



2007-2014

National Policy on Rurality



› A Source
of Strength for Québec

Notice

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Message from the Premier



By making public the *National Policy on Rurality*, our government is confirming its commitment to establish conditions conducive to ensuring that Québec's rural territory develops and thrives.

We believe that it is essential that every gesture that affects the municipalities reflects the basic principles that we have adopted, i.e. partnership, trust, and respect for elected municipal representatives. Once again, we are showing that we are fully engaged in a new era of collaboration with the municipal sector. The *National Policy on Rurality* provides a solid foundation for a new partnership in favour of rural areas that stems from government initiatives in recent years and our confidence in local elected representatives and stakeholders in rural communities.

This policy centres on shared responsibility between the Québec government and elected municipal representatives and collaboration with residents and local and regional organizations. It focuses on rural renewal that relies on the involvement of elected representatives and the public.

The government is convinced that an approach centred on strengthening the ability of rural communities to mobilize and shape their environment as they see fit will engender beneficial spinoff. For that reason, Québec is confirming its place as a leader in the realm of rurality.

Through the innovative solutions that it proposes, this policy will offer rural communities new opportunities. It will enable us to collectively reaffirm the bonds that unite us with rural areas.

We are thus taking an important step toward the enhancement of the ability of local communities to manage their social, cultural and economic development, for the betterment of all Quebecers and future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jean Charest'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Jean Charest
Premier

Message from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions



Rural Québec is rooted in the vitality of over one thousand municipalities, which define a diversified, multifaceted society. They reflect an array of territorial conditions that have helped to shape rural Québec.

Over 1.9 million Quebecers are helping to build and develop rural communities. Their commitment helps to instil in these communities a distinctive character and vitality. Indeed, the values of solidarity and mutual aid combined with a feeling of belonging to the territories have spawned a strong identity.

The new *National Policy on Rurality* belongs, above all, to stakeholders in rural communities who, over the years, have adopted the approach and made it an effective development tool. The adherence by rural communities to an approach centred on shared responsibility, mutual trust, flexibility and autonomy of action underpins the success of the development model that the policy advocates.

A broad consensus has been reached on the policy directions and objectives that the policy pursues, which are aimed essentially at ensuring the development of rural communities and the dynamic occupation of the territory by relying on their specific traits and the ability of rural communities to take the initiative.

The means that the *National Policy on Rurality* propose to attain the desired objective centre on an enhanced rural pact, a broader network of better equipped rural development officers, and an adaptation clause that is better integrated into the government decision-making process. A series of innovative measures aimed, in particular, at testing and developing promising sectors is also one of the means that the policy advocates.

To ensure the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*, the government is making provision for a budget allocation adapted to different needs. It has also concluded a formal partnership agreement with the key stakeholders in Québec's rural development, which establishes and makes official the Québec government's obligations and those of each of its partners.

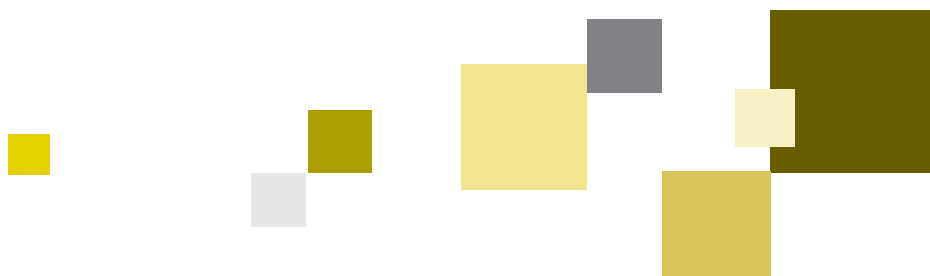
Through this policy, we invite Quebecers to reconfirm their solidarity with rural communities. Québec is banking on inestimable strength on which we can rely in order to achieve sustainable rurality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Nathalie Normandeau'.

Nathalie Normandeau
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACLDQ	Association des centres locaux de développement du Québec
ATR	Association touristique régionale
CAR	Conférence administrative régionale
CJE	Carrefour jeunesse-emploi du Québec
CLD	Local development centre
CMDR	Comité ministériel à la décentralisation et aux régions
CPE	Early childhood centre
CRÉ	Regional conference of elected representatives
FQM	Fédération québécoise des municipalités
FRIJ	Fonds régional d'investissement jeunesse
ICT	Information and communications technology
MAMR	Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions
NPO	Non-profit organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRI	Regional integration program
RCM	Regional county municipality
SADC	Société d'aide au développement des collectivités
SRQ	Solidarité rurale du Québec
UMQ	Union des municipalités du Québec
UPA	Union des producteurs agricoles



Rural partnership agreement

BETWEEN

THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT, represented by Premier Jean Charest and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions Nathalie Normandeau

AND

SOLIDARITÉ RURALE DU QUÉBEC, a legal person constituted pursuant to Part III of the *Companies Act* (R.S.Q., c. C-38) represented by Jacques Proulx, authorized in accordance with the resolution of the Board of Directors of March 31, 2006

AND

THE FÉDÉRATION QUÉBÉCOISE DES MUNICIPALITÉS, a legal person constituted pursuant to Part III of the *Companies Act* (R.S.Q., c. C-38) represented by Bernard Généreux, authorized in accordance with the resolution of the Board of Directors of November 30, 2006

AND

THE UNION DES MUNICIPALITÉS DU QUÉBEC, a legal person constituted pursuant to Part III of the *Companies Act* (R.S.Q., c. C-38) represented by Jean Perrault, authorized in accordance with resolution CA-2006-12-06 of the Board of Directors of December 1

AND

THE ASSOCIATION DES CENTRES LOCAUX DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DU QUÉBEC, a legal person constituted pursuant to Part III of the *Companies Act* (R.S.Q., c. C-38) represented by Jean Fortin, authorized in accordance with resolution PV91-6.10

To become a modern society, Québec needs strong, lively rural areas that allow it to occupy its territory in a dynamic, sustainable manner, build on its collective resources and ensure that all Quebecers enjoy equitable living conditions.

The *National Policy on Rurality* wishes to pursue the impetus launched in rural communities in recent years. The key ideals that underpin the policy reflect a firm desire to ensure the survival of rural areas and of the rural identity and to rethink ways of building on the extensive development potential of rural areas.

To renew rurality with open communities that are prepared to confront the challenges that arise, it is necessary to make a determined commitment, adopt a course of action and share it with the parties concerned.

In this perspective, the Québec government, Solidarité rurale du Québec, in its capacity as an advisory body to the government on rurality, the Fédération québécoise des municipalités and the Union des municipalités du Québec, in their capacity as representatives of Québec municipalities, and the Association des centres locaux de développement du Québec, in its capacity as the representative of development agencies, undertake to pool their efforts to implement the *National Policy on Rurality* in light of the following:

WHEREAS the Québec government and its partners recognize that rural communities are an essential component of the Québec nation's vitality;

WHEREAS the Québec government and its partners agree on the importance of staunch support for the development of rural communities;

WHEREAS the Québec government and its partners agree on the pursuit of the measures that they have undertaken over the past five years;

WHEREAS the Québec government, in the wake of a consultation in which its partners played a key role, has adopted a *National Policy on Rurality*;

WHEREAS the Québec government and the partners involved intend to vigorously commit themselves to the enhancement of the living environment and quality of life in rural communities;

WHEREAS rural development is a challenge that concerns all Quebecers;

WHEREAS rural development depends on the realization of social, economic and cultural measures;

WHEREAS the Québec government and its partners in the rural sector agree to commit themselves, each one in its fields of responsibility and expertise, to carry out initiatives to support the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality* in order to tangibly express their determination to support rural areas.

1. DEFINITION

The Comité des partenaires de la ruralité is a consensus-building body. It has four members, three of whom are the presidents, respectively, of Solidarité rurale du Québec, the Fédération québécoise des municipalités and the Association des CLD du Québec. The fourth member is the Vice-President of the Union des municipalités du Québec. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions chairs the committee.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this agreement is to establish a partnership to implement the *National Policy on Rurality*. The signatories undertake to carry out measures to support rural development in order to ensure the prosperity and survival of rural areas.

3. THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT

Through the *National Policy on Rurality*, the Québec government reaffirms its deep-seated conviction that rural areas have a present and a future and that the prosperity and survival of rural communities represent realistic, attainable objectives for all communities. Québec needs strong, revitalized rural areas to build a socially and economically balanced society.

The government has full confidence in the spirit of initiative of rural populations and assures them of its complete collaboration, which is apparent, first of all, in technical and other support from the Québec public service. The government's collaboration is also reflected in a willingness to adapt policies, programs and measures pertaining to rural communities to their needs and expectations.

The government has earmarked for the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality* \$280 million over seven years, subject to the adoption by the National Assembly of the appropriations, and their availability. The funds will be used as follows:

- a) \$213 million is being allocated to the implementation of 91 rural pacts to be concluded with the RCMs;

b) \$25.3 million is being allocated to ensure the continuity of the services of rural development officers;

c) \$15.5 million is being allocated to experiment with rural development laboratories;

d) \$8.6 million is being allocated to the Fonds d'initiative pour l'avenir rural;

e) \$12 million is being allocated to foster the creation of specialty rural products in the cultural, agri-food and non-wood forest products sectors;

f) \$5.6 million is being allocated for the duration of this policy to funding for Solidarité rurale du Québec in its capacity as an advisory body on rural development.

4. THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS PARTNERS

The government undertakes to establish conditions that enable its departments and agencies to adjust the elaboration of their policies, programs and measures in order to take into account the objectives of the *National Policy on Rurality*.

Committee members may submit any question brought to their attention by rural communities concerning a policy or program that must be adapted to better respond to the specific traits and needs of such communities. They may also formulate recommendations concerning the adaptations to be made to such policies and programs.

5. SOLIDARITÉ RURALE DU QUÉBEC

Solidarité rurale du Québec undertakes to:

a) promote rurality throughout Québec by making known the vitality, achievements, traits and importance of rurality for Québec society;

b) supply on request or on its own initiative to the government advice on questions pertaining to rural development, conduct the necessary consultations and propose to the government innovative solutions and methods of intervention;

c) advise and support rural communities on topics related to their problems, encourage the pooling of experience, and organize discussion forums on rurality-related themes;

d) train rural development officers and offer them support and expertise to enable them to perform their duties;

e) make available to interveners in rural areas through the Internet or other means an information, forecasting and reference centre on rurality in Québec and abroad;

f) participate in the deliberations of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité in order to support the government in the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*.

6. FÉDÉRATION QUÉBÉCOISE DES MUNICIPALITÉS

The Fédération québécoise des municipalités undertakes to:

a) support the governance that the RCMs exercise in their territory in conjunction with the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*;

b) assign training staff to training initiatives focusing on local development and promote participation by local communities in such training;

c) contribute to the vitality of rural areas by fostering the development of tools to facilitate the implementation of the rural pacts;

d) work with the Société locale d'investissement dans le développement de l'emploi du Québec (SOLIDEQ) to ensure that enterprises in rural areas have access to funds from the sociétés locales d'investissement dans le développement de l'emploi (SOLIDE);

e) participate in the deliberations of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité in order to support the government in the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*.





7. UNION DES MUNICIPALITÉS DU QUÉBEC

The Union des municipalités du Québec undertakes to:

- a) train elected municipal representatives in rural development;
- b) foster complementary initiatives by associating rural and urban areas;
- c) develop tools and guides to facilitate the implementation of rural pacts;
- d) support and encourage the networking of municipal expertise from all sources for the benefit of rural communities and in conjunction with rural-urban solidarity;
- e) act in partnership with the other signatories to this agreement and the municipal sector to ensure the prosperity and survival of rural communities;
- f) collaborate with socioeconomic and cultural interveners to adapt and define policies and programs to support the diversity and specific character of rural areas;
- g) participate in the deliberations of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité in order to support the government in the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*.

8. ASSOCIATION DES CLD DU QUÉBEC

The Association des CLD du Québec undertakes to encourage the CLDs to:

- a) make their resources available to implement the *National Policy on Rurality*, support rural development in their territory and rural development officers in their work with communities and project promoters;
- b) foster complementary initiatives between rural and urban areas;
- c) take into account problems pertaining to rurality in the elaboration of their Plan d'action local pour l'économie et l'emploi (PALEE);
- d) promote access to CLD development funds by rural businesses that propose developmental projects;
- e) monitor the implementation of the policy through the CLDs;
- f) participate in the deliberations of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité in order to support the government in the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*.

The parties have accepted the terms of this agreement and have signed the agreement in Québec City on this 7th day of December 2006

Jean Charest
Premier

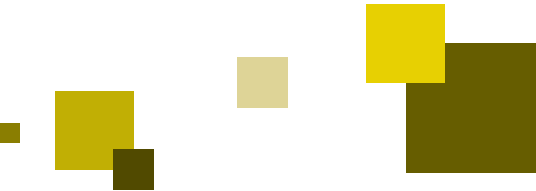
Jacques Proulx
President
Solidarité rurale du Québec

Jean Perrault
President
Union des municipalités du Québec

Nathalie Normandeau
Minister of Municipal Affairs
and Regions

Bernard Généreux
President
Fédération québécoise des municipalités

Jean Fortin
President
Association des centres locaux
de développement du Québec



SUMMARY

National Policy on Rurality



STRATEGIC POLICY DIRECTIONS

1. Promote the renewal and integration of newcomers.
2. Foster the development of the territory's human, cultural and physical resources.
3. Ensure the survival of rural communities.
4. Maintain a balance between the quality of life, the living environment, the natural environment and economic activities.



INTERVENTION OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen the role of elected municipal representatives and consolidate the role of the RCMs in rural development.
2. Ensure that each territory has the means to act.
3. Promote a dynamic of development by territory.
4. Pursue multifaceted development in rural areas.
5. Foster cooperation and complementarity between rural and urban areas.
6. Promote the rural way of life.
7. Offer concrete support from the government in respect of the approaches, strategies and projects of rural communities.

MEANS ADOPTED

(total budget of \$280 million, including nearly \$5.6 million for Solidarité rurale du Québec over seven years)

Maintenance and enhancement of past achievements

1

Adopt a second generation of rural pacts

Allocation of \$213 million to:

- › maintain basic features, i.e. flexibility and management autonomy;
- › elaborate an RCM work plan;
- › promote cooperation and general mobilization;
- › achieve local accountability centred on self-management;
- › focus, in particular, on devitalized communities.

Breakdown of the budget according to the following criteria:

- › allocation of the same basic amount to all RCMs;
- › consideration of the rural population overall and the population in devitalized communities;
- › adoption of the same parameters in respect of all territories, including the RCMs and the metropolitan communities.

Annual accountability reports from the RCMs

2

Round out the network of rural development officers

Allocation of \$25.3 million to increase from 104 to 136 the number of rural development officers to:

- › remedy existing distribution discrepancies;
- › better serve devitalized communities.

Breakdown of the budget according to the following criteria:

- › at least one officer per RCM with a rural pact;
- › an additional officer for RCMs with the most municipalities;
- › an additional officer for RCMs with the most devitalized municipalities;
- › no reduction in the current number of officers.

Ongoing training for officers

Annual report on the officers' work in the rural pact accountability report

3

Broaden the adaptation of government policies and programs

Obligation for government departments and agencies to include an adaptation clause in their policies and programs subject to:

- › an analysis by the Comité ministériel à la décentralisation et aux régions;
- › an opinion from the ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions.

