Quebec town adopts controversial social code of conduct for newcomers

The village of Hérouxville, Quebec, caused much discussion after it issued a statement of "standards" aimed at the town's new and prospective immigrants. The resolution (passed by municipal council) outlines what the community considers to be acceptable and unacceptable social norms of behaviour. According to council, the statement was designed to inform Hérouxville newcomers "that the lifestyle they left behind in their birth country cannot be brought here with them and they would have to adapt to their new social identity."

Hérouxville's resolution is an apparent reaction to recent minority accommodation measures (i.e. permitting Sikh youth to wear religious daggers in schools). Among other things, community residents are not allowed to hide their face (except on Halloween); employers are not required to provide a place to pray or time off to pray; children may not bring weapons to school including ceremonial weapons; and a girl may choose her own spouse. The resolution also states that men and women are equal and controversially warns potential newcomers "that killing women in public beatings, or burning them alive are not part of our standards of life."

The Canadian Islamic Congress and the Canadian Muslim Forum intend to file a complaint with the Quebec Human Rights Commission if Hérouxville does not revoke its resolution. They believe the statement is discriminatory in that it characterizes specific faith groups (particularly Muslims, Jews, and Sikhs) as oppressive towards women and prone to violence. Furthermore, they argue that Hérouxville's town council is disrespecting both the spirit and letter of s. 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which specifies that the "Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians."

Sources:

- Hérouxville's Website – you can find the "standards" under "Avis Public"
- "Friday Magazine" CIC (16 February 2007)
- "Immigrant debate has 'gone too far': Charest" CBC News (06 February 2007)
- Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, "The Muslims aren't coming … they're here!" The Canadian Islamic Congress (02 February 2007)
- Rene Bruemmer and Kevin Dougherty, "Hérouxville: Cause Celebre: 'Isolated case,' Charest says, but other towns mull similar rules" The

Gazette (02 February 2007)
- Hubert Bauch, “Town stands by its norms” The Gazette (06 February 2007)
- “Muslim groups to launch complaint over town's immigrant code” CBC News (05 February 2007)
- “Codes of conduct for immigrants gain favour in rural Quebec” CBC News (01 February 2007)
- “The town of Hérouxville, Que., wants immigrants that fit in with its citizens” CBC News (29 January 2007)
- “Quebec towns reject Hérouxville immigrant code” CBC News (07 February 2007)
- Dene Moore, “Quebec town outlines societal 'norms' for would-be immigrants” Yahoo News (29 January 2007)
- “Critics: Quebec town's conduct code 'xenophobic'” CTV (29 January 2007)
- Sean Gordon, “Quebec town spawns uneasy debate: Accommodation of religious and ethnic minorities reveals ugly urban-rural split” The Toronto Star (05 February 2007)

Further Reading:

- “Police officer faces discipline for penning song about immigrants” CBC News (30 January 2007)