



LE CLIMAT L'ÉTAT ET NOUS

Rethinking public action on the environment

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English version

THE PROPOSAL IN BRIEF

The findings set out in the Status Report document are clear and underline the urgent need for action: the consequences of climate change are already affecting us and government action on the environment is insufficient and sometimes inconsistent.

This proposal to reform environmental governance in Québec is intended to start the debate, not close it.

PRINCIPLES TO BE OBSERVED

We consider that, in order to succeed, environmental governance must be supported by institutions that observe certain principles, including :

- **A coherent long-term vision** enabling the development of strategic planning and ensuring consistency in the actions of government, the choice of priorities, and the allocation of resources towards the attainment of clear, measurable, explicit objectives.
- **Integration with economic development** so that environmental issues are understood and conceived of as a lever of development.
- **Decisions founded on science and traditional and local knowledge**, which requires a strengthening of research and information-sharing capacity, and communication that the population can understand.
- **Inclusive dialogue**. Because the efforts of citizens, communities, and businesses are essential if sustainable development is to become a reality, it is necessary to go beyond consultation held upstream of projects.
- **Continuous measurement, assessment and adaptation**, which will not only allow existing measures and programs to be corrected quickly, but also rapid adaptation to local realities, new knowledge, and world changes.

MODEL

To facilitate discussion, we are proposing a way to restructure government action that complies with these five principles. This model is not put forward as the only solution, but rather as the beginning of a process of reflection and debate on the subject. This is why not all aspects are defined with the same level of precision.

1. A long-term vision and purpose.

2. **Integrating, structuring laws.** The current *Sustainable Development Act* covers no more than 40% of the Québec government's actions. The law should be revised to cover the entire administration.

3. **Integrated, concerted management.** We propose the creation of :

- i. A ministerial committee on sustainable development bringing together all government departments concerned, including those responsible for economic and social matters, transportation, land use, municipal affairs, the environment, and energy.
- ii. Presided over by a **Minister of Sustainable Development** whose sole mandate would be to direct the committee and coordinate the actions of the machinery of government in this field.
- iii. Backed up by a *sustainable Development Secretariat* at the Ministère du Conseil exécutif, which would be responsible, in particular, for coordination and efficiency of sustainable development.

4. **Strategic planning.** Strategic planning would be conducted by the ministerial committee on sustainable development, backed up by the *Sustainable Development Agency* (see below); a committee made up of representatives of the regions; a committee made up of representatives of aboriginal peoples; and direct involvement of citizens and stakeholders

5. **Implementation.** The authors propose setting up a *Sustainable Development Agency* responsible for all files concerning, in particular, the fight against and adaptation to climate change, water management, sustainable development, biodiversity protection, etc.



The Agency would incorporate into a single structure such responsibilities as :

- i. Finance.
- ii. GHG emissions reductions and adaptation to climate change.
- iii. Water management, across the entire territory, supporting organizations in the field, such as the watershed organizations.
- iv. Support for innovation, action, and territorial operations lending technical, logistical and scientific support to initiatives of government departments, RCMs, local municipalities, industries, watershed organizations, nonprofits, aboriginal nations, and all citizens.
- v. Dialogues fostering concertation and action with communities, citizens and stakeholders.

6. Accountability / Rendering of accounts. This aspect is crucial and must be dealt with by :

- i. A Sustainable Development Commissioner, who would keep the current mandate. However, the Sustainable Development Commissioner must report directly to the National Assembly and develop a distinct approach.
- ii. An expert committee on sustainable development. Comprised of academics and backed by a small permanent team, this committee’s mandate would be to report to the Minister of Sustainable Development on the consistency of short, medium and long-term objectives for sustainable development, on progress towards the attainment of these objectives. It would also have a mandate to educate and raise awareness.