The Comité des partenaires de la ruralité may:

- › submit questions that require adaptation to the community;
- › recommend adaptations to the measures submitted.

Innovative solutions

4

Establish rural laboratories to explore and disseminate the results

Allocation of \$15.5 million to conduct 25 development experiments:

- › pilot projects over a period of up to six years focusing on varied themes such as health, education and culture;
- › an annual budget of up to \$100 000 per laboratory, which can be increased by contributions from other agencies;
- › specific agreement between the government, rural communities and potential partners in respect of each laboratory;
- › gradual establishment of groups of laboratories in 2007, 2008 and 2009;
- › choice of territories determined by a call for projects extending over three years.

5

Facilitate the examination of promising development initiatives

Establishment of the Fonds d'initiative pour l'avenir rural with a budget of \$8.6 million and a mandate to examine the potential of:

- › the production of alternate sources of energy;
- › multifunctional use of the community's resources;
- › implementation of a support structure for rural communities that relies on skills in the public service;
- › marketing of specialty products through emporiums;
- › development of existing telecommunications infrastructure and connection to Internet and cellular telephony services;
- › development of international meetings and exchanges on rurality;
- › maintenance and viability of rural schools;
- › enhancement of the housing stock and dwellings as a means of fostering local development.

6

Provide financial assistance to foster the development of specialty products

Allocation of \$12 million to support the creation of specialty products in order to:

- › facilitate the dynamic occupation of the territory;
- › diversify the economy of rural communities.

Breakdown of the budget according to the following criteria:

- › a grant of up to \$25 000 per project;
- › projects covered: agri-food, forest products, cultural activities, heritage and arts and crafts.

7

Foster recognition of rural vitality through the launching of the Grands Prix de la ruralité

Organization of an annual event to pay tribute to the vitality of leaders in rural communities, with a view to:

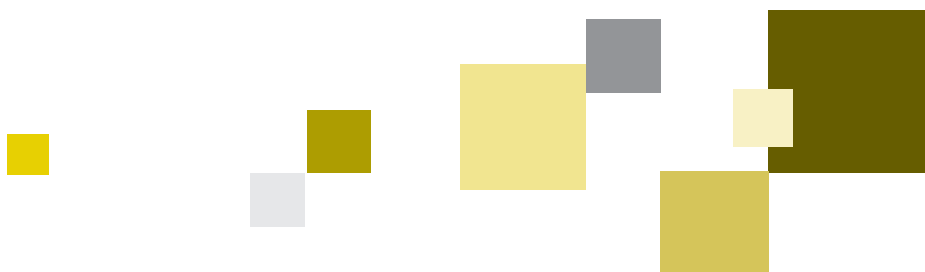
- › demonstrating the creativity, innovativeness and strategic role played by rural communities;
- › acknowledge and pay tribute to key interveners in rural development;
- › highlight the most innovative achievements;
- › broaden the mobilization of rural communities and reaffirm the Québec government's and the partners' commitment to work to ensure the survival and prosperity of rural areas.

8

Adopt a monitoring indicator of the vitality of rural communities

Make available to the RCMs and local communities a tool to evaluate their level of vitality to enable them to:

- › objectively examine their strengths, initiatives and organizations;
- › take stock over the years of their progress and observe their progress and what remains to be done to attain the desired objectives.





INTRODUCTION

The government is making public the *National Policy on Rurality*, which is intended to facilitate and better support the development of rural communities and territories throughout Québec. It is unique in that it focuses on the enhancement of the ability of rural communities to take charge of their development. It is designed to serve as a horizontal policy that influences other government policies and encourages them to contribute to rural development through their sectoral mandates.

The new policy focuses on four key factors.

- **It advocates a bottom-to-top approach in that it emphasizes the management by local communities of rural development.**
- **It relies on local institutions and organizations through the principle of accountability.**
- **It focuses on rurality overall, a context in which human and natural resources are to be developed.**
- **It is intended to be democratic in that it fosters a participatory approach by the public through which elected representatives and individuals are encouraged to play a decisive role.**

Chapter 1 takes stock of the situation and indicates the key components of the concept of rurality and illustrates the scope and nature of the results obtained since the first policy on rurality was launched. In particular, it highlights the positive spinoff from the approach and the new policy's foundations.

More than ever, rural areas are facing numerous challenges and issues. Chapter 2 of the policy emphasizes this situation. It stresses the existing links between social, cultural, economic and environmental factors that are typical of rural areas, especially from the standpoint of demographic trends, the globalization of markets and sustainable development.

Chapter 3 sets out the policy's perspective, strategic policy directions and intervention objectives. It also specifies the main means adopted to achieve these ends. Above all, the government is seeking to ensure the development of rural communities and the dynamic occupation of the territory. To do so, it intends to rely on numerous assets that it plans to build on through the development of the social organization and way of life of rural communities.

Chapters 4 and 5 review each of the means implemented to attain the desired objectives. The *National Policy on Rurality* focuses successively on the measures adopted to maintain and enhance past achievements and to initiate innovative solutions.

Chapter 6 reaffirms the role and mandates of the bodies that will implement and ensure follow-up to the policy and confirms the essential support that the government intends to offer rural communities through its departments and agencies.

Chapter 7 reviews the main results anticipated from the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*. To conclude, the government reiterates the fundamental nature of this approach whose success depends on the mobilization, cooperation and commitment of all interveners.

The *National Policy on Rurality* is one of many initiatives that the government has put forward over the past three years to support the regions, in particular rural areas, in:

- the organization of basic community services, especially by supporting the efforts of school boards to keep village schools open;
- the development of small-scale food businesses through access by regional and niche products to distribution networks and the emergence of reserved appellations;
- the development by the municipalities and the RCMs of their territories' wind and hydroelectric power potential;
- the enhancement of the financial capacity of the municipalities and the RCMs to assume their responsibilities and development through the fiscal and financial partnership agreement.



1

Overview

The implementation of the first *National Policy on Rurality* made it possible to better understand the very concept of rurality. It has also enabled interveners in rural areas to adopt the approach and make of it an effective development tool, from which spinoff has proven to be particularly positive. It has thus been possible to establish the foundations of the new policy in order to respond to the challenges that continue to arise in rural areas.

1.1. Rurality: a choice, lifestyle and way of life

The notion of rurality encompasses numerous facets stemming from Québec's history, organization, methods of occupying its territory, activities and economic solidarity, which continue to be practiced, and the value systems of rural residents. To define rurality we must consider it from several perspectives.

The concept of rurality is defined from a sociological and geographical standpoint as a space inhabited by small human communities, whose values of mutual aid and shared history still focus on pride and a sense of belonging to a community, a territory and a family. Rural areas are characterized by a dynamic and social, cultural and economic practices centred on proximity, conviviality, mutual aid and cooperation. These human communities are depicted as living environments in which the land, everyday relations and social cohesion are closely linked. Rural residents maintain a close link with their immediate environment and foster a differentiated cultural identity that includes the French-speaking, English-speaking and First Nations communities.

From a socioeconomic perspective, rurality in Québec is not uniform and encompasses diversified communities in demographic, economic, geographic, climatic, historic and even cultural terms. Agriculture, which, along with forestry and fishing, initially underpinned rural life, is still important in the dynamic occupation of rural territory and the rural economy. Rural communities experience a wide array of economic conditions ranging from highly devitalized municipalities¹ where high levels of underemployment, economic stagnation and even social distress prevail, to very prosperous areas with growing populations where, in particular, manpower is in short supply. This multifaceted rurality is strikingly apparent between regions and even within regions in the RCMs.

With the passing decades, the universality of certain values and practices has drawn closer together urban and rural communities, although the conformity between the two ways of life is far from being established and numerous differences between the two persist. Rurality today continues to encompass specific individual and collective knowledge, heritage, and know-how. It reflects the social diversity of Québec's territories and corresponds to the ideals of open spaces and freedoms that have prevailed in Québec society from the outset. It symbolizes the direct relationship to other people and nature, a

¹ Devitalized rural municipalities often experience difficult economic, social or demographic situations. They have high unemployment and the lowest household incomes in Québec. These communities are facing a population exodus, especially among young people between 15 and 25 years of age, with the result that the population is ageing rapidly. In some instances, economic deconstruction is occurring as the traditional foundations of their economy crumble.

source of stability in a changing world, which sometimes give rise to a certain traditionalism that makes it possible to transmit values and practices from generation to generation. It transmits a desire to inhabit the territory and centres on the commitment by and ability of rural communities to contribute directly to meeting the challenges that they are facing.

The distinction between the rural and urban ways of life, which has been appreciably mitigated over the past 50 years, is reflected in the similarity of needs, behaviour, expectations, aspirations, consumption methods, and economic and cultural models and practices that are often drawn from the same sources. The traits and needs of rural and urban communities occasionally resemble each other. It is possible to speak of a rural society undergoing major change just as it is in respect of all human communities. However, differences remain in the living environments and values that still define rural society and mean that some people decide to live or settle in rural communities. Moreover, rural Québec's great vitality and approaches centred on an interdependent economy are virtually unknown and rarely conveyed by the mainstream media.

The definition of rurality must adjust constantly, since the populations of rural areas have diversified, their socioeconomic activities have changed, the landscape has been altered, as has land use planning and development, population distribution, relationships centred on proximity and mutual aid, and forms of organization and association. More and more individuals who want to belong to a living environment different from that offered by cities are seeking to integrate rural communities. Among other things, they appreciate the rural environment for the quality of life that it offers and its conviviality. Recreational and tourist activities carried out in rural areas, scenery and vacation homes, lakes and rivers give a new dimension to rurality that is much sought after by rural and urban residents alike.

1.2. Support by rural communities for the approach advocated by the policy and positive spinoff from the rural pacts

First, the policy is noteworthy for the general support among rural communities for the contract-based approach centred on shared responsibility, mutual trust, delegation, and the flexibility and autonomy to act of the RCMs. It is thus possible to rely on the beneficial effect of spinoff from the initiatives put forward in recent years under the *National Policy on Rurality*. The most tangible results in this regard stem from the accountability of the RCMs in conjunction with the rural pacts. Some four and a half years after the initiation of the first pacts, we can make the following observations:

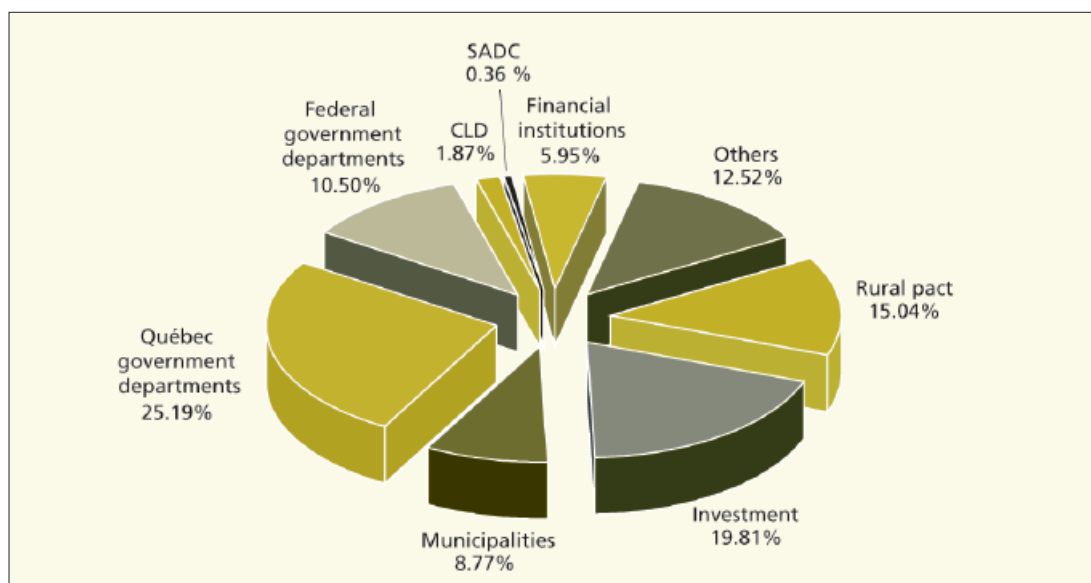
- Widespread mobilization has reached nearly 35 000 people, of whom 7 000 have participated as volunteers on 155 committees, 136 RCM sectoral issue tables, and 462 local committees.

- Over 3 400 projects were being elaborated or had been completed, which suggests that at the conclusion of the five years in which the rural pacts have been in force, the number of projects will exceed 4 000, i.e. an average of four projects per rural municipality. Moreover, the average cost of the projects stood at \$122 993, and the average contribution under the pact totalled roughly \$18 500 per project, which accounts for nearly 15% of the costs (see Chart 1 below).
- More than 5 700 jobs have thus been created, an average of 1.6 jobs per project.
- The \$63.5 million in funding under the pacts has generated investments of nearly \$422 million, which represents a leverage effect of 6.8. If the trend continues, the \$86.4 million transferred to the rural pacts could engender spinoff totalling roughly \$600 million.
- Non-profit organizations have carried out the most projects (55%), followed by the municipal sector, which comprises municipalities, RCMs and municipal agencies (38%).

CHART 1

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR RURAL PACT PROJECTS SINCE 2002

From a qualitative standpoint, the rural pacts, through initiatives aimed at mobilizing and organizing the public and through the local, sectoral and monitoring agencies established, have made possible the initiation of a process of change and the management by rural communities of local development. They have also led to the definition and sharing of a common perspective of development by territory, and the elaboration and adoption of development and innovation tools, which has enabled interveners to foster the emergence of a new rural economy.



An examination of the thousands of projects supported by the rural pacts reveals that ingenious ideas have been acted upon in a number of fields of activity. The enhancement of local services, the quality of community facilities, the range of social, cultural and recreational activities, and know-how and research are some examples of the projects carried out. More specifically, roughly 30% of the projects have focused on development and community prosperity, 60% on the quality of life, and 10% on the organization and commitment of the public.

An evaluation now under way of 10 rural pacts reveals that positive change has occurred in rural areas. Communities have, overall, displayed receptiveness to the approach proposed by the policy. Elected representatives have quickly assumed their responsibilities by mobilizing the public. Together, they have accurately assessed conditions in their communities and taken action.

This situation is fostering the effective management by the community of resources in rural areas. In rural Québec, there is space in which to live, produce, feed oneself and profitability make use of the land and its reserves of quality fresh water. Furthermore, with the advent of the new information and communications technologies, rural Québec has the possibility of exploring new service delivery methods and encouraging new initiatives to market niche products and disseminate cultural or other productions among clientele outside the region.

In recent years, numerous indicators of renewal have been observed in rural areas. Two such indicators are noteworthy, i.e. population growth and emerging economic activities.

Indeed, a trend has been noted for new residents to return to and settle in certain rural communities, in particular young people and recent retirees. This tendency is similar to one noted in recent decades in Europe and the United States, where the population of rural areas is growing. Certain Québec municipalities have undertaken steps to renew their population.

Another indicator of the vitality and creativity of rural areas is thriving rural entrepreneurship and the proliferation of specialty agri-food products and cultural and tourism products. Mention should be made of the new range of cheeses, the small-scale production of beverages, specialized livestock and crop production, bed and breakfast accommodations, country-style dining establishments, forest inns, picturesque festivals, or an array of cultural productions. The originality of the products is becoming a trademark of a revitalized rural Québec, which, in many cases, extends beyond our borders and is benefiting from the globalization of markets.

