

Sustainable Development:  
Because Quality of Life Counts!

# Québec's Sustainable Development Plan

Consultation Document



November 2004



Québec 



*Sustainable Development:  
Because Quality of Life Counts!*

# Québec's Sustainable Development Plan

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

#### PHOTO CREDITS

##### Cover:

Ginette de L'Étoile, Denis Chabot, Martin Guérin, Michel Hall,  
Jeanne Lehoux, Michel Leblond and Diane Saint-Laurent,  
© Le Québec en images, CCDMD

##### Inside pages:

MRC de Rimouski-Neigette, Service des communications de la  
Ville de Laval, Gaétan Beaulieu, Martin Guérin, Michèle Tessier,  
Denis Chabot, Frédérick Dubé, Claire Fecteau, Michel Leblond,  
Paul Grant, Ginette de L'Étoile, Denis Chabot, Michel Hall,  
© Le Québec en images, CCDMD, Robin Edgar, L. Turgeon,  
Benoît Chalifour, C. Hamelin, © Tourisme Québec  
Marc-André Grenier, Julie Moisan, Thérèse Spiegle, Serge Hébert,  
Normand Boulianne, © Ministère de l'Environnement  
Robert Greffard, © La Ville de Québec  
P.G. Adam, © Publiphoto  
Denis Jomphe ©  
Rock Théroix, Alain Dumas, © National Water Policy  
Bowater Forest Products of Canada Inc. ©

##### Legal deposit

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2004  
ISBN: 2-550-43811-6  
Envirodoq: ENV/2004/0328/A  
© Gouvernement du Québec, 2004



## A Word from the Premier

Our government has charted a new course of sustainable development and prosperity for Québec. Health is our first priority. Within a context of demographic change, we will strive to rejuvenate the State's capacity to fulfill its social mission. Faced with strong pressure on public finances, we wish to stimulate the creation of wealth and ensure the stability of our energy supply.

We are driven by our concern for Québec's long-term development. While we make decisions today, we are thinking of our children and of the Québec we will be leaving behind for them.

We are making decisions in the best interests of Québec, with the idea that we are each responsible for Québec's success and for preserving our heritage; government cannot act alone. It must be able to rely upon the commitment and accountability of business, the organizations of civil society and the citizens themselves to work towards a society that will continue to improve.

In many respects, our government's actions are fundamentally steeped in the notion of sustainable development. In spring 2003, I asked the Minister of the Environment, Thomas J. Mulcair, to commit the government's efforts to future generations by giving Québec a sustainable development plan that will make us one of North America's most progressive in the field.

Québec's first government to be elected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century thus heralds in a new era, one that reconciles our standard of living with how we live and where we live – an approach to life that no longer develops the economy at the expense of our environmental heritage but rather for its benefit and the full expression of the population.

With our sustainable development plan, the government of Québec, together with its various ministries and all its constituents, sets forth a vision of development that is at once harmonious and responsible.

**Jean Charest**

Premier of Québec





## A Word from the Minister of the Environment

With our sustainable development plan, we aim to make our society a leader in the field. We have chosen an approach that will make sustainable development a daily reality in Québec.

We have opted for a rallying sustainable development plan, which is aimed at and committed to the future, based on our best assets and laden with challenges. This plan, which combines social, economical and environmental aspects of development, must be the result of a common will and vision that ensures solidarity and coherence of action.

To create and implement a culture of sustainable development, we developed a realistic approach with the means to act.

The Sustainable Development Plan project I am proposing is founded on winning conditions that have brought success to similar efforts elsewhere around the world. Here at home, it is based on solid foundations and well anchored in an innovative and motivating legislative framework.

This Sustainable Development Plan is a call to each of us to participate. I therefore submit for the public's consultation our views, approach and commitments. Together we will build a future and together we must work to make it the best it can be.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Mulcair". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

**Thomas J. Mulcair**

Minister of the Environment



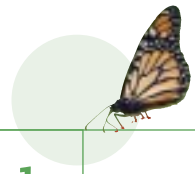


# Table of contents

<b>1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	<b>9</b>
1.1 Emergence and evolution of the concept .....	9
1.2 Meaning of the concept .....	10
1.3 Sustainable development: what is at stake? .....	12
1.4 Implementation in the world: a few facts .....	12
<b>2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN QUÉBEC</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Why should Québec have a sustainable development plan? .....	17
<b>3 DEFINITION</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>4 PRINCIPLES</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>5 COMPONENTS OF QUÉBEC'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b> .....	<b>25</b>
5.1 Public consultation .....	25
5.2 Sustainable development legislation .....	26
5.3 Sustainable development strategy .....	27
5.4 Actions of the departments and agencies .....	30
5.5 Evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms .....	33
5.6 The participation of all society .....	34
<b>6 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FINANCING</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>7 ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES</b> .....	<b>37</b>
7.1 Minister of the Environment .....	37
7.2 Government departments and agencies in the Administration .....	38
7.3 Interdepartmental Committee on Sustainable Development .....	38
<b>8 TIMETABLE</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>9 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>EXAMPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	<b>42</b>







# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1

## 1.1 Emergence and evolution of the concept

The term “sustainable development,” referred to as *développement durable*, *développement viable* or *développement soutenable* in French, appeared for the first time in 1980 in the World Conservation Strategy published by the World Conservation Union (IUCN)<sup>1</sup>. The expression remained relatively unknown until the publication in 1987 of the World Commission on the Environment and Development’s report (Brundtland Report)<sup>2</sup>. The report’s recommendations are based on the concept of sustainable development, often defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their needs. This definition represents a long-term vision of development within a perspective of intergenerational equity.

