

SEMINAR OPENING LECTURE TEXT

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General Secretary
UQÀM

I am very pleased to welcome you to this symposium organized by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec in collaboration with the Faculty of Political Science and Law of UQÀM.

Happy to revisit fifty years of legal changes aiming at citizen inclusion and to be able to measure with you the importance of building institutions that are responsive to society in its diversity. I bring greetings from our Rector, Mrs. Magda Fusaro, who is on mission abroad.

As you know, the Université du Québec à Montréal is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Designed for our anniversary, the new visual design worn by UQÀM and its communities symbolizes the intrinsic characteristics of our university, in particular that of the requirement of citizen inclusion to which we aspire and without which the qualities of accessibility, humanity and rigour that have established our reputation would be meaningless.

UQÀM also prides itself on being a dynamic Francophone university, deeply Montreal-based and open to the world. We open our doors to all cultures and communities, and they are the richness of our university, whether it is our faculty or the UQÀM student community. A pioneer in several fields, UQÀM has multiplied its inclusion strategies over the years, notably by establishing a research chair on homophobia in 2011, as well as programs and initiatives that offer a new sounding board to a society that is increasingly aware of its diversity and experiencing profound changes.

Ms. Line Chamberland, holder of the Research Chair on Homophobia, will speak in a few minutes to examine the impact of decriminalization on women who love women.

We are also proud to have been the first Francophone university in Quebec to allow all students who request it to add a first name other than their legal first name to their student files. First French-language university to place itself under the sign of the democratization of knowledge, UQÀM has wanted, since its foundation, to distinguish itself by its desire to understand the world through the prism of the human, political and legal sciences, feminist and Aboriginal studies, minorities and citizen diversity, the place of Quebec in Canada and in the world... some of the subjects and themes that inhabit UQÀM.

And among those who know how to meet this ideal, the Faculty of Political Science and Law stands out particularly. This is a faculty that shapes minds, encourages students not only to comment on current events, but also to take part in them and enrich the debates. These students are among the most awarded students at our university. Through them and thanks to them, change happens.

UQÀM, it should be remembered, was born in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution, in the heart of citizen action, overflowing with new ideas. It was also the time when entire populations living under the seal of silence began to emerge from their loneliness, even their suffering. Remember 1969, after Pierre Elliott Trudeau was elected Prime Minister, his government passed *Omnibus Act C-150*, which decriminalized homosexual activity in Canada and legalized abortion under certain conditions. That same year, Ottawa ratified the first *Official Languages Act*, which recognizes the equal status of English and French as the official languages of the Canadian federal state. It was also in 1969 that the Quebec law granting the right to vote to Aboriginal people came into force.

Fifty years later, UQÀM continues to promote Aboriginal communities. This is achieved through our innovative university programs and the UQÀM gallery, which together illuminate Aboriginal arts, cultures and societies. This year, UQÀM also opened an office to facilitate the integration of these First Nations students under the direction of Alexandra Lorange, a graduate of the Faculty of Political Science and Law.

Times are changing. Our society is changing. I would like to thank the Honourable J. Michel Doyon, Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, as well as Mr. Hugo Cyr, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Law, and his team and partners for this day, which promises to be so fruitful in discussions. Thank you also to all of you for responding to this invitation. Many of you have contributed to the change that we will celebrate today. The actions you have taken, the social and legislative progress you have initiated, have helped to create a more inclusive society.

The advancement of the laws will continue in respect for others and openness of mind, and it will begin today, thanks to you who will speak out, thanks to you who will attend and draw inspiration from the conferences, thanks to the student community and the faculty of UQÀM, particularly the Faculty of Political Science and Law. We all have the potential to be able to make a concrete change in attitudes and make our community and legal system more inclusive.

Have a good conference and thank you.