1.3. The foundations of the new policy

There has been widespread comment since the launching of the first policy on rurality on the need to pursue the policy and the scope of a second policy. These opinions also appear in advice elaborated by Solidarité rurale du Québec (SRQ)² in the summer of 2006 and in other advice and briefs from individuals, institutions and organizations. The Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM), the Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) and the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) have also consulted their members and expressed their viewpoints.

Day-long sessions devoted to rurality assembling 100 stakeholders from rural areas were organized on October 11 and 12, 2006 in order consult the stakeholders on a background paper that helped guide the elaboration of the new *National Policy on Rurality*. A consensus was reached in respect of the following basic tenets, which seem essential if we are to offer rural populations means and tools geared to their needs:

- The general purpose of the policy is to ensure the development of rural communities and the dynamic occupation of the territory by relying on their diversity and specific traits and the ability of rural areas to take the initiative. The policy adopts the RCM as the core territory from the standpoint of intervention, belonging and decision-making.
- It centres on shared responsibility sealed by a contract between elected municipal representatives and the Québec government, in association with individuals and local and regional organizations and institutions.
- The policy makes available to rural communities flexible, adapted means of intervention.
- It fosters the dissemination of the expertise and rural development experience acquired under the initial policy.
- The policy promotes and supports targeted models, approaches, initiatives and projects that engender positive spinoff in the community.
- It offers support and the transfer of knowledge from the government in the regions.

A consensus was also reached on the need to maintain a development approach centred on mobilization, cooperation, economic solidarity, local collaboration and community commitment, which, together, have a positive effect on the dynamic occupation of the territory. Moreover, interveners agree that we should rely on the ability of local communities to take the initiative, the wealth and highly diverse potential of rural territories, and the desire to explore new fields of development.

² Solidarité rurale du Québec. *Avis pour une nouvelle Politique nationale de la ruralité*, 2006, 60 pages.
<http://www.solidarite-rurale.qc.ca/documents/348/Avis.pdf>

1.4. Concerns

Despite this progress, it appears that all of the problems that Québec's rural areas are facing are far from being solved and that sustained effort is still needed. Indeed, despite positive spinoff, the previous policy on rurality did not succeed in revitalizing all communities nor in solving all of the problems with which rural communities are contending.

Rurality is affected, in particular, by broad trends such as economic liberalization, market globalization, and the communications technologies. It is also facing a number of challenges in demographic terms.

Québec's rural areas have, to varying degrees, experienced numerous problems and undergone radical changes in the past half century. In recent years, they have witnessed population migration, the loss of services, social pessimism, and economic crises, especially in the forestry, fisheries, mining and furniture and textile manufacturing sectors. Furthermore, rural communities have also enjoyed widespread success through economically vital sectors in which the problem of finding upcoming entrepreneurs and manpower shortages are sometimes glaring. The alternating cycle of renewal and decline is probably not over. However, rural communities have shown that they are capable of facing changing situations and adapting their development to new challenges.



2

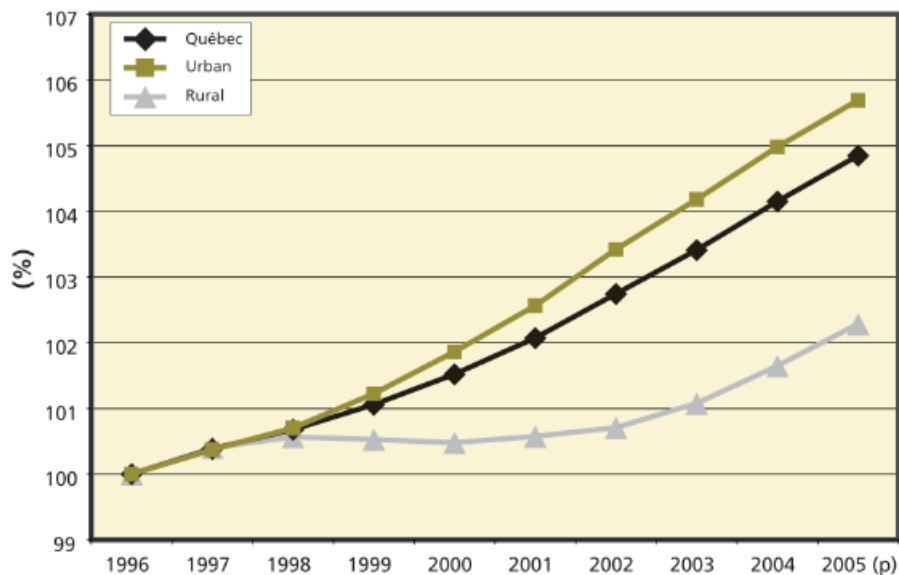
Issues and Challenges

Several major challenges and issues linked to demographics, the economy, the environment and the development of rural communities, and the search for adapted models and intervention processes are compromising the future of rural areas. Moreover, these challenges also afford an opportunity to make changes in order to enhance the situation of the populations concerned.

2.1. A response to varied demographic trends

Québec's population has grown by nearly 5% over the past 10 years. Urban areas accounted for the biggest increase, i.e. nearly 6%. The rural population increased by 3%, slightly below the figure for Québec as a whole. However, as Chart 2 indicates, starting in 2002, growth in the rural population has for several years occurred at almost the same pace as in Québec as a whole and in urban areas.

CHART 2
POPULATION GROWTH RATE IN QUÉBEC, 1996-2005



Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec. *Estimation de la population des municipalités au 1^{er} juillet des années 1996 à 2005.*³

³ Statistics Canada data from the 2006 Census can only be consulted starting in March 2007 and we obtained population growth rates from the estimates of the Institut de la statistique du Québec. In this chart, the rural population corresponds to the municipalities that are part of the territory to which the policy applies.

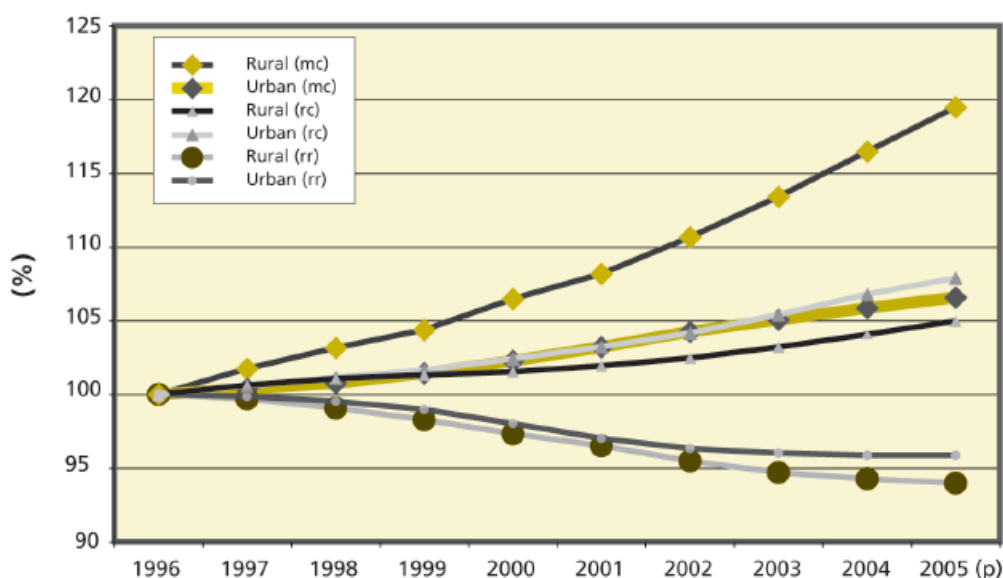
However, the situation differs from one type of rural area to the next. Indeed, certain communities, in particular in the resource regions, are contending with a striking decline in population while others are experiencing population growth.

Population growth is thus polarized by rural municipalities located in the zone of influence of the major urban agglomerations located in southern Québec, especially Montréal, while a large part of rural Québec is losing population. This decline is apparent above all in regions where the economy relies on natural resource development.

As Chart 3 shows, the population of the resource regions has fallen significantly since 1996, slightly more in rural areas than in urban areas. However, it should be noted that decline has slackened over the past three years.

CHART 3

POPULATION GROWTH RATE IN QUÉBEC, BY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITIES (MC), CENTRAL REGIONS (CR) AND RESOURCE REGIONS (RR) RÉGIONS



Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec. *Estimation de la population des municipalités au 1^{er} juillet des années 1996 à 2005.*

The fate of several communities hinges on the demographic question. Depending on the community, mention is made of migration, the ageing of communities, and problems stemming from population renewal. Mention is also made in other communities of the massive arrival of city dwellers, retirees or baby boomers, the conversion of vacation homes into principal residences, and the shortage of workers to fill the jobs available, which contributes to the rapid rise in the cost and value of homes, property taxes and, in particular, land. The situation varies and affects community development, the local services that will and can be offered, and the methods organizing community life.

Rural communities are compelled to fully understand their demographic situation and adopt strategies adapted to their specific case. The consolidation and renewal of populations encompasses the question of the maintenance of populations, especially young people, in their community of origin. They also include approaches to attract new residents, which requires cohesion between old and new residents and between different activities carried out in the territory.

The demographic question leads us to examine other dimensions that affect the attraction or retention of residents in rural areas. Aside from the economic question and employment, it is necessary to assess the delivery of local public services, the availability of housing and the model whereby space is occupied. Intergenerational ties, the place occupied by young people, women and cultural groups in the community, and initiatives geared to promotion, reception, settlement and integration, whether on-site or not, to make a community hospitable are also factors to be considered. What is more, the enhancement of community life through cultural, family, recreational, sports and health measures or policies is a concern in many rural communities.

2.2. A means to develop the human potential of rural communities

A community's residents are its key resource. It is the residents who foster mutual aid and develop a feeling of belonging, which enables the community to mobilize, innovate and act. This challenge implies the development of a relationship and a thorough knowledge of the residents of rural areas and the acquisition of thorough knowledge of their skills and know-how, expectations and needs with regard, for example, to education, training, health and local public and private services.

To take into consideration local human capital also implies the commitment of residents, especially young people, and elected representatives and local and regional stakeholders so that they act as a driving force in development. Since local problems can only be solved through a commitment from the community, their contribution is essential.

Mention is also made of individual and community entrepreneurship projects, the development of local diversity, the pinpointing of local resources and potential to be developed, and the adaptation of manpower to needs. In rural areas, the problem of the upcoming generation in business, on the farm and in

organizations and institutions renders even more acute the need to organize and mobilize local human resources. Rural communities must be able to ensure their survival. In a word, their futures belongs to them.

2.3. The search for models specific to rural areas

The advantage that rural areas enjoy in adopting a model of society stems from the ability of residents and their elected representatives to initiate the desired choices and changes. The resulting development and management models will harmonize with them and will help to renew rural areas.

Rural Quebecers are invited to participate actively in the definition of the type of environment in which they wish to live. To this end, communities must ask themselves what they wish to emphasize in respect of way of life, local culture, social relations, community life and employment. Moreover, they must agree on the importance to be accorded governance, public and private services, the way the territory is occupied, and cohesion and cohabitation as regards residents and the activities carried on in the territory.

2.4. A contribution to sustainable development

Rurality can be defined, among other things, by its link with nature, the use to which the territory is put through agriculture, forestry, mining, recreational, tourism and vacation activities, and hunting and fishing. The survival of rural areas and the quality of life that they offer depend on the balance struck between sustainable development initiatives, sound development methods, and consideration of renewable and non-renewable resources specific to rural areas, such as land, water, the countryside, forests, and the built heritage. This aspect is of paramount importance, in particular in the context of climate change occurring the world over.

The challenge posed by the cohabitation of activities in rural areas also means drawing communities and their natural environment closer together and rethinking, if need be, the spatial structure of the dynamic occupation of the territory. Harmonious, balanced development also means working to ensure its survival and discovering and developing new social, economic and cultural activities that allow residents to live with dignity in rural areas. This concern necessarily includes the effort required to facilitate the integration of newcomers in order to harmonize expectations and values between newcomers and established residents.

Several rural communities now have an Agenda 21,⁴ which defines the key components of balanced development of the territory stemming from consultations with the public and local organizations. The practical application of policy directions adopted locally is also part of the logic of the development of rural territory that can even enhance the drawing power of certain rural areas and revitalize them. The development of and interest in environmental resources can take form, among other things, through tourism, energy or manufacturing initiatives.

2.5. A response to market globalization

In a context where traditional economic bases are weakened by the rapid opening up of markets, the arrival of new, low-priced products and the need to reposition economic sectors against a backdrop of keen competition, rural areas must call into question their economic foundations.

Indeed, in recent decades, rural areas have experienced reduced access to regional and national markets in the wake of the concentration of major distribution networks. However, in recent years, energy costs, environmental questions and the rediscovery of the local economy have served as a counterweight to this concentration. Since then, we have observed a movement toward the consumption of local and regional products, the opening up of local markets and the availability of a more varied range of personalized services. Moreover, certain products and services are able to face domestic and foreign competition.

Rural areas must focus on fields of production with limited price vulnerability that are sought out for their originality and quality. The challenge consists in ascertaining what distinguishes and characterizes rural areas from the standpoint of locally available resources, labour force skills, unique products, an individual and collective entrepreneurship model, economic potential linked to culture and heritage, and their ability to satisfy the needs of local, regional, national and external markets. The business community, in particular, can contribute extensively to such reflection.