In 1991, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) proposed an improved definition: sustainable development means “to improve the conditions of communities within the carrying capacity of ecosystems<sup>3</sup>.” The “carrying capacity” corresponds to an environment’s support capacity. The notion of support capacity defines the pressures<sup>4</sup> tolerated by ecosystems, as well as the services<sup>5</sup> and resources<sup>6</sup> that ecosystems are capable of providing. It also includes the physical, logistical, economical and social constraints placed on human populations.

<sup>1</sup> The World Conservation Union (IUCN), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). **World Conservation Strategy**. International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Gland, Switzerland, 1980.

<sup>2</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). **Our Common Future**. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> The World Conservation Union (IUCN), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). **Saving the Planet**. 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Capacity to biodegrade and recycle certain waste of anthropic origin without irreversibly harming biodiversity and components of the food chain.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of services provided by ecosystems: climate regulation, air and water purification, soil and water conservation, food safety and energy services.

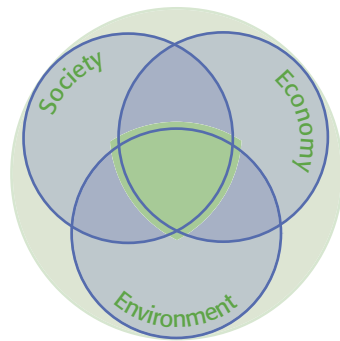
<sup>6</sup> Examples: Food and medicinal products, products of a cultural value, building materials, fuels, oils and resins.

## 1.2 Meaning of the concept

Three interrelated and indivisible spheres are generally used to illustrate sustainable development. They represent environment, society and economy. Since environment supports life, it is the basis for society and the economy.



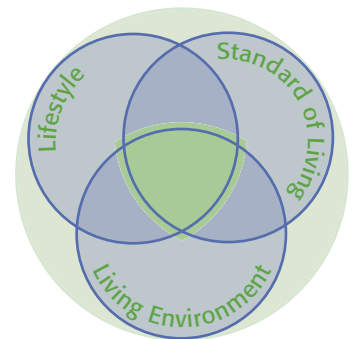
**Environment is the condition for sustainable development, society is the finality for which development occurs, and the economy is the means by which it is achieved.**



### Quality of life and sustainable development

Quality of life is defined as the balance between the needs of human beings and the means they have to satisfy these needs. It is based not only on the capacity of individuals to enjoy an adequate standard of living but also on the opportunity to live in a healthy environment with a lifestyle that is physically, intellectually and morally satisfying. Quality of life, which is the ultimate goal of sustainable development, thus relates to living environment, lifestyle and standard of living. It corresponds to the vision of sustainable development represented by three spheres within a larger sphere.

The concepts of living environment, lifestyle and standard of living concern us directly because they give a practical scope to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The three notions are closely intertwined; they overlap one another as well as complete and further define one another. Within the perspective of sustainable development, they cannot be separated. Reflecting on and resolving a problem according to sustainable development objectives always requires that three dimensions be taken into consideration: environment, society and economy; environment, lifestyle and standard of living.



### The living environment, the environmental dimension to sustainable development

Generally, the **living environment** is a collection of physical, chemical and biological factors with which living creatures have a dynamic relationship and that, in a given setting, have an impact on development. It refers to water, air, soil and subsurface. It is characterized by tremendous variety in living organisms. The living environment includes the environment in which human beings live and conduct their daily activities (work, studies, recreation, etc.), construction, landscaping, and infrastructures, landscapes and the visual contexts within which these settings are found and, finally, the abiding atmosphere (tranquility, security).

### Lifestyle, the social dimension to sustainable development

**Lifestyle** refers to ways of being and ways of living. It relates to social practices, including their cultural aspects. This notion translates into all the behaviours of a collectivity: consumer habits, ways of dressing and lodging, making use of natural and cultural resources, religious choices, time devoted to work and other occupations, modes of creation and artistic production, the importance given to health, security and education, etc. Lifestyle therefore means the central representations of a society, the values that characterize it and to which citizens give importance.

### Standard of living, the economic dimension of sustainable development

**Standard of living** is defined as the situation of a person or a group of persons on a predetermined scale of well being, whether subjectively or objectively agreed upon. Standard of living is not only related to the material well being of individuals and groups, but also to the possibilities of social mobility accessible to them, and the autonomy that the liberty to choose gives them. It is a measure of quantity but also quality of the goods and services available. This notion, among other things, encompasses our use of the resources available to us, the production of goods and services, communication and distribution activities, as well as consumer markets. In this sense, standard of living may be used to at least partially appreciate the economic development of a society.



### 1.3 Sustainable development: what is at stake?

The issue of sustainable development is the capacity of interested partners to act concretely and harmoniously to create and maintain a balance between the benefits of an action and its consequences, whether on the living environment, lifestyle or standard of living. This harmony results from a common will and a vision that ensure the solidarity and cohesion of the actions taken. It is necessary to consider the repercussions of any action undertaken on what characterizes quality of life.

The whole of society is concerned. The quest for sustainable development applies just as well locally as it does nationally. Sustainable development concerns governments, regional and local communities, socio-economic players and citizens.



**Choosing a sustainable development approach therefore involves a different way of thinking and acting.**

### 1.4 Implementation in the world: a few facts

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, member countries of the United Nations reiterated the commitment made in the agreements of the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. They specified certain sustainable development objectives, including the following: to further formulate and map out national sustainable development strategies and begin implementing them by 2005.<sup>7</sup>

In the last 10 years, several States, many international organizations and a good number of communities have adopted and implemented strategies, action plans, programs and various development activities in keeping with the issues set forth in Agenda 21<sup>8</sup> and which take into account the principles of sustainable development stated in Rio de Janeiro. The key characteristics drawn from the analysis of conclusive sustainable development experiences conducted by international organizations, countries and Canadian provinces could be summarized as follows.

