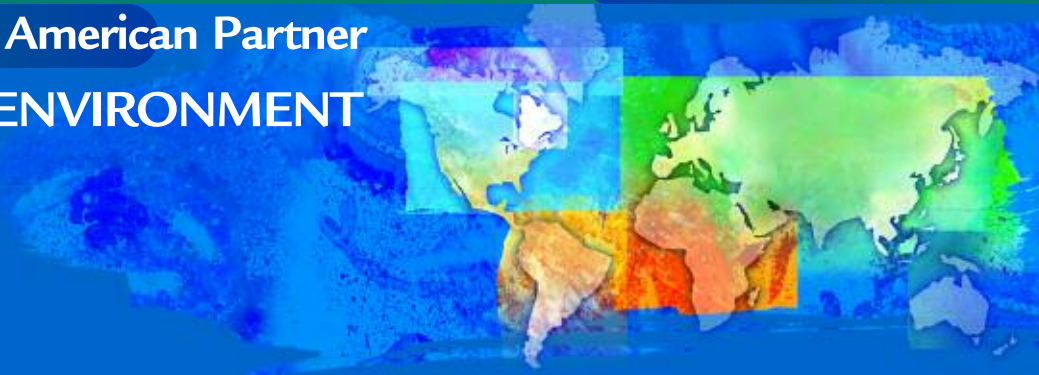


QUÉBEC: a North American Partner in the area of the ENVIRONMENT



QUÉBEC, like its American and Canadian partners, is facing a series of environmental issues relating, among other things, to water management, climate change and air quality. To meet these challenges, bilateral, regional and continent-wide cooperation has become a necessity.

Over the years, Québec has developed an environmental protection system to protect ecosystems and biodiversity and to prevent or reduce water, soil and air contamination. The Government of Québec took a new step forward by adopting, in 2006, the *Sustainable Development Act* and the action plan *Québec and Climate Change, a Challenge for the Future*.

Intergovernmental cooperation

Well aware of the transborder and international dimensions of many environmental issues, the Government of Québec is an active member of various intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms that are essential for protecting and improving the quality of the environment.

- **Membership in the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME)**

The CCME brings together representatives from the federal, provincial and territorial governments. It is the leading forum for discussing Canadian environmental priorities and agreeing on coordinated efforts in areas of shared concern. Provincial laws, regulations and programs are the main basis for the Canadian environmental framework, reflecting the provinces' extensive jurisdiction in the management of land and natural resources, including water.

- **Participation in the implementation of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC)**

The NAAEC is a binding agreement between the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners. It targets the protection and improvement of the environment in North America and the application and enforcement of the related laws and regulation. The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is headquartered in Montréal, Québec, and oversees the implementation of the NAAEC.

- **Participation in the work of the Canada – United States Air Quality Committee**

Québec is located downwind from various industrialized regions, and is keenly concerned about transborder air pollution issues. For this reason, it takes part in the work of the Canada-US Air Quality Committee under the Canada-US Air Quality Agreement. The Agreement sets various objectives for 2010, as well as emissions ceilings for acid rain and smog-causing atmospheric pollutants, with specific objectives for zones such as southern Québec.

Over 94% of the electricity produced in Québec is non-polluting hydroelectricity. This type of energy contributes significantly to limiting emissions of atmospheric pollutants and greenhouse gases throughout the northeastern part of the continent. On a per-capita basis, greenhouse gas emissions in Québec are about half the Canadian average and are close to the European Union level. Québec is also a Canadian leader in the field of wind-generated electricity, and intends to continue to develop its potential in this area.

Environment

Regional partnerships

Québec is an active participant in various regional forums that place great significance on environmental issues.

- **Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG/ECP)**

The Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers has adopted three joint action plans in the area of the environment, covering acid rain and air quality, mercury and climate change. Québec is a member of the NEG/ECP Committee on the Environment and takes part in work relating to the three environmental action plans.

The Acid Rain Action Plan targets a 20% to 30% reduction in nitrogen oxide concentrations by 2007, and a 50% reduction in sulphur dioxide concentrations by 2010. The Mercury Action Plan aims to reduce mercury emissions in the region by 75% by 2010. Last, the Climate Change Action Plan focuses on reducing the emission of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2010 and, by 2020, to 10% below 1990 levels.

The adoption of these plans has earned the NEG/ECP recognition as an international leader in its progressive and pragmatic approach to joint environmental actions.

- **Council of Great Lakes Governors (CGLG)**

Québec is an associate member of the Council of Great Lakes Governors and is particularly active in the CGLG's efforts in the areas of water management, the protection and rehabilitation of aquatic ecosystems and management of invasive, non-indigenous aquatic species. These issues are of crucial importance for the international watershed basin made up of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

In December 2005, Québec signed the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement with Ontario and the eight US states that border on the Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin). As part of the agreement, the ten governments are committed to act jointly to strengthen protection for water resources in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence with a view to sustainable development.

- **Great Lakes Commission (GLC)**

Québec has also been an associate member of the Great Lakes Commission since 1999, and a Québec representative has sat on the GLC's Board of Directors since 2002. The Great Lakes Commission is active in a number of environmental areas: water quality, dredging, invasive non-indigenous aquatic species, shoreline erosion, wetland protection, and brownfield site rehabilitation.

Cooperation with neighbouring states

The Government of Québec also places priority on close intergovernmental cooperation with bordering states. It has signed environmental cooperation agreements with its U.S. neighbours, namely Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and the State of New York.

These agreements favour exchanges of technical and scientific information and the prevention of transborder pollution. Joint management of transborder watershed basins and shared bodies of water is particularly important. Among other initiatives, Québec has signed a cooperation agreement with Vermont for the environmental management of Lake Memphremagog. Cooperation with respect to Lake Champlain is covered by a three-party agreement between Québec and the states of New York and Vermont.

SOURCES

Ministère des Relations internationales du Québec:
www.mri.gouv.qc.ca

Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs du Québec:
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