

INFO CITQ

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A Word from the President

It gives me great pleasure to present our new newsletter, especially since *Info CITQ*—the latest communication tool implemented by the CITQ—comes as the final note to a year that has been particularly full and satisfying in many ways.

For us, the year 2003 marks the completion of a first cycle begun in December 2001 when the Regulation Respecting Tourist Accommodation Establishments took effect and we signed a partnership agreement with Tourisme Québec. Under the terms of this agreement, the CITQ committed itself to visit all the establishments in the seven categories of accommodation within the first two years of the agreement, and to process all of their applications for classification. Each establishment will now be visited every two years, or every four years in the case of educational institutions.

During the years 2002 and 2003, the CITQ team has managed to visit more than 5,500 establishments throughout Québec. *Bravo!*

Building on this achievement and with two years of operation under its belt, the CITQ has also undertaken the process of reviewing the classification grids in 2003. This was based on the result of a major consultation with the tourist accommodation community and the travelers. The following pages give more details on this process.

But first, I would like to thank all who took part in the reviewing process, the members of the various sectoral committees and all the operators who sent in their comments. Thanks to your cooperation, Québec's official classification program will better reflect the expectations of the community and will continue to contribute to the development of Québec's tourist industry.

Finally, the CITQ Board of Directors and team join me to send all operators and industry partners our very best wishes for prosperity in the new year. May 2004 be equal to the warm hospitality that Québec is known for worldwide.

Jacques Veillette
President

A NEWCOMER TO COMMUNICATIONS!

The entire CITQ team is celebrating the birth of their new newsletter which we hope will meet your expectations. Whether you are the operator of a tourist accommodation establishment or an industry partner, this newsletter will provide you with a varied informational content on Québec's classification program, of which the CITQ has been appointed official manager.

Published four times a year, the *Info CITQ* newsletter aims to enrich the information available through the www.citq.qc.ca website—which registers close to 1,500 hits each month—, the annual activity report, and the many releases regularly published in several media throughout Québec.

We hope you'll enjoy reading *Info CITQ* and that you'll want to send us your comments and content suggestions.

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REVIEW OF THE CLASSIFICATION GRIDS **A multi-stage process**

The tourist accommodation industry is forever changing and so is the CITQ. Over the last year, the CITQ has started reviewing the grids it uses to classify the many categories of establishments. The goal of this major operation: adapting the grids to today's context, and reflecting the experience gained during our first two years of operation as well as the wishes expressed by both the community and the travelers.

Based on significant consultation efforts conducted at many different levels, this review process will enable the CITQ to make certain necessary changes in the classification grids used for five categories of establishments: hotel establishments, bed and breakfast establishments, tourist homes, resorts and youth hostels.

The review process the CITQ has implemented includes several stages.

First stage: What operators had to say

Getting to know the opinion of tourist accommodation operators is no doubt a very important first step in the consultation process. This is why **a questionnaire entitled “How did we do in 2002?”** was sent to more than 5,000 operators in December 2002 to gather information, including the changes operators wanted to see in the classification grids.

Despite the low response rate to this informal survey (8%), some of the comments provide an interesting perspective:

- 50% of respondents are bed & breakfast operators, 22% operate tourist homes, and 15% operate hotel establishments of less than 40 rooms. Together, these three categories make up 87% of respondents.
- 75% of respondents said they were satisfied with the services provided by the CITQ and more than 80% said they appreciated the visit of our classification agents.
- 56% of respondents operating **hotel establishments** of less than 40 rooms wanted changes in the classification grids. The creation of a category for “inns” and the adaptation of the existing grid to the realities of small establishments were the main propositions made by these respondents.
- 55% of respondents operating **bed & breakfast establishments** wanted the classification grids to be changed. The main suggestions regarded taking into account the friendly and warm welcome provided, attention to details, the historical or heritage flavour of establishments and the tourist activities available in the vicinity.
- 44% of respondents operating **tourist homes** wanted the classification grids to be changed to take into account their location (waterside, view, surrounding landscape, etc.), architecture, and activities in their area, to differentiate between city and country settings and to add a 5-star level.

