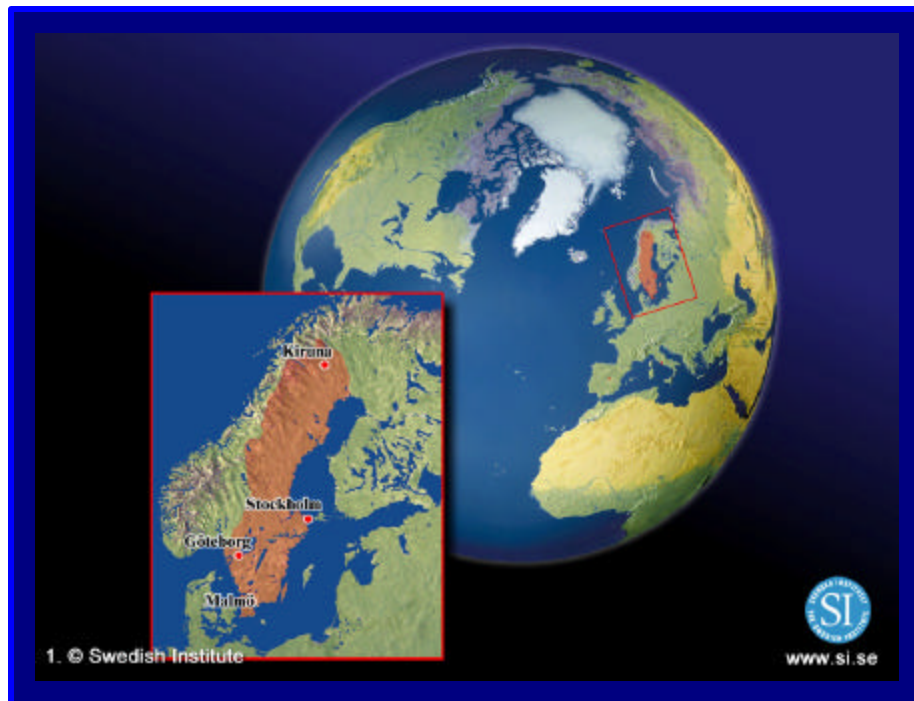


MONTÉRÉGIE'S DELEGATION OF WOMEN TO SWEDEN

MONTÉRÉGIE (QUÉBEC/CANADA)/ SKÅNE (SWEDEN)



MONTÉRÉGIE'S REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

MAY 2003

Project Title: Delegation of a women's regional committee from Montérégie (Québec, Canada) to Skåne (Sweden), which is to study the opportunity to build an international network and foster partnership between groups working on various women issues on a regional scale.

Mission Committee: The mission is organized by the Regional committee on women's issues from Montérégie, Québec, Canada (**CCFDRM**), under the umbrella of the organization called *Conseil régional de développement de la Montérégie* (Montérégie's Regional Development Council), the **CRDM**, responsible for fostering a partnership in all sectors at the regional level.

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Spokesperson: Louise Gagnon-Lessard (**CCFDRM**'s president)

Coordinators: Kim Cornelissen and Annie Morin

THE CCFDRM COMMITTEE

Members: Created in 1996, the committee has 24 members representing several networks dealing with regional issues. Six members come from the Quebec's government.

Mandate: The main mandate is to upgrade women's daily life in Montérégie, by working on projects and group activities at the regional level, which are based on their needs and realities. As a leader in women-related issues at the regional level, committee members are often invited to give conferences, workshops, or to take an active role in other committees, whether regional or national (Québec).

Fully supported by the **CRDM**, the **CCFDRM** plays a proactive role in sharing their expertise and tools developed in key sectors at the regional level (see the list of networks below). The committee also promotes equality within the **CRDM** structure: equality policy, gender analysis in projects, women and men co-presidency in decision-making commissions and committees, etc.

Networks:

- Réseau des élués municipales de la Montérégie (politics)
- Réseau des organismes non-traditionnels de la Montérégie (women working in traditionally « male » work)
- Réseau des femmes d'affaires de la Montérégie (business)
- Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail de la Montérégie (workforce)
- Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie (health and social care)

Sectors:

- Politics (municipal, local and regional level)
- Education, training and employment (women working in traditionally “male” work)
- Business and women’s entrepreneurship
- Health and social services
- Poverty, housing and food safety
- Family and Work harmonization
- Youth
- Agriculture and rural life

THE MISSION

Main goal:

The CCFDRM wishes to build an international network with Swedish women's groups and networks, to help fasten the changes toward a real equality between women and men, in all development sectors involving women.

Hypothesis:

Based on a study on Sweden regional development and equality measures, the **CCFDRM** has made the following hypothesis: rural and urban planning, choices of regional development priorities, and significant actions evolving around those planning tools, benefit from the quasi-equality between men and women at all governmental level structures (national, regional and local). What are the positive impacts of these measures and the challenges that are still to come? How can this knowledge and these regional development measures can be imported to Québec and adapted to our reality? At which governmental level do we need to make changes?

