

## **The personal attendant for leisure (PAL) card: a tool to support the participation of people with disabilities in recreational, cultural and tourism activities**

### **Presentation abstract**

In Québec, even though facilities may be accessible, activities may be inclusive or adapted, and staff may be trained to respond to the needs of people with disabilities, many of them nevertheless require an attendant for these activities or for access to goods and services.

The role of attendants in this context is to provide services that are usually not offered by the staff on site (personal care, help with eating, etc.).

However, attendant-related costs are additional expenses that often hinder participation in leisure, cultural and tourism activities for people with disabilities and their families.

The personal attendant for leisure (PAL) card was therefore created in 2017 to remove this barrier to participation. Offered without charge to eligible people with disabilities who are age 5 and up, the card entitles attendants to free admission to the leisure, cultural or tourism sites that recognize it.

PAL is gradually replacing a similar card created in the 1990s by the community sector. While inspired by its predecessor, PAL introduces changes aimed at optimizing the potential of such a tool and its benefits for holders.

The card was designed to streamline and simplify access for people with disabilities and their families, while remaining a credible mechanism. It is managed centrally by a provincial organization dedicated to promoting leisure, including culture and tourism, for everyone who has a disability. The organization is supported by a pan-Québec network, which can also rely on support from government partners in order to promote the card, as well as for encouraging their respective networks to endorse it.

PAL stems from consensus among the government departments concerned and the independent community action movement for people with disabilities, all of which have joined forces to foster accessibility to leisure, culture and tourism.

On the strength of this consensus, the card is among the measures that form the Government Action Plan to Foster Economic Inclusion and Social Participation 2017-2023 announced by Québec on December 10, 2017. Government financial support is granted for creating, implementing and promoting the card. This initiative, which will span six years, is perfectly aligned with the government policy Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights are Meant to be Exercised.

Adopted in 2009 by the Government of Québec, the policy aims to increase the social participation of people with disabilities over a ten-year time frame. The policy sets the tone for government action and the action of other sectors such as municipalities, public agencies and private organizations with a view to tangible gains conducive to social participation.

To achieve this, the government policy spells out the main challenges and the intervention priorities for reducing the barriers encountered by people with disabilities and their families. The purpose of one of these priorities is to increase the participation of people with disabilities in recreational, sports, cultural and tourism activities in conditions equivalent to those of other clients.

Making structured attendant services available to people with disabilities and to their families is one of the priorities of the Equals in Every Respect policy. Recognition of the need for attendants and harmonization of practices in this regard are among the preferred means for achieving this goal.



## Conclusion

The major phases in implementing PAL make it possible to gauge the impact of this concrete tool that fosters accessibility to leisure, tourism and culture in conditions equivalent to those of people who are not living with disabilities.

This presentation will cover the features of PAL, eligibility requirements and the simplified procedures for obtaining the card. The strategies deployed to increase the number of card holders and the number of sites that have agreed to offer free access for attendants will also be discussed.

## Lead speaker : Josiane Corbeil

**Organisation :** Office des personnes handicapées du Québec

**City (Country) :** Drummondville(Canada)

**Biography :** Ms Josiane Corbeil graduated from Université du Québec à Montréal with a degree in sexology. She is a member of the Ordre professionnel des sexologues du Québec. For a dozen or so years, she occupied various clinical positions within a community organization tasked to monitor and support the social rehabilitation of offenders. Ms Corbeil has been a Québec public servant since 2007. She worked in a professional capacity for the Ministère de la Sécurité publique before joining the team of Office des personnes handicapées du Québec advisers. She now coordinates interministerial projects related to the PAL card.

## 2nd speaker :

**Organisation :**

**City (Country) :** ( )

**Biography :**