



# **QUEBEC'S APPROACH TO REGIONAL GOVERNMENT:**

## **An Overview and Critical Reflections**



**RPLC**  
RURAL POLICY LEARNING COMMONS

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COMMUNAUTÉ D'APPRENTISSAGE  
DES POLITIQUES RURALES



**Municipalities**  
Newfoundland and Labrador



# **CANADIAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

## **A Critical Review of Theory, Practice, and Potentials**

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<http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca>

<http://ruralresilience.ca/project/currentprojects/regional-government/>



- To assess the application and relevance of new regionalism in the Canadian context;
- To seek Canadian innovations in regional development; and
- To understand how these are evolving and if and how they are shared across space in networks of regional development policy and practice.

# Outline



1. Introduction to speakers
2. Background on the history of the RCM's and its role in rural policy initiatives
3. Introduction to RCM's
4. Questions
5. Challenges facing RCM's
6. Questions
7. Closing

# Québec's Approach to Regional Development: The historical context

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# Historical Territories

- 1855: Parishes, municipalities, and counties
- 1960s: From Church to State
- 1979-1983: MRCs (RCM) established\*

\*Metro and Reserves = equivalent territories

# First Rural Policy 2001-2007

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

# Second Rural Policy 2007-2014

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



# Third Rural Policy 2014-2024

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

“Pactes Plus”

# 2014: The impact of austerity politics

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

# What have we learned?

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

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- [RPLC-CAPR.CA](http://RPLC-CAPR.CA)
- [CRDT.CA](http://CRDT.CA)
- [CRRF.CA](http://CRRF.CA)
- [CDNREGDEV.RURALRESILIENCE.CA](http://CDNREGDEV.RURALRESILIENCE.CA)
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- [OECD.ORG](http://OECD.ORG)
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- [BILLREIMER.CA](http://BILLREIMER.CA)



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# REGIONAL COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES IN QUEBEC

STRUCTURES, POWERS,  
DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION,  
FUNDING, CHALLENGES

# Sharing of responsibilities between municipalities and Government

Services	Government	Municipalities
Health and Social Services		
Education		
Income support/Job training		
Housing		
Roads		
Police/Fire/Civil emergency		
Culture and recreational activities		
Parks		
Economic Development		
Land and town planning		
Public Transportation		
Waste management		
Water		

# Powers

- Land Planning, Regional Parks
- Regional local and community development
- Properties valuation, sales for non payment of municipal taxes
- Development of residual materials management plan
- Development of the fire safety cover scheme
- Water courses management
- Acts as if it were a local municipality in the non organized territories



# Governance

- Council composed of the mayor of each member municipality. It may also include one other municipal elected representative
- The prefect may either be elected by universal suffrage or be designated by the council among the mayors
- Make their decisions by a double majority, that is, taking into account the number of votes and the population. A voting limit formula also ensures that no single municipality can hold a double majority

# Governance

- An RCM may declare its jurisdiction in respect to local municipalities
- If an RCM decrees it will exercise powers normally exercised by the local municipalities in its territory, municipalities can oppose this. They cannot oppose this if the decision concerns: social housing, residual materials, local roads or public transportation

# Quebec context

- 17 administrative regions
- 2 metropolitan communities
- 14 municipalities and agglomerations with RCM powers
- 87 RCMS
- 1100 local municipalities
- 1 minister of municipal Affairs and Land occupancy
- 17 regional ministers and Regional administrative conferences

# Quebec context

- Montreal metropolitan area : 4 M inhabitants, 82 municipalities, **14 RCMS**/ Council is chaired by the mayor of Montreal
- Québec city metropolitan area : 800 000 inhabitants, 28 municipalities 5 RCMS, Council is chaired by the mayor of Quebec City
- Metropolitan communities plan and consult on: land planning, economic development, waste disposal, transportation, water management, environment....

# New local and regional development policy

- Abolished : Regional conferences of elected officials, local development centers, rural development policy
- RCM the first government partner for local and regional development : Development Agreements with government departments, regional priorities, bottom-up land occupancy strategy
- Two new funds : Supra local and Regional levels
- Regional administration conference have a new role

# Sustainable land planning

- New governmental orientations, new partnership approach
- Tighten the control of urban sprawl
- A specific approach for slow growth rural areas
- Boomers request for natural environments and low density
- Climate changes: Flooding, banks erosion

# Municipal inter-cooperation

- More and more complex responsibilities
- Many small municipalities with very limited resources (They can't afford)
- Devitalized communities
- The potential answers :
  - Inter-municipal agreements
  - Merging, services provided by the central city ,
  - Specialized inter-municipal corporations
  - The RCM ?



# Québec's Regional Government Model

Some comments by  
Bruno JEAN, Université du Québec à  
Rimouski



# RCM: Conditions of efficient governance

- RCM model maintains very small rural communities with a local government elected with a “supra-local government” that provide municipal services at a fair cost for citizens.
- The RCM is directed by a Council of Mayors.
  - No civil society and business sector representatives (i.e. decision making is not shared between political, economic and civic forces)
- The MRC model is “one size fits all”
  - Fits best with a territory without a central town

# The evolution of two models of RCMs

- 2 types of RMC's
  - Only small rural communities
  - Small communities surrounding a large town with more population than those villages
- RMC Rimouski-Neigette
  - Central city of Rimouski counting for 85% of total population and 90% of property value of the RCM
  - According the demographic weight of this city, the Mayor of Rimouski has seven votes at RCM Council plus one vote for the rest of small rural communities, giving the mayor of Rimouski veto power
  - Rimouski also contributes the most financial to the RCM
- Question: How do you balance demography and democracy in that case?  
No perfect way but it is clear that the “one size fit all” Québec RCM model fits very well in a territory with only small rural communities where one Mayor means one vote at the RCM Council table.

# Elected Prefect of the RCM

- Elected by universal suffrage or chosen by his peers (mayors), the prefect has the same powers, some of which are rather symbolic
- An elected prefect seems more appropriate for a RCM with only small rural communities.
- Elected prefects are not so popular even with some incentives of the Québec government as only 14 RCMs elected their prefect out of nearly 90 RCMs

# The Pros

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- Democratic dimension, citizen involvement
- More legitimacy for the prefect
- More neutrality because the prefect is not at the same time mayor of his municipality
- A position of a full-time elected prefect may attract highly competent people

# The Cons

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- Model that goes badly in RCMs with a major city center
- Cost to organize elections and costs for a full-time prefect
- Easier to remove a non-elected prefect