

**POLICY SUPPORTING LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

# **Specific Agreements on Regionalization**

**The Model of Choice for a Partnership between Government and Regions**

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# Specific Agreements on Regionalization

This booklet is the fourth in a series about the different aspects of the *Policy Supporting Local and Regional Development*. The *Guide to the Implementation of LDC*, the booklets on *Social Economy* and *The Place of Women in Regional Development* were the first three publications of this series.

This booklet was produced primarily for Regional Development Councils and their partners, as well as for departments or government agencies who are first and foremost affected by the specific agreements.

This publication was produced in collaboration with the Québec Regions Association.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present this information booklet on the **specific agreements on regionalization**, which constitute key elements in the regionalization of government action. We should remember that by adopting the Policy Supporting Local and Regional Development, in April 1997, the Government of Québec made regionalization one of its main priorities. It is the model of choice to ensure that services provided by the state meet the needs of all the citizens of Québec, no matter where they live.

What is regionalization? It can be defined as the **adaptation** of government operations and services to regional realities by **involving** the representatives of the local and regional populations in the decision-making process, in the implementation or in the management of activities that are the responsibility of the state.

In short, it is a partnership between the government and the regions. The real purpose of this association is the adaptation of public actions and operations to local or regional needs. **Involvement** and **adaptation** are, consequently, two key words in the concept of regionalization.

In this context, the ministère des Régions and the Regional Development Councils feel that the specific agreement on regionalization is the best model to build this partnership and to maximize the operations of the departments and government agencies throughout Québec.

The collaboration between the Québec Regions Association and the ministère des Régions made possible the adoption of an important memoir by the council of ministers. This memoir removes some of the obstacles to the regionalization of government action. It aims to better adapt state services to the needs of the people in each region of Québec.

**Jean-Pierre Jolivet**  
Minister of Regions

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# **The Specific Agreement on Regionalization: The Model of Choice for a Partnership between State and Regions**

## **Definition**

A specific agreement on regionalization is an agreement between a Regional Development Council and a department or a government agency and, if the need arises, other partners *"To implement the basic agreement or to foresee ways to make government action, with regard to regional development, more responsive to the characteristics of the region"*.

Reference: Article 20, Law on the ministère des Régions.

# MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

The specific agreement on regionalization is a development tool:

- That is **flexible, real** and based on a government-region partnership.
- That makes possible the **realisation of regional development priorities** emanating from the basic agreement between the government and the region or that enables the departments and government agencies to **adapt their operations** to the needs of the region.
- **That can have a multilateral scope** involving several departments and government agencies.
- **That can have an inter-regional scope**, thereby involving more than one region or, in the reverse, applying to only a part of a regional territory.
- Helping to elaborate and implement a regional concerted **plan of action** regarding objectives decided in common.
- That enables the regional parties to participate in the **decision-making** process, in the **implementation** or in the **management** of operations that are the responsibility of the state.

Consequently, the specific agreement on regionalization is:

- A model that must generate **added value** by changing the way things are done and that can have a formative **influence** on the development of a region.

**The Specific  
Agreement on  
Regionalization  
to Implement the  
Basic Agreement**

In the *Policy Supporting Local and Regional Development*, the government re-asserts that “the basic agreements constitute the models of choice for consultation and partnership between the the government and each region of Québec because they can transform, based on their mutual commitment, the contribution of the government and the region into the fulfillment of the regional strategic plan.”

In the basic agreement, the government associates itself with the region by recognizing the regional priorities and orientations to which it subscribes and the implementation process it intends to fulfill. However, because basic agreements have a general scope, their fulfillment requires more special action that may be subject to specific agreements on regionalization between ministères or government agencies and Regional Development Councils.

The specific agreements on regionalization aim to implement the basic agreement. Therefore, they involve the parties in the implementation of real development in relation to the priorities and orientations retained in the basic agreement.

## **Example 1**

### **The Specific Agreement on the Development of Lots within municipalities in Abitibi-Temiscamingue**

The regional strategic plan of Abitibi-Temiscamingue for 1993 showed that the lots within the municipalities of that region had potential for development. Their development was the subject of one of the priorities in the development of the first basic agreements.

