



ACTION WEEK AGAINST RACISM MARCH 15-25, 2007

THE WORKPLACE: A RACISM-FREE ZONE

For several years now, Quebec has been faced with the difficult task of establishing a discrimination-free labour market. Such an environment would make the most of the full range of human resources represented by its citizens, with the aim of ensuring social cohesion and greater productivity. Yet given the very high unemployment rates among ethnocultural groups, we must question whether Quebec society has mustered all the tools it needs to create workplaces that are free of racism and discrimination. What role can be played by private enterprise, the leading employment provider? How can companies positively value ethnocultural diversity in their organizational structures? What role is advisable for the various levels of government? Are they successfully implementing policies that allow for the emergence and consolidation of workplaces that are free of racism and xenophobia?

Racism in the workplace is a chameleon: it takes on the colour of its environment. At times, it may erupt into the open, violently and without warning. Fortunately, such manifestations of racism are extremely rare. Much more widespread in all work environments is latent racism, more palpable and at the same time more insidious. Whether it be prejudice, attitudes of rejection or exclusion, or degrading comments, these manifestations result in psychological suffering and sometimes tension between employees. Clearly, they have adverse effects on the way organizations function and ultimately, the economy. In addition, the "ethnicization" of certain jobs has a harmful impact that contaminates work environments. All these attitudes must be unequivocally controlled, denounced and eliminated.

When organizations and companies are active in the management of cultural diversity and propose concrete measures to avoid potential conflicts, they create, through their actions, racism-free workplaces. With the immigrant population increasing in both cities and the regions, equitable access to employment and the right to a racism-free and discrimination-free workplace are essential goals. The struggle is first and foremost one of awareness building, and it aims to instil an attitude of open-mindedness. The 8th edition of Action Week Against Racism is part of that struggle.

THE ORGANISATION COMMITTEE