

**Report on the Participation of the
Cuban Delegation Invited by Saint Mary's University
to
IMAGINE 2012
and
QUEBEC 2012 INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF COOPERATIVES**

**Quebec City, Province of Quebec, Canada
October 6-12, 2012**



prepared by

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December 6, 2012

acknowledgements...

many people helped this all come together...

particular thanks to

Sonja Novkovic, Tom Webb and Beatrice Alain

**Vancity and Desjardins
Saint Mary's U. and U. of Sherbrooke
International Development Research Centre**

Embassy of Canada in Cuba

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the visit of 4 Cuban professionals to Canada's premier, back-to-back IYC 2012 conferences: IMAGINE 2012 and the QUEBEC INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF COOPERATIVES, held in Quebec City October 6 – 12th, 2012.

THE DELEGATION

The four-person Delegation invited by Saint Mary's University, in association with International Development Research Centre, Desjardins and Vancity, consisted of the following individuals:

Sra. Mavis Dora Alvarez Licea, Proyecto de Palma
Dra. Grizel Donestevéz Sánchez, Univ de Las Villas
Sr. Gonzalo González, Orgaoponico Alamar
Sr. Alfonso Regalado Granda, Comisión para la implementación (Los Lineamientos)



Attending at the Invitation of the University of Sherbrooke was:

Dra. Beatriz Diaz, Univ de la Habana

Attending with the support of the UNDP were:



Martino Vinci, Gerente Proyecto PALMA UE, P. de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo
Maruchi Alonso Esquivel Directora de la Oficina Nacional del proyecto PALMA
Reinaldo Rodríguez Hidalgo Pres. de la CCSF Ramón Balboa, Cabaiguán, Sancti Spiritus.
Luis E. Broom Gómez: Admin. de la UBPC Mantonia, Contramaestre, Santiago de Cuba

This report tracks the visit of the four Cubans invited by Saint Mary's University and supported by SMU, IDRC, Desjardins and Vancity.

THE PROCESS

The decision by Saint Mary's University to invite Cuban participation in IMAGINE 2012/QUEBEC SUMMIT arose from a series of workshops held in Havana in December 2011 (<http://www.theholmteam.ca/HAVANA.WORKSHOPS.Dec.2011.pdf>) and was further advanced by a February 2012 conference organized by the Centre for Canadian Studies, University of Havana and attended by myself and Tom Webb. It is also a continuation of the Partners Knowledge Exchanges (Sagebien and Leenson) funded by IDRC.

As a result of the recommendations and actions that arose from these meetings, Cuba is the only country for which funds were raised by Saint Mary's University to fund their participation.

Needs Identification

In early July, email discussions were conducted between colleagues at Saint Mary's University, the University of Havana and other representatives of Cuba's cooperative movement to identify those areas which were of greatest interest to the Cubans leading up to the conference. Seven priority areas were identified.

1. Legal frameworks for co-operative development
2. Supervisory institutions
3. Public policy promoting co-operatives
4. Best practices of second and third tier coops
5. Best practices of worker co-ops, multi-stakeholder (social) co-ops, and agricultural producer co-ops in Quebec and elsewhere
6. Principle 6 – cooperation among cooperatives: How can Canadian and Cuban co-ops foster relationships?
7. The potential for co-op led economic and social development

My Role During the Conference

1. To present the above areas to the four Cuban Delegates prior to the conference (Do they agree? What's missing? What are their priorities at the conference?)
2. To track and - where possible - facilitate discussion of/engagement in these areas throughout both conferences.
3. To provide support to the October 12th Montreal workshop – including identify any outstanding questions and areas where networks and ongoing engagement would be helpful.
4. To prepare a Report on the above.

PRE CONFERENCE WORK



The Delegation arrived in Quebec City the evening of October 4th after travelling for some 18 hours by plane, bus, train and cab from Havana.



Two historic bed and breakfasts, 2 blocks apart and in walking distance from the Convention Centre, were home for the next eight nights.

October 5th was set aside as a day to relax, decompress, get to know one another as a group and take in a bit of Quebec City culture.

We visited artists' coop Vert Tuyau and spent some time chatting with member Diane Charuest and her colleague about the coops operations.



Strategy Session

On Saturday morning the Delegation met in our room at Auberge Aux Deux Lions to:

- a. Consider the list of seven priorities identified in July
- b. Identify their top four priorities.
- c. Familiarize themselves with the programs for both conferences,
- d. Establish a strategy to maximize their participation in these two important conferences.



