200
22%	\$41,200 to \$82,399
26%	\$82,400 to \$126,264
29%	More than \$126,264

Other payroll deductions

Federal

- Employment Insurance (EI):
 - Premium rate: 1.38%
 - Maximum insurable earnings: \$42,300
 - Maximum employee contribution: \$583.74

Provincial

- Quebec Pension Plan (RRQ):
 - Premium rate: 4.95%
 - Maximum: \$46,300
 - Maximum employee contribution: \$2,118.60
- Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (RQAP):
 - Premium rate: 0.484%
 - Maximum: \$62,000
 - Maximum employee contribution: \$300.08

Sample pay slip

Income: \$30,276 (26 pay periods per year)

Gross pay: \$1,164.46

Deductions: EI: \$16.07

Federal income tax: \$81.20

Quebec income tax: \$100.47

RRQ: \$50.98

RQAP: \$5.64

Total deductions: \$254.36

Net pay: \$910.00

Please visit the following websites for more information on salary conditions in Quebec:

www.informationmarchetravail.ca

www.salarywizard.monster.ca

www.technocompetences.qc.ca

www.stat.gouv.qc.ca

1.5.2 Average income

Median annual income* (2006)

Couples with or without children and single-parent families

City	CDN\$
Canada	63,600
Quebec City	67,100
Sherbrooke	57,000
Montreal	60,800
Trois Rivières	56,900
Gatineau (Ottawa)	70,900

*The median is the level that divides the population in two: 50% of the population has a higher income and 50% has a lower income than the median.

Average annual income by household type (2007)

Household type	Total income (CDN\$)	Disposable income* (CDN\$)
Single person	31,255	26,039
Family	74,762	61,826
Couple without children (two incomes)	66,150	54,332
Couple with children (two incomes)	91,564	74,385
Single-parent family (headed by a woman)	39,347	36,669
Single-parent family (headed by a man)	60,302	49,318

*Disposable income equals income after income taxes.

Source: Statistics Canada 111-0009

1.5.3 Typical family budget, purchasing power and average expenses

To help you prepare a budget, the following table provides information on the typical average budget for a family living in the Quebec City metropolitan region.

Percentage (%) of gross income spent on major household budget items in Quebec (2006)

Budget item	Single person	Couple without children	Couple with children	Single-parent family
Food	12.1	12.2	12.1	12.8
Housing	23.9	17.1	15.6	17.0
Housekeeping	4.9	4.0	4.8	4.9
Furniture	3.5	3.6	2.8	3.1
Clothing	3.6	4.1	4.3	4.9
Transportation	10.5	14.1	14.1	13.8
Healthcare	3.8	4.1	3.0	3.3
Personal care	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.0
Recreation	5.1	6.0	5.8	5.4
Reading material	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3
Education	0.6	0.4	1.7	1.9
Tobacco, alcoholic beverages	3.4	2.5	2.0	3.1
Miscellaneous	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.5
Gaming	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.5
Current consumption	76.1	72.4	69.9	74.6
Personal income taxes	17.1	20.0	22.2	17.9
Individual insurance and retirement contributions	4.6	5.8	7.4	6.4
Cash donations and contributions	2.1	1.7	0.5	1.2

Source: Statistics Canada

Average household expenses by selected metropolitan area (2007)

	Quebec City		Montreal	
	Average expenses per household	Households declaring expenses	Average expenses per household	Households declaring expenses
	\$	%	\$	%
Total expenses	64,053	100.0	59,554	100.0
Total current consumption	44,549	100.0	42,173	100.0
Food	7,369	100.0	7,558	100.0
Housing	10,127	100.0	11,416	100.0
Housekeeping	2,666	100.0	2,611	99.9
Furniture and accessories	1,644	90.1	1,577	90.0
Clothing	2,776	100.0	2,509	98.5
Transportation	9,451	96.9	6,861	98.3
Healthcare	2,673	100.0	1,962	98.5
Personal care	1,193	100.0	1,121	100.0
Recreation	3,391	96.9	3,036	95.4
Reading material and other printed matter	275	78.3	274	72.4
Education	557	37.2	811	36.4
Tobacco products and alcoholic beverages	1,439	93.1	1,310	87.8
Gaming (net amount)	94	44.9	167	51.6
Miscellaneous	893	93.5	960	89.5
Personal income taxes	13,027	93.6	13,103	91.8
Individual insurance payments and retirement contributions	4,934	86.9	3,320	83.1
Cash donations and contributions	1,544	72.7	957	60.4

Note: Metropolitan area: the overall concept for delineating metropolitan areas is one of a large urban area together with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of social and economic integration with this urban area.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table (for fee) 203-0001 and catalogue no. 62F0026MIF.

Last modified: Dec. 22, 2008.

Monthly apartment rents*

Quebec City metropolitan region, October 2008

Apartment type	CDN\$
Studio	452
1 bedroom	558
2 bedrooms	653
3 bedrooms	750

*Utilities (heating, lighting, telephone, Internet and cable television) are not included.

Prospective immigrants should be aware that the cost of living in Quebec is slightly higher than in Europe.

You should also budget for other expenses relating to your move and to immigration procedures.

2.1 Labour standards and employment conditions in Quebec

2.1.1 Overview of current standards

In Quebec, the *Act respecting labour standards* sets out employment conditions for individuals not covered by a collective agreement or employment contract. The provincial labour standards commission (Commission des normes du travail/CNT) is responsible for enforcing this legislation. The CNT protects workers and seeks to establish harmonious labour relations. It also determines the minimum wage, statutory (i.e. public) holidays and mass layoff procedures.

The vast majority of employees are covered by the protection plan established under the *Act respecting labour standards*. If you would like detailed information on these standards, please visit the CNT's website at www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca. The following is an overview:

Statutory holidays (eight days per year): January 1 (New Year's Day); Good Friday or Easter Monday; the Monday preceding May 25; June 24 (Quebec's Fête Nationale); July 1 (Canada Day); the first Monday in September (Labour Day); the second Monday in October (Thanksgiving); December 25 (Christmas Day).

Hourly minimum wage: \$9.00 (May 2009).

Length of work week: No more than 40 hours. In most companies, employees work between 35 and 38 hours per week.

Overtime hours must be paid at the regular rate plus 50%.

The pay period is every two weeks. Generally, employees are paid at regular intervals not exceeding 16 days.

Paid holidays

- Less than one year of seniority: one week
- One to five years of seniority: two weeks
- More than five years of seniority: three weeks

Days off for family or parental leave

- Adoption, childbirth, termination of pregnancy: five days off, including two paid days off
- Death, funeral: one to four days off (depending on the degree of kinship), including one paid day off
- Marriage or civil union: one day off
- Maternity leave: 18 weeks
- Paternity leave: five weeks
- Parental leave: both parents may take parental leave of no more than one year

Did you know?

Paternity leave is available in Quebec for all new fathers. The following options are available:

- Five weeks of benefits: 70% of regular salary (basic plan)
- Three weeks of benefits: 75% of regular salary (special plan)

Individuals may begin to receive paternity benefits in the week in which the child/children are born.

For further information, please visit the RQAP's website at www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca.

