

Daniel Jean, representing the Office des Personnes Handicapées du Québec (OPHQ), a Quebec government office that protects the rights of people with disabilities, opened the second day of the conference by shifting the focus from medical science to daily human experience. He explained that a disability should not be defined by a medical diagnosis alone, but by how a person's health interacts with their environment. A disability is when a person faces constant obstacles that prevent them from doing normal daily activities.

Under Quebec law, this definition is designed to be inclusive. Mr. Jean explicitly stated that this legal protection applies to individuals with MCS and other chronic conditions, even if their condition is not yet fully recognized by every medical doctor. As long as the condition causes a significant and lasting disruption to a person's life, they have a legal right to support and accommodations. This approach ensures that the government focuses on helping people overcome real-life barriers rather than waiting for absolute medical certainty.

Mr. Jean described how his organization works at both the individual and systemic levels to make society more inclusive. Individually, they guide people with disabilities and their families toward the services they need. Collectively, they push ministries, cities, and businesses to build accessibility into their daily operations. While thousands of public organizations in Quebec now write annual plans to remove barriers, Mr. Jean acknowledged that major challenges still exist, especially for people with MCS, indicating that the current laws may need to be strengthened in the future.

Ultimately, Mr. Jean called for a broader understanding of accessibility. It is not just about physical ramps or automatic doors, but also about the invisible environment, such as the chemicals and scents in the air. He concluded by redefining the word resilience. True resilience is not just about a vulnerable individual trying to adapt to a harsh and toxic world. Instead, it is a collective responsibility to design a society that is fair, welcoming, and healthy for everyone.