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**Kathleen Weil slams Jean-François Lisée's immigration comments**

QUEBEC — Immigration Minister Kathleen Weil has slammed PQ leadership candidate Jean-François Lisée for listing three European cities as he called on Quebec to have the “best immigration possible.”

The Parti Québécois leadership hopeful said Monday the province should select rapidly employable, educated francophone immigrants from top job fairs in Paris, Brussels and Barcelona because they can integrate quickly into Quebec society. Lisée also talked about recruiting francophones from around the world.

“That is perfect immigration,” he said.

Weil attacked the comments as discriminatory.

“Every human being has the potential to integrate and to live a full life and to contribute to the society that they live in, and that is the history of Quebec,” she said.

Weil argued Quebec boasts the most diversified immigration in Canada.

“Quebec is an open society; we have greeted, welcomed and settled people from all over the world and we’re going to continue to do that.”

Weil said she was surprised by Lisée’s comments because “people usually don’t discriminate in their comments, certainly not here (in the National Assembly) over the origins of somebody, about who’s a better immigrant.”

She told reporters it is “certainly” discriminatory to “differentiate people based on their cultural background, their origin.”

Lisée’s positions have earned him criticism from inside his own party, too.

PQ MNA Maka Kotto — who supports Lisée’s contender, Alexandre Cloutier, for the party leadership — told La Presse that Lisée was “agitating vectors that tickle the dark part of our souls.”

Kotto later told reporters in Quebec City it had been “imprudent” of Lisée to raise the issue of immigration levels and composition during the leadership race.

“You know this is a topic that stirs up passions and sometimes skids out of control,” Kotto said.

Lisée argued his critics are twisting his words.

“Saying that I want to favour European immigration is nothing but a willful distortion of what I said. My point is that perfect immigration is when we can provide a job, education and integration to every newcomer wherever he or she comes from.”

A new study by the Institut de recherche et d’informations socio-économiques (IRIS) suggests immigrants in Quebec are victims of “systemic racism.”

Weil did not agree to holding parliamentary hearings on the matter, as requested by Québec solidaire MNA Amir Khadir.

Weil also refuted Lisée’s contention that immigration contributes little to the prosperity of Quebec.

She said the province is working to select immigrants whose skills better match labour market needs, which will help overcome the acute labour shortage in Quebec’s regions.