Trial or probationary period: Trial or probationary periods are not regulated and may not be applicable in all cases. They may be specified by the employer in the employment contract.

Termination of employment: Employers must give employees written notice of termination of employment before terminating their contract or before laying them off for longer than six months. The timeframe for giving notice varies according to the employee's length of continuous service.

Complaints and legal recourse: Employees may file a complaint with the CNT if they are dismissed without just and sufficient cause. In that case, they may be represented free of charge by a CNT-designated lawyer.

Did you know?

According to various statistical sources, 85% of job offers are filled through networking. As for the remaining 15%, half of these jobs are posted on the Internet and half are advertised in newspapers!

2.1.2 Labour market flexibility and employment insurance

Under certain conditions, individuals who lose their job may be eligible for employment insurance benefits for a limited time period. For further information, visit Service Canada's website at www.servicecanada.gc.ca.

In recent years, the Quebec City region has experienced a fairly significant labour shortage. The economic situation is good and unemployment is low (less than 5% in September 2008). The labour market is thriving, to employees' benefit. The company staff turnover rate is quite high, advance notice is short and job offers are numerous.

2.1.3 Employment contracts

Quebec's *Civil Code* sets out the basic principles for all employment contracts. Employment contracts may be verbal or written; they may also be fixed term or indefinite term. Indefinite-term contracts are known as "permanent contracts", while fixed-term contracts are known as "temporary contracts". Some small businesses may not use employment contracts.

2.1.4 Hours of work

The regular work week cannot exceed 40 hours. In most companies, employees work between 35 and 38 hours per week.

Generally speaking, employees start work fairly early in the morning. A fairly short break (30 to 60 minutes) is taken at lunchtime. Most companies have a fully equipped kitchen (stove, microwave oven, fridge, etc.) that employees can use. Many employees eat at work and bring their own lunchbox. Some employees may choose to eat together in the kitchen or lunchroom. These customs are essentially cultural; adopting them will enable you to integrate more quickly.

2.1.5 References, contract termination and advance notice

Quebec's *Labour Code* states that either party may terminate an employment contract by providing reasonable advance notice. The parties may terminate the contract without notice if there are serious grounds for termination.

Relatively short notice is required (two weeks in most cases). Employees who have completed two years of continuous service qualify for additional protection if their employment contract is terminated.

If employees are dismissed without just and sufficient cause, they may file a complaint with the provincial labour standards commission (Commission des normes du travail/CNT). If their complaint is deemed valid, they may be reinstated.

No later than five days following your last day worked, your employer is required to provide you with a record of employment indicating the total number of hours worked. Under certain conditions, this document enables you apply for employment insurance and to receive unemployment benefits.

In Quebec, a curriculum vitae (résumé) or cover letter often includes the mention "references available upon request". You may be asked to provide the names of supervisors, managers or co-workers that a recruiter or prospective employer may contact (with your consent). References are in widespread use; employers will often contact your references and you yourself may be contacted if you hold a supervisory position. Therefore, you are advised to remain on good terms with your former employer, regardless of why you left.

Large companies are increasingly using the services of investigative specialists to check jobseekers' references. Therefore, you are advised to draft your résumé with an eye to providing accurate information; do not try to embellish your situation.

2.1.6 Occupational health and safety

Quebec's Occupational Health and Safety Commission (Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail/CSST) has established various programs aimed at preventing workplace accidents and work-related illness. It also operates a benefit plan for workers who are injured on the job. Under this plan, injured employees receive monetary compensation to replace lost income.

Employers must safeguard the health and safety of their employees by complying with the applicable industry-specific regulations; those who fail to do so may face civil penalties and/or criminal charges. Employers are also required to pay an annual occupational health and safety contribution.

2.1.7 Employer's obligations

Employers are required to comply with various employment-related legislative requirements. In compliance with the *Act respecting labour standards*, they must offer employment conditions equal or superior to those set out in the Act.

Employers are responsible for withholding deductions-at-source from employees' wages or salaries (e.g. income tax and other statutory payroll deductions).

Under Quebec law (Bill 90), if employers have a total payroll exceeding \$1 million, they are required to spend 1% on employee training or pay this amount to certified training organizations.

Quebec has a high rate of union membership. In the public sector, a large percentage of government employees are unionized. The right to organize is protected under Quebec's *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, while the *Labour Code* sets out the terms and conditions for union organizing. "Certified associations" are responsible for negotiating the work conditions applicable to the employees they represent. The negotiated collective agreement must be for at least one year, or three years if it is the very first agreement for the employee group covered by the certification.

Any disputes arising from the interpretation or application of the collective agreement are submitted to arbitration. If the agreement expires and is not renewed, the *Labour Code* authorizes employees to take strike action and authorizes employers to declare a lockout. In that event, employers are prohibited from hiring new employees to replace those on strike. Although the right to take strike action is exercised from time to time, certain public sector services are deemed essential. For further information, visit www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com.

2.1.8 Job titles

Job titles may vary from country to country. Be sure to use the correct terminology when looking for a job.

In day-to-day life, you will need to be familiar with the following job titles: Quebec French: European French (English):

- Denturologue: prothésiste dentaire (denturist)
- Optométriste: opticien (optometrist)
- Podiatre: podologue (podiatrist)
- Préposé aux bénéficiaires: aide soignant (health care attendant)
- Chef de la direction: directeur général (chief executive officer)
- Représentant aux ventes: commercial, technico-commercial ou vendeur (sales representative)
- Vice-président: directeur (vice-president)
- Directeur: responsable de service (manager/director)
- Conseiller: consultant (advisor/consultant)

As regards IT job titles, there are a number of differences in Quebec, although they are universally understood. For further information, please visit Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's website and consult the national occupational classification at www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

