

2.2.1 Quebec

The second largest province in Canada — both in terms of size and population, Quebec has a population of 7,782,561 and a total area of 1,542,056 km² (Statistics Canada, 2009). This translates to a population density of 5.63/km². The provincial capital is Quebec City, which has a population of 715,515 (including the metropolitan area). Quebec is also home to Canada's second largest city, Montreal, which has a population of 3,635,571. Quebec is also the only French-speaking province in Canada. At present, approximately 80% of the population report French to be their first language. Unlike the other provinces, secondary school in Quebec is from grade 7 to 11, after which students typically attend a two or three year *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* (CEGEP) to receive a Diploma of College Studies.

K-12 Online Learning

There was no response from the Quebec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport, as such this profile has been developed based on a document analysis of the Ministry's website and other published Government documents.

Category	Yes/No	Comments
Province-led programme	No	SOFAD is a provincial entity, but it does not deliver distance education
Other online programmes	Yes	
Provincial-level policy	No	

Online Programmes

The first distance education programme created by the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport was a correspondence school for vocational education in 1946. This was expanded to include general education courses in 1972, and popular education and CEGEP courses in the 1980s. In the early 1990s, a distance education institution was created for those CEGEP courses (Saucier, 2007).

Then in 1994-95 the responsibility for distance education was devolved from the Ministry to the school boards. In January 1996, as the result of a joint effort between the Ministry and the school boards the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (SOFAD) was created. SOFAD is a not-for-profit organisation tasked with the development and production distance-learning materials. Currently, SOFAD has created distance materials for more than 200 courses in a variety of formats (only a small percentage are online courses). School boards throughout Quebec use these materials in their own distance education programmes. At present, there are:

- 38 school boards or consortia that offer only French-language distance education;
- 1 school board that offers only English-language distance education; and
- 1 school board and 1 consortium that offer both French-language and English-language distance education.

These school boards and consortia operate a total of 57 centres.

It should be noted K-12 distance education in Québec is reserved for the adult student (i.e., students who have reached the age of 16 before July 1 of the current school year). Younger students are not eligible to participate in these distance education programmes.

There is also a programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport, *Écoles éloignées en réseau* or Networked Remote Schools, which is designed to connect rural and remote schools via the Internet to allow them to share curricular resources. In most instances it appears this system has been used as a way to engage students in blended learning opportunities based on themed projects, although there are also reports to it being used as a means to deliver online learning.

Provincial Policies

The *Education Act* in Quebec makes no reference to distance education. As the school boards hold the primary responsibility for distance education since 1995, policies and regulations related to K-12 distance education also appear to be at the district level.

Funding

The Government of Quebec provides school boards funding for distance education students based upon enrolment at a rate of 80% of the amount provided for a student enrolled in a brick-and-mortar setting. The Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport does provide a block grant to SOFAD to support their course development activities. SOFAD also charges a fee for school boards to use their materials, money that is reinvested in the development of other learning materials.

Tracking, and Accountability

The Ministry of Education does track enrolments, but not completions, for K-12 distance education. For example, in 2007-08 there were 38,429 enrolments from 18,760 students in distance education, up from 37,217 enrolments in 2006-07 and 30,038 enrolments in 2005-06. This growth has been consistent over the past decade, as there were only 10,910 enrolments in K-12 distance education in Quebec in 1995-96 (Saucier, 2009).

The Ministry also attempts to collect data on student performance for its distance education students. However, some of the school boards do not forward that data to the Ministry, resulting in a data set representing approximately 50% of the results. The most recent attempt to collect this information was in October 2007 and that incomplete data can be viewed at http://www.sofad.qc.ca/pdf/echecs_et_maths_2007.pdf.

Teaching, and Curriculum

Distance education teachers in Quebec are called tutors, primarily because their role is not necessarily to teach the content but to be able to provide assistance, as the student requires it. The selection, duties, and payment of these tutors are managed by the school boards.

The curriculum materials used in the school board programmes are mainly provided by SOFAD, however, the use of SOFAD's materials in distance education is not compulsory. School boards are able to design their own materials locally or to buy the materials of some other providers.