<sup>7</sup> *World Summit on Sustainable Development Report, Johannesburg (2002).*(A/CONF.199/20, chapter 1, resolution 2/162 b).

<sup>8</sup> Action Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century agreed upon at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

### **Political commitment at the highest level**

To be efficient, a sustainable development approach must be based on a political commitment from the highest level of government.

### **A common vision**

Sustainable development approaches and strategies are articulated around a shared vision and based on the principles of sustainable development agreed upon at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

### **A realistic situation**

The choice of development orientations must be made taking the state of the environment, social context and economic trends into account.

### **Clear orientations and objectives**

A sustainable development approach is generally based on clear, measurable and up-to-date objectives.

### **Efficient implementation mechanisms**

The sustainable development approaches that work best provide for administrative mechanisms that ensure the implementation and monitoring of planned actions according to a precise timetable.

### **Participation of civil society**

The participation of civil society is essential to the success of a sustainable development approach. Conclusive experiences rely on information from, consultation with, and the support of civil society. They give a lot of latitude to partnership.



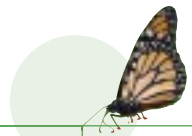
### **Financing**

The financing of sustainable development measures occurs primarily through a reorientation of the State's investment priorities and use of the incentive potential of public investments.

### **The evaluation of results**

Defining, documenting and monitoring sustainable development indicators are deemed essential to the success of the planned approach. States have their sustainable development actions evaluated by an auditor or independent commissioner who usually reports to Parliament or the government's executive body.





2

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN QUÉBEC

The government of Québec has been committed to sustainable development for some time now. Among other things, it:

- Created in 1988 the first Round Table on Environment and the Economy in Canada
- In 1991 set up the Interdepartmental Committee on Sustainable Development which is made up of the majority of government departments and agencies
- In 1992 actively participated in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro
- In 1996 produced a report for the international community (Rio + 5) listing all sustainable development actions undertaken by Québec<sup>9</sup>
- In 2002 participated in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg for which it prepared and presented *Québec's Report on Sustainable Development*<sup>10</sup>
- Organized summits, forums and symposiums to encourage civil society and government to commit to sustainable development.

The government of Québec applies a rigorous approach to the management of the State and public funds while striving to maximize positive spin-offs in the short and longer term, in environmental, social and economic respects. It has been incorporating sustainable development into its political orientations and interventions for some years now.

<sup>9</sup> Implementing Agenda 21: Examples of sustainable development initiatives undertaken by the Government of Québec. 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Québec Report on Sustainable Development presented to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. 2002.

**On an environmental level,** the government has among other things manifested its will to protect its water resource, to encourage recycling of residual materials, provide citizens with access to information on the state of the environment and to better manage its automobile inventory (for air quality, energy conservation and health protection). It has recently acquired a new framework for biodiversity focusing on sustainable development. As a matter of fact, in June 2004, the government adopted a strategy and action plan extending to 2007.

**On a social level,** the government has prioritized essential missions such as health, education and assistance for the most deprived. Among other things it has taken several steps to fight poverty with a larger approach that aims for the social development of Québec as a whole. For example, the National Strategy for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion is part of the continuity of all the actions it takes. Also, the key areas of intervention of the Québec National Public Health Program (2003-2012) pertain to employment, housing, social inclusion, the management and prevention of health problems related to the environment and welfare.

**On an economic level,** one of the government of Québec's priorities is ensure prosperity for Québec and its citizens through economic development and the creation of quality jobs. In this respect, the government of Québec's economic strategy is to prioritize small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and regional development.

Several government departments and agencies have also incorporated sustainable development in their mission or adopted policies and sectorial strategies that correspond to sustainable development concerns. Moreover, in 1999, the government of Québec asked all departments to include sustainable development in their strategic plans.





## Why should Québec have a sustainable development plan?

The actions described above demonstrate that Québec has gradually begun to change its methods. However, **the current scope of the challenges and issues require more innovation, greater focus on the implementation of measures promoting sustainable development and increased efficiency and coherence of daily actions.** To do so, it is necessary that:

- The coordination of sustainable development be assigned to a leader who has legitimate authority
- The efficiency of sectorial measures be improved through the adoption of a common, shared vision
- Focus be placed on interdepartmental cooperation
- Targeted, measurable objectives allow for evaluating progress
- Interdepartmental coordination be improved through a comprehensive strategy and an official management framework
- Government departments and agencies be required to commit themselves and truly succeed in their sustainable development efforts by continually aiming to harmonize economic, environmental and social concerns in their interventions and, especially, to be accountable
- Methodological tools be developed to facilitate the implementation of sustainable development.

Several of these points have been brought to the fore, whether by the Conseil de la science et de la technologie in 2001 in its recommendation entitled *Innovation and Sustainable Development: Tomorrow's Economy*<sup>11</sup>, by the participants in the national forum on sustainable development organized by the Québec's ministère de l'Environnement in June 2002 or by the interim Auditor General of Québec in his 2003-2004 report to the National Assembly.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Recommendation produced by the *Conseil de la science et de la technologie* entitled "*Innovation and Sustainable Development: Tomorrow's Economy*." Gouvernement du Québec. September 2001.

<sup>12</sup> *Rapport à l'Assemblée nationale*, tome 1, chapitre 3.