It was agreed that all seven areas identified in July remained of interest. The following four areas were identified as priorities by the four Delegates.

1. Legal frameworks for co-operative development
2. Best practices of second and third tier coops
3. Best practices of solidarity and social co-ops.
4. Best practices of worker co-ops.

Opportunity For Embassy Engagement

Cuban Ambassador to Canada Terecita Vincente was contacted prior to their arrival and a meeting arranged with Alain González, Cuban Consul in Montreal. Alain met the group on their arrival in Montreal and shared a lunch at the airport. Beatriz Diaz arrived with our Delegates and participated in this luncheon.

Pre-Conference President's Luncheon

On October 6th, Colin Dodds, President of Saint Mary's University, hosted a luncheon for the Cuban Delegation (five including Beatriz Diaz). Attending from SMU were Sonja Novkovic, Tom Webb, Larry Haiven, Karen Miner and myself.

This was also an opportunity for the Delegation to meet with representatives of Vancity, whose sponsorship supported Mavis Dora Alvarez Licea's attendance at both IMAGINE/SUMMIT and her subsequent 5 stop speaking tour in British Columbia in October.

Representing Vancity was Chris Dobrzanski, (Senior Vice President of Risk Management & Operations and CEO of Citizens Bank of Canada) and Mo Ledak (recent MMCCU graduate).



THE CONFERENCE

IMAGINE 2012 kicked off on the evening of October 6th and ran until October 8th. The 2012 Quebec International Summit of Cooperatives began October 8th and ran until the 11th.

With the exception of one or two luncheon speakers, full Spanish translation was available throughout.



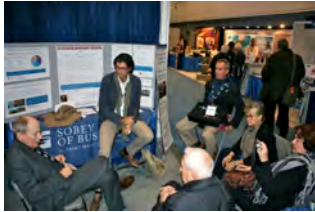
MEETINGS ARRANGED DURING THE CONFERENCE

Desjardins



Like Vancity, Desjardins was also a sponsor of the Delegation, specifically they supported the participation of Alfonso Regalado. A meeting with Yvon Bernier, Vice President of Desjardins' International Development division was kindly arranged by Martin Ruel, Director of Programs for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Co-operative Legislation



Sonja Novkovic arranged for the Cuban Delegation to meet with lawyer Felice Scalvini, European Vice President of the International Cooperative Alliance whose professional interest is cooperative legislation,



Quebec Taxi Coop



At the express request of Alfonso Regalado and thanks to the generosity of Mr Abdallah Homsy, President of Quebec's worker-owned Taxi Cooperative, two meetings with this important worker cooperative were arranged. The first was with the four Cubans, Eric Leenson and myself. Mr. Homsey explained the history and operations of the coop.

Mr. Homsy sent a cab that afternoon to bring Alfonso Regalado, myself and Boris Schaffer (MMCCU graduate who came along for translation) to a second meeting at the coop's offices so Alfonso Regalado could get a better sense of how the dispatch system operates.

At the end of the visit, Alfonso was presented with a copy of the Taxi Coop's Operations Manual (in French).



Union Cab of Madison

A luncheon meeting was also arranged with John McNamara (Business Manager) and Rebecca Kemble (Board Member) of Union Cab of Madison, a worker owned and operated cooperative. Rebecca is also President of the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives. The UNDP/CIDA Delegation sat in on this lunch.



At the end of the meeting, John McNamara shared with the Delegation electronic copies of Union Cab's Policy Manual, Dispute Resolution Process and a recent PowerPoint providing an overview of the co-op.



Other Meetings

Eric Leenson arranged a meeting with Brian Branch, President and CEO of the World Council of Credit Unions. This was attended by Alvarez, Gonzales and Dondestevez, Reglaldo and I were visiting the Quebec Taxi Coop.

THE MONTREAL WORKSHOP



On Friday October 12th a concluding workshop was held in Montreal. From the letter of invitation:

The workshop aims to introduce Cuba's transformation of its economy, and to allow our Cuban guests to better understand the unique way in which government and actors of the social economy work together in Quebec to support a development model centered around people and communities. Together, we will seek to identify ways in which actors of the social economy could support Cuban partners as they move to strengthen the cooperative sector in Cuba.



All eight members of the Cuban Delegation plus Martino Vinci attended this workshop. _____ invited guests were in attendance. Their names and contact numbers are contained in Annex 1.

