



QUÉBEC'S SOCIAL ECONOMY

For over a hundred years, the social economy has left its mark on the development of Quebec. Cooperative organizations and enterprises of various shapes and denominations have contributed to the development of a more humane society and economy over the generations. A new generation of social economy organisations has met with remarkable success in recent years. The list of new projects and their impact on our communities is impressive: early childhood centers, homecare services, recycling centers, alternative agriculture, new technologies, community-based housing, social tourism and recreation initiatives, culture, communications, and more. A culture of collective entrepreneurship based on principles of democracy and solidarity has taken root throughout Quebec.

Today, over 7,000 social economy enterprises in Quebec of different sizes operate in over twenty different sectors of activities (arts and culture, agriculture and food, retail, environment, collective housing, leisure and tourism, information technology and communications, media, manufacturing, services to people, etc.). Collectively, they regroup over 150,000 employees, generate over 17 billion dollars in revenue, and account for around 8% of Quebec's GDP.

The social economy is supported by an innovative infrastructure of solidarity finance, local, regional and national government development organisations and institutions, and networks of actors including social movements that have worked together to foster its development. Together these efforts have entailed systemic support for the social economy that culminated in a framework law, adopted unanimously by Quebec's Parliament in October 2013.

DEFINITION OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

A social economy enterprise is an enterprise whose activities consist, in particular, in the sale or exchange of goods or services, and which is operated by a cooperative, a mutual society or an association, in accordance with the following principles:

- (1) the purpose of the enterprise is to meet the needs of its members or the community;
- (2) decision-making is independent of the government;
- (3) democratic governance by its members;
- (4) it defends the primacy of individuals and work over capital in the distribution of its surpluses and revenues;
- (5) it bases its activities on the principles of participation and individual and collective empowerment.

The social economy can be developed in all economic sectors in response to the needs and aspirations of communities.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF ENTERPRISE

- Social economy enterprises explicitly recognize the social dimension of the economy, as their principles and operating rules demonstrate.
- Because they maintain close ties with their local communities and regions, social economy enterprises are often in the best position to recognize and interpret emerging needs and make a concerted effort to meet them. They are the instigators of real social innovation that is often copied by the public sector and the market.
- The very nature of their mission leads them to pursue objectives that stem from a different rationality than that of traditional enterprises: social utility, individual and collective empowerment, community revitalization, job creation, etc.
- Imbued by a spirit of solidarity, social economy initiatives mobilize human and financial resources that are neglected by others.
- Because they do not have to answer to shareholders demand for maximum short term financial returns, social economy enterprises are more able to tie their development strategies and daily activities to objectives of sustainable development.

To read more about the SSE as a sustainable kind of enterprise click [here](#)

THE SOCIAL ECONOMY'S CONTRIBUTION TO RETHINKING THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The social economy is rooted in a broader vision of a plural economy that questions the traditional ways of viewing economic development. Rather than reducing the economy to a binary vision of either the private for profit sector or the public sector, , recognition is given to a vibrant social economy made up of citizen based enterprises led by civil society to protect collective interests. The two poles of Market and State are not the only engines of economic and social growth. Recognizing civil society's contribution to economic and social development leads to the notion of a plural economy that embeds economic development within society and merges economic, social and environmental goals.

Whether it is in the area of natural resources, services, manufacturing or culture and communications,, the challenge for the social economy movement is the same: to guarantee, in a context of market globalization, a collective say in our resources and in the way our communities' needs are met.

CHANTIER DE L'ÉCONOMIE SOCIALE

The *Chantier de l'économie sociale* is a permanent independent organization. Its mission is to promote the social economy as an integral part of Quebec's plural economy and, in doing so, to participate in the democratisation of the economy and the emergence of a new development model based on values of solidarity, equity and transparency.

A non-profit corporation, the *Chantier* brings together sectorial networks of the social economy, territorial networks from all regions of Québec, networks of organizations that work in support of the SSE (Local Development Centers, community economic development corporations, etc.), and major social movements (unions, community groups, cultural, ecological, and feminist movements). All together, the *Chantier's* Board of Directors regroups 35 members elected by 9 electoral colleges. In doing so, it facilitates communication and coordination amongst different economic actors in favour of the SSE.