Thus, despite the numerous sectorial sustainable development interventions that are assured within the Administration, there is still a great deal to be done.

This is why the government of Québec decided to make sustainable development one of its priorities<sup>13</sup>. It chose to **better structure and frame its approach to, on the one hand, make its actions more efficient and coherent and, on the other hand, to give the population a clear signal and invitation to join in the implementation of real sustainable development in Québec**. It is the *raison d'être* behind Québec's Sustainable Development Plan.

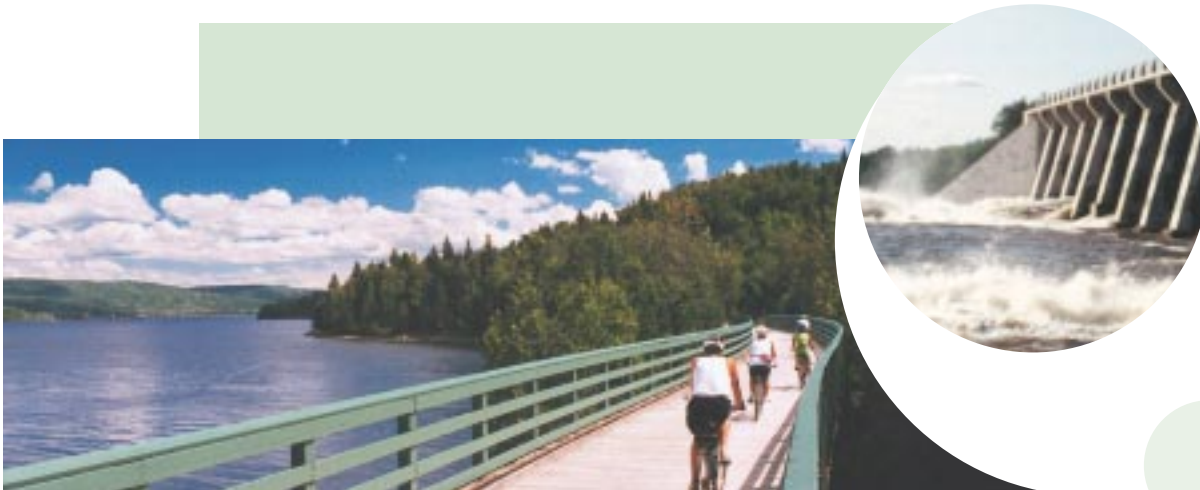
### For the government of Québec, acting with a view to sustainable development means:

- Reaffirming its commitment to sustainable development, following the growing number of governments, organizations and enterprises that have chosen this path
- Adopting a comprehensive development approach for Québec with the will to ensure the well being of all its citizens
- Coordinating protection of the environment, social progress and economic development by combining efforts and resources to reach common goals
- Seeing to it that the decisions taken today will not compromise the development opportunities of future generations.

**These are the reasons why the government has decided to adopt a definition of sustainable development that fits its vision, to opt for principles that will guide its action and to give itself a plan that will serve to frame and implement its action.**

---

<sup>13</sup> *Briller parmi les meilleurs – La vision et les priorités d'action du gouvernement du Québec*. April 2004.



## DEFINITION

3

As part of the approach to sustainable development in Québec, the following definition has been proposed:

**Sustainable development is an ongoing process to improve the living conditions of the present generation that does not compromise the ability of future generations to do so and that ensures a harmonious integration of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development.**

This definition is inspired by:

- The initial definition in the Brundtland Report, from which is taken the notion of intergenerational equity
- The improved definition established in 1991 by the UICN, UNEP and the WWF, from which is taken the notion of improving living conditions
- The international consensus to retain environment, society and economy as the three fundamental dimensions of sustainable development.





## PRINCIPES

4

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted in June 1992, sets forth 27 principles. These principles are intended to guide action, as well as develop the policies, laws and regulations that will enable nations to reach the three fundamental objectives of sustainable development, which are maintaining the integrity of the environment, improving social equity and being economically efficient. These principles were reiterated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002.

Based on the 27 principles set forth at the Rio Summit and the particularities of Quebec, the government has drafted 14 principles to guide the actions taken by Quebec's Administration. These principles will serve to define their legal obligations and authority, while serving as a basis for the choices the government departments and agencies will make with respect to sustainable development. By the same token, they will be required to take the principles into consideration in their policies, programs, strategies and action plans.

Therefore, it is proposed that the Administration adhere to the following principles.

### Principle 1 HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

People, protection of their health and improvement of their quality of life are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development; people are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

### Principle 2 SOCIAL EQUITY

Development must be undertaken in a spirit of intra- and inter-generational equity, taking the needs of everyone concerned into account.

**Principle 3 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

To achieve sustainable development, environmental protection must constitute an integral part of the development process.

**Principle 4 ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY**

The economy of Québec must be effective, geared toward innovation and economic prosperity that is conducive to social progress, and respectful of the environment.

**Principle 5 INVOLVEMENT AND COMMITMENT**

Sustainable development is founded on a shared commitment; the involvement of citizens and a partnership among all groups in society are needed to ensure the social, economic and environmental sustainability of development.

**Principle 6 ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE**

Educational measures and access to information must be encouraged in order to stimulate innovation, raise awareness and ensure effective public involvement in the implementation of sustainable development.

**Principle 7 PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The property, sites and landscapes making up a society's cultural heritage are a source of identity, pride and solidarity. Through its cultural heritage, the traditions, customs, values and knowledge of a society are passed on from generation to generation and the preservation of this heritage fosters the economy of resources. Cultural heritage components must be identified, protected and enhanced, taking their intrinsic rarity and fragility into account.

