

Grand forum des communautés résilientes
June 4-5, 2019
Quebec City
Séminaire de Québec



Call to action

Towards a real transformation of practices for more resilient communities

BACKGROUND

AT A TIME WHEN the mobilization of citizens of all generations, municipalities, First Nations and policy makers in the fight against climate change is at the heart of public debate.

AND AT A TIME WHEN science invites us to rethink and rebuild our relationship with nature and embrace the notions of complexity and uncertainty associated with climate change.

We need to implement **AMBITIOUS MEASURES** to make our communities more resilient with regards to climate change in addition to the efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. Governance, fiscal, regulatory and technical tools must be used to support the transformation of Quebec communities and to foster innovative solutions.

It is in this spirit that more than 250 stakeholders (municipal professionals, First Nations representatives, researchers, elected representatives, students, public officials and leaders of social and environmental organizations) met in Quebec City on June 4 - 5, 2019, during the *Grand forum des communautés résilientes*.

This call to action results from the co-creation work carried out at the *Grand forum des communautés résilientes* and serves as a clarion call to all those concerned with the adaptative measures ahead. It is inspired by the following observations:

- Several Quebec, Canadian and international communities have taken the necessary steps to build their resilience by focussing on the collaboration of various stakeholders around common issues and on the search for solutions.

- Many Quebec stakeholders are already working on adaptation and resilience and are organized around the Rés-Alliance which lets them create synergies and develop promising approaches.
- Collaboration and co-creation approaches encompassing multidisciplinary aspects (social, natural, health and applied sciences) enable the identification of innovative solutions.
- The successful implementation of measures within communities depends on the practical cooperation between the following stakeholders: researchers, practitioners and decision makers.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

To start a real transformation leading towards more resilient communities, the following taboos as to our ways of doing things must now enter the sphere of public debate:

Absence of a real risk culture

- Collective amnesia about past events and their psychosocial, economic and environmental impacts as well as the denial of existing risks hamper the transformation of our communities.
- Awareness and public education efforts about adaptation to climate change must be strengthened to initiate behavioural changes and promote social acceptability of the measures to be implemented and the accompanying public expenditure.
- Information on risk areas, natural constraints and socio-economic vulnerabilities are not readily available and shared with citizens.
- Current risk and contingency management practices, at the individual, corporate and political levels, are largely responsive, leave little room for retrospection and focus on short-term practices when crises occur.
- The notion of resilience is often too theoretical and compartmentalized and does not provide us sufficient opportunity to tackle social, economic and environmental issues.

Lack of clarity and complementarity in roles and missions

- The role of each stakeholder in community resilience is not clearly defined, which impedes the optimization of available resources and leads to a lack of accountability regarding decisions.
- Research is focussed on the production of scientific publications. The involvement of researchers is often limited and short-term and the competition between them to obtain funding is an indisputable reality. This leads to a lack of cooperation among research stakeholders, reducing opportunities for collaboration and synergy. Knowledge transfer to stakeholders and communities is thus lacking.
- There is no clear mandate or specific funding for border organizations to provide regional support to decision-makers in their adaptation efforts and in the use of advanced scientific knowledge.

- Current governance and decision-making processes at all levels do not adequately take into account interdependencies with neighbouring communities.

Lack of land use planning

- The relationship deficit between humans and their environment leads to the destruction of natural areas. Although climate change is often singled out, many of our current practices are ill-suited to Quebec's climatic context and are also responsible for damages incurred during floods, droughts or storms.
- Political and private influence in decision-making is, in some cases, detrimental to the adoption of sustainable solutions that go beyond political deadlines.
- The multiple measures and programs currently in place are poorly integrated and traditional silo management remains a significant barrier to resilience.

The economy must change and become a lever for adaptation

- Municipal revenues, based primarily on land value, promote development in sectors with high economic value but that are often at risk (e.g., flood zones).
- Municipalities lack the means to determine areas at risk, adapt to climate change and implement resilience strategies. Funding from other levels of government for this purpose is inadequate.

TO COMMIT: 6 COURSES OF ACTION

To build the resilience of our communities to face major water management challenges in the context of climate change, this call to action invites all stakeholders to truly transform our systems. To this end, six courses of action have been identified:

1. PUT THE COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF RESILIENCE

- Involve, in a balanced way, all stakeholders and citizens in the decision-making mechanisms.
- Sustain synergies between stakeholders to foster mobilization, the transfer of knowledge and the sharing of scientific and local data.
- Participate in devising solutions that integrate sociocultural, economic, environmental and health components.
- Accelerate the implementation of adaptation solutions based on a process of social learning, retrospection, change management and social acceptability involving ALL stakeholders.
- Develop the risk collective memory especially by leveraging artistic interventions.

2. SWITCH TO A RESILIENT LAND USE PLANNING MODE. The development of resilient communities requires a review of land use planning practices to:

- Encourage cooperation between regional county municipalities, watershed organizations, ZIP committees, regional round tables and environment

councils to foster a land use planning vision that takes into account interdependencies and issues beyond administrative boundaries.

- Promote consolidation of the territory built outside risk areas and avoid the sprawl phenomenon in natural areas.
- Develop existing planning tools so that they are proactive, adaptive and co-constructed to respond to environmental and climate changes.
- Foster the emergence of a shared, inclusive and coherent vision for the development of urban, agricultural and forested areas at the watershed level giving water its rightful place.
- Provide Quebec with a clear and shared vision for land use planning and update the legislative and economic guidelines and tools accordingly.

3. REVIEW THE TAXATION AND FINANCING ASPECTS OF MUNICIPALITIES to acknowledge, in particular, the contribution of natural environments by integrating the notions of ecological services and biodiversity. The diversification of municipal revenues appears to be essential to reduce the dependency on property tax.

4. ADOPT “NO REGRETS” MEASURES RIGHT AWAY. There is no reason for citizens, politicians and corporations not to take action. Preserving natural areas, widening buffer strips, voluntarily relocating homes at risk or securing drinking water supplies are all “no regrets” measures that will generate positive social, economic and environmental impacts.

5. INVEST MASSIVELY IN RISK PREVENTION. It is time to shift from a reactive crisis management mode to a proactive and anticipatory mode for extreme events such as floods and droughts, at the most appropriate territorial level (watershed, aquifer, etc.). In this regard, the following courses of action are to be considered:

- The development of action programs for flood prevention.
- The setting up of a support service for individual actions at the property level.
- The implementation of communication campaigns to develop the risk culture.
- The start of a major project on the relocation of residences and infrastructures at risk.

The short-term investments needed to implement these measures will significantly reduce financial and human costs in the long run.

6. END “MANAGEMENT BY ORDER” AND RAISE ACCOUNTABILITY OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS

- Each stakeholder’s mandate should be clarified, the resources needed to fulfil them secured and decision-making must be made accountable.
- The regulatory framework should be improved and applied in a clear, predictable manner free from political and private influences, based on regional realities.