



Public Policy Profile

POLICY: The Montréal Social Economy Plan

DATE INTRODUCED: Formally known as Building Montréal 2025: A Social Economy Partnership for Community-based Sustainable Development was initiated in 2006.

JURISDICTION: Municipal (Montréal)

INTENDED OUTCOME: According to the Plan, “the purpose of the partnership is to consolidate actions and increase the City’s support for Social Economy enterprises, in particular by calling on their services or involving them more regularly. The City intends to increase the share of goods and services obtained from Social Economy enterprises in the City’s budget, while complying with the applicable regulatory requirements.”

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The partnership has three goals:

- To formally acknowledge the contribution made by the Social Economy to Montréal’s development.
- To support the Social Economy by building on past achievements, strengthening existing means and developing new approaches that will allow it to flourish.
- To consolidate and increase the contribution by players in the Social Economy to sustainable development in greater Montréal by fostering and creating community-based enterprises meeting its citizens’ needs.

The plan is a lever for economic growth based on five strategic directions:

- Support for community-based entrepreneurship to strengthen local roots, support community-based entrepreneurs, and foster major Social Economy projects.
- Encourage contribution by the Social Economy to major projects, to encourage its integration from a sustainable development perspective.
- Encourage contribution by the Social Economy to improve quality of life so as to continue innovating in such areas as culture, sustainable development, housing, community-based property development, recreation and tourism.
- Support business practices to encourage the growth of Social Economy enterprises.
- Promote the Social Economy to showcase our creativity at home and abroad.

SIGNIFICANCE

According to Mendell, “one of things that is really important that came out of the committee was getting people to understand what the Social Economy is within the municipal administration. It is not known, it is not understood, and it fell under the umbrella of the division in the City that looks after economic development. So once you’re in an economic area your challenge is even that much greater. This a very traditional notion of what CED means. One thing we decided would be very useful to do was an inventory of the existing engagement of the City of Montréal with the Social Economy without them having named it, or without having them set that as an

actual goal. It was about \$31 Million dollars. Close to one percent of the City spending was already spent on the Social Economy initiatives, so that was really important because it meant that the City wouldn't have to be convinced that this was something entirely new. It was more to show what the areas are and where they have already been doing it. That allowed for a spring-board to then look at very specific areas that the City could get engaged. There were five strategic directions that were identified, and they were broad but I think it was a really important step."

According to Margie Mendell "this is a unique initiative in that it didn't end up a measure of policy instruments (i.e procurement, etc). The clear objective was to establish a partnership between the City and the Social Economy actors. This partnership would be the policy measure adopted in that the partnership would allow for on-going dialogue with concrete objectives in concrete areas. The partnership was the direct outcome of these meetings and I think that is quite unique. What the partnership does is recognize the role of the Social Economy towards development in Montréal. The partnership makes a commitment to support the Social Economy, to consolidate what exists and to promote new areas and always linking this to sustainable development by encouraging and promoting community-based initiatives and enterprises. And that was the general vision of this partnership. There is now an openness to talk about the Social Economy at the municipal level."

REPLICABILITY

For Mendell there is not 'one right answer.' Instead, it is the process of co-construction of policy that is important and leads to positive outcomes. "Rather than to say 'we have done this perfectly and this is how you do it', there is no replacement for these sorts of what I call 'diologic spaces.' It is an intelligent way to develop public policy, much more efficient from the point of view of government, and from the point of view of actors it is extremely useful to be around the same table to be able to express needs, it increases the visibility and recognition of the capacity of the Social Economy to do things well in many sectors. How this spans out in many settings of course varies because it is not every case that you'll be able to create these sorts of environments. However, we argue vigorously for these intermediary spaces that don't replace representative democracy and elected officials, and so on, but that these spaces are created where you can better draft policy and that is going to reflect the needs and aspirations of actors, and is going to increase capacity to do a better job".

"These institutional spaces can be replicated...but there has to be the willingness...in some places the political culture doesn't lend itself to that but that doesn't mean it's impossible, it's just harder."

INTERVIEWS

Margie Mendell, Associate Professor and Vice-Principal of the School of Community and Public Affairs, Concordia University.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://ville.Montréal.qc.ca>

Profile by Crystal Tremblay, research assistant, Canadian Social Economy Hub
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