Over the years, in collaboration with many partners, the Chantier de l'économie sociale has developed various tools to meet the needs of social economy organisations in a variety of areas: labour development (*Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre en économie sociale et action communautaire* (1998)), access to capital (*Réseau d'investissement social du Québec* (1997) and *Fiducie du Chantier de l'économie sociale* (2007)), research (Community-University Research Alliance for the Social Economy (2001-2011)), development and market access (*Commerce Solidaire* (2012)) and the transfer of best practices (*RELISS* (2012), *Territoires innovants en économie sociale* (2013)).

For a brief presentation of the Chantier's history and structure, click [here](#)

For the Chantier's English-language brochure, click [here](#)

HISTORY

The *Chantier de l'économie sociale* was created in March 1996, in the leadup to an *Economy and Employment Summit* organized by the provincial government. Partners at the summit in October 1996 requested that *Chantier de l'économie sociale* continue its work for two years to promote the concept and clarify the role and potential of the social economy, see to the implementation of social economy projects, and contribute to the development of policies and measures necessary to the future development of this sector.economy.

Stakeholders in the social economy decided in 1998 to make permanent the work group in charge of promoting and developing collective entrepreneurship. The *Chantier de l'économie sociale* thus became an independent corporation, with an organizational structure made up of a general assembly and a board of directors representing the various stakeholders in the social The broad and inclusive definition of the social economy adopted in 1996 was a key step not only for the recognition of past achievements but also for the realization of its potential in the future. The strong mobilization that resulted from the Summit no doubt contributed to a resurgence in the development of collective enterprises. The Summit of 2006 took act of this growth and restated the desire of all actors of the social economy for a development model based on solidarity.

Read the 2006 Declaration [here](#)

Today, the social economy continues to develop in Quebec and serve the needs of its communities. For example, around 100 social economy enterprises (half of which have a cooperative status and the other half an associative status) answer the needs of an aging population and employ over 6,800 people. Currently they provide services to 81,000 people, though this is expected to grow substantially in the coming years. At the other end of the spectrum, popular day-care centers, managed by parents and subsidized by government have developed throughout the province since 1997. Currently, the network regroups 1,000 CPEs that employ 40,000 people and serve the needs of 180,000 children.

The social economy is a source of significant social, economic and policy innovation. In order to learn from the best practices taking place, a center for the referencing and transfer of best practices taking place in Quebec was put into place in collaboration with other institutional actors in Quebec (Territoires innovants en économie sociale et solidaire). Another center created by the Chantier (RELIESS) monitors innovative public policy developments emerging internationally that enable the social economy.

TIESS: (website forthcoming)

RELIESS: www.reliess.org

FRAMEWORK LAW

Today, the social economy is recognised by government, labour, municipalities, the private sector and social movements as an integral part of the Quebec socio-economic infrastructure.

Representatives of the social economy (both the established and emerging sectors) participate in social dialogue at all levels (local, regional and national)

The framework law for the social economy, adopted unanimously on October 10, 2013, recognizes the current and future contribution of the social economy to Québec's development permanently includes the social economy in strategies to foster individual and collective wealth and confirms the role of organizations that represent it in the social dialogue. The framework law exists alongside a series of previous provincial laws, including the Law on Cooperatives, the Law on financial services cooperatives and the Insurance Act which governs mutual, as well as measures, programs and agreements that exist at the regional and municipal level.

The three main objectives of the law are:

- 1) to promote the social economy as a lever for socioeconomic development;
- 2) to support the development of the social economy by creating and adapting policy tools with a view to fostering coherence in government action and transparency; and
- 3) to facilitate access, for social economy enterprises, to the Administration's measures and programs.

For more information on the Quebec framework law, click [here](#)



CHANTIER DE L'ÉCONOMIE SOCIALE



SOCIAL ECONOMY:

IT'S ABOUT MONEY AND **HUMAN VALUES.**

FURTHER DOCUMENTATION

English language articles on the social economy in Québec available at:

<http://www.chantier.qc.ca/?module=document&uid=1059>

English language briefs on innovative policies for the social economy in Quebec available at:

<http://reliess.org/documentation-centre/?lang=en>

English language worldwide news on the social and solidarity economy available at:

<http://www.riposs.org/?lang=en>