Alvarez, Reglaldo, Gonzalez, Donestevéz and Diaz made presentations to the Workshop on Cuba's new cooperative path and a general discussion followed.

Nancy Neamtam Presentation on Quebec's Social Economy

The main area of interest for the Cubans attending this workshop was to learn more about Quebec's solidarity economy and social cooperatives. Because it was foundational to the workshop, notes on of Nancy Neamtam's presentation appear as Annex 2 to this report.

Afternoon Field Visits

Three field visits were arranged for the afternoon.

The first was to a social enterprise, the second was to Batir son Quartier (a coop housing development SE) and the third was to La Maison Verte, a retail natural products cooperative.

Closing Dinner

The closing dinner was held at Espace Lafontaine, a Montreal worker cooperative.



BC SPEAKING TOUR - MAVIS ALVAREZ

Following the meetings in Quebec City and Montreal, Mavis Alvarez travelled to British Columbia to participate in a speaking tour hosted by the communities of Sooke and Courtenay, the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. She also spoke at Vancouver's 5th Annual Che Guevara Conference. Mavis spoke on cooperatives, sustainable agriculture and community.

NEXT STEPS

This is a "framework" document: it lays out the background and objectives of the Cuban's visit, and the meetings facilitated in Quebec City and Montreal to support those objectives.

The final version of this report will add the reflections of the Cubans following these visits. How did the four SMU-sponsored delegates feel about the facilitated discussions? What questions were answered? What new questions were raised? What events or presentations during the two conferences stand out particularly in their minds? What were their overall take-aways? What objectives were not met? What new objectives emerge? What do they see as next steps? How can Canada help?

In early February, I will travel to Havana to interview the four Cuban delegates and include a final section to this report presenting their reflections and suggestions for future engagement.

ANNEX 1: List of Contacts

FROM IMAGINE 2012/QUEBEC INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF COOPERATIVES, QUEBEC CITY

Beatrice Alain	Chantier	beatrice.alain@chantier.qc.ca
Yvon Bernier	Vice President, International Development Desjardins	ybernier@did.qc.ca
Maude Brossard	Chargée de projet, Chantier	maude.brossard@chantier.qc.ca
Diane Charuest	Artist, Member, Coop Vert Tuyau	ateliervertdegris@sympatico.co
Delia Espinosa	Embassy of Canada in Cuba	Delia.Espinosa@international.gc.ca
Larry Haiven	Academic Head, MMCCU, SMU	larry.haiven@smu.ca
Abdullah Homsy	President, Quebec Taxi Coop	admin@taxicoop-quebec.com
Wendy Holm	MMCCU, SMU	wendy@wendyholm.com
Leonardo Iannone	Sr Development Officer, Cuba Program, Americas Branch, CIDA	leonardo.iannone@acdi-cida.gc.ca
Rebecca Kemble	President, US Federtion of Worker Cooperatives	rebecca@usworker.coop
Eric Leenson	Sol Economics	eleenson@soleconomics.com
Loredana Marchetti	IDRC	lmarchetti@idrc.ca
John McNamara	Union Cab of Madison	john_mcnamara@unioncab.com
Marguerite Mendell	Concordia	marguerite.mendell@concordia.ca
Danielle Mingay	CIDA, Embassy of Canada, Cuba	Danielle.Mingay@international.gc.ca
Nancy Neamtan	Chantier	nancy.neamtan@chantier.qc.ca
Sonja Novkovic	MMCCU, SMU	snovkovic@smu.ca
Yann Omer-Kassin	Development Agent, Tech Resources Group, Batir Son Quartier	ykassin@batirsonquartier.com
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Julia Sagebien	U of Dalhousie	julia.sagebien@dal.ca
Felice Scalvini	VP for Europe, ICA	scalvi00@felicescalvini.191.it
Boris Schaffer	Canadian Ethical Restoration and Construction Coopertative	bschaffer@cercc.ca
Jason Hughes_	Admin. Coord+ Member Coop La Maison Verte	Jason@cooplamaisonverte.com
Tom Webb	MMCCU, SMU	jtwebb@auracom.com

