

Québec's Approach to Rural Development.
A successful rural policy under
budgetary pressure

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- Québec's Approach to Regional Development: An historical analysis
- This webinar provides an overview of Québec's approach to regional development from before confederation to the current period. We will focus on the establishment of the National Rural Policy in 2001 and its evolution since that period of time. Topics covered will include the institutional and cultural roots of the Rural Policy, its key features, its impacts and legacy, its transitions to current conditions, and its prospects for the future. The discussion will consider various explanations for the success of the policy and the implications it has for regional policy, development, and programs in general.

Feb 23; 11-12:30 CST

Plan

- Overview of the implementation and survival of Québec's rural policy
- Major impacts according OECD review
- What are its prospects for the future of this rural policy under budgetary pressures



- During the 1990s an interest in regional-focused policies emerged as a response to failures of previous approaches to development.
 - It occurred in a context of increasing global competition, budget cuts, government withdrawal and eroding capacity, and widespread environmental degradation.
 - The interest was particularly salient in OECD countries.
 - OECD. *The New Rural Paradigm*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006. <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/book/9789264023918-en>.
 - Regional Development Committee launched a series of studies from various countries (Rural Policy Reviews; Territorial Reviews).
 - Canada: OECD. *OECD Territorial Reviews: Canada 2002*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002. <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/book/9789264176300-en>.
 - Québec: OECD. *OECD Rural Policy Reviews: Québec, Canada 2010*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010. <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/book/9789264082151-en>.
- Québec was particularly interesting since it was one of the few territories where a rural policy had been implemented – as opposed to sectoral or economic policies.
- It remains particularly interesting to us since it is also the only province that has done so – and it has been formally and continuously in law since 2001.
 - It is unusual for such innovative approaches to survive – and this one has survived over 5 elections and 3 changes in political parties.
- Questions to consider today
 - What are the conditions that contributed to the implementation and survival of Québec's rural policy?
 - What have been its major impacts?
 - What are its prospects for the future?
 - What can we learn for rural and regional policy in other locations?

First Rural Policy 2001-2007

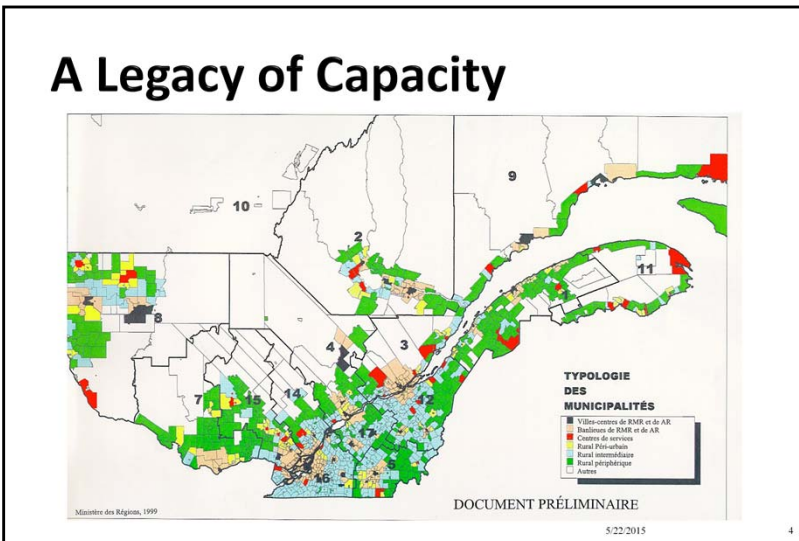
- ▶ Sustainable development and prosperity of rural communities
- ▶ Improve the quality of life and attractiveness
- ▶ Support citizens engagement and contribute to the capacity of the rural world



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•First Rural Policy: 2001-2007 Objectives

- Stimulate and support the sustainable development and prosperity of rural communities
- Contribute to the quality of life in rural communities and make them more attractive
- Support citizens' engagement in the development of their communities and contribute to the capacity of rural world



- First Rural Policy 2001-2007
- Implemented within a well-established political and social structure in Québec.
 - 86 regional counties (17 administrative regions)
 - Counties were a legacy from the Catholic church structures (parishes in rural areas)
 - Québécois had a long history of meeting, making decisions, and negotiating within and among these boundaries.
 - They were religious, social, and personal identity characteristics that remained after the Quiet Revolution of the 50s and 60s.
 - Health, education, and social life were organized with respect to them
 - There was an enormous amount of physical and social infrastructure that corresponded with these boundaries: churches, convents, seminaries, municipal halls, caisse populaire.
 - The government took over many of the functions related to them – along with much of the physical infrastructure.
 - Most municipalities were congruent with these boundaries.
 - Was relatively easy because of the social homogeneity of Québec.
- Most important: It was relatively easy for the government to assign responsibilities to these social entities since the capacity was well developed and their recognition was taken for granted.

