



Summary - Synthesis

The programme of the *Together for a regional vision of sustainable development* conference was spread over two days. The first day allowed for the adoption of a common vision of sustainable development for the region while the second day was reserved to present tools and steps to take to help and speed up the implementation of sustainable development. Even if the resulting vision has yet to be completed, the conference was a high point for the Gaspesia-Magdalen-Islands region. The participants, partners and organisers contributed to the conference's success and made the event go far beyond the initial objectives.

Common Vision

Because the objective was to establish a concerted vision of sustainable development endorsed by the entire region, it was essential to have a truly representative participation. Mission accomplished! About 115 participants were on hand, many Francophones but also Anglophones and Micmacs. Geographic diversity was also accomplished with participants from the Magdalen Islands and from all of Gaspesia's MRCs. Finally, the presence of participants from different sectors of activity working together towards a common goal was notable.

The first day began with a regional diagnosis including a quantitative description, supplemental information on Micmacs and on Anglophones and finally a qualitative description that was essentially a regional summary (synthesis) of consultations. A specialist in sustainable development from outside the region then presented his analysis and thoughts. In conclusion, he suggested ideas and approaches to reach a common vision. A panel and a workshop followed by a plenary session allowed participants to react to the description presented and work towards a common vision. The day was to have ended with the statement of a common vision of sustainable development. This was not the case.

However, this was not a failure nor was it due to a disagreement. We must understand that a vision of sustainable development in a region as large and as diversified as ours must take into consideration numerous aspects. For this vision to be recognized and carried by regional players, it must be well prepared and be unanimous. To show the extent of the deliberations, we present here a few assertions:

Assertions

- There exists a disparity in the region in terms of knowledge regarding sustainable development. There is a disparity in how far the idea has progressed among individuals and organisations.
- The number and diversity of participants expresses not only the conference's success, but also the relevance of the process.
- The will to listen and understand in light of this diversity was exemplary.

- All of the participants showed real enthusiasm for sustainable development. All were aware of our region's exceptional potential to implement and accomplish true sustainable development.

- Some of the elements presented and discussed seemed to be unanimous among participants. The vision should include the following elements:
 - Maintain and improve quality of life
 - A healthy environment
 - A sustainable and concerted use of natural resources
 - Economic diversification to create and maintain jobs
 - Civic involvement

- After the first day, a vision statement was proposed. Participants agreed it was a good start, but it must be improved and then approved by participants.

Together, united in our diversity, to make the Gaspesia and Magdalen Islands Region a place favourable to the implementation of sustainable development known for:

- its healthy environment**
- its democratic involvement**
- its sustainable economy**

- Sustainable development is a long term process that requires local involvement and as such the regional co-ordination must follow the participants' rhythm so they can express themselves and own the results.

Implementation

The second day dealt with actions and the implementation of sustainable development. A vision is very important, but tangible actions are just as important. The earlier stages of the process demonstrated the importance of showing examples of sustainable development steps already taken or under way in Gaspesia and Magdalen Islands as well as implementation tools. The means needed to allow sustainable development to take shape aren't well known. There is no miracle recipe or implementation protocol available to ensure success. However, tools and procedures are available to guide actions. It is possible to use them and adapt them to the needs and reality of a region and its inhabitants.

The opening conference presented and analysed three very different methods of reaching sustainable development. It allowed us to identify the elements needed to proceed and

succeed. The morning's other conferences presented different tools and means to implement sustainable development with numerous examples where they were applied.

During the breaks and at lunch time, a dozen of such processes under way in the region were presented by participants using posters and information kiosks. This allowed for enlightening exchanges, information sharing and illustrated tangible examples of sustainable development.

The afternoon workshop, followed by the plenary, allowed participants to continue reflecting and exchanging on the subject of implementation. Since a common vision was not adopted the previous day, it was difficult to select priorities for the region. Many suggestions were nevertheless unanimous:

- The need to continue the process
- The establishment of a similar annual regional event (changing location in the region)
- Setting up a committee or a regional sector-related forum to ensure the process is followed-up
- The need to keep the main players on board
- The need to determine the vehicle, the beacon, to identify sustainable development

Moreover, many assertions were made regarding the implementation of sustainable development. Here they are:

- Tangible steps for implementation are too often associated with the environment; they must also reach economic and social realms.
- Tangible short term steps must be taken at the local level.
- Regional actions are more complex and must be initiated in the short term but target mid and long term results.

At the end of the conference, many participants completed the voluntary commitment agreement. They committed themselves to accomplishing an action of their choice, either on a personal or professional level, during the next year.