Testimonial

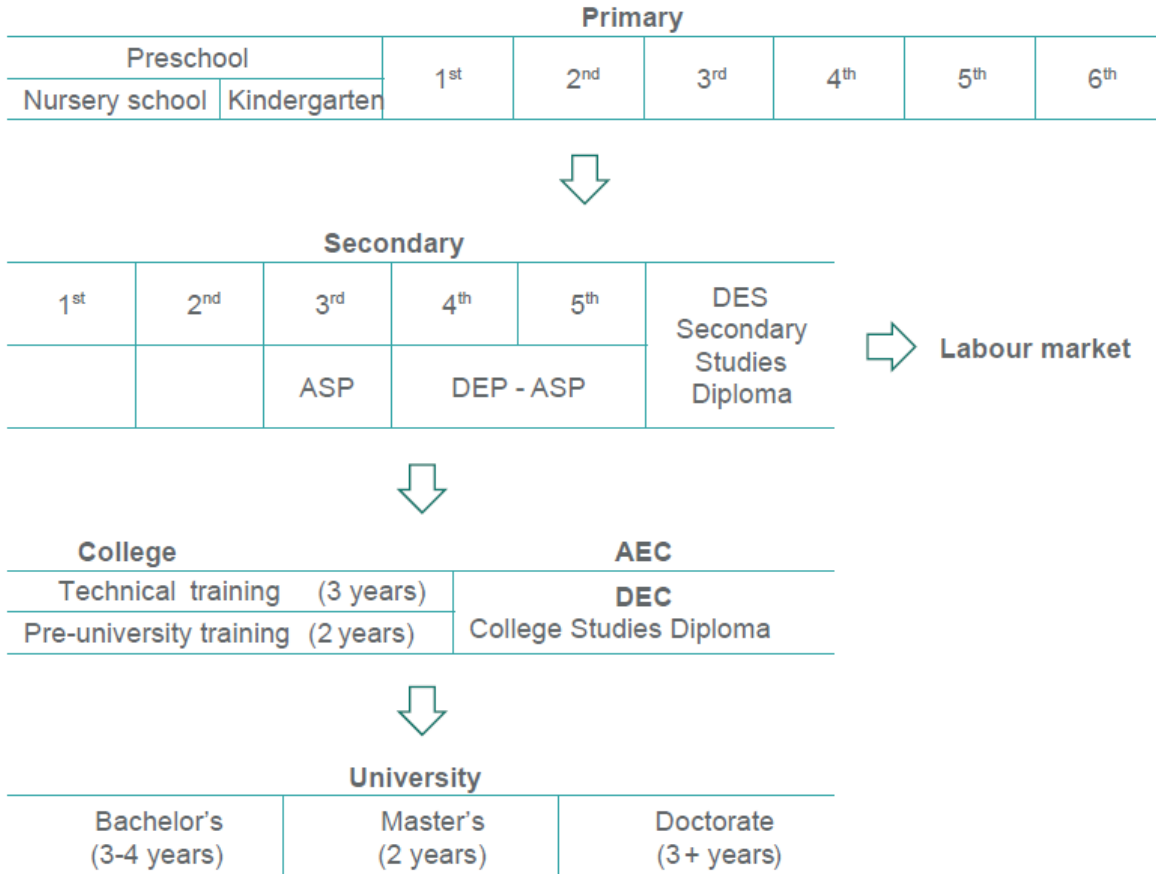
“After I arrived in Quebec City, I easily found a job that matched my qualifications. But after 18 months working for a Quebec-based new technology company, I lost my job overnight! I was called into my supervisor's office, informed that my position had been downsized and told that I had to leave the premises immediately, without even being able to take my things with me, along with about 30 of my co-workers.

But in return, I was given financial compensation and access to the services of a recruiting firm until I found a new job, which in my case took eight weeks. So the dynamic labour market makes up for the precarious nature of employment contracts here.”

Jean-Marie Perrono (immigrated from France to Quebec in 2003)
Senior architect – Oracle

2.2 Quebec's education system

In Quebec, schooling is mandatory for children aged 6 to 16. The education system is divided into four levels, each of which is represented in both the public and private systems: primary, secondary, college and university (see diagram below)



2.2.1 Preschool and primary education

Preschool education is optional. For parents who so desire, children who have reached five years of age on September 30 of the current school year may enrol in kindergarten. The primary (elementary) school program, beginning at age 6, lasts for six years.

2.2.2 Secondary education

After the six years of primary school, students begin a five-year secondary program (if enrolled in a general program of studies). The secondary program for students taking vocational training varies in length.

The professional studies diploma (diplôme d'études professionnelles/DEP) is issued upon successful completion of a 900-1,800 hour program (average duration of 18 months). Students begin the DEP following their third, fourth or fifth year of secondary studies, depending on specific program requirements.

The attestation of professional specialization (attestation de spécialisation professionnelle/ASP) marks the successful completion of a 6-12 month program. Approximately 50 options in various training areas are available to DEP holders wishing to enrol in the ASP diploma program.

The attestation of professional training (attestation de formation professionnelle/AFP) is issued upon successful completion of a maximum 900-hour program (one year). The AFP program, which students begin after completing their second year of secondary studies, is offered in a workplace setting and prepares students to undertake a semi-specialized trade.

The secondary studies diploma (diplôme d'études secondaires/DES) marks the successful completion of a five-year general program of studies. The DES diploma provides access to post-secondary education.

There are slightly more than 2,400 public institutions in the primary and secondary education sectors, in addition to 300 private institutions, most of which are subsidized. Public schools are administered by school boards that report to the Department of Education, Recreation and Sports (MELS).

2.2.3 Post-secondary education

In Quebec, post-secondary education is divided into the college and university levels.

Colleges

Colleges are the initial level in the post-secondary system. Public colleges offering general and professional training courses are known as "collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel" (CEGEPs); there are also private colleges.

Colleges in Quebec offer two-year pre-university programs or three-year technical programs. The former lead directly to university-level studies, while the latter directly prepare students to enter the labour market. Technical trade programs are available for prospective police officers, childcare educators, nurses, office technicians, etc.

The college studies diploma (diplôme d'études collégiales/DEC) marks the successful completion of one of eight different pre-university programs or various technical programs (115 options in five subject areas). Students can also obtain an attestation of college studies (attestation d'études collégiales/AEC) upon completion of a variable-length technical training program (330-1,350 hours) leading directly to the labour market.

Universities

The university system in Quebec is divided into three cycles.

The first cycle leads to a bachelor's degree, marking the successful completion of at least 90 credits (usually three years of full-time studies). Students earning bachelor's degrees may directly enter the labour market or may go on to the second and/or third cycles (master's/doctorate).

There are various types of bachelor's degrees: specialized, bachelor's with major/minor and general bachelor's.

In the specialized bachelor's program, all courses are taken within a single discipline or area of study. Students complete 90 or more credits, depending on the program.

A distinction is made between the bachelor's program with major and the bachelor's program with minor:

- The bachelor's with major (representing the student's primary focus) is a 60-credit program usually comprising two years of full-time study. Most courses are taken within a single discipline or area of study.
- The bachelor's with minor (representing a secondary focus) is a 30-credit program usually comprising one year of full-time study. Most courses are taken within a single discipline or area of study.

University students have the option of registering for a diploma or a certificate program. Diploma programs are usually 60 credits, while certificate programs are usually 30 credits.

The general bachelor's degree is the equivalent of three 30-credit certificates.

There are two types of second-cycle programs: the professional master's program ("master's without thesis") or the research master's program ("master's with thesis"). These correspond to specialization in a given area of study or an introduction to research in one or more disciplines.

Master's programs are usually two years, totalling 45 credits. A second type of master's program leads to a diploma and usually involves one year of full-time studies (30 credits).

The third cycle provides an introduction to scientific research and prepares students for a research career. Students can obtain a doctorate (PhD) upon completion of a three-year full-time program (at least 90 credits). Doctoral students are also required to write and defend a dissertation.

Sources:

Guide de comparaison des études avec le système éducatif du Québec du MICC. Étudier au Québec – MELS/MICC [French only]

Capacity Canada - Camo: Accès aux professions et aux métiers - analyse du contexte - intervenants et initiative au Québec - August 2005 [French only]

2.2.4 Equivalencies

Individual institutions decide on program equivalencies for admission purposes. If individuals who received training outside Quebec do not know which program level they should apply for, they should contact the MICC to obtain a comparative evaluation of their studies completed outside Quebec.

2.3 Qualifications, professional associations and regulated professions

Quebec has established a professional system that regulates training equivalency, degree recognition, professional qualifications and other matters. This system is completely independent of and separate from the immigration process.