**Principle 8 PREVENTION**

In the presence of a known risk, preventive and corrective actions must be taken, with priority given to actions at the source, using the best techniques available at an economically acceptable cost.

**Principle 9 PRECAUTION**

Where there is a risk of serious or irreversible harm, the lack of absolute scientific certainty must not be used as an excuse for postponing the adoption of effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.



### Principle 10 BIODIVERSITY PRESERVATION

Biological diversity offers incalculable advantages and must be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations; the protection of species, ecosystems and the natural processes that maintain life is essential if quality of human life is to be maintained.

### Principle 11 RESPECT FOR ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT CAPACITY

Human activities must be respectful of the support capacity of ecosystems, and must not exceed the threshold beyond which the functions and balance of the natural environment would be irreversibly altered.

### Principle 12 RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Production and consumption patterns must change in order to reduce their adverse social and environmental impact to a minimum and, in particular, avoid waste and the depletion of resources.

### Principle 13 POLLUTER/USER-PAY

Those who generate waste material or other forms of pollution should bear the cost of preventive, waste reduction and anti-pollution measures; goods and services should be priced so as to reflect all the costs they generate, whether at the production or consumption stage.

### Principle 14 INTER-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION

Governments must collaborate to ensure that development is sustainable from an environmental, social and economic standpoint; the external impact of actions in a given territory must be taken into consideration.







5

## COMPONENTS OF QUÉBEC'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

To support all the government's sustainable development initiatives and send a clear, coherent message about the priority government has given sustainable development, it has been proposed that Québec's Draft Sustainable Development Plan be based on the following elements:

- Public consultation
- Sustainable development legislation
- Sustainable development strategy
- Actions from government departments and agencies
- An evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanism
- Participation from all actors in society.

### 5.1 Public consultation

Since a commitment from the population is essential to the success of a sustainable development approach, the Minister of the Environment will be undertaking a consultation tour to present the proposed approach and to collect the concerns and opinions of Quebecers on the orientations proposed in Québec's Sustainable Development Plan. The recommendations formulated during the consultation period will serve to improve the plan by better reflecting their expectations.

## 5.2 Sustainable development legislation

As part of Québec's Draft Sustainable Development Plan, the Minister of the Environment is proposing the adoption of a sustainable development law.

### The new legislative framework will:

- Confirm the political will and express the State's leadership in matters pertaining to sustainable development
- Within the Administration, establish an official management framework to contribute to sustainable development
- Set clear rules: a definition of sustainable development, as well as roles and functions for the Minister of the Environment and the other government departments and agencies
- Set forth the sustainable development principles that will guide government actions
- Commit the government to preparing and adopting a sustainable development strategy, and the government departments and agencies<sup>14</sup> to be accountable for the actions they will undertake to contribute to reaching the strategy's objectives
- Put a mechanism in place to evaluate results and accountability by appointing a commissioner reporting to the Auditor General
- Introduce a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved. This new right would be added to the economic and social rights listed in the Charter of human rights and freedoms to reaffirm the right of every person to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law
- Commit the government to adopting a system of sustainable development indicators to measure progress
- Create a Green Fund designed to support the measures taken by the Minister of the Environment to promote sustainable development in Québec.

---

<sup>14</sup> In this context, means an organization, a person appointed or assigned by the government or a department, including its staff, as a part of the functions assigned by the law, government or department.

The Administration's new management framework will ensure that powers and responsibilities are exercised in the pursuit of sustainable development. Some of these provisions of the future act may in due course apply to the following, after consultation and agreement with the interested parties:

1. Municipal bodies identified in section 5 of the *Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information*
2. School bodies and health and social services institutions respectively identified in sections 6 and 7 of the same Act.

The government management framework provided by this future legislation should also help to better integrate the objectives of sustainable development, in all regards and in every sphere of intervention, into the different policies, programs and actions of the Administration. It should also ensure that government development actions are coherent and promote the government's imputability. It will also aim to encourage all individuals and all public and private organizations to participate in the implementation of sustainable development in Quebec.

### 5.3 Sustainable development strategy

One of the strong points of Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan is the adoption of a strategy. The strategy will be the driving force behind the government's actions. The aim of the government in adopting a strategy is to establish the priority of the axes of intervention and objectives and, thus, to guide the sustainable development actions of government departments and agencies.

This strategy will provide added value to the government's current sustainable development action because it will help coordinate, harmonize and combine them.

The sustainable development strategy will:

- Provide a global vision of sustainable development in Québec
- Explain issues, orientations or priority axes of intervention and measurable objectives that the Administration must pursue
- Serve as a reminder of the sustainable development principles that the Administration must take into consideration
- Provide for mechanisms and means to monitor and measure progress.

- Be supported by mechanisms promoting the cooperation and commitment of government players as well as greater coherence in the implementation and monitoring of priority interventions
- Be developed with government departments and agencies, and coordinated by the Ministère de l'Environnement
- Be adopted by government on the Minister of the Environment's recommendation
- Be submitted to the population for consultation prior to its adoption, in order to promote discussion and enrich its content
- Be introduced the year following adoption of the sustainable development act for a period of five years, and revised periodically.

It has been proposed that the first draft sustainable development strategy be based on three main issues, which are explained below.

### 1. Knowledge as a prerequisite to action

Knowledge is a valuable tool to encourage adherence to the values and principles of sustainable development and make informed decisions. As several government and civil initiatives have demonstrated, knowledge is important to Quebec society. It is essential that efforts are pursued to document the state of Quebec's environment, society and economy and establish links between these dimensions in order to be able to monitor their progress. Developing knowledge relies on research and innovation. It must be appropriately disseminated and shared fairly.

