

Rural Horizon

Winter 2005

RURAL TEAM QUEBEC

Supporting the development of Quebec's rural communities—that has been Rural Team Quebec's mission ever since it began in 1998. The Team consists of representatives from about twenty federal departments and agencies, as well as representatives of key organizations working on rural issues in Quebec, such as Solidarité rurale du Québec, Sociétés d'aide au développement des collectivités (SADCs) [Quebec community futures development corporations], and the Table de concertation des Forums jeunesse régionaux du Québec [Quebec regional youth forums roundtable].

Rural Team Quebec works to create partnerships to mobilize stakeholders in Quebec's various regions around issues affecting their rural communities. The Team also provides information about programs and services offered in rural areas, and maintains a dialogue with citizens in these rural communities to better identify their local and regional concerns.

One of Rural Team Quebec's latest achievements has been to hold four Community in Action events. These events have enabled hundreds of community organizations to learn more about the programs and services offered by the Government of Canada, as well as to discuss the particular issues and problems faced by their regions in order to help their communities grow. The most recent Community in Action event was held in the Lanaudière region on November 18, 2004. At this event, some 100 community representatives examined issues that they regarded as priorities for the development of their region. As a result, a committee was later established to ensure that concrete action will be taken on the issues raised at this event, organized in partnership with the Table des partenaires du développement social Lanaudière, the SADCs of Lanaudière, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

For more information about Rural Team Quebec, visit our Web site at www.rural.gc.ca.

Third Fair of Villages: Seducing city dwellers

From February 4 to 6 this year, close to 60 rural municipalities set up shop in Montreal's Bonsecours Market to attract Montrealers who are pining for rural life. The event was the third Fair of Villages, presented by Solidarité rurale du Québec. It gives regional county municipalities all over Quebec a great opportunity to show what they have to offer and promote the idea of moving to rural communities.

Once again this year, city dwellers responded to this invitation from rural Quebec by coming out in big numbers. Over 4,000 people visited the various venues at this event. The "Place des projets" provided information about job openings and other rural business opportunities, while the "Place des villages" showcased numerous regional artists. The General Store had traditional local products and gourmet items, while the Conference Centre offered information on rural life.

Some visitors also attended a symposium, organized by Solidarité rurale du Québec, about a study now being done on the phenomenon of city dwellers who move to rural areas. This study, funded by the Government of Canada, will give a better understanding of why people move to rural areas and identify the conditions needed to welcome newcomers to rural communities and persuade them to stay. Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development, Wayne Easter, was pleased to participate in the official opening ceremony of this unique event that will help build bridges between rural and urban Canada. "The ability to not only attract urban Canadians to rural Canada but to help urban Canadians better understand rural issues and concerns is at the top of my agenda as Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development," said Mr. Easter.

As Jacques Proulx, the president and founder of Solidarité rurale du Québec, put it: "When we first raised the idea of this fair in 2001, some people looked at us as if we were a little crazy. But now many people share our view that rural living is an increasingly popular modern lifestyle option and that there are many people living in the cities who would like to move to rural areas to work, raise their children, and live their lives in a different kind of setting." With this year's theme "A Breath of Fresh Air," the Fair of Villages once again offered urbanites who are looking for a change the opportunity to visit a marketplace of villages where they can go to live in Quebec.



The Honourable Wayne Easter, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development

In this issue

- Rural Team Quebec
- Third fair of Villages: Seducing city dwellers 1
- Diversity and trust: Keys to rural development
- Rural Canadians speak their minds in Red Deer 2
- Inter-Community Harmony Project
- Forest Innovation Partnership 3
- Human Resource Centres of Canada for Students opening soon
- The social economy: A priority for the Government of Canada 4

The Third National Rural Conference

Diversity and trust: Keys to rural development

Rural communities need to understand the importance of cultural diversity and trust as keys to their future, former Red Deer Mayor Gail Surkan told delegates at the third National Rural Conference.

