

SITUATION REPORT

2023-2024

*for Gaspésie's socio-ecological transition
to carbon neutrality*

- Short Version -



Prepared by
Collectivités Zéro Émission Nette Gaspésie

May 2024

This is the abridged version in English of the document published on May 22, 2024.

The full version, as well as the abridged version in French, can be found at the following address:

<https://www.pourlatransitionenergetique.org/le-projet-collectivite-zen/czen-gaspesie/>

Territorial recognition

In this document, the Gaspé Peninsula has been chosen for strategic and practical reasons, but we recognize that the lands where we carry out our activities are part of the traditional unceded *Mi'kmaq* territories, and linked to the 1760-61 Peace and Friendship Treaties.

Acknowledgements

It would be impossible to list all the people and organizations who have contributed to the development of this document without the risk of forgetting some. To all of them, we express our deepest gratitude.

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Credits

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Lead organisations

Direction régionale de la santé publique GÎM

Conseil régional en environnement de la Gaspésie

Solidarité Gaspésie

Partner organisations

CIRADD (centre de recherche en innovation sociale spécialisé en développement territorial durable)

Regroupement des organismes communautaires Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine / Corporation de développement communautaire (ROCGÎM-CDC)

Conseil de l'eau du nord de la Gaspésie (CENG)

Réseau en développement social de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RDS-GÎM)

Table de concertation féministe de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Environnement Vert Plus

Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles (recherche et enseignement)

Pôle d'économie sociale GÎM

Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA)

Syndicat Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN)

Le mouvement ACTES -CSQ



An initiative of Québec ZéN, a project of the **Front commun pour la transition énergétique.**

Summary

This report provides an overview of the Gaspé region and its population, and **summarizes available information** on climate-related issues in the Gaspé peninsula. It includes a chapter on vulnerabilities to climate hazards in the region, one on GHG emissions, and a section on existing research on the subject.

In addition, as part of the process of co-constructing and deploying a regional multi-actor action plan for a socio-ecological transition, this document aims to present **the information needed for the steps to come**. The identification of the region's main, secondary and innovative stakeholders according to 14 themes sets the table for consulting and mobilizing stakeholders towards the planning and operationalisation of transition trajectories (Chemins de transition)¹.

Scope and limits of the approach

1- This inventory is first and foremost a mobilization tool. It has been designed with the intention of initiating dialogue. It has been developed with best practices and within the limits of our resources. The collaboration of any other organisation is welcome for making improvements to this document in the coming months. Thank you for sharing your comments with us using [this questionnaire](#) (in French).

2- The actors (organisations) identified in this document (chapter 5) have not been consulted, but simply identified by our partners according to their links with the themes developed in the roadmap for Quebec's transition to carbon neutrality v2.0.

¹ This term is defined in the glossary in the long version of the document, in french.

Introducing the project

Collectivités Zéro Emission Nette Gaspésie (CZÉNG) has been active since March 2022. It is one of eight Collectivités ZÉN in place in Quebec at the time of writing. These Collectivités ZÉN are an initiative of the Front commun pour la transition énergétique du Québec, a broad coalition acting in favour of the socio-ecological transition.

CZÉNG's mission is to inform and encourage dialogue in order to co-construct and achieve a socio-ecological transition aimed at ending dependence on hydrocarbons that will bring resilience and social justice based on our power to act collectively in the Gaspé region, unceded Mi'gmaq territory linked to the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1760.

This situation report is the first step in a process called “chemins de transition” (transition trajectories), which will enable us to move from the current state (situation) to a desirable vision of our collective future (determined by the population) through a series of milestones to be achieved over the next few years.

The aim of this situation report is to draw a global portrait of the region and its populations, and to produce a synthesis of the information available on issues relating to climate disruption in our region.

Climate-related changes are numerous, varied, interrelated and evolutionary, affecting all the systems and ecosystems, populations, production, infrastructures, etc. that make up our daily lives. Nothing and no-one will escape the effects of these changes, even if we manage to limit the temperature rise caused by our greenhouse gas emissions to 1.5°C.

Summary and highlights

The Gaspé peninsula and its people

- A mountainous peninsula surrounded by sea, far from the major centers of Quebec;
- Three Mi'kmaq communities present on the territory for several millennia;
- Three linguistic communities: Mi'kmaq, English-speaking and French-speaking;
- The lowest rate of socio-economic vitality in Quebec;
- The highest average age and the highest proportion of people over 65 in Quebec;
- The lowest graduation rate in Quebec;
- The highest rate of home ownership;
- Several portions of the territory identified as "food deserts";
- Quebec's largest fishing industry;
- Wind power installations equivalent to 28% of Québec's installed capacity;
- Innovative public transportation for a rural region, but lacking in many areas;
- The "happiest people in Quebec", who have a strong sense of community, are welcoming and close to nature.

