

Contradictions in Recent Quebec Immigration Policy: Giving with one hand, taking with the other

Jill Hanley

Scientific Director, SHERPA University Institute

Associate Professor, McGill School of Social Work

A Refresher on Quebec Settlement and Integration Policy

- Quebec is the only majority-francophone jurisdiction in North America – 8.4 million people
- Before Quebec gained control of immigrant selection and settlement, immigrants tended to integrate into anglophone minority
- 1991: Canada-Quebec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens
- Since then, control over levels of immigration, selection and integration services

Strong Community Settlement Sector

- Active umbrella organization: TCRI. <http://tcri.qc.ca/>
- Heavy focus on Greater Montreal region (more so than rest of Canada)
- Well-organized, neighbourhood-focused, established settlement organizations – funded by Quebec government
- Classic services for permanent residents:
 - Reception and orientation (school, health, housing)
 - Employability
 - Immigration applications
 - French courses

Election of CAQ in 2018

- New party to government – election platform with negative focus on immigration
- Change of name: *Ministère d'immigration, francisation et intégration - MIFI* (replacing MIDI's Diversity and Inclusion)
- After years of problematic public rhetoric (from all parties), succession of rapid and controversial changes
- However, « giving with one hand, taking with the other »...

Contradictory Changes in Policy

- Permanent residents
- Refugee claimants
- Migrant workers
- International students
- Various « sponsorship » programs

Permanent Residents

Problems

- Commitment to reduce to 40,000 per year in context of major labour shortage
- Introduction of « Values Test »
- Freeze and thaw of immigration applications in 2019

Contradictions

- Numbers not reduced in practice
- Expansion of settlement services
- Financial support for participating in French courses
- Values test can be taken multiple times

Refugee Claimants

Problems

- Negative public rhetoric
- Exclusion from subsidized daycare (under Liberals in 2017)

Contradictions

- Major public investment in shelter, health and social services
- Opening eligibility for French classes
- New, limited employment services
- New eligibility for Housing Allowance

Migrant Workers

Problems

- Proposals to limit access to Permanent Residence
- Freeze of applications under the Quebec Experience Class in 2019
- Very high levels of French required
- Reopened under existing rules in November 2019

Contradictions

- New eligibility for all settlement services
- Introduction of new French courses for their schedules
- Special measures for long-standing caregiver applications
- PR still possible for all levels of occupations (i.e. « low-skilled ») after only 12 months of work

International Students

Problems

- Proposals to limit access to Permanent Residence
- New applications frozen in summer 2019
- Freeze of applications under the Quebec Experience Class in 2019
- Reopened under old rules in November 2019

Contradictions

- New eligibility for all settlement services
- Introduction of new French courses for their schedules
- Still recognized as desirable immigrants

Various Sponsorship Programs

Problems

- Framed as a charitable act, a potential burden on the state
- Repeated freezing of applications for:
 - Parents & Grandparents
 - Private Sponsorship of Refugees
- Problematic procedures when open

Contradictions

- Lower financial criteria than in rest of Canada
- More flexible formula for private sponsorship of refugees

How to respond? Permanent residency

- Repeated need to mobilize around surprise announcements
- Sense of insecurity for people working towards PR (i.e. migrant workers, international students)
- Clear need in province for continued immigration – restrictions don't make any economic sense
- But settlement support for PRs is expanding

How to respond? Settlement services

- Expanded eligibility very welcome - a longstanding demand
- But struggle with rapid increase in numbers
- Training on specific needs of migrant workers and international students lacking – TCRI and allies are responding
- Still no funding for the organizations that do the important grassroots outreach and advocacy

How to respond? Refugee claimants

- Numbers still very high in Quebec – although immediate sense of « crisis » is diminished
- Apart from the daycare exclusion, government response has been very positive
- Class action to fight daycare exclusion being mounted, led by TCRI

How to respond? City of Montreal

- New engagement by the City of Montreal to offer direct services to immigrants in relation to settlement
- Particular commitment to precarious status migrants – including undocumented
- Limited mandate, but changing the landscape

How to respond? Public rhetoric

- Negative public rhetoric requires active mobilisation and resistance:
 - Bill 21 on symbols of faith in the public sector
 - Values Test
 - General rise in xenophobia
- Most enduring problem - difficult to predict the future around this

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Thanks

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Jill Hanley

Jill.hanley@mcgill.ca