ATTENDEES AT OCTOBER 12th WORKSHOP, MONTREAL

Leo Iannone	ACDI	Loredana Marchetti	IDRC
Gervais L'Heureux	AQOCI	Michel LaFleur	IRECUS - Université de Sherbrooke
Lynne Markell	Canadian Co-operative Association	France Boutin	Ministère des finances et de l'économie du Québec
Bernard Ndour	CAP Finance	Maruchi Alonso Esquivel	Oficina Nacional del proyecto Palma
Reinaldo Rodríguez Hidalgo	CCSF Ramón Balboa	Gonzalo González Llerena	Organopónico Alamar
Jacques Desjardins	CDEC	Patrick Piché	Pôle régional d'économie sociale de Longueuil
Francesca Nunes	CDR Montreal Laval	Mavis Alvarez Licea	Proyecto Palma
Martin Van Den Borre	CDR Outaouais-Laurentides	Martino Vinci	Proyecto Palma UE, PNUD
Marilena Bioli	CECI	Wendy Holm	Saint Mary's University
Arnaud Deharte	CECI	Sonja Novkovic	Saint Mary's University
Nancy Neamtan	Chantier de l'économie sociale	Eric Leenson	SOL ² Economics
Béatrice Alain	Chantier de l'économie sociale	Handy Acosta	Tunza Youth Advisor, UNEP LAC
Maude Brossard	Chantier de l'économie sociale	Luis E. Broon Gómez	UBPC Mantonia
Alfonso Regalado Granda	Comision para la implementacion	Grizel Donestevez Sánchez	Universidad de Las Villas
Margie Mendell	Concordia University	Beatriz Diaz	Universidad Habana
Marie-Paule Robichaud	Conseil quebécois de la cooperation et de la mutualite	Marie Bouchard	Université du Québec à Montréal
Alain Gonzalez Gonzalez	Consulat général de Cuba	Johanne Lavoie	Ville de Montréal
Jason Hughes	Coop la maison verte		
Julia Sagebien	Dalhousie		

ANNEX 2: Notes from a presentation by NANCY NEAMTAM, Chantier de l'économie sociale, Montreal Workshop October 12, 2012

Quick Overview of the social economy (co-operatives and other form of collective enterprises) in Quebec

Alphonse Desjardins created first financial cooperative in Quebec offering credit to those who had previously had no access at the end of 1800's. The economic crisis of the 1930's saw the beginnings of agricultural cooperatives (produced cooperatives) supported by the church and local priests. Other coops (worker coops) developed in forestry.

In 1960, Quebec underwent a 'quiet revolution'. The election of a new government led to a rapid creation of public services (universal health care, public education for all, etc.). At the same time, citizens began to organize in neighbourhoods and villages to act collectively to improve the quality of life in their communities.

In the 1970's we began to see new forms of collective action through citizen mobilization. New services were developed through the non-profit model to respond to different needs. For example, tenant's rights groups became involved in developing cooperative housing. Rather than depending exclusively on private and public housing, cooperative and non-profit housing was developed and has been the main form of social housing...

In the 1970's women entering massively into the labour market needed access to daycare. Community mobilization led to the creation of parent-controlled daycare centres, mainly on the non-profit model. . This became the model for Quebec's universal day care system.

In the 1970's one of the major labour unions created a financial cooperative (credit union) known today as the Caisse d'économie solidaire. The union federation wanted to offer financial services to members. This credit union became very financially successful while choosing to offer financial services exclusively to collective organizations (cooperatives, non-profits which we now call the social economy and unions) and are now one of the top financial performers in the Desjardins movement.

In the 1970's, we also saw the creation of food cooperatives. Some, located in poor urban areas, failed. But many of the rural area food coops still exist and new ones are being added.

In the 1980's – Tight Finances Set New Directions

Financial difficulties facing the Province of Quebec of the 1980's created new incentives for the growth of social economy enterprises. We seized the opportunity.

Major labour unions and community organizations working in poor communities were looking for solutions to respond to the needs for jobs and new services. Realizing if you “just ask government”, won’t get too far, they took another approach: as citizen-based organizations, they decided to pursue a new direction and become economic actors.

One example of this is our labour unions – their role is not only to negotiate collective agreements but also to be active participants in economic development. An example is the Quebec Solidarity Fund, a pension fund, which must invest 60 percent of its \$8 billion in assets in the creation and consolidation of jobs in SME’s across Quebec. Through the intervention of the Quebec Solidarity Funds, the result is the creation of more jobs but also more transparency in how SME’s are managed, as representatives of workers will have access to all the information. Fond Action is another workers controlled pension fund created in 1996 that focuses on social economy enterprises, environmentally friendly enterprises and enterprises that practice participatory management,

Through these labour pension funds, unions began to become investors in their own enterprises. This represented an important shift in mentality (way of thinking) towards a solidarity economy: bringing all actors together to create employment, open economic opportunities and create social cohesion to revitalize communities.