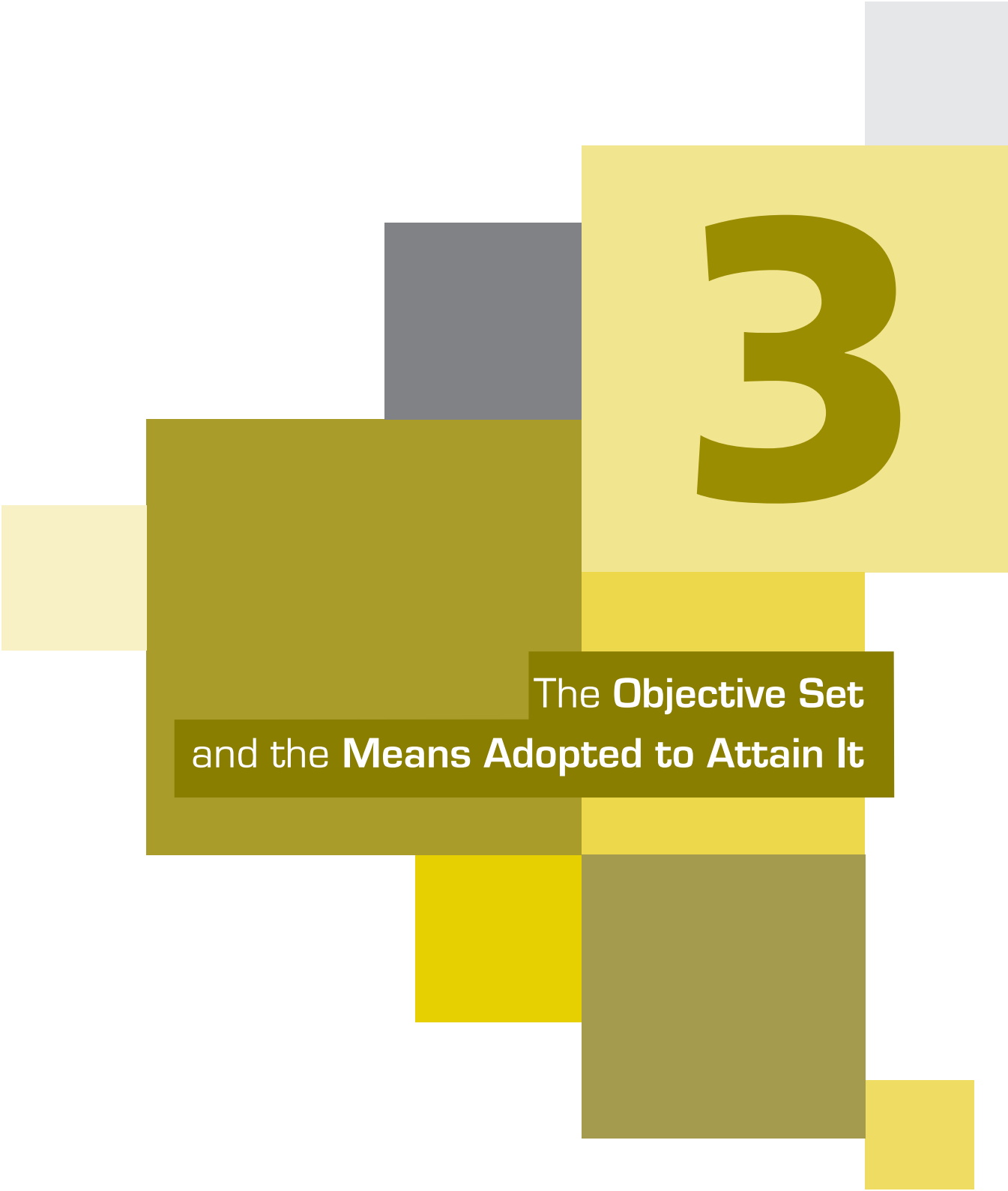
Mention can be made of specialty, regional or niche products in the forestry, agri-food, cultural and manufacturing sectors, and in the realm of personal and business services. Rural Québec can also set itself apart through the quality of life and the living environment that it offers its residents and newcomers, who are also a driving force in its transformation and adaptation to modern challenges.

⁴ Agenda 21 is an international action program for the 21st century, geared to sustainable development. It was adopted by the signatories to the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* in June 1992. In Québec rural communities, it is an approach through which community residents define their own perspective of sustainable development in respect of their communities. This approach encompasses four major phases, i.e. a diagnosis of sustainable local development, the elaboration of a multi-year action plan, the realization of concrete initiatives, and the regular evaluation by means of indicators of the results obtained.

2.6. A government response adapted to the needs and expectations of rural communities

Rural communities have for a long time displayed a desire to invest in their own development to ensure that such development satisfies their needs and expectations. However, they do not always have at their disposal technical and professional resources, above all in devitalized areas, to advise them and support their efforts, with the result that some projects are delayed or abandoned. The residents and elected representatives of these areas strongly emphasize that government programs and measures are sometimes unsuitable and that more effort could be made to adapt them to local conditions.

The final challenge facing the government is to adapt its policies and programs in such a way that they better respond to local conditions. The government must also concretely support local initiatives through appropriate, flexible technical and professional support that satisfies the varied needs of rural communities and by developing refined knowledge of rural areas. One avenue to emphasize is the transfer of knowledge and the mobilization of government expertise in respect of rural needs through more sustained support.



3

The **Objective Set**
and the **Means Adopted to Attain It**

In light of these challenges, the government reaffirms its determination to ensure the survival of rural areas and the rural identity and to take a new look at ways of taking advantage of the development potential in their territories. To this end, it advocates the adoption of a perspective centred on the development of social organization and the way of life of rural communities, which will serve as the starting point for a series of strategic policy directions and intervention objectives.

3.1. A perspective centred on the development of social organization and the way of life of rural communities

The new *National Policy on Rurality* maintains the impetus given to the development of all rural communities in Québec so that they are able to give meaning to their initiatives, along with a direction and vision that is understood and adopted by the public. It is possible to alter the course of rural development if clearly defined initiatives are implemented according to a logic or a territorial project underpinned by the values of cooperation and pride in living in a rural territory.

The emergence of a community project in each rural area opens up a new chapter on rurality in Québec by developing within rural communities all of their natural resources (agricultural, maritime, forestry, mining, wildlife and so on) and human resources (social and cultural practices and traditions). A policy on rurality is elaborated through association with urban areas, schools, educational and research institutions, cooperatives, the business community, savings and credit unions, and organizations devoted to the well-being of residents and the harmonious development of their territory. In this policy, we must consider the contribution made by newcomers as an essential factor in ensuring the survival of rural areas.

The future of rural areas depends, by and large, on the responses that communities find to their situation. It is apparent that the communities that best succeed are those that have relied on diversity, an array of small and medium initiatives, and development that is rooted locally. To achieve this end, we must bank on the creative spirit found in the community, which is often reflected in a wide range of fields of interest. Community development also means taking into account all groups and resources, each of which can serve as a building block in the rurality of today and tomorrow.

3.2. Strategic policy directions

On the basis of this perspective, the government invites rural communities to propose initiatives that enable them to attract newcomers to areas with declining birth rates or to harmoniously integrate newcomers. It also encourages rural areas to appropriate their territory and its resources through individual and collective initiatives by relying on the commitment of elected representatives, residents and local organizations. It also encourages them to offer residents and newcomers an attractive social and economic environment, with a range of activities and services adapted to the needs and size of the communities. It invites rural communities to foster the harmonious, sustainable development of their territory.

The government's approach centres on four strategic policy directions that correspond to targets that rural communities actively engaged in their development should seek to wholly or partially attain, and on the government, which is committed to supporting them:

- promote the renewal and integration of migrant and immigrant populations;
- foster the development of the territory's human, cultural and physical resources;
- ensure the survival of rural communities;
- maintain a balance between the quality of life, the living environment, the natural environment and economic activities.

In light of these key policy directions, the government has set a series of objectives in order to make concrete between 2007 and 2014 interveners' desires and initiatives in respect of the territory and to attain the general objective set by the policy.

3.3. Intervention objectives

Through the *National Policy on Rurality*, the government is seeking, overall, to ensure the development of rural communities and the dynamic occupation of the territory by relying on the communities' diversity and specific traits and the ability to take the initiative displayed by rural areas. To this end, the policy proposes seven intervention objectives aimed both at rural areas and government bodies.

■ **Strengthen the role of elected municipal representatives and consolidate the role of the RCMs in rural development**

The policy reaffirms that rural development strategies depend on the leadership of elected municipal representatives and that the RCMs are the focal point of mobilization, reflection, cooperation and action in the targeted territories. It seeks to strengthen the role played by local decision-makers and to consolidate the role played by the RCMs with a view to promoting rural development on the basis of a perspective through which local communities establish their priorities according to their needs, expectations and ability to intervene.

■ **Ensure that each territory has the means to act**

To support the commitment to rural areas, the government intends to maintain in the policy an array of financial and technical measures that enable each territory to engage in a flexible, autonomous manner in development in keeping with local decisions. Elected representatives and residents will seek to adopt a work perspective based on a broader knowledge of the community's resources, the mobilization of residents with respect to facets of local development, the choice of a model and an intervention strategy, and a range of initiatives in the field that reflect the residents' expectations and needs.

■ **Promote a dynamic of development by territory**

The policy advocates a development dynamic geared to the specific nature of rural areas. It thus fosters the establishment of development strategies in each rural territory. These strategies are aimed at satisfying the territories' objectives from the standpoint of quality of life, social and economic development, and public and private services. They are often elaborated in conjunction with the mobilization of the population with a view to seeking possibilities for socioeconomic development adapted to each situation and bring into play the resources and potential of each rural area.

■ **Pursue multifaceted development in rural areas**

The policy encourages each RCM and each rural community to pursue the multifaceted development of the territory, i.e. varied development centred on the diversification of the economy. This policy leads them to rely on foreign experience or on the pooling of all human, natural and cultural resources in their territory. It spurs rural areas to envisage new ways of offering public services and developing the territory, natural resources and the environment, and to benefit from the advantages of heritage and local knowledge.

■ **Foster cooperation and complementarity between rural and urban areas**

The policy advocates the strengthening of cooperation and complementarity between rural and urban areas, which are service centres, in order to foster concrete initiatives that benefit each party, bearing in mind the differences, specific traits and vocations of each rural area. It encourages interveners to determine the fields of complementarity to be developed, the services to be shared from the standpoint of the dynamic occupation of the territory, economic development, or activities, facilities and services of a social, community, cultural and educational nature to be pooled. Under an approach that is respectful and mutually satisfying, intermunicipal agreements become possible and desirable in terms of the economy, families, culture, recreation, sports and tourism. They are also possible and desirable when discussion focuses on land use planning, sustainable development, public transportation, local services, and policies governing the attraction, settlement and integration of newcomers.

■ **Promote the rural way of life**

The policy encourages rural areas to preserve their identity, values and cultural practices while developing their unique heritage and natural environment and continuing to offer varied possibilities with respect to ways of life. It seeks to ensure that the very notion of rurality and rural territory is properly explained and promoted so that its intrinsic values and practices are shared by all Quebecers, by demonstrating their importance for collective well-being.

■ **Offer concrete support from the government in respect of the approaches, strategies and projects of rural communities**

The policy seeks to provide concrete support from the government in respect of the approaches, strategies and projects of rural communities. Such support, which is aimed, in particular, at the devitalized municipalities covered by the policy, will be adapted according to socioeconomic conditions in rural areas and to the specific needs of the communities.

3.4. Reference rural areas

The territory of the municipalities covered by the first *National Policy on Rurality* is being maintained (see Appendix 1), with the territorial adjustments indicated below.

- The municipalities of Amos and Lachute, La Tuque, Cowansville, Matane and Dolbeau-Mistassini, whose urban population is below 13 000, are being integrated into the territory to which the policy applies. These municipalities display characteristics similar to those of the cities covered by a rural pact, such as Montmagny, Sainte-Marie and Mont-Laurier, and their zone of influence is confined to the territory of their RCM.
- The municipalities of Matagami, Lebel-sur-Quévillon, Chapais and Chibougamau are being included in the Pacte rural de la municipalité de Baie-James. Each of these municipalities, whose populations are less than 10 000 and whose economies rely on natural resource development, display characteristics similar to those of several rural municipalities.

The territory to which the policy applies encompasses 1 011 municipalities and 34 aboriginal communities for a total population in 2005 of 1 913 910 inhabitants.

3.5. Means adopted

To attain its objective, the government has adopted eight means. Three of them are aimed at maintaining and enhancing past achievements and the remaining five are innovative solutions.

The maintenance and enhancement of past achievements

- It is essential to establish a second generation of rural pacts.
- It is necessary to round of the network of rural development officers.
- We must further adjust government policies and programs to take into account the specific traits of rural areas.

Innovative solutions

- It is important to set up rural laboratories to examine and disseminate the results of experiments in innovative activity sectors.
- We must facilitate the examination of initiatives geared to development.
- We must provide financial assistance to foster the development of specialty products.
- We must encourage recognition of rural vitality through the establishment of the Grands Prix de la ruralité.
- It is important to adopt a monitoring indicator of the vitality of rural communities.

To this end, the government has allocated \$280 million over seven years, to be earmarked for the different measures proposed.



4

**The Maintenance
and Enhancement of Past Achievements**

There is a broad consensus among various interveners on the effectiveness of certain measures implemented under the first *National Policy on Rurality*. The government intends to maintain and enhance each of these measures.

4.1. A second generation of rural pacts

The rural pact is a practical instrument that interveners in rural territories have greatly appreciated, in particular because it trusts local stakeholders and concretely satisfies the each rural area's needs and takes into account its specific conditions. The flexibility and autonomy of management that the pact affords and the possibility of intervening in a wide range of situations are the features that are the instrument's main strength.

The consultations carried out indicate that we must maintain measures to satisfy local needs and focus more closely on better targeted initiatives that lead to greater change. Consequently, the funding earmarked for the rural pact must be used both to support community projects and to implement a genuine strategy that contributes to the consolidation and survival of rural communities.

In this perspective, the second-generation rural pact must centre on the following principles:

- As the advice submitted by Solidarité rurale du Québec⁵ proposes, the rural pact must introduce a territorial notion in its work plan and specify what must be pooled and included in the collective effort in the RCM overall. Rural areas agree on a common assessment of the socioeconomic situation and on the policy directions and measures to be pursued jointly to renew and strengthen rurality.
- The rural pact is a tool for collaboration and general mobilization to effect change and consolidate what is worth consolidating by focusing on several objectives. Specifically, it should engender diversity and collective wealth, promote new economic activities and job creation, introduce new work methods, emphasize the territories' originality and their modern identity, and pursue development for the benefit of the entire community.
- The pact is a flexible instrument in respect of local accountability⁶ centred on self-management, and endogenous development, i.e. development that occurs in the local community without outside intervention. It also serves as an educational tool and to heighten awareness among elected representatives and individuals of their role in the quest to ensure their community's survival, the enhancement of skills, and the development of identities. These social dimensions lead to the search for mutual aid approaches and alternate solutions to local development adapted to communities in the territory.

⁵ *Op. cit.*

⁶ The notion of accountability refers here to the ability of a rural area to analyse its situation, pinpoint its problems and solve them.

- Since Québec's rural areas are multifaceted and their state of development varies, a number of communities are still devitalized, a situation that warrants attentive treatment. The rural pact continues to be a measure that is adapted to work in several devitalized communities to ensure the emergence of local commitment and projects that rally residents around common solutions. Cooperation and solidarity are the historic foundations of the rural economy and community organization and they underpin the philosophy for collective action that makes it possible to revitalize local life by reconciling the imperatives of economic development with the benefits of local identity and the territory's human and natural resources.

The new generation of rural pacts will receive an overall budget allocation of \$213 million over the seven years of the policy, i.e. \$22 million in 2007-2008, \$26 million in 2008-2009, and \$33 million per year in subsequent years until 2014.

In addition to a basic amount that is identical for all RCMs, the pacts will receive assistance that takes into account total rural population and, specifically, the population of devitalized municipalities. Moreover, to ensure fairness, criteria governing the allocation of funding will be reviewed in such a way that the RCMs located in the metropolitan communities of Montréal and Québec City are subject to the same parameters as the other RCMs when the budget allocation devoted to rural pacts is apportioned.

To maintain the current dynamic, the government intends in 2007-2008 to increase by \$22 million the current budget allocation. During the subsequent years of the policy's implementation, the territories and budget allocations will be determined according to Statistics Canada data from the 2006 Census. The option adopted ensures that no RCM's or territory's budget will fall below the allocation received in 2007-2008.