First Policy Outcomes

- ▶ Large-scale mobilization
- ▶ Territory-based development perspective
- ▶ Elaboration and adoption of development and innovation tools
- ▶ A contact based agreement : the **rural pact**
 - More than 4,800 projects
 - Over 5,705 jobs
 - \$86.4 million from the pacts have generated \$504 million
 - Average cost was \$123,016 with average contribution from the pact was about 15% of the cost
- ▶ Non-profit organizations carry out most projects, followed closely by the municipalities, the MRCs and municipal organizations.



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•First Policy Outcomes

- Large-scale mobilization: over 30,000 individuals, including 7,000 volunteers, participating in 155 committees and 136 MRC sector-based working groups and 462 local committees
- Implementation of change and an empowerment process
- Definition of a territory-based development perspective
- Elaboration and adoption of development and innovation tools
- Emergence of a new rural economy
- A contact based agreement : the rural pact
 - Designed to:
 - Consolidate and develop the economy and employment in rural communities;
 - Bolster residents' commitment to community development;
 - Ensure and enhance the availability of community services.
 - Above all, the rural pact has helped strengthen the management of rural development and contributed to getting projects started.
 - Projects funded under the rural pact have broadened the acquisition of knowledge and skills in communities. Moreover, they offer unique avenues for development and original solutions to rural problems.
- More than 4,800 projects are underway or have been completed.
- Over 5,705 jobs have been created.
- Some \$86.4 million from the pacts has generated investments of nearly \$504 million.
- The average cost of a project was roughly \$123,016 and the average contribution per project from the pact was approximately \$18,500, the equivalent of 15% of the cost.
- Six priority sectors
 1. Maintain and improve the provision of services;
 2. Develop new products and new businesses;
 3. Hold on to youth and families and get them to return to the community;
 4. Support individual and collective entrepreneurship;
 5. Develop human capital;
 6. Ensure a network of promoters and local stakeholders.
- Non-profit organizations (NPOs) carry out most projects, followed closely by the municipalities, the MRCs and municipal organizations.

OECD Québec rural policy review: key policy issues

- ▶ Wholistic approach to rural policy (economic, social, environmental)
- ▶ Less effective in remote regions
- ▶ Weak protection for agricultural land near large urban centres
- ▶ Limited by lack of Provincial-Federal co-ordination



- Québec has developed a specific rural policy (PNR) - separate from agricultural and economic policy - to promote rural development. It focuses on social capital and aims to build community capacity and ensure that rural areas are occupied in a dynamic and sustainable way. Quebec's PNR, which is in line with the OECD New Rural Paradigm, is one of the most advanced in the OECD area.
- This policy effectively promotes socio-economic development in accessible rural areas and intermediate rural areas. However, it has a limited impact on the remote rural regions and resource-based rural communities which are the most vulnerable in Québec.
- The provincial law protecting agricultural land from urbanization is enforced in the same way across the entire province. This province-wide enforcement does not effectively protect valuable agricultural land in fringe metropolitan areas, e.g. Montreal, and it is limiting development in rural and remote rural areas.
- The promotion of rural development is hindered by lack of co-ordination between the provincial and federal governments and duplication at the local level

OECD Québec rural policy review: recommendations

- Integrate rural policy decisions into local economic development
- Protect pools of skilled labour in rural areas
- Work with marginal communities to facilitate the transition to other economically sustainable sources of employment
- Reduce urban sprawl and protect valuable agricultural land and amenities
- In predominantly rural regions allowing greater scope for the development of unused agricultural land



- OECD Recommendations
- Integrate rural policy decisions into local economic and entrepreneurial development and enhance the role of the supra-local level (groupings of municipalities). (Like MRC)
- Protect pools of skilled labour in rural areas to encourage innovation and diversification of the local economy. In areas suffering from the economic results of declining natural resources, work with the community to facilitate the transition to other economically sustainable sources of employment, taking into account both the reduction in population that in many cases has occurred and new skill requirements.
- Using green belts, reduce urban sprawl (promote compact cities) and protect valuable agricultural land and amenities surrounding urban centres. In predominantly rural regions, by contrast, allowing greater scope for the development of unused agricultural land can create new economic opportunities.