Community Economic Development Corporations have been created as coalitions in all urban areas. Their role is to bring in and engage actors dedicated to the social and economic development of the community. This represented a shift in mindset from private sector control of the economy to greater citizen involvement and collective action within the heart of the economy to create more and more economic activity under citizen control.

1996 - Necessity Again Spurs Co-Op Engagement

In 1996, with the province facing 14 percent unemployment, the S&P rating agencies began pressuring the Quebec government to cut back in spending.

Often, in the face of crisis, communities are able to put forward a long-term vision. In response to financial pressures, a major summit was organized by the Quebec government bringing together all stakeholders — big and small businesses, government, the social sector — to consider how to stimulate employment. A working group on the social economy was created to look at ways in which government could work more effectively with the private Quebec’s civil society.

Today, Quebec’s social economy - coops, mutuals, non-profit associations – are part of daily life in a plural economy with strong participation from collective enterprises.

If we recognize the full potential of cooperatives as part of Quebec's social economy infrastructure and give them the proper tools, coops can play tremendous role in creating employment and responding to community needs (culture, environment, well-being, etc.).

The big gain from the 1996 financial crisis is that the social economy is now recognized by everyone as an integral part of the social economy infrastructure of the Province of Quebec. As a result, all public policy must take into coops into consideration in order that this form of enterprise can play a strong role/realize it's full potential.

As a result, in the past 15 years, there has been renewal in the growth of coops and NP's in many sectors of the Quebec economy.

In 1996, the Province of Quebec took several important steps forward:

1. The province formally recognized the social economy as an integral part of all public policy discussions.
2. The province formally recognized the need to develop a new legal framework for coops. At the time, there were no coops with a strong attachment to territory.
 - a. The province changed the law to create solidarity coops: one third of members no longer needed to be in direct relationship as user members but instead could come from the community, community organizations, and other interested bodies,

The advantage to solidarity coops was that when coops have social objectives, they are more effective at making connections with social organizations and bringing in expertise.

Today, the most frequent form of new coops are solidarity coops.

These cooperatives forge important links between local development and the coop model.

- b. Worker shareholder model cooperatives have also been encouraged.

Other Factors Supporting SE and Coop Development in Quebec

Other things had major impacts on the development of Quebec's solidarity economy.

One was a shift in local development policy with the recognition that the creation of economic activity could not rely solely on outside investors. The need to start local enterprises and help people start up local businesses was evident. Municipalities had to invest in local enterprise – they had no choice.

Investment fund associates – private, coops, non-profit, mutual - created the necessary infrastructure for communities across Quebec to allow people who wanted to start businesses to get the support they needed at the regional level.

Another important factor also emerging post-1996 was the development of specific financial instruments to support collective enterprises. Why specific? Because all the tools on the table were developed for the private sector model. Even if we wanted to access them, SE and coop actors did not offer high enough economic potential and returns for investors. Goal of cooperatives is to serve community, the goal of venture capitalists are to make profits. Coops and ENPs needed specific financial tools to attract capital.

Consequently, the public sector entity INVESTISSEMENT QUEBEC was mandated by the Quebec government to offer loan guarantees to coops and collective enterprises.

In 1997, the first investment fund dedicated to non-guaranteed loans for SE enterprises (coops, non profits) was created.

Sixteen years later, if you compare the portfolio of Quebec's SE actors to those of traditional private sector enterprises, we have clearly won the war. Our enterprises last longer and are better in paying back their loans.

The investment payback rate is remarkably higher. If the community builds something out of aspiration for community, it will do everything to keep it afloat and make sure it survives.

Innovative investment products were developed dedicated exclusively to social enterprises - e.g. a patient capital fund. The approach was never to do this *instead* of government but rather *with* government so government investors have a more long term and positive impact (social, environmental, cultural)

Fast Forward to Today

Today, the Province of Quebec has an economic system that supports the social economy. It is diversified. There are many actors: big, small, government, civil society. Some are dedicated exclusively to the cooperative model, others are more oriented towards the community development model. Quebec's social economy is a very complex and inter-related sector.

Today, there are two major organizations doing this work in Quebec:

1. Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité (CQCM) is the organization that brings together all Quebec cooperatives with sectoral and regional components and a mandate to support emergent coops.