Vulnerability to climatic events

- Vulnerability is the "propensity or predisposition of a population to suffer damage if exposed to a hazard"² (St-Germain et al., 2023). It involves factors of psychosocial and territorial sensitivities, exposure to climatic hazards and adaptive capacities.
- Our weak points in the Gaspé peninsula are primarily :
 - the already high and growing percentage of elderly people;
 - the socio-economic level of our MRCs is among the lowest in Quebec;
 - the coastal location of a large part of our population and infrastructure;
 - the fact that there is only one main road, making people's mobility and the deployment of services in the event of an emergency very risky.
- Our strengths include :
 - strong social and community support and a real sense of belonging;
 - a homeownership rate approaching 73% (the highest in Quebec);
 - an increasingly clear desire in some MRCs for participatory governance;
 - the commitment of numerous citizens' groups concerned with the environment, the territory, climate change or improving social justice on the territory.
- **Vulnerabilities related to coastal or riverside hazards (high risk)**
 - **Coastal submersion**, affecting more than a third of the Gaspé coastline, with all MRCs affected.
 - River **flooding**, especially due to increased precipitation and atypical precipitation events, particularly in the Rocher-Percé MRC.
 - **Coastal erosion**, already underway and exacerbated by the loss of ice cover, the strength of storms and rising sea levels.
 - The **psychological, social and economic impacts** are considerable.
 - **Damage to infrastructure** (municipal, road, residential, commercial, etc.) and **ecosystems** (beaches, wetlands, riparian ecotones etc.), and compromised public **safety**.
 - Seniors, people with lower incomes or living in exclusion, and those with mental health problems, are at greater risk of suffering significant consequences.
 - The main economic activities established in coastal areas, notably fishing and tourism.
- **Medium-risk vulnerabilities**
 - **Salinization of drinking water**: due to coastal submersion, sodium levels in groundwater are rising. Already, 76% of wells sampled exceed the recommended value.

² Propensity or predisposition of a population to suffer damage if exposed to a hazard

- **Extreme heat and heat waves:** will cause multiple health impacts, particularly in people with existing chronic illnesses, young children and the elderly.
- **Brush fires:** drier conditions will lengthen the fire season, and increased lightning activity means that we can anticipate greater risks, especially near forests.
- **Hydric and agricultural drought:** occasional and recurrent droughts are forecast. The distribution of groundwater is unknown, and a reduction in the quantity and quality of drinking water is expected. We also anticipate a drop in agricultural production and psychosocial repercussions for farmers and the general public.
- **Increase in disease vectors and infectious diseases:** the emergence of diseases of animal, human or environmental origin is expected. The development of insect pests, invasive plants and exotic diseases is also anticipated.
- **Lower risk vulnerability**
 - **Air pollution:** the cascading effects of various sources (pollution, fine particles, smoke, etc.) could have an impact on the health of the most sensitive populations.
 - **Pollen and allergens:** given the lengthening of the growing season, seasonal allergies will be longer and more severe.
 - **Avalanches:** despite the reduction in snow cover, the snowpack will be more unstable due to the new winter conditions.

GHG emissions

In Quebec :

- Total GHG emissions in Quebec amounted to 77.6 Mt CO₂ eq. in 2021, representing an 8.9% reduction from 1990 levels.
- Energy consumption in the form of hydrocarbons generates 68% of Quebec's GHG emissions. Petroleum products are burned mainly for transportation and to heat buildings.
- 32% of GHG emissions come from non-energy sources. These include gases from industrial processes in product manufacturing (17%), agriculture and gases from animal digestion and manure, as well as fertilizers and liming (10%), and the waste sector (5%).
- The industrial sector is responsible for 36% of GHG emissions, when emissions from energy (19%) and manufacturing processes (17%) are combined.
- Road transportation's share of total emissions has increased over the past decade. This is due to three trends: an increase in the number of vehicles, an increase in the number of SUV-type light trucks, and an increase in the number of heavy trucks.
- The results in terms of GHG reductions are insufficient to meet the targets set by the various levels of government. However, some progress has been made, and certain measures are particularly effective when the necessary efforts are deployed.

In the Gaspé peninsula:

- The St Marys Cement plant in Port-Daniel-Gascon is Quebec's largest GHG emitter. In 2020, this plant alone was responsible for 1.6% of the province's total emissions.
- Gaspé is the region of Quebec with the highest motorization rate (number of vehicles per inhabitant), and is among the regions with the highest proportion of light trucks in the personal vehicle fleet.
- The data required to draw up a portrait or inventory of the Gaspé peninsula's GHG emissions are not currently available. What is currently available is highly fragmentary and incomplete. Lastly, the absence of information by sector of activity only allows us to raise certain questions.
- The household carbon footprint calculated by CIRAIG will shed new light in this context. It will give us a general idea for the Gaspé region as a whole, but also identify any differences that may exist between the 5 MRCs, and highlight disparities between households according to income.