As for the application framework of the new rural pacts, it is essentially the same as that of the first generation. Below are the framework's key features:

- flexible application;
- the RCMs alone are accountable and enjoy management autonomy;
- enhancement of the process of accountability in respect of the government and, above all, the public, while ensuring that the pacts are flexible and straightforward;
- priority is given in the pact to the mobilizing, organizing, informing and ensuring the participation of individuals;
- eligible projects must be community oriented and focus on the social economy; private projects are excluded;
- infrastructure, services, public works or current operations are excluded that can be funded through municipal budgets or government programs, e.g. waterworks, sewers, and road works, fire and security services;

- an 80% ceiling has been placed on the government's contribution to eligible expenditures in respect of pact funding;
- funding may be obtained to hire rural development officers at the local level to satisfy specific needs in the territories of devitalized municipalities;
- The RCMs must:
 - take stock of the five years of the first pact as required by the agreements signed between the RCMs and the government;
 - elaborate a new work plan that includes territorial and local dimensions and takes into consideration the policy directions and objectives stipulated in the *National Policy on Rurality*;
 - make provision in the new work plan for procedures respecting mobilization, organization, information and accountability;
 - make provision in information measures for the dissemination of the pact's contents, procedures for managing funding, the decision-making process governing the choice of projects, and the contents, means and frequency of dissemination of results;
 - define the job description of the rural development officer and the administrative unit to which he reports.

It should be noted that the rural pact may go beyond the budget allocation used to fund projects and adopt an approach that advocates original, community-based solutions to the problems and priorities targeted by the community. A medium- and long-term perspective of possible initiatives under the pact will better enable local elected representatives to adopt the policy and thus invest in a genuine development approach and not just in project management and funding.

4.2. A broader network of rural development officers

The 104 rural development officers have proven to be essential professional resources in the process that enables rural areas to assume management of rural renewal operations, both from the standpoint of technical support and debate, given their knowledge of policy directions, trends and innovations in rural areas. They have played a leading role in the implementation and the realization of rural pacts.

However, there is a disparity in the distribution of the officers. Some RCMs have one agent for several municipalities while others must rely on the same human resources to serve 10 or even 20 municipalities. Moreover, it is much more demanding to work in a devitalized territory than elsewhere. Such work warrants special attention that demands technical support and a constant presence, without which it would be hard to envisage tangible, enduring changes.

Bearing in mind these observations, the government undertakes to bring to 136 the number of rural development officers in the network. The budget allocation for this purpose has been set at \$3 400 000 for 2007-2008 and will be indexed subsequently. It will reach over \$25 million during the seven years of the policy. The 32 new officers, who will make it possible to offer sufficient support throughout the rural territory, will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- RCMs or territories with one rural pact will have at least one rural development officer.
- RCMs with the greatest number of municipalities will have at their disposal an additional officer.
- RCMs with the greatest number of underprivileged municipalities will be entitled to an additional officer.
- Notwithstanding the application of these norms, the existing number of agents will not be reduced in any RCM.

The budget allocation devoted to funding the network will be increased so that \$25 000 in basic financial assistance is earmarked for each officer's position. This amount will be indexed annually for the duration of the National Policy on Rurality.

Furthermore, annual specific or ongoing training will be maintained to satisfy the needs targeted by the officers and to inform them of conditions in Québec's rural areas.

The grants for officers will complement the budget allocation in respect of the rural pacts and will be paid to the RCM, which will decide whether to hire the officer directly or assign the officer's position to the local development centre (CLD). To conclude, the RCM will take stock each year of the work performed by its officer or officers and the report will be appended to the rural pact accountability report. The RCM will also undertake to pay at least an amount equivalent to the government's contribution.

4.3. Adaptation of government policies and programs

Rural communities deem the adaptation of government policies and programs to be a key component of the *National Policy on Rurality*. This measure is intended to adapt public services to the specific conditions in rural areas.

In order to respond to the concerns of rural communities and further adapt government initiatives, the policies and programs of government departments and agencies will be subject to the following conditions:

- When government departments and agencies elaborate policies or programs, they must take into account the characteristics of the territory, in particular of rural areas, and adapt their initiatives accordingly. The Comité ministériel à la décentralisation et aux régions (CMDR) will analyse the application of this adaptation clause and the ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions (MAMR) will systematically formulate advice on its application.
- The members of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité may submit any question brought to their attention by rural communities⁷ concerning a policy or program that must be adapted to better respond to the specific nature and needs of rural communities. If they deem it appropriate, they may formulate recommendations concerning the adaptations to be made to the measures submitted to them.

In short, this approach is aimed at ensuring that government departments and agencies take into account the specific nature of rural territories when they elaborate policies or programs. Effort will focus, in particular, on the following key sectors: housing, municipal infrastructure and services, territorial service delivery, especially day care and training services, and management of the territory. The fields of activity chosen will affect development and the survival of rural territories and will be in keeping with the deliberations of the conférences administratives régionales (CAR) which, under their mandates, are responsible for coordinating and harmonizing government initiatives in the regions.

⁷ See section 6.1.1 below, which describes the composition and mandate of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité.



5

Innovative Solutions

In order to attain the objectives that the *National Policy on Rurality* pursues, the government is also adopting a series of new measures focusing on the evaluation and development of activities that have not been studied or tested extensively until now and the examination of initiatives geared to development. In addition, it is establishing a fund intended to foster the development of specialty products and implement an annual province-wide event to recognize rural vitality. The government is making available to local communities a tool that enables them to evaluate their level of vitality.

5.1. Rural laboratories to examine and disseminate the results

The rural pacts seek to explore numerous innovative activity sectors in rural areas in light of projects initiated by rural organizations or municipalities. In all cases, the scope of and spinoff from the projects is confined to the local level or to the RCM. The policy intends to innovate by proposing 25 sweeping development experiments in fields of activity that have potential for rural areas, which have not been studied or tested extensively until now. These projects are aimed at rural communities, RCMs or local organizations.

The government is setting aside an overall budget allocation of \$15 500 000 to carry out sweeping development experiments in the fields of activity mentioned earlier.

The experiments covered consist in pilot projects for periods of up to six years devoted to topics that warrant examination and offer promising potential for Québec rural communities. For example, the projects may focus on health, education, culture and heritage, the reception and integration of newcomers, alternate sources of energy, local economies and services, or natural resource development. Each laboratory will have an obligation to transmit to other rural areas in Québec its observations and results throughout the experiment according to an approach specified when the project starts up.

Proposed fields of experimentation

Health in rural areas: an examination of prevention methods and health service delivery in rural areas intended for all clientele.

Reception, settlement and integration of newcomers: approaches to population renewal from the standpoint of clientele such as young people, young families, workers, migrants, immigrants, and so on.

Innovative specialty and local agriculture: the development of potential and knowledge, the promotion of specialty products, and inventive marketing.

The school at the heart of the rural community: the school's central role in the community's socioeconomic and cultural development.

New forestry: an examination of the versatility of forests, the development of their full potential and, in particular, of non-wood forest products.

Culture and heritage at the heart of rural development: the development of cultural, heritage and historic traits in rural areas as an economic and social lever.

Rural areas as stakeholders in the energy sector: rural areas as a site for the development of new energy sources such as biomass, biofuel, green energy, and so on.

Integrated resource development in rural areas: appropriation and integrated approach to the development of all land, forest, landscape, wildlife and water resources and the natural and built heritage.

The family as the cornerstone of community life: an examination of the place that the family occupies in its various forms at the heart of the community, young people and the elderly, intergenerational ties, activities and infrastructure adapted to the needs of families, the promotion of living environments that facilitate family life, and so on.

The environment and sustainable development in rural areas: a local development model and strategy linked to respect for and the development of a territory's environmental characteristics and biological diversity.

Local economies: the search for development models centred on bonds of trust, local purchasing, short economic circuits, and on what the rural community can best control.

The new information and communications technologies (ICTs) and rural development: innovative use of these new rural development tools to deliver services, in respect of new economic, cultural and community activities, employment and settlement by newcomers.

New forms of local services: the examination of approaches to offer varied, quality public and private services in small communities spread over a vast territory.

Promising rural development models: revitalization of rural socioeconomic life through reliance on local partnerships, cooperation, mobilization, organization and a thorough knowledge of populations.

The entrepreneurial community and community entrepreneurship: in the absence of individual entrepreneurs, the community assumes this role to solve problems that arise and to satisfy needs.

An annual budget allocation on the order of \$100 000 for the duration of each laboratory will be attributed to the territories selected in the fields of experimentation proposed. The implementation of the laboratories implies an annual outlay of \$1 million in 2007-2008, \$2 million in 2008-2009 and, subsequently, \$2.5 million per year until 2014.

Each laboratory's budget may be increased by means of contributions from government departments and agencies, municipalities or local organizations, and by private-sector contributions. The funds earmarked for a laboratory will be paid pursuant to a protocol between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions and the agency responsible. All of the laboratory's financial or technical partners, e.g. the local municipality, the RCM, a cooperative, a non-profit organization, a sectoral government department, a research and development group, or the private sector, may also sign the agreement.

Not all of the laboratories will start up in the same year. An initial group of laboratories will be selected in the fall of 2007, a second group in the spring of 2008, and a third group in January 2009. During the first two years, the laboratories will focus, as a priority, on the themes proposed, while the laboratories in the last year may focus on other fields submitted by rural communities. The territories will be chosen based on a call for projects spread over three years. In the spring of 2007, complete documentation on the organization of this measure, the fields adopted and the methods of selection and operation will be made available to interested parties and will be distributed in each territory of application of the rural pact.

5.2. Experimentation and the transfer of initiatives geared to development

It is in the interests of Québec's rural areas to take greater advantage of potential in fields such as energy production, the integrated use of community resources, telecommunications, and knowledge exchanges between regions and at the international level. Moreover, certain promising economic sectors are already undergoing intensive examination in rural areas in certain Western nations.

The Fonds d'initiative pour l'avenir rural is intended to put into operation promising measures for rural areas upon which it is now impossible to act. The objective is to assemble human resources and knowledge to determine the most promising initiatives and communicate the results to rural communities as the initiatives progress.

To this end, task forces will be set up to examine, on behalf of rural communities, initiatives or activity sectors that can support future rural development. Each task force will fulfil a precise mandate and must conclude its deliberations with proposals, strategies and practical means aimed at the rural communities and other bodies concerned. The participants will be drawn from the private and public sectors (government departments and agencies) and the community and research sectors. They may, if need be, rely on outside studies and research during their mandate. The final outcome of their deliberations will be made public but also transmitted and explained to targeted clienteles such as the RCMs and the municipalities, rural development officers, organizations devoted to rural development, and the Québec government.

The cost of experimentation, the transfer of expertise and the functioning of the task forces will be covered by the Fonds d'initiative pour l'avenir rural. A budget of \$1 725 000 will be allocated to this fund in 2007-2008, which will be gradually reduced to \$950 000 in 2014, for a total over seven years of over \$8 600 000.

At the outset, eight task forces will be set up and others may also be established over the years. They will have a precise mandate and their composition will be announced in the spring of 2007.

5.2.1. Energy production in rural areas

Rising oil prices, growing, varied needs for energy sources and the repercussions on the environment of such sources means that the search for alternatives to the importing and consumption of oil and gas and other choices with respect to electricity generation for heating and domestic and industrial use of electricity is expanding in many countries.

In rural areas with open space in which to produce the raw materials required by alternate sources of energy, this marks a new field of activity that may grow in importance in the coming years. To accurately ascertain the potential offered by this emerging field of activity, the task force responsible for this sector will have to draw up a profile of the potential for the production of new energy sources in rural areas and propose a realistic strategy to implement possible solutions.

Objectives of the task force on energy

- Acknowledge and develop the advantages and potential of rural areas in the realm of the production of alternate sources of energy.
- Specify the best niches to develop.
- Ensure economic spinoff and job creation and the establishment of new enterprises and technologies near the sources of supply of raw materials.
- Propose practical means to ensure that stakeholders in rural areas are the main beneficiaries of the development of this new economic sector.
- Assess the environmental impact of the technologies studied.

The task force may take into account:

- biomass: in forests and in plants, with cutting residues and recycling (cities, Hydro-Québec), with agricultural residues (manure, straw), or voluntarily produced biomass (hybrid poplars or willows, graminaceous plants, switch grass), and so on;
- production for biofuel and biodiesel, i.e. oleaginous plants and biomass processing;
- processing technologies for each of the products, i.e. forest and agricultural biomass, waste and fresh oil;
- the production of heat, hot water, steam and electricity: existing equipment (boiler rooms, dual energy, and so on);
- the use of biofuels for farm and road vehicles, and industrial, commercial and residential heating.

5.2.2. Multifunctionality in rural areas

The socioeconomic development of rural areas hinges on reliance on the full potential stemming from the territory's resources, local culture and the method of community organization. It is advisable to alter more conventional development approaches and turn to a combination of each area's advantages. In this way, it will be possible to help communities build rurality based on their traits by focusing on a new way of using resources, which explains the need for new products, enterprises and activities and a new range of jobs. This approach directly affects the dynamic occupation of the territory and promotes integrated resource development by establishing bridges between activity sectors and methods of developing a territory's resources.

The task force will examine new activities and the ties to be promoted between activity sectors such as natural resources, farm and agri-food products, agriculture centred on specialty products, local agriculture, new forestry, non-wood forest products, wildlife activities, energy production, green chemistry,⁸ protection of the countryside, farm tourism and new forms of tourism, the links between the environment and development, the complementarity between rural and urban areas, recreational facilities and activities, heritage and culture, and so on. The task force will take into account the deliberations of the Commission sur l'avenir de l'agriculture et de l'agro-alimentaire québécois.

⁸ Green chemistry refers to the design of non-noxious chemical products by means of renewable raw materials of plant origin that allows for substitution methods in respect of existing processes.

5.2.3. A support platform

An examination of the results of the policy and other indicators clearly reveals that there are striking discrepancies between RCMs in the mastery of their development process. The situation stems in part from a lack of knowledge, expertise, technical resources and support in certain rural areas, in particular from the government in the region. These RCMs require tailor-made support to bolster their ability to act and initiate a development process at the same pace as other RCMs.

The task force responsible for this sector must assess the possibility of establishing a support structure in respect of these rural communities by relying on the skills of the public service. In this way, the communities can contribute in conjunction with specific operations to support areas that require specialized assistance that is unavailable locally or even in the region. This approach will take into account the needs of rural communities but also reflect the possibility of transferring resources from the government.

5.2.4. Marketing of specialty products through Québec emporiums

Rural Québec is noteworthy for the production of a wide range of specialty products in the agri-food, agro-forestry, arts and crafts and cultural sectors. Such products are often associated with country life and the specific heritage of a community, a territory's geographic, climatic or geological traits, or simply with the artists' know-how and ingenuity. All of these products reflect an original facet of Québec rurality. Their survival depends largely on their presence on markets and the ability of their creators or producers to earn a living from them.

Moreover, access to the local, regional or domestic market is often a factor that hampers the success and expansion of such production. To remedy this situation, certain countries such as the United States have established sales showcases for local and regional products, like emporiums, outlets that specialize in the sale of products from specific territories.

The objective of the task force responsible for this sector will be to foster the development and consolidation of this type of production by examining and proposing models that can ensure the marketing of rural specialty products. Some examples are private, cooperative or social economy establishments that are not seeking to compete with existing commercial ventures but to complement them. The formulas proposed will be discussed with producers to ensure that the broadest possible range of products is offered.

5.2.5. Connection to telecommunications networks

At the conclusion of the Villages branchés program,⁹ all schools and a majority of municipalities will be connected in 2007 to high bandwidth telecommunications networks. However, residents and businesses in rural communities will not be able to obtain individual connections because the infrastructure is often confined to the centre of the village (the school and town hall) and does not serve the entire territory of the municipality. A survey conducted in 2005 by Statistics Canada reveals that 49% of Québec households subscribe to a high-speed Internet access service, i.e. 76% of all Web surfers. A similar situation prevails with regard to cellular telephony. Numerous rural areas are still excluded from these basic services, which limits links between their residents and the outside world and largely hampers development prospects.