2. Chantier.de l'économie sociale. Created at the 1996 summit, Chantier is based on recognition that if we want to have an innovative economy that brings together different elements of SE, we need to build networks of organizations. Chantier's mission is *to transform the economic model to put people back in centre of economy*. Its mandate is *to promote and also to work at developing the social economy*. The community chooses the legal structure that best fits their needs (e.g. housing? Daycare? Worker coops?). Under Chantier, organizations concerned with development have come together to work with stakeholders and social movements (labour, women, social) to create the environment, tools, training and support to allow people to meet their community needs.

One example is a reciprocal agreement with Montreal to support SE and coop ENTs in their purchasing and procurement policies. Similar alliances are struck with other municipalities, labour unions, pension funds and other investors. The creation of new financial instruments remains a priority, as is work with other researchers to learn from their successes and failures. Chantier is also working on access to markets (ongoing discussions with governments and municipalities to support SE) and on opening markets to more easily source products from SE's and ENPs. Chantier has also set up a transactional platform - Commerce Solidaire –to make it easier for consumers to support and buy from SE enterprises

Chantier collaborates internationally and had been inspired by (and build upon) initiatives from other countries - e.g. Brazil – that include micro credits and collective kitchens. Part of Chantier's international network is linked to social movements in Central America.

In Conclusion

It is time for public policy to be oriented toward forms of economy that put people first. The Social Economy has an extremely important role to play in delivering this.

We have regional orgs – coalitions similar to Chantier – that work hand in hand with local and regional government to move this forward. The challenge is how do we build on all this to scale up to become a more important element in Quebec? How do we build bigger coops and more coops? How do we enlarge the “coop space” within government?

Major values that are created when small community organizations contribute for example to environment... But how can we measure these values? This is an important question for all of us - how can we most effectively measure the positive benefits created by the social economy?

There are many examples. Government subsidized SE's for intellectually handicapped workers have a very fast payback. Funeral coops in Quebec resulted in a 30 percent reduction in the cost of funerals – holding the line against an invasion of big US funeral corporations.

The City of Montreal could have developed traditional policy with suppliers but instead it proceeded differently. Montreal developed partnerships with groups of social actors and together developed shared objectives that each - according their own means – committed to achieve; it is today a true partnership.

(The City of Montreal didn't create programs *per se*, it instead focused on operations: all available grant money is focused on public purchasing to buy more from SE actors. Montreal also has an internal campaign to familiarize city employees of the existence of SE products and services to promote staff support of SE. Only one of many actions government can take to create demand for the SE sector.)

Quebec's Local Development Policy requires all municipalities to fund local development centres. The governance of these centres varies; boards are made up of elected members but also members from the SE and private sector. Some are more open to coops than others; this really depends on local officials. Provincial law obliges them to support and invest in SE.

Quebec municipalities are now realizing – in urban but particularly in rural areas– how important it is that the social economy be used as a tool to have more control over the local economy – e.g. over natural resources. This requires changes to legislation. The first hurdle to this is to get local officials to understand why a local model is a good model for this community. This is becoming well accepted in communities across Quebec today.

Some small municipalities don't have luxury of developing policies for local citizens. In this case, what we see on the ground is municipalities that get involved in (for example) giving (or making available on long-term leases) lands for the development of local infrastructure. Municipalities can also lend – for example - buildings, personnel and machinery and engage in promotion of projects to members of community.

One of the things Quebec measures well is innovation. We can see this as coops occupy part of the market that is not occupied by private sector firms and discover ways to develop new markets. To forge new agreements between the unemployed or underemployed – e.g. domestic workers - to obtain better working conditions. To better serve an aging population.

The challenge is really to support organizational innovation to serve the collective good.¹ To create the opportunity for stakeholders to have a voice in the discussion. To create diverse places where actors can debate different development models. To give voice to citizens, unions, communities. To provide public services at the national, provincial and local. This is the function of innovation – in Quebec, we are committed to this goal.

¹ Two examples of serving the public good:

The City of Montreal is responsible for managing stray dogs and cats. Currently, this is undertaken by private enterprise. Private companies focused on economic performance have no interest in increasing costs for example by keeping animals in centres for very long so they euthanize quickly and the community is badly served. Montreal has asked SE to provide better model.

SE supports access to affordable and nutritious food in special neighbourhoods whose needs would be unmet otherwise. There are several SE models to allow low-income communities access to better nutrition (and in particular fruits and vegetables) that include a grocery store and a food counter.