In this regard, an agreement concerning the mutual recognition of professional qualifications was signed between France and Quebec on October 17, 2008 by Quebec Premier Jean Charest and French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Francophone Summit.

Under the agreement, a common procedure has been implemented for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications with a view to facilitating and expediting the permit application process for regulated trades or professions. The relevant bilateral authorities will review the qualifications for the regulated professions and trades with a view to concluding arrangements. These arrangements are expected to be negotiated by December 31, 2009.

The agreement also stipulates that the authorities will review differences in terms of training length and content. Applications will be processed on an expedited basis (within four months of filing). A bilateral advisory committee will set out the relevant rules and procedures and will meet at least once a year.

Regulated professions in Quebec include the following: architect, surveyor, lawyer, chartered accountant, certified general accountant, dentist, engineer, doctor, veterinarian, pharmacist, midwife and social worker.

For further information, please consult the agreement at www.mri.gouv.qc.ca.

Equivalencies

Each institution decides which equivalencies it will grant for admission purposes. Individuals who received training outside Quebec who not know which cycle or level they should apply for should contact the MICC to obtain a comparative evaluation of the studies they completed outside Quebec.

2.3.1 Quebec's professional system

Instituted in 1973, Quebec's professional system is governed by the *Professional Code*, which serves as the legislative framework for the professional system and applies to all of the professional associations (known as "orders"). The professional system is made up of the Government of Quebec, the National Assembly, the professional orders, the Office des professions and the Quebec Interprofessional Council (Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec/CIQ).

The Quebec Professional Office (Office des professions du Québec/OPQ) acts as a monitoring and control mechanism and is authorized to take action with respect to the professional orders and to make recommendations to the government.

As an autonomous governmental agency, the OPQ oversees the professional system and ensures that each of the professional orders effectively carries out its mandate of protecting those members of the public who use professional services. Please visit www.opq.gouv.qc.ca.

The Quebec Interprofessional Council (CIQ) represents the collective interests of the professional orders. It is recognized as a provincial government advisory body under the *Professional Code*. Please visit www.professions-quebec.org.

2.3.2 Professional orders

Quebec's 45 professional orders are responsible for ensuring that their members have the necessary knowledge and expertise and that they adhere to the applicable professional conduct rules.

The professional orders are required to ensure that the individuals working in their areas of jurisdiction provide the best possible services to the public. Each professional order is authorized to ensure public protection and professional service quality. In Quebec, there are two types of professions: exclusive and reserved. In the exclusive professions, only members of the recognized orders are authorized to use the professional designation and to engage in the legally defined set of activities. In the reserved professions, although practitioners do not have the exclusive right to engage in professional activities, use of the professional designation is limited to them (e.g. the designation "engineer" can only be used by members of the Quebec Order of Engineers/OIQ).

The professional orders are responsible for ensuring their members' competence. To that end, they verify whether their members have completed the required training or professional qualifications; they also organize professional development activities. Each order has its own professional inspection committee that oversees skills development and service quality, in addition to its own code of ethics aimed at maintaining integrity and ethical conduct.



Two types of professions

Exclusive professions

Acupuncturist: www.ordredesacupuncteurs.qc.ca

Agronomist: www.oac.qc.ca

Architect: www.oaq.com

Surveyor: www.cagq.qc.ca

Hearing aid technician: www.ordreaudio.qc.ca

Lawyer: www.barreau.qc.ca

Chemist: www.ocq.qc.ca

Chiropractor: www.chiropratique.com

Chartered accountant: www.ocaq.qc.ca

Bailiff: www.huissiersquebec.qc.ca

Registered nurse: www.oiiq.org

Engineer: www.oiq.qc.ca

Forestry engineer: www.oifq.com

Doctor: www.cmq.org

Veterinarian: www.omvq.qc.ca

Notary: www.cdnq.org

Optician: www.oodq.qc.ca

Optometrist: www.ooq.org

Pharmacist: www.opq.org

Podiatrist: www.ordredespodiatres.qc.ca

Midwife: www.osfq.org

Radiological technologist: www.otrq.qc.ca

Reserved professions

Chartered administrator: www.adma.qc.ca

Audiologist: www.ooac.qc.ca

Certified management accountant: www.cma-quebec.org

Certified general accountant: www.cga-quebec.org

Guidance counsellor: www.occoppq.qc.ca

Certified human resources professional: www.orhri.org

Certified industrial relations counsellor: www.orhri.org

Dietician: www.opdq.org

Occupational therapist: www.oeg.org

Accredited appraiser: www.oeaq.qc.ca

Dental hygienist: www.ohdq.com

Licensed practical nurse: www.oiiq.org

Respiratory therapist: www.opiq.qc.ca

Certified interpreter: www.ottiaq.org

Speech-language pathologist: www.ooaq.qc.ca

Physiotherapist: www.oppq.qc.ca

Psychoeducator: www.occoppq.qc.ca

Psychologist: www.ordrepsy.qc.ca

Dental technician: www.ottd.com

Medical technologist: www.optmq.org

Professional technologist: www.otpq.qc.ca

Certified terminologist: www.ottiaq.org

Marriage and family therapist: www.oppq.qc.ca

Physical rehabilitation therapist: www.oppq.qc.ca

Certified translator: www.ottiaq.org

Social worker: www.optsq.org

City planner: www.ouq.qc.ca

For further information, please consult the list of professional orders at www.opq.gouv.qc.ca.

It should be noted that only 20% of professions are regulated. To exercise a regulated profession, you must hold the appropriate permit issued by a professional order. The professional orders regulate access and standards, evaluate qualifications and issue authorizations to practice a profession or use a professional designation.

The professional orders may require you to take a professional exam, undertake training or complete an evaluation.

Each professional order has specific membership criteria. You are advised to contact the order that oversees your profession and to verify the relevant requirements.

You are not required to be a permanent resident or Canadian citizen to join a professional order. The permits issued by professional orders are valid throughout the province of Quebec.

The following procedures must be observed to exercise a regulated profession in Quebec:

- Obtain a permit
- Be registered with the professional order

Obtaining a permit

- Educational requirements: candidates must have obtained the required Quebec diploma or equivalent diploma providing access to the professional order. Therefore, immigrants must have their foreign diplomas or training recognized. The equivalency process takes into account the courses completed in various subject areas, the number of hours of study per subject area, the total number of hours of study and work experience. To have your diplomas and training recognized, you should submit a written application to the appropriate professional order, which will provide you with a copy of its bylaws governing the diploma equivalency process, together with an explanation of the procedure and a form to complete.
- Other conditions vary depending on the professional order: practical training (internships), additional training and exams. The automatic granting of membership to individuals trained outside Quebec is very rare. You should expect to be required to take exams or complete an internship or training course. Fees are charged for these procedures (including exam sessions).
- Sufficient and adequate knowledge of French (individuals who successfully completed three years of study at a secondary or postsecondary institution in Quebec are assumed to have proficiency in French). You will need to have the following documents on file: diplomas, educational certificates, transcripts, training descriptions, course descriptions and proof of employment and professional experience. All documents should be originals or certified true copies.