Increasingly, the public regards high-speed Internet access and cellular telephony as being as basic as electricity service. For many residents, these services are a necessary tool to carry out their economic, social or cultural activities. Consequently, in the *National Policy on Rurality*, it is essential to specify that these services must, in the medium term, become accessible to everyone.

The objective of this task force is to find the means to stimulate service availability in rural territories by:

- taking stock of the extent of high-speed Internet and cellular telephony services in the rural territory overall;
- exploring the best means of ensuring that all rural territories have access within seven years to high-speed Internet service;
- proposing means to develop existing telecommunications infrastructure in the territory both in the private sector and in the municipalities and the education system, with the participation of local communities and support from the Québec government.

5.2.6. International meetings and exchanges on rurality

Many foreign countries have responded very favourably to the rural development model that Québec has implemented. The bottom-to-top approach, the mobilization of residents, leadership displayed by elected representatives, the definition of intervention guidelines, local management of budget allocations, the exploration of new fields of activity, and ongoing government support mean that Québec expertise is acknowledged and sought after.

The growing influence of the *National Policy on Rurality* has led to several international exchanges in recent years, the most recent one being Québec's participation in an OECD seminar devoted to rural policy held in Scotland in the fall of 2006. At that time, offers to exchange information, network interveners and organize formal meetings to advance the cause of rural areas were discussed.

⁹ Launched officially by the Québec government on September 18, 2002, the Villages branchés program is intended to support school boards, local municipalities, regional county municipalities and private educational institutions throughout Québec that wish to establish a high bandwidth telecommunications network between buildings in a region.

A task force will focus in this regard on the prospects for Québec rural areas to make known their expertise and to take advantage of outside expertise. An initial project is being planned to hold in Québec City in September 2008, in conjunction with the city's 400th anniversary, an international meeting devoted to rurality, under the theme "Renewed rurality adapted to a globalized world." The symposium would assemble representatives from 30 OECD countries.

5.2.7. The maintenance and viability of rural schools

The government has devoted considerable effort to find, in collaboration with the school boards and community representatives, appropriate solutions to keep schools open and offer quality services to students throughout Québec. Over the past 30 years, measures have been adopted to counteract the adverse effect of declining student populations. Furthermore, under the program to maintain village schools,¹⁰ the school boards are now compelled to organize a public consultation when they plan to close a school or revise their policy governing the maintenance or closing of schools. This approach has also been accompanied by measures focusing on the adaptation and training of teaching staff in order to take into account varied needs or aimed at the use of the information and communications technologies (ICTs) for distance education and school twinning.

The maintenance and vitality of rural schools continues to arouse complex debate concerning the nature of the mission fulfilled by public education, the quality of schooling offered, and equal educational opportunities throughout the territory. Additional effort is required to enhance the initiatives under way in order to ensure the maintenance and vitality of rural elementary and secondary schools. At the same time, we must guarantee the quality of services that students receive by offering a learning environment that is attractive to and stimulating for teachers, and better recognize the school's place in the community.

During the first year, the task force will devote itself to taking stock of the traits of teachers working in small rural schools and the problems that school boards encounter to attract, support and retain staff in these schools. To this end, the school boards, universities and municipal, economic and community partners will work together.

¹⁰ <http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca>

Mandate of the task force on the maintenance and viability of rural schools

The task force will examine the following questions:

- initial teacher training in light of teaching in small rural schools, including the availability and nature of training sessions;
- challenges arising from difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers in small rural or remote schools and non-traditional forms of school organization;
- the contribution made by communities to the challenge of maintaining rural schools, the arrival of new families and the enhancement of the living environment. On this point, the development and promotion of the community school is an integral component of the education system strategy in rural areas. The development of the community school must make it possible to maximize the use of resources and indeed to foster the integration of services. It is, in particular, in this spirit that the ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport will work with the ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine to implement joint solutions to problems of access to day care services for school-age and preschool children;
- various incentives such as fiscal measures, the sponsorship of young people, the twinning of schools, and so on.

5.2.8. Housing, a tool for local development

In certain rural areas that have worthwhile potential for new developmental projects or new enterprises, adequate housing or the means to facilitate access to it may be lacking, especially for young families. The size and composition of the housing stock, the quality of housing and its accessibility are, among other things, essential factors in attracting new families to these communities or in encouraging current residents to remain.

Moreover, it would be worthwhile to elaborate a comprehensive approach that integrates the question of housing in rural areas. For example, objectives intended to foster a community's social and commercial vitality or to ensure its school's survival could go hand in hand with objectives aimed at facilitating the arrival of new families, including young families, or satisfying the needs of elderly people who wish to remain in the community but in dwellings better adapted to their needs. Other objectives could be considered in rural areas with extensive recreational activities or active real estate markets.

The objective of this task force is to explore the possibility of incorporating the government's rural housing initiatives into a comprehensive perspective to satisfy the needs of rural residents or individuals wishing to settle in rural areas. To do so, the task force would take stock of the situation and determine strategies or means to be tested or put forward in light of existing programs or programs that must be adapted accordingly.

5.3. Financial assistance to stimulate the development of specialty products

The future of Québec's rural areas hinges, among other things, on their ability to generate new activities in their territories. To the end, the government intends to adopt for the entire duration of the *National Policy on Rurality* a measure to provide financial support for the creation of original products in rural areas. The measure is designed to support the creation of new activities that contribute to the dynamic occupation of the territory and economic diversification in rural communities.

The total budget allocation devoted to this measure is \$12 million. The annual budget will increase from \$1 125 000 in 2007, to \$1 500 000 in 2008 and \$1 875 000 per year for the last five years of the policy.

Up to \$25 000 per project may be granted in the form of a subsidy. The projects covered are linked to the agri-food, non-wood and wood forest products, culture and heritage, and craft products sectors. This measure, which will apply starting in the spring of 2007, relies essentially on the know-how and ability to innovate of promoters and rural craftspeople. It is intended to stimulate the creation of over 480 products, for an average of 32 products per region.

5.4. Recognition through the launching of the Grands Prix de la ruralité of rural vitality

The *National Policy on Rurality* demands a considerable investment of time and effort by many individuals concerned with the development of their communities. It is advisable to emphasize the commitment of such individuals and the original initiatives that they propose. The government intends to organize, in collaboration with the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité, a major annual event, the Grands Prix de la ruralité, to pay tribute to the leaders of rural development and highlight the most innovative achievements. The event is intended essentially to:

- demonstrate the sense of innovation and the strategic role played by rural communities in contemporary Québec;
- recognize and encourage key interveners in rural development, in particular the municipalities, the RCMs, local development centres (CLDs), rural development officers, and local leaders;
- highlight the most innovative achievements likely to inspire stakeholders in rural development and strengthen the ties between them;
- broaden the mobilization of rural communities and reaffirm the Québec government's and its partners' commitment to strive to ensure the survival and prosperity of rural communities.

The Grands Prix de la ruralité will thus reveal individuals or organizations and initiatives and innovations stemming from the implementation of rural pacts and other facets of the policy on rurality.

5.5. A monitoring indicator of the vitality of rural communities

The government will make available to the RCMs and local communities a flexible, simple tool that enables them to assess their level of vitality. This tool will be elaborated in collaboration with the partners from the rural communities.

It should be noted that this approach is not intended to compare the territories or to pass judgment on the level of development achieved. It pursues two basic objectives. First, it seeks to allow the communities to objectively examine the strengths, initiatives and organizations involved in the management of local development and the organization of community life. Second, it is intended to enable each territory to evaluate its progress over the years, to ascertain progress and what remains to be done to attain the objectives set. The communities will then be in a position to make the desired changes and rethink, if need be, the approach to be followed to achieve their ends.



6

**Mobilization
and Commitment of the Partners**

The implementation of the policy relies essentially on shared responsibility sealed by a contract between local elected representatives and the Québec government. It also requires mobilization and a concrete commitment both from local and regional organizations and institutions and individuals. Moreover, it requires the government to play a strategic role in supporting rural communities in the pursuit of the objectives set out in the *National Policy on Rurality*.

6.1. The rural partnership agreement, a concrete commitment

To ensure the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*, the government has concluded a formal partnership agreement with the key stakeholders in Québec's rural development, i.e. Solidarité rurale du Québec (SRQ), the Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM), the Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) and the Association des centres locaux de développement du Québec (ACLDQ). The agreement, which introduces and supports the policy, establishes and formalizes the Québec government's and each partner's obligations.

Furthermore, the policy confirms that the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité is the government's leading ally in the pursuit of the policy directions and objectives established jointly, and that Solidarité rurale du Québec is its advisor on rural development.

6.1.1. The Comité des partenaires de la ruralité

The Comité des partenaires de la ruralité is a flexible coordinating body that participated in the elaboration of and follow-up to the first *National Policy on Rurality*. It will play a similar role in respect of the new policy. The committee is made up of four members, three of them the presidents of Solidarité rurale du Québec, the Fédération des municipalités du Québec and the Association des CLD du Québec, and the fourth member is the Vice-President of the Union des municipalités du Québec. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions chairs the committee.

The Comité des partenaires will indicate the expectations of rural communities from the standpoint of the implementation of the policy, clarify certain questions and suggest, if need be, the adjustments needed to satisfy these expectations. The committee will also have a key role to play in the presentation of the new policy to rural communities so that the latter can adopt it.

The committee will periodically organize a day-long session devoted to rurality that will focus on the advancement of the *National Policy on Rurality* and bring together the representatives of the main province-wide organizations affected by its implementation, and researchers interested in this particular field.

The province-wide organizations interested in the policy's implementation, i.e. the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec, the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, the Regroupement des sociétés d'aménagement forestier du Québec, the Conseil de la coopération et de la mutualité du Québec, the Mouvement Desjardins, the Chantier de l'économie sociale, the Fédération des

chambres de commerce du Québec and community agencies devoted to culture, recreation, the environment, and immigration, and researchers, would be invited to attend the event.

Mandate of the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité

- Advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions on the implementation of the policy.
- Ensure synergy in respect of the partners' initiatives.
- Facilitate the dissemination of information among interveners.
- Promote rurality.
- Offer support to heighten awareness of rural communities through each partner's contribution in the realm of research conducted by the partners' organizations, by facilitating the networking of interveners.
- Advise the Minister on priorities in respect of research and initiatives stemming from funding under the programs and measures in the policy.
- Participate in the establishment of and follow-up to the task forces and guide them in the exploration of fields likely to foster rural development.
- Evaluate the implementation of the policy (each partner will do so in light of its field of expertise).
- Contribute to the adaptation of policies, programs and measures aimed at rural areas.

6.1.2. Solidarité rurale du Québec, a renewed advisory body

Solidarité rurale du Québec is a coalition of provincial agencies and associate corporate and individual members from all over Québec. Its mission is to promote the revitalization and development of rural areas and the villages and communities found there in order to reverse the trend toward decline and disintegration in rural Québec. Solidarité rurale du Québec has served since 1997 as an advisory body to the Québec government in the realm of rurality.

The agency recently submitted a substantial opinion concerning the renewal of the *National Policy on Rurality*.¹¹ Through this opinion, preceded by an extensive consultation throughout Québec, Solidarité rurale du Québec reveals the need to renew the policy and puts forward a series of recommendations intended to foster the sustainable occupation of rural territories.

The government recognizes the importance of the role that Solidarité rurale du Québec is playing in the implementation of the policy and intends to renew its mandate as an advisory body in the realm of rural development by allocating to it \$5 577 000 in operational funding over seven years.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*

Mandates of Solidarité rurale du Québec

- Promote rurality throughout Québec by making known the vitality, achievements, traits and importance of rurality for Québec society.
- Supply on request or on its own initiative to the government advice on questions pertaining to rural development, conduct the necessary consultations and propose to the government innovative solutions and methods of intervention.
- Advise and support rural communities on topics related to their problems, encourage the pooling of experience, and organize discussion forums on rurality-related themes.
- Train rural development officers and offer them support and expertise to enable them to perform their duties.
- Make available to interveners in rural areas through the Internet or other means an information, forecasting and reference centre on rurality in Québec and abroad.
- Participate in the deliberations of the comité des partenaires de la ruralité in order to support the government in the implementation of the national policy on rurality.

6.2. Government support

The government is aware of the importance of the role it plays in rural development on two levels, first through the promotion of policies, programs, measures and budgets to support and encourage activity sectors and offer services to rural residents. It also supports the approaches adopted by rural communities by offering them technical and, occasionally, financial support during the reflection and direct action stages in the field, and by making available to them the government's resources and expertise. For this reason, the government intends to offer support to rural communities throughout the implementation of the policy.

6.2.1. Measures to support reflection and action

The government intends to make available to rural communities relevant documentation on approaches, models, strategies, management methods and projects supported under the first generation of rural pacts and other means in the first policy. These documents will be disseminated in all rural communities and among the partners involved in the rural pacts, i.e. elected representatives, municipal organizations, the education system, rural development officers, CLDs, local development agencies, volunteers, and so on. This information will also be widely disseminated in government departments and agencies.

The government will maintain and enhance the existing rural information kit that assembles all of the measures, programs and forms of technical and financial support aimed at rural communities and initiatives and projects. The fact sheets in the information kit will be accessible on the Internet and will be updated periodically.

A communications plan devoted to the contents of the new policy will be implemented so that all of the RCMs and rural communities affected receive and transmit this information. In this way, the government is seeking to foster active participation by elected representatives, volunteers and individuals in the development of their communities.

The Comité des partenaires de la ruralité will ascertain the possibility of establishing on the Internet a user-friendly information service devoted to what rural communities have to offer, especially from the standpoint of employment, housing, technical and financial assistance programs, and business opportunities. Provision will be made in the rural pacts, in collaboration with the Comité des partenaires de la ruralité, to ensure that opportunities for meetings and exchanges arise throughout the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*, so that interveners can discuss their experience and benefit from it.

6.2.2. Specific commitments by government departments and agencies

Government departments and agencies have made concrete commitments to support rural communities in the pursuit of the objectives set out in the policy. The commitments include a series of targeted measures and are integrated in various forms into the mandates of the rural laboratories and the task forces assigned to experiment with promising development initiatives.