“Somewhere [during the conference], you will talk about the importance of immigration to rural communities,” said Surkan.

“If that, in fact, is a part of our future, the values that we develop around inclusiveness and respect for diversity will be one of the most powerful economic and social development tools that we can have.”

Surkan noted that rural communities have always been inclusive, but they’ve also been largely homogeneous.

“They (rural communities) have not really dealt with true diversity, and yet, the future of our rural communities will depend on being inclusive of many cultures, languages and values that may not be as familiar as those that we’ve historically had inside our communities,” she said.

The real challenge, said Surkan, is to be inclusive after being homogeneous for so long.

To do this, she said, a community needs to understand itself at a much deeper level than just its physical form. It also has to understand its importance and to design and plan for its survival.

Surkan also pointed to the need to understand rural communities “as essential living environments where people feel they have a sense of a shared future, where they have influence, where they work together to build common value systems.”

This, she said, would provide more effective ways to support the process of community development and sustainability.

In addition to inclusiveness, Surkan spoke of the need for communities to re-establish and strengthen trust and collaboration.

“We have to be...collaborative rather than adversarial,” said Surkan. “Many of us, especially here, in the west, are only one generation away from when we actually knew how to gather together to raise each other’s barns, or to share our resources to build the first place of worship, or to find a way through our family and community networks to support those that were less fortunate in our communities.”

Surkan added that collaboration and cooperativeness are among the most important values that show the importance of rural communities.

“We know that in our communities, a lot of what we have done in the past has depended on our ability to trust one another. Trust is an enabler.” As an example, Surkan highlighted the Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) comprising over 40 communities in central Alberta that banded together originally to work on economic development.

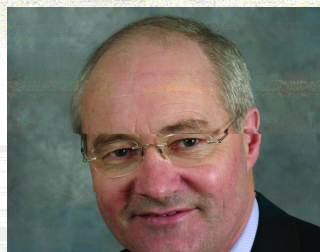
She said the partnership met the challenge of moving from a competitive environment to one where the future was seen as being shared.

This is a good example, according to Surkan, of communities who understand that they aren’t in this alone. If they are to succeed, they need to recognize the importance of supporting the entire network.



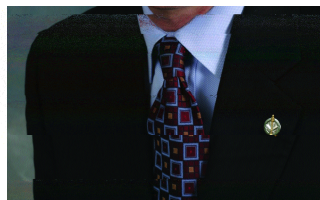
Mrs. Gail Surkan at the third National Rural Conference

Rural Canadians speak their minds in Red Deer



A message from the Honourable Wayne Easter, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food with special emphasis on Rural Development.

Rural Canada is where there’s heart and where there’s hope.



“We were offered jobs all over Canada, but we’re not going because we are where there’s heart and where there’s hope.”

What a great comment this was by a participant at the Third National Rural Conference held in Red Deer, Alberta in October, 2004. It reflects the passion rural Canadians have for those unique places we call “rural Canada.”

We saw a lot of this passion at the Red Deer conference. And we saw a lot of enthusiasm, drive and willingness to find ways to take action and build strategies to strengthen and sustain rural Canada. It is this sort of positive and forward-thinking human effort that will make a difference in rural Canada.

The National Rural Conference focused on five subjects important to rural Canada: entrepreneurship, community capacity building, infrastructure, northern issues and youth. Participants talked about projects going on in their communities, what makes them successful and what could be done to better support them and similar projects.

They spoke of the need for collaboration, partnerships and communication within and between communities, and the value of cooperatives in rural communities. They also spoke of the importance of long-term and stable government programs that rural communities could count on, and quality information they could use for planning. Increasing the awareness and understanding of the interdependency between rural and urban Canada was also raised.

Youth from rural communities made their presence felt throughout the conference. This began with a youth forum organized by the National Rural Youth Network, and continued throughout the weekend. Their message was clear and heartfelt: youth don’t just want to be listened to by government; they want the tools to be active and productive leaders in their communities. They also insisted that youth programs need to be developed with youth, not just for youth.