Joining a professional order

To practice a given profession, individuals must have their names entered on the membership roll of their professional order after they have been issued their permit. They must also pay their membership dues and other related fees, in addition to taking out professional liability insurance (as applicable) and meeting various other requirements.

The fees for obtaining a permit and being included on a professional order's membership roll may be quite significant, ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the

circumstances and the professional order. These fees include equivalency processing fees, examination fees, permit fees, membership fees, etc. As applicable, you should budget for additional expenses relating to training or internship requirements.

The membership procedures for professional orders can be lengthy and complex. In addition to application processing times, you should take into account the availability and length of required training courses or internships (as applicable).

Specific information on access to each regulated profession is available at the following address: <http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/fr/dossiers/professions-metiers.html>.

2.3.3 Order of Engineers (Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec/OIQ)

Practicing as a professional engineer

Engineering is an exclusive profession. Therefore, individuals must have a permit and be registered with the OIQ in order to practice professionally and to use the professional seal and designation.

Permits

There are two types of permits.

Junior engineering permits

Junior engineering permits are issued to individuals who hold a recognized Quebec diploma or have diploma or training equivalency. Immigrants who have not completed OIQ-recognized training in Quebec are required to have the equivalency of their foreign diploma recognized. In determining equivalency, the OIQ takes into account the length, content and type of training and experience.

Most foreign-trained individuals will be required to successfully complete tests of their knowledge.

Engineering permits

Engineering permits are issued to junior engineering permit holders who have acquired sufficient experience, successfully complete the professional exam and have sufficient knowledge of the French language.

Did you know?

Unlike in other parts of the world, the engineer designation is not automatically granted to holders of diplomas issued by a post-secondary institution or engineering school. You may only apply to use the designation after you have met the OIQ's requirements.

Registering with the OIQ

In order to register with the OIQ, you must complete a form, pay annual dues and take out group professional liability insurance.

For further information, please consult the brochure entitled "Exercer la profession d'ingénieur", available at www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca [French only].

Or contact the OIQ at the following address:

Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec
Windsor Station, Suite 350
1100 Rue de la Gauchetière West
Montreal, Quebec H3B 2S2
Phone: (514) 845-6141, ext. 116
Toll-free: (800) 461-6141 Fax: (514) 845-1833
Website: www.oiq.qc.ca
Email: immigrants@oiq.qc.ca

If you are an engineer from France, you can also contact Francogenie, an association that represents the interests of French “ingénieurs diplômés” (certified engineers) and facilitates their integration within Quebec. <http://www.francogenie.com/>

2.3.4 Regulated trades and professions

The membership or professional practice criteria for other professions and trades are also regulated.

Some professional qualifications are regulated to ensure workers’ safety. For that reason, qualification certificates are required to engage in certain regulated activities.

Qualification certificates are required for approximately 10 trades posing safety risks in the following sectors: electricity, piping, elevator mechanics, gas, stationary machinery and pressure vessel inspection, blasting (mining and seismic exploration), welding, drinking water and halocarbons.

For further information, please consult the *Guide de la qualification professionnelle* available on Emploi-Québec’s website: www.emploi-quebec.net [French only]

Trades and occupations in the construction sector are also regulated. Individuals must hold a certificate of competency issued by the Quebec Construction Commission (Commission de la construction du Québec/CCQ) attesting that they have the required skills to work on construction sites in Quebec.

For further information, please consult the MICC’s website at www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca.

2.3.5 Comparative evaluation

The comparative evaluation of studies completed outside Quebec is a general comparison of diplomas issued by two official education systems. This service is provided by the MICC, whose website includes correspondence guides with Chile, China, France, Morocco and Rwanda. www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca

The comparisons in the guides are for information purposes only and have no legal significance. The guides are not legally binding on professional orders, educational institutions or employers in Quebec; these entities may evaluate your training using their own specific methods and criteria.

You will also find comparisons of diplomas from 22 countries in the *Guide des procédures d’immigration pour les travailleurs qualifiés permanents*, available at www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca [French only].

Comparative evaluations are required for individuals wishing to:

- Obtain a Quebec teacher's permit issued by the Department of Education, Recreation and Sports (MELS)
- Obtain employment in the municipal, Quebec or Canadian civil service
- Obtain financial aid under the MELS's post-secondary student loan and scholarship program

In all other cases, you should contact the educational institution(s) or professional order(s) directly to determine whether a comparative evaluation is required.

Procedure

1. Complete the form (in English or French) and enclose an identification document: www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca.
2. Enclose your original diplomas or certified true copies. All documents written in a language other than English or French must be translated by an individual certified by the Quebec Order of Certified Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters (Ordre de traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec/OTTIAQ).
3. The fee for a comparative evaluation application in 2009 totalled CDN\$105.
4. Processing time: 45 business days provided that all procedures have been followed, the payment is effective and all required documents have been received. NB: applications for specific job are processed on a priority basis. A letter from your prospective employer requesting a comparative evaluation should be included with your application.
5. Submit your application in person or by mail to the following address:

Immigration-Québec
Direction régionale de la Capitale-Nationale et de l'Est-du-Québec
930 Chemin Sainte-Foy, Rez-de-Chaussée
Quebec City, Quebec G1S 2L4
Phone: (418) 643-1435 or toll-free (888) 643-1435
Fax: (418) 643-7460
Email: direction.quebec@micc.gouv.qc.ca

Testimonial

I am currently employed as an English teacher for a school board, although I have very little job security. I am dealing with the gulf separating university diploma equivalency requirements and the reality on the ground. Despite the urgent need for people to replace teachers who are retiring, the Department of Education has told me I have to complete two years of full-time university courses even though I have a French bachelor's degree and 10 ten years of experience!

None of the other staff members have ever questioned my skills. In fact, everyone has shown great interest in my unique background. My availability and willingness to hang in there for the long haul have allayed any concerns they might have had. But how am I supposed to be available to teach if I have to take more courses? My situation is very hard to deal with!

Nevertheless, teaching here is a very worthwhile experience in many ways. I've learned more in two years here than I did in all my years in France."

Caroline Levasseur (immigrated from France to Quebec in 2003)
English-language teacher (adult education)

3.1 Résumés and job interviews

3.1.1 Looking for a job

Procedure

To get the most out of your job search, you should research the Quebec labour market ahead of time. One useful tool is Emploi-Québec's website, which contains a wide array of valuable information on job descriptions, salary conditions, professional prospects and employers' requirements.

You should also be able to describe your skills and the type of position you're looking for. Keep in mind, however, that you won't necessarily find your dream job overnight. In this regard, you are advised not to scale down your expectations when deciding on a job: even if it doesn't match your skills precisely, it will be a valuable first experience that you can build on in the future.

Did you know?

Emploi-Québec administers an employment assistance program designed to help integrate immigrants and visible minorities, known as PRIIME (Employment Integration Program for Immigrants and Visible Minorities). The program also aims to encourage small and medium-sized businesses in Quebec to hire immigrant workers to meet their staffing needs and to support the reception and integration of immigrants in the workplace. In this way, new arrivals gain their first experience of what it's like to work in North America.

Cover letters

Your cover letter should be short and to the point. The information provided should be different than that provided in your résumé (CV). A typed cover letter is preferable to a handwritten one.