The main goal of this agreement was to in transfer 5,000 lots that belonged to the government to the municipalities so they could develop them. The dynamics of the projects realized on scattered lots, in agricultural and agro-forestry reservations, on blocks of lots and in territories under contracts for forestry supplies and forestry development has contributed to the revitalization of several localities. This agreement bound the Ministère des Ressources naturelles, the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêches et de l'Alimentation, the Ministère des Affaires Municipales and the Secrétariat au développement des régions\* to the Abitibi-Temiscamingue Regional Development Council with regard to the implementation of measures to use these lots as levers to realize projects that would generate development, whether in forestry or in other fields (recreation, agriculture, etc.) Among the results of this enterprise, was the creation of more than 100 full-time jobs and the consolidation of jobs in factories.

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\* ministère des Régions since April 1, 1998.

## Example 2

### **The Specific Agreement on the Development of the Marine/Agriculture Industry in Gaspésie/Magdalen Islands**

The regional strategic plan shed some light on the major difficulties in fishing in that region. For that region, fish farming in salt water (“mariculture”) constitutes a kind of diversification to be consolidated and developed. One of the development priorities included in the basic agreement aims the growth of salt water fish farming in the region.

The Ministère de l’Agriculture, des Pêches et de l’Alimentation and the Regional Development Council have negotiated an agreement on the implementation of a regional organisation, to be know as The Society for the Development of the Mariculture Industry which will support financing for the development of mariculture in the area. The parties are involved in the financing, the management and in decision making on the choice of options to be carried out in order to ensure the growth of this regional industry.

#### **Specific agreement for regionalization in order to adapt government action to regional characteristics**

The Policy Supporting Local and Regional Development also indicates that specific regionalization agreements may make it possible to adapt government action to regional characteristics. This adaptation includes any measure that in intended to modify the operating methods of the departments and government agencies in view of the realities and needs of the regions.

This type of agreement can have national significance when negotiated and finalized with a majority of regions and perhaps all of them. However, its implementation makes it possible to adapt ministerial action to the special needs of each region by making room for regional adjustments.

The specific agreements on regionalization that target the adaptation of government action to regional characteristics therefore associate the parties **to implement real measures** enabling the regional development councils and their partners, if any, to participate in the activities and services that are under the authority of the departments or government agencies.

## **Example 1**

### **The Specific Agreements on the Regionalization of Immigration (5 regions)**

The Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration has defined a policy on the regionalization of immigration which includes an approach based on a **partnership with the regions**. In five regions, an agreement was made to implement a measure to regionalize immigration in conjunction with regional operations.

These agreements combine the efforts of the department and the regions in planning the operation and the **management** of a government program: the fund for the Regional Development of Immigration. The parties together determine the operational priorities of and then chose the projects they will finance, which are then submitted to the appropriate department.

## **Example 2**

### **The Specific Agreements on Deer Population in the Lower St. Lawrence**

The closing of deer hunting in the Lower St. Lawrence region in 1993 encouraged dialogue among the various partners involved.

On September 9, 1994, the Lower St. Lawrence Regional Coordination and Development Council signed a first agreement with the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune and seven other partners (including industries and the Québec Fauna Foundation), to manage the Duchénier devastation. This brought about the construction of 43 kilometers of road in order to make the habitat accessible should winter conditions become very harsh.

On September 21, 1995, the Regional Council signed another agreement with the Ministère des Ressources naturelles, the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune and the Secretariat au développement des régions in order to develop the confinement areas of deer in public forests. This agreement included three parts: planning, the implementation of these plans and the establishment of an emergency intervention plan. These actions were successful because the deer population increased enough to reopen the hunting season in 1996. It should be mentioned that this activity generates \$4.3 millions annually in the economy of the region.

### **Example 3**

#### **The Specific Agreement to Prevent School Dropouts in Saguenay-Lac-St. Jean**

To cope with the major problem of school dropouts in the region, the government, represented by six ministers, agreed with the representatives of the region to establish a strategy for concerted effort to substantially reduce the rate of school dropouts in the coming years.

Through this agreement, each of the partners can coordinate their operations and combine their respective efforts. It targets every level of schooling, from pre-school to university. It includes regional or sector-related actions, actions specific to local environments and educational institutions and, finally, to applied research and activities involving technological development and the new communications technologies.

# The Role and Function of the Various Parties

## Identification of the Objectives of the Specific Agreements on Regionalization

### **Procedural Initiatives**

Three paths can be taken to identify the measures, activities or programs that can become the objective of specific agreements on regionalization: one comes from the region, another comes from a department or government agency and yet another from a joint approach by the Regional administrative conference and the Regional Development Council.