Second Rural Policy 2007-2014

- ▶ Strengthen the role played by municipal representatives and consolidate the RCM's role
- ▶ Ensure that each territory has the means to act
- ▶ Encourage a territorial development dynamic
- ▶ Pursue multifaceted development
- ▶ Foster rural-urban cooperation
- ▶ Promote the rural way of life
- ▶ Offer concrete gov't support



- The review of the first policy was very favourable, although there were several aspects that were flagged as needing development. These are reflected in the changes made for the Second Rural Policy 2007-2014
 - Strengthen the role played by municipal elected representatives and consolidate the RCM's role in rural development measures
 - Ensure that each territory has the means to act
 - Budget of \$280 million
 - Rural pacts established between MRCs and the government
 - Development officers and regional offices
 - Encourage a development dynamic centred on the territory
 - Special programs for devitalized communities – become an asset for the MRC
 - Pursue more multifaceted development
 - Foster cooperation and complementarity between rural and urban areas
 - Promote the rural way of life
 - Offer concrete support from the government in respect of the approaches, strategies and projects of rural communities

Third Rural Policy 2014-2024

- ▶ Build on the progress of previous policies
- ▶ Greater decentralization;
- ▶ Promote intersectoral, multifunctional, development, rural-urban collaboration
- ▶ Maintain the flexibility and local autonomy
- ▶ Encourage citizen participation
- ▶ Advocate an inclusive and equitable approach

"Pactes Plus"



•By the time the second policy was completed and evaluated it was clear that these policies were winning propositions. The third policy (2014-2024) recognized this by a longer term commitment more resources and expanded support through the rural agents. Elements of the third policy include:

- Focus on greater decentralization;
- Promotion of a greater intersectoral approach, multifunctionality and development initiatives that are complementarity between rural and urban areas;
- Maintenance of the flexibility of implementation and enforcement of local autonomy so they are able to implement the policy;
- Encouragement of greater citizen participation;
- Advocacy of an inclusive and equitable approach territorially.
- In order to achieve those goals, the New Rural Policy consolidates the network of rural agents and "rural laboratories" take a new and more flexible form with "Pactes Plus."

2014: The impact of austerity politics

- ▶ Implemented by a new government (Nov 2014 and Apr 2015)
- ▶ MRCs responsible for regional development
- ▶ \$100 million for the MRCs
- ▶ MRCs can delegate, but remain accountable
- ▶ No supplementary funds for dialogue functions



- A new government (Liberal) took over from the PQ in the 2014. They immediately implemented an austerity programme that has significantly changed the configuration of rural and regional governance in the province.
- Most important among these are the fiscal transition pacts (Nov 2014) and Loi (Bill) 28 (April 2015)
 - These laws give the responsibility for local and regional development to the MRCs
 - The fiscal pacts are used to distribute territorial development funds to the MRCs over the next 2 years (2015-2016): total of \$100 million.
 - The MRCs can entrust a particular organization to fulfil its mandate, but the MRC remains accountable and is the only body that can sign agreements with the government.
 - The Bill recognizes the importance of the MRC as a venue for dialogue within the region and between the region and the provincial government, but it does not provide supplementary funds for this purpose.

Implications of the provisional agreement

- ▶ MRCs' authority and delegation powers are increased
- ▶ Financial support is cut
- ▶ Rural laboratory program is cut
- ▶ Closure of Solidarité Rurale du Québec
- ▶ Reduced support for Rural Development Agents
- ▶ Jeopardizes the Québec Rural University program



• Implications and impacts of the provisional agreement

- The government clearly recognizes the MRCs as the primary bodies responsible for regional development.
 - Their authority and responsibilities are clarified and increased
 - The MRCs are given the power to recreate support structures along the lines of the old local community development organizations (CLDs).
 - The MRCs can create organizations for regional collaboration such as the old Regional Committees of Elected Representatives (CRÉs)
- BUT
- The funds (\$100 million) are half of the previous budget (Fonds de développement des territoires).
 - but they must finance them out of their own allocation and not via the provincial government.
 - The Rural Agents are supported for a year only but after that it is up to the MRC to support them – with a 45% reduction in their previous budget.