Second stage: What the travelers had to say

No review of the classification grids would be complete without taking into account the expectations of the travelers. To this end, the CITQ commissioned **Léger Marketing** to conduct a qualitative study on the expectations and perceptions of the travelers as regards accommodation

establishments and on the influence these expectations and perceptions have on their appreciation of the quality of accommodation provided. This study was conducted in August and September 2003.

To achieve these objectives, **focus groups** made up of consumers reflecting the socio-demographic features of the target public were set up. Three groups took part in this operation:

- Consumers staying in bed & breakfast establishments;
- Consumers staying in hotels for personal reasons; and
- Business people staying in hotels.

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Here are the main findings of this study:

- The most desirable features for participants staying in **bed & breakfast establishments** were: cleanliness of the establishment, a warm and personalized welcome, comfort and amenities such as a private bathroom, room size, food quality, country charm, safety and a limited number of possible guests.
- The most desirable features for participants staying in **hotels for personal reasons** were: room comfort, bathroom equipment, recreational infrastructures, cleanliness, price, location of the establishment, on-site bar/restaurant, safety and a personalized welcome.
- The most desirable features for participants staying in **hotels for business reasons** were: proximity to work location, efficiency of services such as express check-out, workspace, 24-hour access to services such as a pool, the safety of the establishment, free on-site parking, free local calls, comfort, room appointment and cleanliness, and a clean bathroom.

Third phase: What sectoral committees and operators had to say

The highlight of the consultation undertaken by the CITQ was the creation of sectoral committees made up of representatives from sectoral associations and operators. Meeting every Saturday in October, November and December 2003, these committees reviewed the changes inspired by two years of CITQ experience, the propositions from the tourist accommodation community and the expectations and perceptions of the travelers.

Five sectoral committees proceeded to review as many classification grids, namely for hotel establishments, bed & breakfast establishments, resorts, tourist homes and youth hostels. More than 30 people from the tourist accommodation community were involved in these committees, along with three CITQ representatives.

All operators from those five categories of establishments received a letter inviting them to visit the www.citq.qc.ca website to see and react to the changes proposed by the sectoral committees.

Some of the expectations expressed by the community, such as the creation of a new category for inns or the adoption of a 5-star level for other categories, cannot be met within the present review process, since such changes involve a major revision of the grids requiring a much more extensive process and the Minister's approval.

Nonetheless, the CITQ is considering submitting a memorandum to the Minister for Regional Development and Tourism in 2004 to propose such a revision.

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Did you know?

- *Developed in 2001, the classification grids are the result of collective efforts involving major input from the accommodation community.*

All CITQ classification guides were developed in close association with the accommodation community. To develop classification grids for each of the seven categories of establishment covered by the Act and Regulation Respecting Tourist Accommodation Establishments, a committee was made up of industry representatives, operators from the category concerned, and classification agents.

Each of the classification grids thus developed were then tested in several establishments, readjusted according to the results of these tests and submitted to the Minister for approval before being put to use.

Furthermore, the classification grids are now being reviewed through a process systematically based on joint action with the accommodation community and partnership with Tourisme Québec. These grids are the classification guides that all operators receive when their case file is opened at the CITQ.

The classification guides are available at www.citq.qc.ca under "Reference library".

News from the Board

At its September 26, 2003 meeting, the CITQ Board of Directors:

- Acknowledged receipt of a Tourisme Québec decision stating that from now on, establishments will need to have at least one star or sun to be listed on the bonjourquebec.com website, in the *Accommodation in Québec* directory, and in the ATRs' regional guides;
- Expressed its intention to adopt a code of ethics for members of the Board to underscore the Board's commitment to maintaining its independence and transparency;
- Approved the calendar of meetings for 2004, as follows:

Board meetings:

- Monday, December 8, 2003
- Friday, March 5, 2004
- Friday, June 11, 2004
- Friday, September 24, 2004

Annual General Assembly: Friday, March 5, 2004

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