Northerners too were clear in their message: northern communities face many challenges, but northerners have the creativity and the initiative to overcome them. They are also great producers of wealth for the rest of Canada. The North needs government to supply the tools and the support they need to bring to life the vision they have for their communities. Northerners spoke of the need for infrastructure programs suited to their needs, streamlined governance, and for all levels of government to work together and to share information. They also spoke of the need for municipal governments to work towards common goals for both their community and their area.

As I said in my closing remarks in Red Deer, the fabric of this country rests in rural Canada. We are going to continue to build our communities in rural Canada because we deserve our share, because we are producers of wealth in this nation. Together we will build on what we have, and we will take action for sustainable rural communities — where there’s heart and where there’s hope.

Inter-Community Harmony Project: Fighting our prejudices together

by Sophie Cléroux and Sonia Tengelsen

In the Gaspé region, the English-speaking Aboriginal community of Listuguj and the French-speaking non-Aboriginal community of Pointe-à-la-Croix are physically separated by nothing more than a highway. In the past, this geographic proximity of the two communities, combined with the cultural differences between them, has repeatedly led to problems of racism, intimidation and harassment. Determined to reconcile the two sides, the Accès-Jeunes youth centre in Pointe-à-la-Croix, in co-operation with Listuguj Department of Educational Services, decided to launch the Inter-Community Harmony project.

This project began with the hiring of a co-ordinator to serve as a bridge between the two communities. To promote good relations between leaders and stakeholders in the two communities, a committee was also formed, with representatives from the Sûreté du Québec, the Listuguj Aboriginal Police Department, the Listuguj Band Council, and the municipality of Pointe-à-la-Croix, as well as from local social service agencies, schools, and youth centres. This committee succeeded in building a consensus around problems and issues related to young people in the two communities and in developing and implementing an action plan focused on preventive, educational, social and cultural activities.

Some 700 young people aged 5 to 19 have now benefited from this initiative, which included preparing a treaty between the two communities'



students and holding sensitization workshops on racism. These activities gave the participants a greater understanding and acceptance of each other's cultures and promoted reconciliation between individuals and healthier relations between the communities.

Following this project, there has been a noticeable decrease in racist behaviour, social tension, and verbal and physical violence among the communities' youth. According to Dominique Bouchard, who initiated the project, "before this project happened, it wasn't uncommon for a bunch of Aboriginal kids to come to the skateboard park and take it over, chasing away the non-Aboriginal kids who were using it. Then the non-Aboriginal kids would retaliate by committing acts of theft and vandalism in the Aboriginal community. Thanks to this project, we have seen a big reduction in this kind of intimidation and violence."

There has also been a noticeable improvement in communication between the various agencies and workers in the two communities.

The Inter-Community Harmony project enjoyed great support from many partners, including the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy, in co-operation with Sécurité publique du Québec. In 2003, this project received the Award for Excellence from the Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé [Quebec network of healthy cities and towns], as a project that had distinguished itself by the high degree of collaboration between its various partners, among other things.

For more information, contact Pierre Vicaire, project coordinator at (506) 789-3152.



Knowledge transfer in regions At the heart of the Forest Innovation Partnership

Innovation is the key to the future of forest-dependent communities in Quebec. To achieve this goal, research centres must make their expertise more readily available. The Forest Innovation Partnership's mission is to answer the needs of Quebec's forest-dependent regions and their communities by promoting innovative forest management through more effective knowledge transfer between researchers and users. This strategic alliance stems from an agreement between the Canadian Forest Service (CFS), FERIC and Forintek Canada Corp. with financial support from Canada Economic Development.



Workshop on controlling the white pine weevil and blister rust, Béarn, September 2004

The Forest Innovation Partnership is geared toward all forestry stakeholders interested in research and development, and knowledge and technology transfer. It targets small- and medium-sized businesses, such as forestry co-operatives, forestry group ventures, forestry developers and seedling production centres, which tend to be located in rural areas.