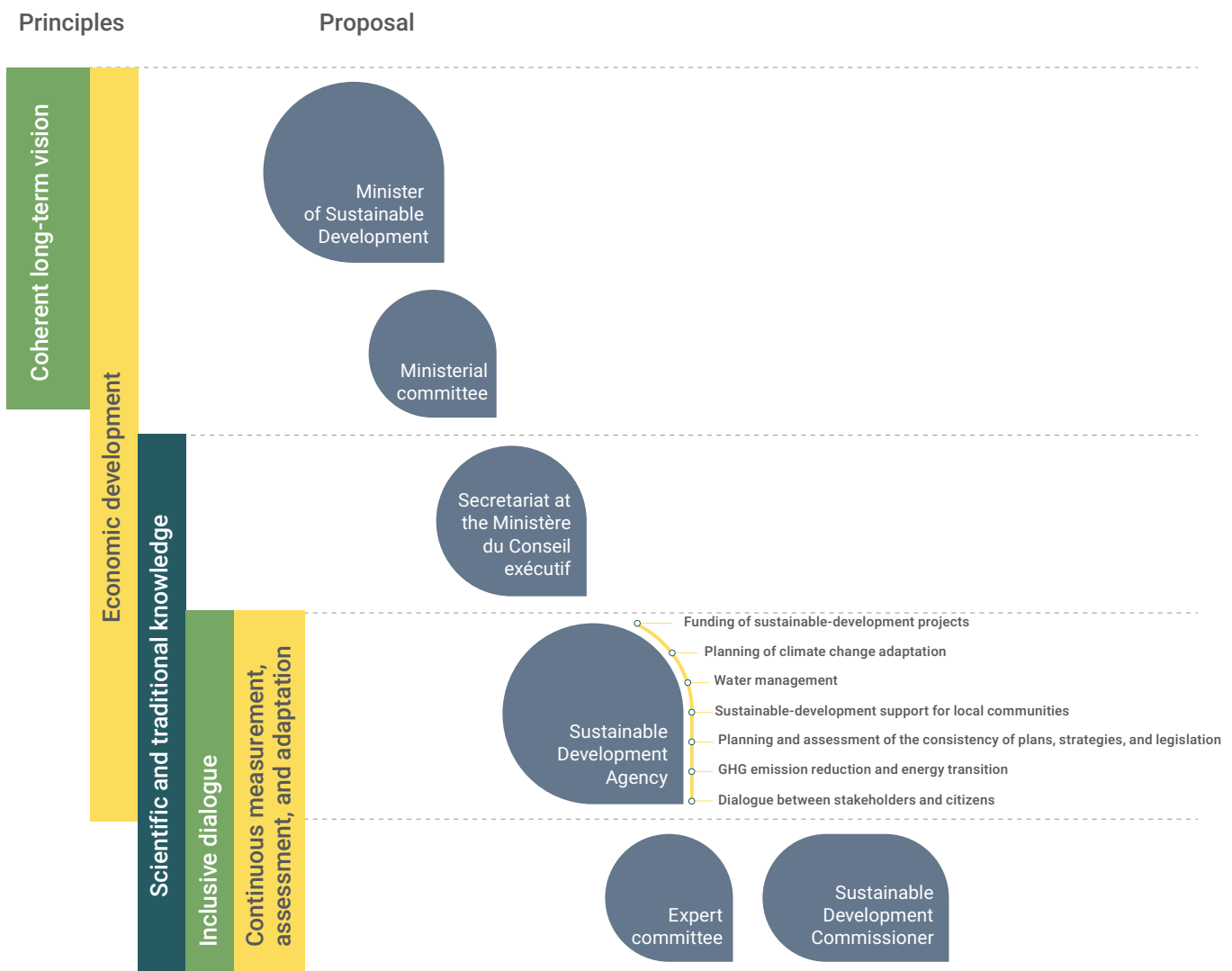


Figure 1 Graphical representation of the proposed structure.

About this document. This report was produced as part of a voluntary initiative by a score of academic experts; it presents a revised environmental governance framework for Québec. This initiative was launched in summer 2017 and is supported by Institut de l'énergie Trottier, the Chief Scientist of Québec, and Institut du Nouveau Monde. This proposal is intended to contribute to starting a debate aimed at engaging Québec society within a few months of the next provincial election. It has been developed by academics, and does not claim to represent everybody's position, nor to be the final word on the matter.