Department or agency	2007 task forces	Laboratories	Targeted measures
La Financière agricole du Québec			Support and promote the development of the agricultural and agri-food sector in the regions, in particular through its farm and forestry financing operations, the venture capital investments made by its subsidiary, Capital Financière agricole inc., and young farmers Build on La Financière agricole du Québec's expertise in the development of emerging agro-outputs and value-added agri-food products
Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation	Emporiums Energy production in rural areas Rural multifunctionality Support platform	Innovative and local agriculture Integrated resource development in rural areas	Support for agri-food processing: decision-making support section and support for the development of regional and niche products section Support for small-scale production of alcoholic beverages Support for the development of reserved appellations Foster the establishment of greater numbers of farmers and the sustainability of their operations by building on the ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation's expertise
Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport	Maintenance and viability of rural schools Support platform	The school at the heart of the community	Maintenance of the last village school Support for the Remote Networked Schools project and the Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN) Web portal for English-language schools, 11% of which are located in rural areas Pursuit of measures to limit the effects of declining student populations Facilitate access to worker training and qualification: Plan de rapprochement en formation professionnelle et technique Completion of the Villages branchés du Québec project Support for recreational and sports facilities
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale			Support the development of rural communities through the initiatives of the network of local employment centres, especially in respect of manpower needs Take into account rural conditions in agreements covering the territorial approach to combating poverty and social exclusion
Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles	Support platform	Reception and settlement of newcomers	Pursue the regional immigration action plans, agreements with the CRÉ, the municipalities and, possibly, the RCMs Pursue the regional integration program Advise the promoters of immigration projects
Ministère de la Culture et des Communications	Emporiums Rural multifunctionality Support platform	Culture and heritage Integrated resource development in rural areas	Fonds du patrimoine culturel québécois Facilitate the elaboration of cultural policies and their implementation by the RCMs and the municipalities Promote the signing by the RCMs and the municipalities of cultural development partnership agreements Support for the Villes et Villages d'art et du patrimoine network

Department or agency	2007 task forces	Laboratories	Targeted measures
Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine	Maintenance and viability of rural schools Support platform	The family, the cornerstone of community life	Elaborate innovative solutions that simplify the lives of women farmers based on an experimental project concerning the specific needs to reconcile work and family life of families working in the agricultural and bio-food sectors Explore ways to support early childhood centres and coordinating offices in communities affected by business closures, devitalization or negative net migration
Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux	Support platform	Health in rural areas Local services	Support the organization of services and measures aimed at farm families, especially those pertaining to psychological stress Pursue support for the development of rural communities through community action measures and the initiatives of the Réseau québécois des Villes et villages en santé
Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions	All	All	Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (MRIF) Measure to transfer federal gasoline tax revenues Support for specialty products
Ministère des Finances			Maintain the tax credit for recent graduates working in resource regions
Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune	Energy production in rural areas Rural multifunctionality Support platform	New forestry Energy production in rural areas Integrated resource development in rural areas	Foster the production of renewable energy and small-scale electric power generation (less than 1 MW) Allow the RCMs to implement wind power development projects Prolong the Programme de mise en valeur des ressources du milieu forestier – Volet II Prolong the Programme de création d'emplois en forêt Prolong the Programme d'aide à la mise en valeur des forêts privées Pursue the implementation of the forest-blueberry program Ascertain the possibility of elaborating programs to allow for the development of other non-wood forest products (NWFP)
Ministère des Services gouvernementaux	Last kilometre Support platform	New information and communications technologies and rural development	Facilitate the development of expertise in each region to broaden the availability of Internet services Introduction of Services Québec in rural areas

Department or agency	2007 task forces	Laboratories	Targeted measures
Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs	Energy production in rural areas Rural multifunctionality Support platform	Integrated resource development in rural areas The environment and sustainable development	
Ministère du Développement économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation	Support platform	Local services Entrepreneurial community	Continued support for local development centres (CLD) Local investment fund (general section and section devoted to upcoming entrepreneurs) Support for social economy enterprises: partnership with the Réseau d'investissement social du Québec and the Réseau québécois de crédit communautaire Support for the development of cooperatives: partnership with the Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité
Ministère du Tourisme	Emporiums Rural multifunctionality Support platform	Integrated resource development in rural areas	Financial assistance for developmental tourism initiatives in the regions Technical support for the development of promising tourism products in rural areas
Ministère des Transports du Québec	Rural multifunctionality Support platform	Integrated resource development in rural areas The environment and sustainable development	Assistance program for public transportation Implementation of the villages-relais network
Secrétariat à la jeunesse	Support platform	Entrepreneurial community	In conjunction with the <i>Stratégie d'action jeunesse 2006-2009</i> : Continue to support Place aux jeunes du Québec \$30 million in additional funding for regional youth investment funds to further support regional and local projects that satisfy the needs of young people Continued financial support for regional youth forums Pursuit of measures in the Défi de l'entrepreneuriat jeunesse and \$17 million in additional funding
Société d'habitation du Québec	Housing, a tool for development Support platform	Reception, settlement and integration of newcomers	RénoVillage Rénovation Québec AccèsLogis Québec Logement abordable Québec

Appendix 1 describes in detail these commitments.

6.2.3. The role played by the ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions

The ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions (MAMR) will oversee the technical preparation of all of the measures and commitments proposed under the *National Policy on Rurality*. It will also pinpoint the means to support rural development initiatives.

More specifically, the Direction du développement rural in the department will ensure follow-up to and the implementation of the policy, the promotion of its contents, the adoption of various measures, the dissemination of information, and training pertaining to facets of the policy. This branch will also be responsible for relations with the federal government and the other provinces and territories. It will focus on maintaining knowledge of Québec's rural areas both in Canada and abroad. Moreover, the branch will evaluate the policy and draft documents pertaining to accountability for submission to the Québec National Assembly.

The regional offices of MAMR will play an active role in offering technical support to rural communities, especially with regard to support for the rural pacts, the work of rural development officers, and the coordination of government support for rural areas. In particular, they will be responsible for the organization of a regional rural development officers' issue table, the establishment of a rural committee of the conférence administrative régionale (CAR), follow-up in respect of the rural pacts, and the management of the measure to create specialty products. They will have a mandate, with the conférences administratives régionales, to elaborate a map of government service delivery in their territory. They will serve as a gateway for applications for technical and professional assistance from the rural communities that approach the government.



7

Anticipated Results

The *National Policy on Rurality* is intended to ensure rural development and the dynamic occupation of the territory. Throughout the follow-up process in respect of the policy, the government undertakes to present each year a report of the results obtained and to provide a comprehensive assessment of the results at the conclusion of the policy. To this end, it will produce by the fall of 2007 indicators that make it possible to measure the policy's effectiveness. The Comité des partenaires de la ruralité will discuss the anticipated results and the indicators.

The government must set targets covering the qualitative and quantitative results to be attained.

7.1. Qualitative results

From a qualitative standpoint, the anticipated results will be evaluated in light of:

- the mobilization of individuals;
- projects and models pertaining to the reception, settlement and integration of newcomers;
- the range of maintained, adapted or new local services;
- the maintenance and enhancement of the living environment, the quality of life and the feeling of belonging;
- community commitment;
- rural innovation initiatives;
- models and types of rural strategies implemented in rural areas;
- research and knowledge acquired concerning rurality in Québec;
- effective community management of development.

7.2. Quantitative results

Moreover, the results can be quantified with respect to the following parameters:

- the number of volunteers involved in development organizations;
- the number of municipalities that have a development strategy and structure;
- the number of projects supported by the rural pacts in various activity sectors;
- changes in migration movements in rural municipalities;
- jobs and investments generated, new products and services inventoried;
- specialty products;
- coverage of the territory by high-speed Internet service (number of subscribers and number of municipalities covered).

CONCLUSION

A project for Québec as a whole

The *National Policy on Rurality* will make it possible to facilitate and better support the development of rural communities and territories throughout Québec. It will also contribute to the betterment of Quebecers and ensure the future of upcoming generations.

By 2014, the measures put forward by the policy should make it possible to significantly improve the population report by harmoniously integrating newcomers into rural areas. These initiatives should enable rural areas to take control of their territory and its resources by relying both on individual and collective initiatives to develop their territory's extensive potential.

Rural communities will thus be able to guarantee their survival by offering to residents and newcomers attractive living environments that provide an array of activities and services adapted to the needs and size of the communities. Moreover, rural communities will adopt the measures necessary to maintain a fair balance between the enhancement of the quality of life, economic development and environmental protection from the perspective of the harmonious, sustainable development of the territory.

Through the new *National Policy on Rurality*, the government is proposing to rural residents the means of action that will benefit Québec society as a whole and contribute significantly, through their realization, to the sustainable development of Québec.



APPENDIX 1: Commitments by government departments and agencies

The commitment by government departments and agencies is essential to offer a range of support measures to communities that wish to improve their lot by taking advantage of their potential. This commitment is also important from the standpoint of the adaptation of government initiatives to rural conditions, the success of the new rural development laboratories and in the field, and to support and ensure the success of initiatives launched under the rural pacts. The specific measures that the government will introduce for this purpose are indicated below.

■ **La Financière agricole du Québec**

- Support and promote, from the perspective of sustainable development, the development of the agriculture and agri-food sector in the regions, especially through its insurance and farm income stabilization measures, its farm and forestry financing operations, its investments in venture capital and financial support for young farmers.
- Build on La Financière agricole du Québec's expertise in the development of emerging agro-outputs and value-added agri-food products.

■ **Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation**

- Pursue food processing support measures aimed, in particular, at the development of small food businesses and the implementation of community services to facilitate access for regional and niche products to distribution networks. These measures also specifically encourage the consolidation of existing small-scale producers of alcoholic beverages and the development of their full potential, and the emergence of reserved appellations for food products with a potential for such designation.
- Foster the establishment of as many qualified young farmers as possible and the their survival by building on the department's expertise in a comprehensive approach that includes the enhancement of the living environment, training, general support, support in gaining access to the occupation, and the enhancement of knowledge of the lives of young farmers and their establishment on farms.

■ **Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport**

- Pursue the application of financial measures and public consultation procedures to maintain the last village school (annual budget of \$11 million).
- Maintain technical and financial support for the Remote Networked Schools project between 2006 and 2008 and the Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN) project for schools in the English-speaking community, 11% of which are located in rural areas.

- Maintain measures aimed at limiting the reduction in resources stemming from declining student populations, i.e. educational services offered by small school boards through the hiring of teachers, better funding of school management and other educational expenses, the rule that offsets any drop in school population exceeding 1%, the introduction of budget allocations protected from declining population in respect of educational resources earmarked for students with adjustment or learning difficulties.
- Pursue the implementation launched in June 2006 of the Plan de rapprochement en matière de formation professionnelle et technique to foster the maintenance of access to training in all regions through enhanced regional collaboration and joint initiatives. This plan is intended to meet the challenges of accessibility and worker qualification against a backdrop of population decline and significant demand for specialized workers. It is accompanied by a budget allocation of \$26 million over three years and makes provision for support for regional collaboration and partnership projects, regional prior learning and skills recognition, experimentation under the Cégeps en réseau project, and strengthening of the partnership between training institutions and the workplace.
- Broaden high-speed Internet access between school and municipal buildings in all regions of Québec by finalizing the projects planned under the Villages branchés du Québec program.
- Continue to apply the Programme de soutien aux installations récréatives et sportives aimed at upgrading to comply with standards, renovation and development of infrastructure throughout Québec, by means of the Fonds pour le développement du sport et de l'activité physique. Some \$24 million per year has been earmarked for this program until 2010.

■ **Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale**

- Pursue the initiatives of the local employment centres aimed at supporting the development of rural communities and, in particular, in satisfying manpower needs and taking into account rural conditions in agreements covering the territorial approach in combating poverty and social exclusion.

■ **Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles**

- Pursue the elaboration of regional action plans and the conclusion or renewal of immigration regionalization agreements with the regional conferences of elected representatives, the municipalities and, possibly, the RCMs, to encourage long-term settlement by immigrants in the regions. The following objectives, in particular, have been set, to be achieved through a flexible partnership centred on decision-making in the regions: the promotion of the regions among immigrants, attraction of the immigrant clientele, support for access to the labour market and development of the employability of immigrants, and intercultural rapprochement.

- Maintain the regional integration program that seeks to increase the number of immigrants who settle and remain in regions outside the Greater Montréal area through the enhancement of reception, settlement and integration services. The regional integration programs also promote in the regions the economic, social and cultural contribution made by immigrants. This program is contributing to the funding of immigration regionalization agreements and is also open to community agencies that wish to carry out regionalization projects.
- Build on the department's expertise to advise the promoters of projects to attract immigrants to rural areas to ensure that the projects take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the host area from the standpoint of employment, the availability of housing, local services, francization, transportation, openness to cultural diversity, and so on.

■ **Ministère de la Culture et des Communications**

- Offer broader support for projects aimed at preserving, developing and promoting our collective heritage through the Fonds du patrimoine culturel québécois, which makes it possible, in collaboration with community interveners, to maintain or enhance the state of preservation of Québec's cultural heritage, in particular by instilling in the public a culture of conservation, integrating public art into the question of conservation, encouraging municipalities to protect their heritage, and informing them about the best conservation and restoration practices.
- Foster reliance on the department's expertise with respect to the elaboration by the municipalities and the RCMs of cultural policies and the signing of cultural development partnership agreements, which, among other things, will enable the department to adapt its initiatives to conditions in rural areas.
- Continue to support the Villes et Villages d'art et de patrimoine initiative, which enables communities to hire cultural development officers and thus foster local or regional cultural development measures.

■ **Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine**

- Elaborate innovative solutions that simplify the lives of women farmers through an experimental project concerning specific needs stemming from the reconciliation of work and family life for families in the agricultural and bio-food sector.
- Examine ways to support early childhood centres (CPE) and coordinating offices in rural or devitalized communities to ensure that the communities affected, especially by the closing of forest-dependent businesses, devitalization or declining population, continue to obtain adequate child care services.

■ **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux**

- Support the organization of services and measures offered to farm families by the health and social services network and by community agencies, especially with respect to psychological distress.
- Continue to support the development of rural communities from the standpoint of the enhancement of living conditions through community action measures and the initiatives of the Réseau québécois de villes et villages en santé (RQVVS).

■ **Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions**

- Ensure the implementation of the *National Policy on Rurality*.
- Implement the fiscal and financial partnership agreement for rural municipalities and RCMs.
- Pursue efforts to help rural municipalities develop or enhance drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and infrastructure that supports the local and regional economy, through government financial assistance from the Québec and federal governments (Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund), and the transfer of a portion of revenue from the federal gasoline tax.

■ **Ministère des Finances**

- Maintain the tax credit for recent graduates working in remote resource regions. This tax credit is intended to combat the exodus of young people from the resource regions and to encourage recent graduates to settle in these regions.

■ **Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune**

- Allow the RCMs and aboriginal nations, in partnership with the private sector, to launch wind power development projects that maximize local and regional spinoff, bearing in mind the economic, social and environmental concerns of the interested communities. A call for tenders will be announced shortly for two separate blocks of 250 MW and the projects must not exceed 25 MW.
- Foster small-scale electricity generation (less than 1 MW) to enable SMEs and cooperatives to carry out such projects. Hydro-Québec will elaborate a program to buy the output of small producers and will submit it to the Régie de l'énergie by late 2007.
- Encourage innovation in the energy sector and facilitate the emergence of private-sector initiatives in the promotion of new energy technologies with respect to decentralized electricity generation, especially autogeneration and small-scale generation. In this perspective, the government will allow customers benefiting from certain rates to supply Hydro-Québec with their surplus electricity in their capacity as autogenerators and thus reduce their electricity bill. The eligible renewable energy sources are hydroelectric, wind, photovoltaic, biogas, forest biomass residue and geothermal power.
- Pursue support for the development of forest resources and job creation in the regions by extending the Programme de mise en valeur des ressources du milieu forestier – Volet II, the Programme de création d'emplois en forêt and the Programme d'aide à la mise en valeur des forêts privées, in order to support local or regional projects in rural areas.

- Facilitate the development of non-wood forest products (NWFP) by pursuing the implementation of the Programme d'attribution des terres du domaine de l'État sous aménagement forestier for the purpose of establishing blueberry fields (forest-blueberry program) and, on the strength of experience acquired through this program, ascertain the possibility of elaborating programs that make it possible to develop other NWFPs. This evaluation will be carried out in collaboration with the future Commissions régionales sur les ressources naturelles et le terroir, which can determine for their region the development potential of such products and the measures likely to contribute to their development.