#### **- Proposal from the Region**

The region, represented by the Regional Development Council, can take the initiative to propose various objects of agreement. These agreements generally target the implementation of the basic agreement but can also concern the adaptation of government action to regional characteristics.

In this case, the regional council must inform the Assistant Deputy Minister of the ministère des Régions for that region<sup>11</sup> of any proposal for an agreement that they intend to submit to departments or government agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> For the regions of Montreal and Laval, it is the Assistant Deputy Minister at the Ministère des Affaires municipale et de la Métropole.

- **Proposal Resulting from a Government Initiative**

A ministère or a government agency may propose to make a specific agreement on regionalization regarding the implementation of the basic agreement or the adaptation of their actions to the characteristics of one or several regions.

In this case, the ministère or government agency must inform the Assistant Deputy Minister of the ministère des Régions<sup>22</sup> of their intention to propose an agreement to the Regional Development Council.

- **Joint Identification of the Regional Administrative Conference and Regional Development Council**

The joint initiative of the Regional Administrative Conference and Regional Development Council constitutes the preferred model to identify objects for specific agreements on regionalization in view of the establishment of action plans to implement the basic agreement. This approach will be favored just as much for the goals of the priorities recognized by the basic agreement as it will for the identification of measures, activities or government programs that could become the subject of agreements in view of their adaptation to the characteristics of a region.

This government-region joint approach reaches its conclusion when the action plan to implement the basic agreement is adopted. A notable purpose of this action plan is to enable both parties to agree on the subjects of the agreements to be negotiated during their terms.

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<sup>2</sup> For the regions of Montreal and Laval, it is the Assistant Deputy Minister at the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la métropole.

# Negotiating the Specific Agreement on Regionalization

A specific agreement on regionalization is the result of negotiations between parties. Therefore, it cannot be imposed by any of the partners. On the basis of the proposal of a subject to be agreed upon as described above, the agreement project is discussed and negotiated. It is then written by either one of the parties and is finally validated by the appropriate authorities.

In fact, negotiating an agreement is an interactive process that involves many players.

- The **Regional Development Council** consults the local partners involved in the agreement, if necessary. The board of administration of the RDC approves the projected agreement and authorizes the president to sign it.
- The **sector-related ministères or government agencies** involved participate in the discussions, negotiate the terms of the agreement with the other parties and validate the project with the appropriate authorities.
- The **regional Assistant Deputy Minister of the ministère des Régions or, if appropriate, of the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la Métropole** must be informed of the project and will participate in the negotiations that will finalize any specific agreement involving the region. He coordinates the progress of the agreement projects within the government apparatus, in collaboration with the departments involved, until all parties sign them.

He also ensures that the agreement contains all the appropriate elements and that it is in accordance, if necessary, with the modes of financing of the Regional Development Fund in order to recommend its signature by the ministère des Régions.

In the case of specific agreements on regionalization that have national significance, the Assistant Deputy Minister must ensure that the agreement on the project for his region is in accordance with the main national parameters defined by the ministères and government agencies involved.

When several ministères or government agencies are involved, he undertakes as the president of the regional administrative conference, the required inter-department coordination to enter into discussions with the Regional Development Council.

The ministère des Régions and the minister responsible for the region can participate in the discussions and act as mediators with the sector-related departments who are involved if requested to do so by the parties.

## **Signature and Implementation**

The parties then sign and implement the specific agreement on regionalization.

## **Follow-Up and Evaluation of the Specific Agreement on Regionalization**

One of the important objectives of the Policy Supporting Local and Regional Development is to manage by results rather than by placing a primary emphasis on standards and procedures. In that context, it is essential that the parties periodically follow-up the actions of the various partners for each specific agreement on regionalization and evaluate the results obtained as compared to the objectives of the agreement.

# Financing the Specific Regionalization Agreements

The Law on the ministère des Régions instituted the Regional Development Fund. It has been allocated to two activities:

- Financing the measures included in the specific agreements on regionalization.
- Financing the structuring of projects that have a regional influence.

The fund's commitment to either activities is a responsibility shared by the Regional Development Councils and the ministère des Régions<sup>3</sup>. The Regional Development Councils are responsible for the allocation of the fund along with the ministère des Régions or, if appropriate, the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la Métropole. As managers of the fund, they are responsible for the allocation of the money in accordance with the norms governing the fund.