In the space of a few sentences, you should demonstrate how you match the job profile. You can submit your cover letter by email (mention the position title in the subject line). Don't forget to include your telephone contact information so prospective employers can get a hold of you.

Résumés

Résumés (or CVs) are a marketing tool designed to promote your experience and skills and to secure a job interview. There are various types of résumés, including chronological, functional and skill-based.

It's up to you to decide which type is best suited to your circumstances and situation.

Job recruiters and managers may receive many applications for a single position and thus have little time to devote to your résumé. Therefore, your résumé should:

- Provide an accurate summary of your skills and experience (2-3 pages maximum)
- Be printed on 8.5" x 11" paper
- Be easy to read, with no spelling mistakes
- Be consistent
- Use action verbs
- Provide information on training equivalency

Résumés should be divided into the following sections: professional experience (including job descriptions); training and professional development; technical skills (including qualifications); and language skills (spoken and written). You may also wish to include information about your professional affiliations and volunteer work.

Your résumé is supposed to summarize your skills and qualifications, focusing on information that directly relates to the labour market. Unlike in Europe, your professional experience counts for more in Quebec than your degrees or diplomas.

Assistance may be obtained from a wide variety of organizations:

- Voice of English-speaking Québec
- Centre d'éducation des adultes des découvreurs - point de service Phénix
- Centre R.I.R.E. 2000
- Quebec City Chamber of Commerce (CCQ)
- GIT - job search club
- Option-travail
- Canadian Practice Firms Network
- Orientation and integration service for immigrant workers (SOIIT)
- Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration (OFII) - France

Assistance is also available from the Quebec Association of Job Search Centres (Association des centres de recherche d'emploi du Québec), a network of specialized job search and professional placement organizations. For further information, please visit www.cre.qc.ca.

Emploi-Québec's *Guide pratique de recherche d'emploi* will provide you with useful tools, information and advice on your job search (available at www.emploiquebec.net) [French only].

Inforgtravail, a website run by various community organizations providing employment integration assistance, offers a wide range of job search opportunities and information sources focusing on services offered in the Quebec City region (please visit www.inforgtravail.qc.ca).

Also be sure to visit the Libre Emploi website, which provides customized one-time job search assistance at www.libreemploi.qc.ca.

Testimonial

When I met Pierre Lavigne, director of the National Optics Institute (INO) at an international conference in California in 1988, little did I know that he would end up convincing me to move to Quebec City—or that I'd still be here 20 years later, running my own company!

Nevertheless, after studying in England, I left the former Yugoslavia to head an optical research lab in Quebec City for several years before seizing the opportunity to create Doric Lenses thanks to a patent application I'd filed and a spinoff venture with the INO.

Doric Lenses now has a staff of 20, most of whom are immigrants. That's because there's an abundance of qualified workers in the immigrant community here and also because there are no hiring restrictions in the photonics sector. Plus the hiring process has been greatly facilitated by the various subsidy programs established by Emploi-Québec, such as PRIIME (employment integration program for immigrants and visible minorities), which covers 50% of an immigrant worker's salary for a six-month period.

For an immigrant entrepreneur, you really have to surround yourself with the right people right from the outset, whether that means start-up assistance organizations, specialized advisors or business mentors. If you begin with a solid foundation and a well-structured organization, you can then focus on technology development, sales growth and maintaining company profitability.”

Sead Doric (immigrated from Bosnia to Quebec City in 1989)
CEO - Doric Lenses

3.1.2 Job interviews

During a job interview (known as an “entrevue” in Quebec French), the atmosphere is often friendly and relaxed. Be sure to focus on your achievements and on specific facts. It is almost unheard of for interviewers to deliberately try to trip you up. They will be unfailingly polite, enthusiastic and positive. But that doesn't automatically mean that you're hired!

In the case of a small business, you won't always be interviewed by a representative of the human resources (HR) department. If you are, the HR representative may be accompanied by a technician, who will verify your technical skills.

Before the interview, you should research:

- The company/organization and its history.
- Its mission and values.
- Its products and services.
- The job description.

During the interview:

- Be on time.
- Be calm, concise and to the point (don't give long rambling answers).
- Be curious and ask questions.
- Dress appropriately.
- Ask the interviewer to rephrase any questions you don't understand.
- Don't display arrogance in any way and don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Do not use first names: call the interviewer “Mr. X” or “Ms. X” (in French, use the formal “vous” form; do not use the “tu” form).
- Do not make any references to your private life.
- Answer any salary-related questions.
- Don't exaggerate or lie.
- Imagine how the interview will play out beforehand.

After the interview:

- Send a “thank you” email.
- Follow up.

Frequently asked questions during job interviews:

- To help you prepare for the interview, answer the following potential questions.
- What's been your most positive work experience? Why?
- What specific kind of project difficulties have you encountered?

- Have you ever had to deal with conflict in the workplace?
- What kind of challenges are you seeking?
- How do you go about planning your work?
- How would you describe your relationships and interactions with your co-workers, supervisors and subordinates?
- What are your personal values?
- What kind of environment do you like working in? What types of personalities do you like working with?
- Describe an occasion when your integrity was put to the test?
- Do you like taking risks? What kinds of risks and in what situations?
- What types of tasks do you dislike?
- How do you make sure that you remember things?
- What's your ideal type of supervisor?
- What's the hardest decision you've ever had to make?

Did you know?

The rights and freedoms of all Quebec residents are recognized and protected under the province's *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. The main objective of the Charter is to ensure harmonious interactions between people and with institutions in accordance with the principles of human dignity. The provincial Human and Youth Rights Commission (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse/CDPDJ) works to protect human rights and to end discrimination.

Therefore, **you should never mention personal information such as your age, marital status, ethnic origin, height/weight, family status, immigration status in Canada or social insurance number** during your job search, in your cover letter or in your résumé.

3.2 Professional and business practices

General information

Language of the workplace: Canada's two official business languages are French and English, although some regions of the country are not bilingual. In the province of Quebec, all documents should be provided in French; English-language documents are optional.

In the business world, you will frequently hear English-speaking Canadians referred to as "anglophones" and French-speaking Canadians referred to as "francophones".

Here is some useful information on business practices in Quebec:

- Protocol: men and women are treated as equals in the business world. Therefore, businesswomen do not expect to receive any specific courtesies that would not be extended to their male colleagues.
- Dress code: this may vary significantly from one organization to another. For example, business attire is customary in most government offices and consulting firms. However, in the technology sectors, the dress code is usually more relaxed. Women generally wear pants suits, dresses or slacks, together with the appropriate accessories.
- Wintertime: cloakrooms will be provided for your winter garments. Bring dress shoes and a suit for office wear. Most Quebecers bring a lunch and eat at work in the wintertime.

Testimonial

To ensure a smooth, calm and successful professional integration, my first challenge was psychological: I had to admit that I had to get over certain cultural differences. I had to stop thinking that everything that was different about my culture was bad or had to be rejected. That was when I stopped wasting time and energy looking for magical solutions in books and business employee handbooks. I don't think there are any magical solutions out there, although I do think that you have to understand a number of universal principles and put them into practice in order to establish trust (which is at the heart of all business transactions).