Québec Context on Regional Development, by Sector:

Although most levels of government in Québec have been implementing legislation to promote women and men equally, and even though many programs and proactive measures target social-democratic goals, there seems to be a very wide gap between the results obtained in Québec in comparison to Sweden, more specifically considering regional development. Even if that dynamic approach confirms the **CRDM** leadership in equality measures in Québec, there are still many problems in all sectors studied.

Decision-making structures:

- **Local and regional structures**
Few women are taking their place in decision-making structures. There are only 10 % women mayors (19) and 23 % woman councillors (223). The 19 women mayors represent only 4 % of the total population in Montérégie. Moreover, in local and regional decision-making structures, most seats reserved for elected representatives are only available for mayors (as opposed to councillors). This situation makes it almost impossible for any woman with children to play her role as mayor, because she also has to be a member of many committees, without much money. Often, these mayors are the only elected women in these committees, and they face isolation, prejudices and frustration in regard to the selected development priorities.
- **National politics**
Québec has a national political structure based on the British system, a single-member plurality system, saying candidates are elected without a list, in one turn. Women who want to be elected depend highly on the willingness of parties, and the idea of mandatory parity, as it is the case in France, is not very popular yet. Although Québec's vice-prime minister is a woman, Mrs Pauline Marois, no actual party leader is a woman, neither in Québec nor even in Canada.

Education, training, employment and entrepreneurship

Women are mostly studying and working in very few branches labelled as "traditionally feminine"; also, women entrepreneurs lack appropriate expertise, networks and financing while trying to cope with running a business, raising kids and doing domestic chores.

Agriculture and rural life

In Montérégie, the agriculture industry and the price of land are increasing; thus, making it very difficult for young farmers to find the investment needed to own their farm. This situation is even more difficult for women since parents' owners are usually quite reluctant to transfer the family farm to their daughters.

Industrial farming also creates a lot of tension between farmers and rural residents not involved in agriculture. The first ones need to have bigger and bigger farms, and the second ones want to raise their children and live in a healthy and peaceful environment. Few efforts have been taken to find a solution to the ever-growing gap between the two realities.

Housing

For those who do not own their home, social housing and cooperatives are also very difficult to implement, considering that many town councils have prejudices against these housing solutions and do not want to address the issue. Nevertheless, in the midst of municipal fusions and major reforms of metropolitan planning in 2001, these problems have to be resolved with equity, both at the regional level (in terms of location) and at the human level (in regard to the access for those who need it).

Poverty and violence toward women

The group *Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie* is a regional coalition of women that networks more than fifty women's organization throughout the region of Montérégie. These groups work to better the conditions of women regarding health programs and social services in Quebec. The incidence of poverty is more frequent for women than for men and studies have shown that poverty has a negative impact on mental and physical health. Furthermore, women are the principal caregivers for dependants (children, seniors, parents and disabled individuals).

For the past five years, women of Quebec have been coping with the negative consequences of the implementation of the reform on health care. This reform has for objective of reducing the duration of the hospital stay when patients most remain in the establishment for more than 24 hours. Therefore a proportion of 70 to 80% of women are the persons who now most take care of the elderly. This has major impacts on their economic situation and also on women's own personal health.

Regarding violence against women, the Quebec government has adopted in 1995 a policy that recognizes violence as a major social problem. The government recognizes the feminist approach as being good way to combat violence towards women. Although measures have been put in place, the number of conjugal violence cases have risen approximately as much as 19% between 1997 and 2000. For these reasons, women's groups from all over the region have demanded from the government more financial support and a campaign promoting the prevention of violence against women.

Family and Work Harmonization

The government of Québec has put different measures in place to ease the work and family organization for women and men. These measures include : for children under 12, parents pay a maximum 5\$/day fee for day-care centres, financial and technical support is available to set up daycare centres, financial and technical support for implementing municipal or regional family politics is also available, promotion is made to share chores and children care duties between both parents, and finally, promotion is also made for enterprises to facilitate family and work hamonization. All these measures talk a great deal about the importance of family and child quality of life in Québec. But despite these programs and measures, there is still a great deal to do, since it is still women who predominantly take care of the children, the disabled and the ageing families, thus stopping them from being in the decision-making structures and making them lose business opportunities.

The mission, in summary:

Date: May 12th to May 22, 2003

Members and sectors:

Emilie Blais	national politics and youth
Suzane Cormier	family and work harmonization
Kim Cornelissen	municipal and regional politics
Jacinthe Dubien	women resource centre; health and social services
Louise Gagnon-Lessard	poverty and food safety
Claire L'Heureux	women's entrepreneurship, cooperative and social economy
Annie Morin	women and regional development structures
Caroline Nantel	women working in traditionally « male » work
Johanne Nasstrom	women's violence and poverty
Raymonde Plamondon	agriculture and rural life

Region studied: Skåne, Sweden

Mission objectives:

Each of the following objectives is both in relation to Women's issues and Regional Development issues:

1. *Build an international network of Women working in regional development;*
2. *Make a comparative portrait, between Montérégie and Skåne, on Women issues and regional development sectors (transport, housing, sustainable development, social economy);*
3. *Apply measures in Montérégie, based on Swedish successful measures, and initiate regional discussions on Montérégie's methods of planning in a context of decentralization and municipal fusions.*