The ministères or government agencies can also finance the measures agreed upon in the specific agreements on regionalization as part of their sectoral programs.

However, it is possible that an agreement might not contain a financial component. For example, local authorities could be participating extensively in the decision-making process without having to make financial contributions.

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<sup>3</sup> For the Montreal and Laval areas, it will be the Assistant Deputy Minister of Municipal Affaires and Metropolis.

# The Adaptation of the Standard Structure for Measures and Government Programs subject to the Specific Agreements on Regionalization

Signing a specific agreement on regionalization does not necessarily modify the standard structure of sector-related programs.

In the case of agreements requiring a modification of the standard structure of measures or programs, the approval process for the modifications to the standard structure of the programs by the Conseil du trésor will be done as follows:

- **The sector-related department involved will present a request to the Conseil du trésor** in the form of an appendix to the specific agreement on regionalization, **specifying the modifications to be made to the structure of the program in question.**
- Once the Conseil du trésor approves this appendix, **the parties sign the agreement.**
- **If the agreements involve several or most of the regions** (with regard to daycare for example), the department involved presents the Conseil du trésor with a request to modify the standard structure for most of the specific agreements on regionalization.

If the Regional Development Fund is allocated to finance authorized measures for the modification of the standard structure, the standards applicable to the fund are those of the adapted sector-related program.

# A Guide to Writing a Specific Agreement on Regionalization

A specific agreement on regionalization should usually contain a minimum number of components.

## **1** The Title of the Agreement

## **2** The Identification of the Parties

With regard to the government, the party will be the minister and not the ministère.

## **3** The Introduction

The introduction is often formulated with "**Considering**" or "**Whereas**". It specifies, so to speak, the **rationale** for the agreement. The problem or the situation that engendered the agreement is usually presented in the introduction.

## 4 The Definition of the Language

This section will serve, if necessary, to define the terms or acronyms used in the agreement.

## 5 The Subject of the Agreement

The subject of the agreement defines what the agreement is about and should not be confused with the objectives of the agreement.

It is usually appropriate to indicate the following in every specific agreement on regionalization:

- if the implementation of the **basic agreement** is the issue. If such is the case, one must describe how the specific agreement on regionalization will be connected to it (recall the orientations, the priorities or the operational objectives) and how it will contribute to its implementation.
- if the agreement targets the **adaptation of government action** to regional characteristics. It must also include a description of what is to be done and how it is to be done.

## 6 The Objectives

In identifying the objectives or purposes of the agreement, it is appropriate to pay particular attention to the identification of **measurable targets** that will make possible the evaluation of the agreement when it is in force or when it ends.

## 7 The Respective Commitment of the Parties

A specific agreement on regionalization derives its meaning and importance from the clarity and precision of the real commitments made by each signatory. If applicable, the financial contribution of the parties is to be specified.

## **8** **The Duration**

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The agreement must state the length of time it will be in force by stipulating the starting and termination dates. The parties establish this component of the agreement.

## **9** **The Administrative Modalities of the Agreement**

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The various administrative procedures will be determined as follows:

- procedures for modification
- procedures for renewal
- procedures for verification
- procedures for termination

## **10** **Follow-Up and Evaluation**

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It is essential to include follow-up and evaluation elements in every specific agreement on regionalization. It is why the agreements must also include follow-up and evaluation procedures, as well as indicators that will establish comparisons between the objectives and the results achieved.

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## The Signatories

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Specific regionalization agreements are signed by the following:

- The Minister of Regions or, for the Montreal and Laval areas, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Metropolis, **will first sign all the agreements** in order to validate their conformity with the *Policy Supporting Local and Regional Development* and to confirm the commitments of the department, if necessary.
- The sector-related minister or ministers in authority, from ministères as well as from government agencies.
- The President of the Regional Development Council duly authorized to do so by the board of administration.
- The President of the partner of the Regional Development Council involved in the agreement, if necessary.
- The minister responsible for the region may sign all the specific agreements on regionalization involving his region.

This publication can be consulted at the internet web site for the ministère des Régions  
[www.mreg.couv.qc.ca](http://www.mreg.couv.qc.ca)

The Québec Regions Associations

ministère des Régions du Québec