It is therefore a question of developing, acquiring and disseminating knowledge as well as scientific, technical, traditional and popular experiences to stimulate the population's interest in and commitment to sustainable development. Knowledge must be used to reduce and better manage health and security risks, with a view to prevention and precaution.



---

## 2. Responsible concerted actions

It is typical to measure the performance of activities using such indicators as productivity, competitiveness, economic return and consumption. Unfortunately, such an approach does not sufficiently evaluate the carrying capacity of ecosystems or the lifestyle of the populations. This means that a different approach to performance that goes beyond financial gain or the immediate satisfaction of individual needs ought to be designed.

To be more viable, societies must rethink their production and consumption patterns, to reduce waste by making them more efficient and responsible. Quebec must commit itself to this global approach. It must also respond to demographic changes with innovative measures that promote economic prosperity and demographic balance. It must organize and develop its territory in a sustainable fashion through integrated management, viability and the resilience<sup>15</sup> of communities. Finally, it must reduce its ecological footprint<sup>16</sup> in such a way that future generations will enjoy equitable development opportunities.

## 3. An individual and collective commitment

Everyone must commit to sustainable development. Such a commitment must be demonstrated both individually and collectively by a will to preserve national assets and to equitably share the fruits of the various achievements. The fight against poverty and social exclusion as well as improving quality of life, must be based on civic action, community commitment and sharing. In this regard, Quebec must show solidarity and contribute to the study of issues that extend beyond its borders.

By promoting democratic life, the State and the population is engaging in a constructive dialogue that allows citizens to express themselves, to be heard and to help build a society in their image.

---

<sup>15</sup> "The capacity of a system, community or a society to resist or to change in order to obtain an acceptable level in functioning and structure. Resilience is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organizing, and the ability to increase its capacity for learning and adaptation, including the capacity to recover from a disaster." *Disaster Prevention and Sustainable Development*. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. United Nations. January 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Ecological footprint is a measure of the pressure a human being places on nature. It is a tool that evaluates the productive surface necessary for a population to respond to its consumption of resources and absorption of waste.

### Desired characteristics of the orientations

The orientations as well as the axes of intervention and priority objectives of the sustainable development strategy to be prioritized should:

- Correspond to the State's essential missions: knowledge, health, prosperity, security and identity
- Follow the government's priority actions, defined in the document entitled Shine among the best - The Government's Vision and Action Priorities and be part of the continuation of the commitments of the Forum of Generations
- Respect the international objectives in the fields of Sustainable Development (Agenda 21)
- Apply the principles of sustainable development
- Have consensus
- Gain the interest and commitment of a large number of players
- Allow for the implementation of concrete and measurable actions.

Thus, they will allow for the implementation of transversal and concerted actions by government departments and agencies, together with sectorial actions.

### 5.4 Actions of the departments and agencies

The Administration's departments and agencies must determine what actions they plan to undertake to contribute to the reaching of the sustainable development strategy's objectives.

An action plan, a scorecard or any other similar formula make up mechanisms that we could use to further define the actions that policymakers wish to make concrete in their field of expertise.





### Planning the actions of the departments and agencies allows for:

- Further defining the actions to take in the fields of expertise and responsibilities of the departments and agencies in view of ensuring the strategy's implementation
- Defining the activities the departments and agencies plan to carry out or the changes expected to reach the objectives
- As needed, indicating changes to policies, programs and standards deemed necessary in their fields of expertise
- Exposing the constraints, conditions and timetable for carrying out the planned measures.

Many concerted sustainable development actions are underway or about to be. Among these are:

- Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
- Quebec strategy on climate change.

The first and most important concerted sustainable development action that government has undertaken **is the 2004-2007 Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.**

Among its priority interventions for sustainable development, the government decided in June 2004 to implement a government action plan for biodiversity. This action plan represents an important component of its Sustainable Development Plan since it:

- Involves the environmental, social and economic dimensions of conservation and the sustainable use of biological resources in Quebec
- Integrates the interventions of the departments and agencies interested in biodiversity
- Makes it easier for national and regional non-governmental bodies to participate in preserving biodiversity
- For this purpose, encourages initiatives that are more innovative and strategic
- Provides an annual accounting of progress and will use indicators.

Some examples of sustainable development actions for biodiversity. With its biodiversity action plan, the government intends to:

- By 2005, set up pilot projects for the restoration of natural habitats in agricultural areas
- By 2005, integrate the *Politique de protection des rives, du littoral et des plaines inondables* into all land use schematics of the county regional municipalities (CRMs)
- By March 2006, introduce new requirements in the general forest management plans
- By 2007, reinforce the environment monitoring of mining establishments
- By 2007, increase the environmental performance in large businesses and SMEs by implementing better business practices including environment management
- By 2007, implement a sustainable ecotourism policy
- By 2007, create 10 new ecological reserves
- By 2007, recognize 50 natural reserves on privately owned land
- By 2008, create a national park in Nunavik
- By 2006, draft and implement action plans for 34 plant species designated as threatened or vulnerable
- By 2007, protect 100% of the known habitats of threatened or vulnerable fauna and flora in public forests
- Broaden the scope of the *Politique des débits réservés écologiques pour la protection du poisson et de ses habitats* (ecological reserved flows policy for the protection of fish and fish habitats) to apply to other aquatic ecosystem components
- Incorporate the principle of ecoconditionality into financial assistance programs for agricultural producers.