■ **Ministère des Services gouvernementaux**

- Build on the department's skills to facilitate the development of expertise in each region of Québec to support local communities and agencies in order to broaden the availability of high-speed Internet service and its use, in particular through the development of infrastructure built under the Villages branchés du Québec program.
- Ensure that Services Québec reaches rural areas and promote the department's services among residents through all of the means of communication available, i.e. the Internet, customer relations centres, services outlets, interactive terminals, and so on.

■ **Ministère du Développement économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation**

- Pursue support for the initiatives of CLDs, through the RCMs, so that they promote local economic development and job creation and the renewal and diversification of the entrepreneurial pool in rural regions and communities.
- Support local entrepreneurship and foster the development of businesses including social economy enterprises and cooperatives by maintaining the local investment funds (FLI) and the section of the FLI devoted to upcoming entrepreneurs that applies solely to rural territories.
- Continue to support the Réseau québécois de crédit communautaire to develop entrepreneurship through microcredit.
- Facilitate the emergence of social economy enterprises by the Réseau d'investissement social du Québec.
- Continue to support the development of cooperatives in the regions of Québec by supporting the Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité by means of a partnership agreement. This agreement is aimed at encouraging the emergence of new cooperatives, in particular to create or maintain local services in rural areas (food, gasoline, restaurants, and so on), satisfy the growing need for personal services stemming from the ageing of the population (homecare services, housing for the elderly, medical clinics, and so on), and respond to certain problems experienced by upcoming businesses.

■ **Ministère du Tourisme**

- Support tourism development in rural areas, especially through the Aide financière aux activités structurantes en région program.
- Offer, in collaboration with the associations touristiques régionales (ATR), technical support and expertise to develop promising tourism products in rural areas, in particular farm tourism, hunting and fishing, bicycle touring, ecotourism and adventure tourism, festivals and events, cultural tourism, nautical tourism and health tourism.

■ **Ministère des Transports du Québec**

- Implement in early 2007 the *Politique québécoise du transport collectif*, which contains measures concerning less populous regions aimed at proposing alternate solutions to the automobile. Municipalities with populations under 20 000 will be eligible for public transportation assistance. Moreover, the assistance paid to regional county municipalities will be increased, financial assistance will be introduced to foster the maintenance and establishment of inter-regional bus transportation services and for the conclusion of agreements with the regional conferences of elected representatives to test in the region projects devoted to the optimization and integration of public transportation services.
- Establish a network of villages-relais to offer road users safe stopping points at regular intervals and an array of services and quality reception services. This measure also fosters an integrated development approach with regard to local activities and facilities in the case of an axial highway, with a view to enhancing the living environment. A subsidy of up to \$40 000 is granted to any municipality that has applied to be designated as a village-relais for the elaboration of its application.

■ **Secrétariat à la jeunesse**

Under the *Stratégie d'action jeunesse 2006-2009*:

- Continue to support Place aux jeunes, which initiates local projects to encourage young graduates to return to and remain in the regions. Some \$7.3 million will be granted to this organization over the next three years to extend the network of migration officers in the 70 RCMs that are most affected by and concerned with the exodus of young people or that are experiencing negative net migration.
- Offer an additional \$30 million in funding to the regional youth investment funds to finance greater numbers of local and regional projects to satisfy the development needs and concerns of young people in all regions of Québec. These projects focus, among other things, on citizen participation, culture, sports, quality of life, health, dropping out of school, the intercultural dimension, and the development of specific expertise.
- Continue to offer financial support to the Forums jeunesse régionaux to ensure that young people are represented in all regions of Québec, and emphasize their concerns. A citizen participation officer's position will be created in each youth forum to heighten awareness among and help young people get involved in community life and in the development of their living environment.

- Maintain the measures stemming from the Défi de l'entrepreneuriat jeunesse and add \$17 million in funding to allow for the hiring, mainly in the regions, of new officers to heighten awareness of and promote entrepreneurship among young people.

■ **Société d'habitation du Québec**

- Continue to support residential renovation and the availability of affordable housing in all regions of Québec through the RénoVillage, Rénovation Québec, AccèsLogis Québec and Logement abordable Québec programs.

APPENDIX 2: The rural territory covered by the *National Policy on Rurality*¹²

1. RCMs entirely covered

Abitibi	La Haute-Côte-Nord	Les Pays-d'en-Haut
Abitibi-Ouest	La Haute-Gaspésie	Les Sources
Acton	La Matapédia	Lotbinière
Antoine-Labelle	La Mitis	Maria-Chapdelaine
Argenteuil	La Nouvelle-Beauce	Maskinongé
Avignon	La Vallée-de-la-Gatineau	Matane
Bécancour	Le Domaine-du-Roy	Matawinie
Bellechasse	Le Fjord-du-Saguenay	Mékinac
Bonaventure	Le Granit	Minganie
Brome-Missisquoi	Le Haut-Saint-François	Montcalm
Caniapiscau	Le Haut-Saint-Laurent	Montmagny
Charlevoix	Le Rocher-Percé	Nicolet-Yamaska
Charlevoix-Est	Le Val-Saint-François	Papineau
Coaticook	Les Basques	Pontiac
D'Au-ray	Les Chenaux	Portneuf
Kamouraska	Les Collines-de-l'Outaouais	Robert-Cliche
L'Érable	Les Etchemins	Témiscamingue
L'Islet	Les Jardins-de-Napierville	Témiscouata
La Côte-de-Gaspé	Les Laurentides	

2. Territories entirely covered

Basse-Côte-Nord	Nord-du-Québec	Agglomération de La Tuque	Agglomération des Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Blanc-Sablon	Baie-James	Coucoucache	Grosse-Île
Bonne-Espérance	Chapais	La Bostonnais	Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent	Chibougamau	La Tuque	
Gros-Mécatina	Lebel-sur-Quévillon	Lac-Édouard	
La Romaine	Matagami	Obedjiwan	
Pakuashipi		Wemotaci	
Saint-Augustin			

¹² The rural territory covered by the *National Policy on Rurality* can also be consulted on the Website of the ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions (MAMR) (www.mamr.gouv.qc.ca).

3. RCMs or territories partially covered

Arthabaska	Saint-Côme–Linière	Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil (village)	East Broughton
Chester-Est	Saint-Éphrem-de-Beauce	Saint-Bonaventure	Irlande
Chesterville	Saint-Évariste-de-Forsyth	Saint-Cyrille-de-Wendover	Kinnear's Mills
Daveluyville	Saint-Gédéon-de-Beauce	Sainte-Brigitte-des-Saults	Sacré-Coeur-de-Jésus
Ham-Nord	Saint-Hilaire-de-Dorset	Saint-Edmond-de-Grantham	Saint-Adrien-d'Irlande
Kingsey Falls	Saint-Honoré-de-Shenley	Saint-Eugène	Sainte-Clotilde-de-Beauce
Maddington	Saint-Martin	Saint-Félix-de-Kingsey	Sainte-Praxède
Norbertville	Saint-Philibert	Saint-Germain-de-Grantham	Saint-Fortunat
Notre-Dame-de-Ham	Saint-René	Saint-Guillaume	Saint-Jacques-de-Leeds
Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes	Saint-Simon-les-Mines	Saint-Lucien	Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur-de-Wolfestown
Saint-Albert	Saint-Théophile	Saint-Majorique-de-Grantham	Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf
Saint-Christophe-d'Arthabaska	Beauharnois-Salaberry	Saint-Pie-de-Guire	Saint-Joseph-de-Coleraine
Sainte-Anne-du-Sault	Sainte-Martine	Wickham	Saint-Julien
Sainte-Clotilde-de-Horton	Saint-Étienne-de-Beauharnois	The following sector of Drummondville:	Saint-Pierre-de-Broughton
Sainte-Élisabeth-de-Warwick	Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague	Saint-Joachim-de-Courval	L'Assomption
Sainte-Séraphine	Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka	Joliette	L'Épiphanie (parish)
Saint-Louis-de-Blandford	Saint-Urbain-Premier	Crabtree	L'Épiphanie (city)
Saint-Norbert-d'Arthabaska	Deux-Montagnes	Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes	The following sector of L'Assomption:
Saint-Rémi-de-Tingwick	Kanesatake	Saint-Ambroise-de-Kildare	Saint-Gérard-Majella
Saint-Rosaire	Oka	Sainte-Mélanie	L'Île-d'Orléans
Saint-Samuel	Saint-Joseph-du-Lac	Saint-Paul	Saint-François-de-l'Île-d'Orléans
Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens	Saint-Placide	Saint-Pierre	Saint-Jean-de-l'Île-d'Orléans
Saint-Valère	Drummond	Saint-Thomas	Saint-Pierre-de-l'Île-d'Orléans
Tingwick	Durham-Sud	L'Amiante	Sainte-Pétronille
Warwick	L'Avenir	Adstock	Sainte-Famille
Beauce-Sartigan	Lefebvre	Beaulac-Garthby	Saint-Laurent-de-l'Île-d'Orléans
La Guadeloupe	Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil (parish)	Disraeli (parish)	
Lac-Poulin		Disraeli (city)	
Notre-Dame-des-Pins			
Saint-Benoît-Labre			

La Côte-de-Beaupré	Saint-Colomban	Lac-Saint-Jean-Est	Le Haut-Richelieu
Château-Richer	Saint-Hippolyte	Belle-Rivière	Henryville
Lac-Jacques-Cartier		Desbiens	Lacolle
Saint-Ferréol-les-Neiges	La Vallée-de-l'Or	Hébertville	Mont-Saint-Grégoire
Saint-Joachim	Belcourt	Hébertville-Station	Noyan
Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague-du-Cap-Tourmente	Kitcisakik (Indian reserve)	Labrecque	Saint-Alexandre
Saint-Tite-des-Caps	Kitigan Zibi	Lac-Achouakan	Saint-Blaise-sur-Richelieu
Sault-au-Cochon	Lac-Fouillac	Lac-Moncouche	Sainte-Anne-de-Sabrevois
	Lac-Granet	Lamarche	Sainte-Brigide-d'Iberville
La Haute-Yamaska	Lac-Metei	L'Ascension-de-Notre-Seigneur	Saint-Georges-de-Clarenceville
Bromont	Lac-Simon (Indian reserve)	Métabetchouan-Lac-à-la-Croix	Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix
Roxton Pond	Malartic	Mont-Apica	Saint-Sébastien
Saint-Alphonse	Matchi-Manitou	Saint-Bruno	Saint-Valentin
Sainte-Cécile-de-Milton	Réservoir-Dozois	Sainte-Monique	Venise-en-Québec
Saint-Joachim-de-Shefford	Rivière-Héva	Saint-Gédéon	
Shefford	Senneterre (parish)	Saint-Henri-de-Taillon	
Warden	Senneterre (city)	Saint-Ludger-de-Milot	Les Maskoutains
Waterloo	The following sectors of Val-d'Or: Dubuisson, Val-Senneville, Vassan	Saint-Nazaire	La Présentation
La Jacques-Cartier		Lajemmerais	Saint-Barnabé-Sud
Fossambault-sur-le-Lac	La Vallée-du-Richelieu	Calixa-Lavallée	Saint-Bernard-de-Michaudville
Lac-Croche	Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu	Le Bas-Richelieu	Saint-Damase
Lac-Delage	Saint-Antoine-sur-Richelieu	Massueville	Saint-Dominique
Lac-Saint-Joseph	Saint-Charles-sur-Richelieu	Saint-Aimé	Sainte-Hélène-de-Bagot
Sainte-Brigitte-de-Laval	Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu	Saint-David	Sainte-Madeleine
Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier	Saint-Jean-Baptiste	Sainte-Anne-de-Sorel	Sainte-Marie-Madeleine
Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier	Saint-Mathieu-de-Beloil	Sainte-Victoire-de-Sorel	Saint-Hugues
Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury		Saint-Gérard-Majella	Saint-Jude
La Rivière-du-Nord		Saint-Ours	Saint-Liboire
Sainte-Sophie		Saint-Robert	Saint-Louis
Prévost		Saint-Roch-de-Richelieu	Saint-Marcel-de-Richelieu
		Yamaska	Saint-Pie
			Saint-Simon
			Saint-Valérien-de-Milton

Manicouagan

Baie-Trinité
Betsiamites
(Indian reserve)
Chute-aux-Outardes
Franquelin
Godbout
Pointe-aux-Outardes
Pointe-Lebel
Ragueneau
Rivière-aux-Outardes

Memphrémagog

Austin
Ayer's Cliff
Bolton-Est
Eastman
Hatley (township)
Hatley (municipality)
North Hatley
Ogden
Orford
Potton
Saint-Benoît-du-Lac
Sainte-Catherine-de-Hatley
Saint-Étienne-de-Bolton
Stanstead (township)
Stanstead (city)
Stukely-Sud
The following sector of Magog:
Magog (township)

Mirabel

Mirabel

Rimouski-Neigette

Esprit-Saint
Grand-Lac-Touradi
La Trinité-des-Monts
Lac-Huron
Le Bic
Saint-Anaclet-de-Lessard
Saint-Eugène-de-Ladrière
Saint-Fabien
Saint-Marcellin
Saint-Narcisse-de-Rimouski
Saint-Valérien
The following sectors of Rimouski: Sainte-Odile-sur-Rimouski, Sainte-Blandine, Mont-Lebel

Rivière-du-Loup

Cacouna
Cacouna (Indian reserve)
L'Isle-Verte
Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs
Notre-Dame-du-Portage
Saint-Antonin
Saint-Arsène
Saint-Cyprien
Saint-Épiphanie
Saint-François-Xavier-de-Viger
Saint-Modeste
Saint-Paul-de-la-Croix
Whitworth (Indian reserve)

Roussillon

Saint-Isidore
Saint-Mathieu
Saint-Philippe

Rouville

Ange-Gardien
Marieville
Rougemont
Saint-Césaire
Sainte-Angèle-de-Monnoir
Saint-Mathias-sur-Richelieu
Saint-Paul-d'Abbotsford
The following sector of Richelieu: Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours

Rouyn-Noranda

The following sectors of Rouyn-Noranda:
Arntfield
Beaudry
Bellecombe
Cadillac
Cléricky
Cloutier
D'Alembert
Destor
Lac-Dufault
Lac-Montanier
Lac-Surimau
McWatters
Montbeillard
Mont-Brun
Rapides-des-Cèdres
Rollet

Shawinigan

The following sectors of Shawinigan:
Lac-à-la-Tortue
Lac-des-Cinq
Lac-Wapizagonke
Saint-Gérard-des-Laurentides
Saint-Jean-des-Piles

Sept-Rivières

Port-Cartier
Lac-Walker
Rivière-Nipissis
Uashat-Malotienam
The following sectors of Sept-Îles: Gallix, Moisie

Vaudreuil-Soulanges

Coteau-du-Lac
Les Cèdres
Les Coteaux
L'Île-Cadieux
Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot
Pointe-des-Cascades
Pointe-Fortune
Rigaud
Rivière-Beaudette
Saint-Clet
Sainte-Justine-de-Newton
Sainte-Marthe
Saint-Polycarpe
Saint-Télesphore
Saint-Zotique
Très-Saint-Rédempteur