Overview on climate change research

- Three themes are developed:
 - The effects of climate change and hazards;
 - Impacts of these hazards on society and the economy;
 - Possible adaptations, mainly to reduce vulnerability.
- Reducing GHG emissions is not a dominant research topic. Mitigation strategies generally involve decarbonization programs aimed at companies, ministries or municipalities.
- Over the past decade, half of all research on the Gaspé region has focused on coastal erosion and flooding, mainly from an adaptation angle.
- Some projects, such as those in the Baie-des-Chaleurs and Percé, pay particular attention to citizen participation and community development.
- Other regional research topics include fisheries, municipal governance, climate data, forest ecosystems and climate change communication strategies.

Mapping out the stakeholders

- More than 160 organizations identified as key stakeholders in 14 themes;
- These Stakeholders are identified by their peers, the Collectivités ZéN Gaspésie partners.
- 14 themes that represent the foundations of the "Feuille de route pour la transition du Québec vers la carboneutralité - Roadmap for Quebec's transition toward carbon neutrality" and that rally all of Quebec's ZéN Communities;
- A database, inevitably incomplete, that nonetheless provides a starting point to identify potential collaboration between organisations working on the project;
- Organisations grouped into three categories across the 14 themes:
 - Key stakeholders, with their capacity to regulate, legislate, frame practices, etc;
 - Secondary stakeholders who operate within the themes and know how they work;
 - Innovative stakeholders who intervene creatively to promote change towards socio-ecological transition.
- Mainly regional organisations, many of which include local organisations. These organisations vary in their vocations, missions and actions.
- MRCs (and municipalities) are identified as key players in 12 of the 14 themes, and secondary players in another.
- Other regional organisations stand out for their capacity to intervene:
 - Conseil régional de l'environnement (proposed in 9 themes);
 - Direction régionale de la santé publique (6 themes);
 - Réseau de développement social GÎM, Environnement Vert Plus, Solidarité Gaspésie and CIRADD, already partners of CZéNG, received between 4 and 6 nominations;
 - Tourisme Gaspésie and the Union des producteurs agricoles received 4 and 5 mentions respectively;
 - Ministries: MELCCFP, MRNF and MÉIÉ;
 - Of course, there are many others.
- Each theme counts between 12 and 29 identified partners. On average, there are 5.5 "must-have" organisations, 10.9 secondary organisations and 2.8 "innovative" organisations in each theme.
- The identification of future partner organisations is not yet complete. Along the way, we'll be putting new partners in touch with each other, to ensure the full participation of civil society in the Collectivités ZéN's "transition trajectories - Chemins de transition".

Conclusion

*« What's the point of accumulating all this new knowledge
if it doesn't help us to revisit our idea of what we are
of who we are and who we could become -
if it doesn't allow us to rediscover the meaning
of our third basic freedom
the freedom to invent social realities
never before experienced?
»*

*David Graeber and David Wengrow, Au commencement était...
Une nouvelle histoire de l'humanité, LLL, 2021*

How do you conclude a first step? You don't conclude a start. You organize it, you plan it with a team.

When the desired destination takes us to less-frequented waters, the adventure calls out to us. Our quest for a better way of life in a fair and equitable world must be built together. Together, here, on the land we hold so dear!

Stormy winds await us. Worry, fear and dread tug at our heartstrings. We know it's possible to fail, but we also know that a positive transition is within our grasp. Societies that are more egalitarian and better integrated into their environment have already succeeded in developing on our planet.

Our knowledge, our history, our intimate connection with nature, our will, our desire to be happy and the solidarity that drives us are our sails to our destination.

Next steps in the process

Firstly, over the next few months, we will hold **future exploration workshops** throughout the region, with a wide range of demographic groups, to develop a shared **vision** of a desirable future for our region that coheres within the planetary limits and considers human needs.

Then, we will co-construct "transition trajectories - Chemins de transition" between our starting point, the "current situation", and the arrival point, the "vision", by identifying the milestones to achieve it: in other words, actions (chronologically staggered along various major transformation axes) that enable planned and realistic progress.

Then, with these major trajectories mapped out over the long term, we will need to select the milestones on which we will take priority action over the next two years, and specify the actions to be taken according to concrete, measurable objectives. We will then have an operational plan for transition in the Gaspé peninsula.

Finally, once planned, the stages (milestones) of these "transition trajectories - Chemins de transition" will be **implemented**, or "operationalized": for each milestone, the identified stakeholders will be mobilized and invited to get down to work. An important element of this stage is the support for change by the population, who have themselves formulated the ultimate goal of the journey. This mass support legitimizes the systemic transformations and facilitates acceptance of the new proposals. Throughout the process of operationalising the "transition trajectories - Chemins de transition", the approach and its results need to be re-evaluated to ensure updating, coherence and overall success. This evaluation loop makes it possible, in particular, to update the operational plan every two years according to the evolution of the issues at stake and the indicators put in place.

We hope that this inventory will contribute to the construction of common ground that encourages, stimulates and invites dialogue. It's an invitation to co-construct and implement a socio-ecological transition, by relying on the collective power to act in the Gaspé region. Together, let's set course for a resilient and socially justice-fostering way out of our dependence on hydrocarbons.

It's arranged. Don't miss the boat!