In order to adopt Quebecers' business practices and conduct, I turned to the basic principles of human behaviour. In other words, I identified the fundamental values and behavioural patterns shared by all human beings worldwide (regardless of country or time period. I focused on the universal human principles that bind us, rather than the cultural differences that set us apart.

Three universal human values enabled me to establish trust-based relationships with my employers, clients, colleagues and friends: respect, professionalism and honesty.

These values shaped my interactions in the business world and helped me achieve a successful and easy professional integration. I'm convinced that as long as I express my values in an authentic and genuine way, other people will understand and appreciate them whether they're in Canada, China or elsewhere or whether or not they're in a professional setting. These principles spontaneously influenced my day-to-day business interactions and ensured my successful professional integration.

Mokhtar Aljane (immigrated from Tunisia to Quebec in 2000)
Investment fund financial analyst – FILACTION

3.2.1 In the workplace

Hours of work

At most companies, the work day begins at around 8:00 am and ends at around 5:00 pm.

Meal breaks usually don't exceed 30 or 60 minutes. Usually, companies will have a cafeteria or kitchen on site where you can eat your lunch or prepare food. Food deliveries are also common and numerous caterers provide this service.

It is also customary to take a break twice a day (e.g. coffee breaks), although these are usually quite short.

Communications and work relations

Upon arrival: People don't "make the rounds" of the office to shake hands and greet everyone. They normally go discreetly to their personal work areas after quickly greeting whichever colleagues are present.

Greetings: Greetings are informal at all levels and include expressions such as "hello", "hi there", "good morning", "how are you?" and "nice to see you!"

Hierarchy: The corporate hierarchy is usually flexible, informal and has a limited number of levels (consistent with North American business practices). However, there is a hierarchy and it should be scrupulously respected. Accessing individuals in the hierarchy is straightforward, informal and dialogue-based.

Decision-making process: Decisions are made by consensus. Unless you are specifically asked to share your opinion, meetings are not usually the best place for heated discussions. Debates are supposed to take place beforehand; meetings are for making decisions. Once your immediate supervisor makes a decision, it should not be debated or questioned and should be carried out without complaint. Publicly challenging a decision made by your immediate supervisor shows a lack of solidarity.

Presentations: Any presentations you make should usually be short and to the point. The results obtained, the goals to be achieved or the project deliverables are more important than explanations about the procedures you followed or detailed arguments.

3.2.2 Off-site

Business meetings:

Arranging a meeting: Meetings are relatively easy to arrange in Quebec, regardless of your contact's level of decision-making authority.

When you call, you will often reach your correspondent's direct line (regardless of his/her hierarchical rank) or voice mail (message service). You will rarely have to deal directly with a secretary acting as "gatekeeper". If your correspondent is not in, be sure to leave a message and your call will be returned. You can usually expect a response within two to three days.

When arranging a meeting, set a date no more than one or two weeks away—any longer than that and you will not be taken seriously.

Did you know?

In Quebec, when you call up people and leave a message in their voice mail or send an email, you will usually receive a response much more quickly than you would in Europe. So be sure to follow suit!

Introductions: there is little formality and the protocol is limited.

- Step forward, shake the other person's hand firmly and warmly and state your first and last name: "Hello, my name is Louise Smith."
- Be sure that you heard the person's name correctly when you are meeting someone for the first time. If you didn't, simply ask: "I didn't hear your name, could you repeat it again, please?"
- When speaking French, it is advisable to use the formal "vous" form at first, although you will often find that people will start using your first name and the familiar "tu" form before too long. Do the same if you feel comfortable. When speaking English, people will quickly switch to a "first name basis".

Meetings: To ensure successful business meetings, be sure to follow the following simple rules:

- Be on time. Punctuality is seen as a sign of respect toward the other participants and their own time.
- If you're running late, phone your contact to warn him/her. If you're delayed more than 20 minutes, the meeting may need to be rescheduled.
- Most business meetings have a set agenda and running time. If you want to raise a particular point, advise the person chairing the meeting so that your question can be included in the "miscellaneous" category. Respect the running time.
- If the meeting is scheduled to run for longer than two hours, beverages and snacks may be served.

Business meals: These usually take place at lunchtime. However, business breakfasts are growing in popularity; business dinners are increasingly rare. You should be aware of the following rules:

- Invitations to dine in someone's home are rare and should be considered an honour.
- Business meals don't usually exceed 90 minutes.
- Abstaining from alcohol is increasingly common during business meals.
- The host generally begins the conversation by addressing the business matter at hand.
- The host will usually pay for the guests, although this is not always the case (you may be required to pay for your own meal).

Gifts: Gift giving is not customary in Canadian business relationships. However, gifts may be exchanged at meetings with foreign clients or partners.

In Canadian business practices, offering gifts to obtain special treatment is not tolerated. In fact, it may be seen as corruption and may have legal consequences. The Government of Canada and certain companies have adopted a code of conduct under which accepting gifts is prohibited under certain circumstances.

Negotiations and contracts: Contracts are negotiated and decisions are made relatively rapidly. Related discussions aim for efficiency first and foremost. At meetings, Quebecers get straight to

the point and don't argue endlessly for hours and hours. Talking too much or being overly extroverted may be viewed negatively.

Contracts entered into by business partners or with clients are usually shorter and more succinct than contracts in Europe. However, reliance on lawyers for legal matters is much more common.

Networking

Networking is an indispensable practice and tool in the Quebec business community since it generates multiple opportunities. Gradually building up your own diversified network of key contacts will enable you to identify new clients, partners, suppliers or future employees more easily.

To optimize the networking process, you should identify specific gatherings and locations that will play a strategic role in helping you reach your goals (receptions, special events, conferences, etc.). In Quebec, these often take the form of "5 à 7" (after-work events starting at 5:00 pm and finishing at 7:00 pm), cocktail receptions, meetings, luncheons, etc.

Golf is also a key way of combining pleasure and networking. So don't be surprised to see a profusion of golf tournaments scheduled during the week (often on Fridays) during work hours.

Your long-term networking goals should be to become a dynamic link within your networks, to demonstrate your "value-added" and to optimize your involvement.

Networking is a learnable skill. For further information, please visit OFII Quebec's website, which provides useful hints and advice: www.ofiicanada.ca

Did you know?

Here's a great trick: if you find yourself at a cocktail party and the guests don't know each other, make things easier for everyone by taking the initiative: strike up conversations and introduce the newcomers to the guests who are already there. Your evening is sure to be eventful as well as successful!

3.3 Opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs

A strong entrepreneurial culture has developed in recent years in the Quebec City region, where entrepreneurship is held in high regard.

Immigrant entrepreneurs can achieve their goals and find the assistance they require locally, ensuring that they have every opportunity for success.

It should be noted that the administrative process for business startups in Quebec is quick and straightforward and costs no more than a few hundred dollars. In addition, seed capital is not required.

3.3.1 Starting a business

Starting your own business, whether for-profit or non-profit, is definitely within the grasp of immigrants. Although starting a business is an additional challenge for individuals settling into a new home, the Quebec City region offers a wide array of business startup assistance that can play a key role in the success of any venture.