## 5.5 Evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanism

For its Sustainable Development Plan, the government of Quebec plans to implement a rigorous evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanism. This mechanism:

- Will be based on a requirement to provide results of the actions undertaken by the departments and agencies to reach the strategy's objectives
- Will require departments and agencies to produce annual reports. To this end, each department, agency and individual within the Administration and subject to section 14 must state in a special section of its annual management report and complying with section 24 of the *Public Administration Act* (chapter A-6.01) or, if applicable, in its annual activity report:
  1. The objectives set or, where applicable, the reasons why no specific objective was identified for the year given the adopted strategy.
  2. The various activities or interventions it successfully carried out or failed to carry out during the year to reach the objectives, as well as the degree of success, and the indicators used.
  3. Where applicable, measures taken following comments or recommendations from the sustainable development commissioner.
- Will, under the Minister of the Environment's authority, prepare a general report on the implementation of sustainable development and progress made, at least every three years
- Have the sustainable development commissioner, reporting to the Auditor General, intervene to verify and evaluate progress made by the Administration in view of respecting the sustainable development-based governance framework and specified in the legislative framework. Notably, annual management or activities reports submitted by the departments and agencies will be examined and a profile drawn up following an analysis of the sustainable development indicators.



### **Sustainable development indicators**

Progress will be measured using sustainable development indicators, to be introduced no later than two years after the adoption of the sustainable development law. These indicators will be an integral part of the sustainable development strategy and will serve to describe the sustainable development situation for a second strategy. They will serve to measure the progress made in sustainable development in Quebec.

### **Sustainable development commissioner**

A very important part of Quebec's sustainable development plan is the appointment of a sustainable development commissioner reporting to Québec's Auditor General.

The commissioner's mission will be to verify and evaluate the Administration's progress in view of the sustainable development-based governance framework provided for by the sustainable development act. Responsibilities will include examining and verifying reports required under the law to ensure implementation of the government's sustainable development strategy. For this purpose, the commissioner will submit and make public a report each year on the various activities conducted by the Administration within the framework of the government's sustainable development strategy.

## **5.6 The participation of all members of society**

Participation of all members of society is fundamental to the implementation of sustainable development. It must be the result of everyone being mobilized and, as such, concerns every individual, organization, enterprise and institution. Actions undertaken by the departments and organizations to implement Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan will involve the participation of other players of society. Mechanisms must be developed to ensure the coherence of these actions.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

6

There are numerous benefits to be expected from sustainable development, for government as well as enterprises and society. Setting up a legislative framework for sustainable development is the first step towards making these benefits real. This legislative framework will result in expenses for the government in the short term (creation of a commissioner's position, development of indicators, etc.) and the benefits will occur progressively over a longer period. Above all, this approach must be considered as an investment in the future.

A new legislative framework, however, should not require the injection of substantial sums of money in the departments and agencies. It is expected instead that, to a large extent, the government will be able to redirect its current budgets in view of its sustainable development strategy by changing its methods and improving the State's governance.

These methods should contribute to changes in the work organization, methods and intervention priorities. Within the framework of sustainable development, it will be easier to internalize all the different costs and take their economic, social and environmental dimensions into account.

The financial capacity of the departments and agencies will dictate to what extent they will take part in Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan. In other respects, the legislative framework was designed to be implemented gradually to provide the greatest flexibility within their means and to reduce financial constraints. Certain interventions of the government departments and agencies may require additional budgets. Such cases will be debated during the annual program review and requests for additional financing for specific projects will be laid before the Conseil du trésor.

## The Green Fund

A **Green Fund** will be established within the Ministère de l'Environnement. The fund will serve to finance measures carried out by the Minister to promote sustainable development, especially in its environmental aspects. Specifically, it will provide support to the Minister to exercise his mission; it will make it possible for the Minister to grant financial assistance in particular to municipalities and non-profit organizations working in the environmental field.

The fund will be financed by the following:

1. Sums paid into the fund by the Minister of Finance.
2. Gifts, legacies and other contributions paid into the fund to further the achievement of the objects of the fund.
3. Sums paid into the fund by a minister and taken out of the appropriations granted for that purpose by the National Assembly.
4. Revenue allocated to that purpose by the Government, and any contribution determined by the Government on a proposal of the Minister of Finance, including revenue from taxes or other economic instruments intended to promote sustainable development that are identified by the Government.
5. Revenue derived from fees or other amounts collected under the Acts and regulations under the administration of the Minister of the Environment, including from economic instruments used for the purpose of achieving environmental objectives prescribed under paragraph e.1 of section 31 of the *Environment Quality Act* (chapter Q-2), except for revenue already specifically allocated, otherwise than to the consolidated revenue fund, by the applicable Act or regulation.
6. Fines paid by offenders from an offence against a provision of an Act or regulation under the administration of the Minister of the Environment.
7. Fees and other amounts collected by the Minister of the Environment to compensate expenditure or costs incurred for the measures the Minister is entitled to take to protect or restore the environment, such as the costs and other amounts referred to in sections 113, 115, 115.1 and 116.1 of the *Environment Quality Act*.
8. Damages, including punitive damages, paid following a civil suit instituted on behalf of the Minister of the Environment.
9. Revenue generated by the investment of the sums making up the fund.



# ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

## 7.1 Minister of the Environment

In the implementation of Québec's Sustainable Development Plan, the Minister of the Environment will be assigned the following functions:

1. Promote sustainable development within the Administration and among the general public, and fostering joint and cohesive action in order to harmonize interventions.
2. Coordinate the efforts of the government departments to define, renew or revise the components of the sustainable development strategy, including sustainable development indicators, and recommending the adoption of the strategy and indicators by the Government.
3. Coordinate efforts to prepare periodic assessments of the implementation of the sustainable development strategy within the Administration and, at least every three years, make a report on the implementation and laying it before the National Assembly as a special section of the annual report of activities of the Minister's department.
4. Improve knowledge and analyze experiences elsewhere in the field of sustainable development, in particular as regards the directions pursued by strategies and action plans and their implementation and the development of indicators and other methods for measuring the progression of sustainable development and the integration of related environmental, social and economic concerns.
5. Advise the Government and third parties as regards sustainable development and give expert advice and assistance to help achieve the objectives of the strategy and to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are applied and complied with.

## 7.2 Government departments and agencies in the Administration

All Government departments and agencies must, progressively and to varying extents:

- Participate in the drafting of the sustainable development strategy
- Participate in the drafting of sustainable development indicators
- Promote sustainable development in their respective fields of activity
- Provide support to their clients outside Government in their sustainable development initiatives.

In the case of the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*, it will contribute by collecting, producing and disseminating statistics needed to develop and monitor the sustainable development strategy, indicators and prepare the reports provided for in the sustainable development act.

## 7.3 Interdepartmental Committee on Sustainable Development

The Interdepartmental Committee on Sustainable Development (ICSD) was created in 1991. Its mandate is to promote sustainable development within the government of Québec, foster joint and cohesive action in order to harmonize interventions, and integrate the principles of sustainable development into government policies, programs and plans. Coordinated by the Minister of the Environment, the Committee is currently made up of 25 departments and agencies interested in integrating sustainable development into their activities.

Québec's Sustainable Development Plan will enable the ICSD to include as members all government departments and agencies targeted by the government's sustainable development initiative and add the following responsibilities to its mandate:

- Participate in monitoring, updating and reviewing the sustainable development plan
- Coordinate every intersectorial work group deemed necessary for the implementation of sustainable development in Québec
- Produce a report at least every three years on the implementation of sustainable development within the Administration.





## Timetable

8

### 2004

#### Fall

- Tabling of draft legislation on sustainable development
- Tabling of a consultation document on Québec's Sustainable Development Plan
- Implementation of a 2004-2007 Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

### 2005

#### Winter

- Regional series of public consultations on Québec's Sustainable Development Plan

#### Spring-Summer

- Tabling of a bill on sustainable development and parliamentary commission
- Ministry of the Environment's Sustainable Development Action Plan

#### Fall

- Adoption of a law on sustainable development and tabling of the Sustainable Development Strategy
- Appointment of a sustainable development commissioner

### 2006

#### Spring

- Development of sustainable development actions by departments and government organizations





## CONCLUSION

9

- Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan is based on a political commitment from the highest level of government
- Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan draws from international experiences in the field
- Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan is inspired by Quebec's many sustainable development accomplishments to date
- Quebec's Sustainable Development Plan will be articulated around the following major components:
  - Public consultation
  - Sustainable development legislation
  - Sustainable development strategy
  - Actions of governments and agencies
  - Evaluation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms
  - Participation of all players of society.

## Examples of sustainable development actions

Innovative land management approaches

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

**Integrated watershed management** enables interactions between water, fauna, flora, soil and human activity. The aim of applying an integrated management approach to an area's aquatic resources is to examine and respond to all concerns. Equally, such an approach allows for local action while providing a broader view of the watershed area and increasing user awareness.

Better environmental performance

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

**Energy efficiency measures** for buildings, regardless of how they are used, lead to substantial financial savings. Through these measures, fewer resources are used and greenhouse gases are reduced.

Alternative means of transportation

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

The "alternative means of transportation" available, such as public transportation, carpooling and bicycling, reduce use of fossil fuels, polluting emissions and greenhouse gases in addition to having direct repercussions on improving health. They are also less expensive for users.

Sustainable accounting

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

Although the gross national product (GNP) is an excellent indicator of economic activity, it is not well adapted as an instrument for measuring quality of life on a national scale in terms of sustainability.

Also, several countries, either together or in partnership with other countries, have set up national **sustainable accounting systems** which reflect the interactions between economic, environmental and social issues. Governments are not alone in addressing these concerns. As part of the many initiatives of international bodies, civil society and private enterprise, a number of new more sustainable approaches to reporting have been put forth, whether it is individual business, industry or the State.



Greater social and environmental responsibility

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

**Responsible management standards** allow for the environmental and social performance of an organization to be measured. They help organizations develop ongoing improvement processes, including production, consumption of raw materials and energy, monitoring repercussions of their activities on the environment, ethical questions or their social responsibility.

A preventive approach to health

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

Several industrialized countries are faced with a rapid rise in food-related health problems, particularly obesity. Consumption habits and certain food products such as trans fats are singled out. **Prevention programs**, which aim to alert and inform the public, encourage more responsible consumption of these products.

A population that is more involved in its environment

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

**Eco-neighbourhoods** allow its people to take charge of their environment. Their objective is to improve a neighbourhood's quality of life by promoting eco-civism. Actions encompass hygiene, management of residual materials and embellishment as well as security. In addition to enhancing the present and preparing for the future, eco-neighbourhoods stimulate economic and social vitality.

Initiatives that promote social integration

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

Social economy enterprises, **on-site training and recovery centres** are recovery and recycling plant-schools that improve the well being, social commitment and professional integration of young people who are having difficulty in high school. They provide the skills they need to enter the job market.

Measures that encourage responsible consumption

### Putting sustainable development to work means acting differently

**Ecolabels** are logos placed on products that comply with environmental protection standards to inform consumers about the product's environmental performance.





♻️ This paper contains 100% recycled post-consumer fibres.

**Environnement**  
**Québec** 