Workshop on controlling the white pine weevil and blister rust, Mont-Laurier, September 2004

The knowledge obtained through research conducted by the CFS, FERIC or Forintek is transferred via field demonstrations given by researchers, seminars, videoconferencing, trade publications and training activities.

In order to effectively reach forestry stakeholders, the Forest Innovation

Partnership relies on a network of regional partners consisting of some 15 organizations whose forestry expertise is renowned. They include forestry associations, educational establishments and organizations devoted to knowledge transfer. The role of regional partners is to help implement Forest Innovation Partnership initiatives in their respective areas and convey regional concerns to those overseeing the Forest Innovation Partnership.

Some of the most popular activities are workshops on controlling the white pine weevil and white pine blister rust, which occurred in a number of regions in 2003 and 2004, namely Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Estrie, Montérégie, Lanaudière, Laurentides, Mauricie and Outaouais. The purpose of the initiative was to inform stakeholders about the silviculture techniques developed by CFS researchers to counter these forest pests. Forest engineers and technicians working in private forests attended the half-day workshops and now have the information they need to adopt these innovative techniques in their forestry practices.

For more information, contact the Forest Innovation Partnership at (418) 648-5254 or visit its Web site www.partenariat.qc.ca.

SCF: Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada

FERIC: Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada

Forintek: Wood Products Research Institute of Canada

by Chantal Turbis, Canadian Forest Service

photo by Serge Leblanc, Forest Innovation Partnership

Human Resource Centres of Canada for Students opening soon for summer 2005

Most Human Resource Centres of Canada for Students (HRCC-S) will open for business on May 2 this year. Every summer for the past 37 years, over 250 students have been working at these approximately 90 service outlets located throughout Quebec, helping other students to find summer jobs.

If you are an employer, business owner or homeowner, HRCC-S invite you to offer a student a job this summer. Do you need a full-time employee, or someone who would be willing to spend a few hours doing odd jobs around your home or place of business? We know qualified students who are eager to help you out.

If you are a student, we encourage you to visit an HRCC-S to help prepare your résumé, or to see our postings for jobs in your region and throughout Canada. We can even give you the chance to take a practice interview.

One of the priorities of HRCC-S is to create employment opportunities for clients with special needs, such as students with disabilities and students who must overcome barriers to employment.



In summer 2004, HRCC-S received 52,724 job offers and filled 50,577 of them. The team of summer employment officers made several presentations to various organizations and educational institutions in their communities and held over 2,655 group information sessions.

For more information about the programs and services offered under the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy, call our toll-free Youth Info Line at 1 (800) 935-5555 or visit our Web site at www.youth.gc.ca.

The social economy: A priority for the Government of Canada

In its federal budget announcement in March 2004, the Government of Canada expressed its determination to help social economy enterprises in a number of ways, including giving them access to a range of programs currently offered to small businesses. It also provided new funding through pilot programs that will strengthen capacity building, financing and research for the social economy.

Social economy enterprises are run like businesses, producing goods and services. However, they manage their operations and redirect their surpluses in pursuit of social and community goals, such as affordable housing, skills development, promoting civic participation and addressing local environmental challenges.

Quebec's social economy is growing steadily. It includes over 7,150 enterprises (co-operatives and non-profit organizations) that have combined gross sales of \$17.2 billion and employ 124,000 people.

To support the social economy, the Government of Canada will invest:

➤ \$17 million over two years for a pilot program for community capacity building, including \$5.1 million for agencies that provide support to social economy enterprises in Quebec that will be launched this spring;

➤ \$100 million over five years to provide financing for social economy enterprises, including \$30 million for social economy enterprises in Quebec; and

➤ \$15 million over five years to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, to support research projects on the social economy.

These initiatives have been planned and implemented in consultation and co-operation with Quebec's social economy sector, so that they complement the activities of Quebec's main social economy organizations and of the Government of Quebec.

More information about this new program is available through your regional CED office (visit www.dec-ced.gc.ca for contact information).

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