The regional gateway for helpful information is the Quebec City Local Development Centre (Centre local de développement de Québec/CLD).

The consultants at the Quebec City CLD are available to guide you towards custom-tailored business solutions. From advice and project financing to business startups, they offer short or long-term personalized service. Whatever the type or scope of your project, special attention is paid to your business plan and each stage of your development.

For further information on the Quebec City CLD:

- Call (418) 525-7771
- Visit www.clddequebec.qc.ca

You can also download the *Guide de démarrage d'une entreprise* (business startup guide) from the CLD website [French only].

The Quebec City region is also home to various business assistance organizations offering support during the initiation, startup and development phases. For example, Inno-Centre offers a 24-month assistance program for startup entrepreneurs designed to bring them from the initial phase to the development phase.

For further information:

- Entrepreneuriat Laval: www.el.ulaval.ca
- SOVAR: www.sovar.com
- Inno-Centre: www.inno-centre.com

Additional useful information

Ressources Entreprises: This organization seeks to offer business information and referral services to specialized resources supporting business development in the Quebec City region.

Info Entrepreneurs: Government of Canada service offering the *Business Start-Up Info-Guide*, available from the following website: www.infoentrepreneurs.org

Quebec business startup portal: www.entreprises.gouv.qc.ca

Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (MDEIE): www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca

Testimonial

When I decided to immigrate to Quebec and start a business, I wonder if my perceptions were in line with reality?

Quebec is a place where you can make the entrepreneurial dream a reality. I realized that my successful business startup experience was shaped by three major factors.

First, there is the mindset of a people who are proud of their network of small businesses, are unfailingly enthusiastic, show a zest for life and consistently solve problems from a forward-looking perspective. That may seem like a cliché, but it actually encourages people to take the initiative and fosters a genuinely entrepreneurial culture. It also translates into a simplified business startup process and tax advantages, particularly in comparison with France.

Second, the availability of complimentary business startup and development tools. I'm thinking in particular of Ressources Entreprises, which provided me with guidance and introduced me to key project stakeholders in the areas of consulting, financing, business development, etc. It's an actual network dedicated to helping businesses and fostering regional economic development. You certainly can't disregard all of these resources.

Third, there's a concept that brings a smile to the face of newcomers to Quebec: networking! It's a state of mind and a natural process. People get together to facilitate and develop their professional contacts. Networking allowed me to integrate, develop my potential and meet some key people along the way. Networking is a learnable and improvable skill and it's become an integral part of my life as an entrepreneur.

Eric Taillefer (immigrated to Quebec from France in 2005)
Founding President, Harmonya Technologies

3.3.2 Taking over a business

Consistent with the trend observed in most of the G8 countries, demographic changes in Quebec and the baby-boomers' early retirement are creating business succession problems. The statistics speak for themselves:

- Nearly 95% of Quebec companies are small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and 40% of business leaders are seriously considering retiring by 2010 (70% by 2015 and 85% by 2020).
- Nearly 70% of SMEs go out of business during the first-to-second generation transition, while 65% of SMEs have no succession plans in place.
- Of those SMEs that do have succession plans, only 50% have identified a successor. Due to demographic and socioeconomic factors, intrafamily transfers are increasingly rare, while 37% of entrepreneurs are thinking of selling their business to a non-family member.

Sources: Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) and Quebec's Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (MDEIE).

Consequently, immigrants with an entrepreneurial bent have numerous opportunities to take over family businesses in Quebec. Compared to starting a company, taking over an existing business allows you to build on an existing foundation and to tap into a well-established clientele and business culture.

If you are interested in business takeover opportunities, you are strongly advised to seek assistance and guidance during the process. Obtaining expert advice can simplify matters and increase the likelihood of success.

Testimonial

I immigrated to Quebec in 1998 after I married a Quebec diplomat. When I couldn't find a position that matched my career aspirations, I began to weigh up my options. My husband encouraged me to become an entrepreneur, so I decided to take over an existing business and acquired a carwash: Auto Nette Gagnon.

Why a carwash? Because I could see there was a real need (two out of three Quebecers own a car). The process of taking over the business was not only an opportunity for me to integrate into Quebec society, but also to prove myself and gain valuable business experience.

At the outset, I had only a vague notion of what I had to do. So I restructured the company—more like a micro-business—in line with my personal vision. And today, my company is very well known.

In the carwash business, I found that many employees are experiencing social difficulties. I've travelled a lot and have a strong sense of social responsibility. So I saw an opportunity to balance work and community service and to help reintegrate these employees, some of whom were born in Quebec and some of whom were immigrants like me.

Over the years, the business has grown by leaps and bounds. I still strive to hire individuals in difficulty who show a degree of commitment to the company. None of that would have been possible without the small business assistance available at the local level, such as the CLD and other programs. The assistance I received greatly facilitated my entrepreneurial career.

Based on my valuable and exciting experiences as an African entrepreneur in Quebec, I wrote a book entitled *Une femme d'affaires noire dans le domaine de l'homme blanc [A Black Businesswoman in the Realm of the White Man]*, which was published recently.

Laurence-Lydie Traoré (Originaire du Burkina Faso, arrivée à Québec en 1999)
Présidente et propriétaire - Auto-Nette Gagnon

3.3.3 Business mentoring

If you decide to start your own company or take over an existing business, you may need guidance as you embark on your new venture.

Business mentoring may be the ideal solution! With deep roots in the Quebec City region, business mentoring was initially embraced by the Entrepreneurship Foundation, which has provided assistance on a wide range of projects over the years.

The Entrepreneurship Foundation plays an active role in promoting the development of an entrepreneurial culture in Quebec.

It has also compiled a list of volunteer business mentors, who assist new entrepreneurs and support business growth.

In the Quebec City region, the Entrepreneurship Foundation is represented by the Managerial and Entrepreneurial Assistance Service (Service d'aide aux gestionnaires et aux entrepreneurs/SAGE): www.sagequebec.org.

Did you know?

Approximately 70% of mentored companies in Quebec have been in operation for at least five years—twice as long as entrepreneurs who did not receive mentoring.

For further general information on business mentoring in Quebec and on available services, visit the Entrepreneurship Foundation's website at www.entrepreneurship.qc.ca.

Testimonial

When I initially met with SAGE's representatives in the Quebec City region, my company, Adeon Canada, which specializes in CRM advisory services and business intelligence, had been in business for nearly a year. Although the results were good and the company was in excellent financial shape, our growth had levelled off and I couldn't quite figure out why.

That's when Yves Bourget, my mentor at SAGE, informed me that although people in France and Quebec speak the same language, they have different approaches to business. Yves never made any decisions for me. Instead, he shared his extensive business experience and helped me realize what was holding me back. After just a few mentoring sessions, I began building a network of Quebec partners who have played a key role in the growth of our company provincewide. I'd like to thank Yves for his invaluable advice, availability and flexibility.

The mentors at SAGE are seasoned business people, most of whom are still working, and they provide their services on a volunteer basis. Despite his busy schedule, Yves was there for me whenever I needed him, even in emergencies.

Aziz Lefilef (immigrated to Quebec from France in 2007)
Partner - Adeon Canada