The future of Québec's rural policy?

- ▶ Eliminates the Rural Pact program
- ▶ Eliminates the Rural Laboratory program
- ▶ Rural Development Agents support significantly jeopardized
- ▶ Solidarité rural du Québec closes
- ▶ Québec Rural University program threatened
- ▶ The end of Québec's rural policy?



...but: a strong MRC framework remains

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- Immediate outcomes of the new laws
 - Eliminates the Rural Pacts program – using « Transitional financial pacts »
 - Eliminates the Rural Laboratory program
 - Drastically reduced support for Rural Development Agents.
 - Cuts an \$800,000 award to Solidarité rurale du Québec (SRQ) – a major rural lobbying third sector organization that has been instrumental in promoting rural issues. This has effectively shut them down.
- Collateral damage
 - The Québec Rural University program is also in jeopardy since its planned meeting in Charlevoix region (2015) requires the support of several local development centres (CLDs) in the region that are being reorganized as a result of the new policy.
- In sum: this looks like the end of the 14-year rural policy initiative that has been internationally recognized as one of the few success stories in rural and regional developments.
- At this point it looks like Québec is falling prey to
 - Neo-liberal ideology and budget rhetoric
 - Increasing focus on urban issues
 - Weakening of the rural lobby
- The one bright light: The MRC regional infrastructure remains strong – in terms of its resources and capacity. This creates the possibility for them to establish rural policies that are appropriate and effective for their local conditions.

Implications for other locations

- ▶ Multi-sectoral; multi-departmental
- ▶ Respect and utilize historical legacies
- ▶ Allocate rights and responsibilities – with access to resources
- ▶ Long-term framework
- ▶ Continuing need for knowledge mobilization and action



- How does Québec's experience inform initiatives and conditions in other locations?
- These insights emerge from comparative analysis:
 - OECD: international comparisons
 - Canadian Regional Development Project (Vodden et al.): Provincial comparisons
- Effective regional development policy:
 - Requires a multi-sectoral approach: rural and regional issues are inherently complex
 - Requires an approach that takes advantage of historical legacies
 - In Québec: Institutional, demographic, and cultural legacies of the Church and its secularization, existing networks, informal systems of governance, flexibility to respond to regions and communities in trouble.
 - In Ontario: Different traditions of social mobilization (North, south, east)
 - In NL: Regional isolation with different modes of governance and self-reliance
 - In BC: Regional initiatives and their formalization in trusts and bands.
 - Requires allocation of regional rights and responsibilities – with adequate control over resources to support them (not necessarily top down)
 - Benefits from a consistent, long-term approach
 - Allows regions to learn how to work among themselves and with others
 - Provides a stable context in which compromise can take place
 - Tolerates inevitable failures so the people can learn from them
 - Continuing requirement for research, knowledge mobilization, and political action
- Other reflections from your experiences?

What Have We Learned?

- ▶ Regional focus
- ▶ Multisectoral approach
- ▶ Social Capital focus
- ▶ Consistent and long-term framework for collaboration
- ▶ Value of delegated and distributed authority
- ▶ Value of additional resources for devitalized communities
- ▶ Value of flexibility for local conditions



- What have we learned from the Québec initiatives and experiences (OECD Review plus other observations – e.g. Vodden research)?
- Value of a regional approach – with the right ingredients (worked with existing social infrastructure rather than tried to build a new one (e.g. NL, ON – Vodden Research)
- Value of a multisectoral approach
 - Note that the MRCs were originally formed for health, education, and labour objectives – economic development was added later.
- Value of a focus on social capital – building the capacity for local people, municipalities, groups to take initiative.
- Value of a consistent framework for regional governance
 - The rural policy has been in place since 2001 – through multiple government changes
 - Took time for municipalities to trust agreements
 - A necessary ingredient for compromise: will they follow through on any deals made – especially over the long term.
 - Without it – the best strategy is zero-sum.
- Value of delegated and distributed authority and responsibility – with adequate resourcing
 - Resourcing in the form of finances, personnel (Development Officers), focused programs and objectives.
- Value of additional resources for devitalized communities
 - By linking those resources to community conditions it turns devitalized communities into assets and opportunities for the MRCs.
- Value of flexibility for local conditions
 - MRCs have ability to respond to local assets and opportunities.

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- CRDT.CA
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- OECD (<http://oecd.org>)
- SSHRC (<http://sshrc.ca>)