



February 17, 2012

Workshop on municipalities of the future: Strategic Advisory Panel submits report to the UMQ

The report of the Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ) strategic advisory panel – the *Comité des sages* – was submitted today to the UMQ board of directors by panel members Claire l’Heureux-Dubé, Lise Bissonnette, Jean-Paul L’Allier and Guy LeBlanc. According to their prefatory note, “In March 2011, UMQ president Éric Forest asked us to make recommendations about municipalities of the future and the role of elected officials in this new reality. Our work and discussions have raised some twenty findings and recommendations. We are delighted to share these with you. We hope our report will contribute toward social progress and greater democracy in Quebec’s municipalities.”

The report includes 9 findings and 14 recommendations on governance and citizen participation, as well as on municipalities’ financial and administrative autonomy – all clearly and concisely presented.

Claude Béland, the advisory panel’s fifth member, states that “Municipalities in the future will be less numerous, more populous, more concerned about ethics, more democratic and active in promoting civic competence among their citizens, more efficient, and more independent and responsible through the powers conceded by the central government.” (Mr. Béland is currently out of the country and was not present for today’s submission.)

According to former Supreme Court Justice Claire l’Heureux-Dubé, volunteerism is a major tool for social development. “If citizens are the heart and life of the city, and if the city exists for its citizens, then citizen involvement is essential.”

Lise Bissonnette points out that, “The more global our concerns, the more our hopes matter on a human scale. Cities and towns, large and small, are the context where these hopes are best expressed and must find answers. Our elected representatives are on the front line in this work of solidarity.”

The former head of the Quebec Municipal Commission, Guy LeBlanc, has high expectations: “The municipality of the future will be a mutually supportive online community, where citizens and their elected representatives work in harmony to build a city that is cultured, welcoming, enterprising and financially sound, where the government makes use of modern management practices that respect its citizens’ ability to pay.”

In a concluding comment on democracy at local levels, Jean-Paul L’Allier, whose in-depth political experience covers both the municipal and provincial sectors, says, “Ethics is primarily a matter of personal values, attitude and conviction before it is an object of legislation, regulation and control. Local democracy and transparency are essential for informed decision making, but representatives must make decisions within their sphere of competence and not seek an impossible consensus.”

The strategic advisory panel’s report is available online at livreblancmunicipal.ca.

STRATEGIC ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS

Claire l’Heureux-Dubé

Throughout her long career, justice Claire L’Heureux-Dubé has worked on behalf of the equality and advancement of marginalized groups in Quebec and Canada. She is a former judge of the Quebec Superior Court and the Quebec Court of Appeal, and a former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, where she worked to promote the fundamental values of equality, universality and access to justice. Claire L’Heureux-Dubé has received numerous awards and honours, including among others the Touchstone Award (*Prix Les Assises*) of the Canadian Bar Association (2003), the Yves Pélicier Award of the International Academy of Law and Mental Health (2002) and the Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award presented by the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession (1998). Claire

L'Heureux-Dubé was made a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2003 and is the recipient of several honorary doctorates.

Lise Bissonnette

Author, journalist, editor, analyst, administrator, Lise Bissonnette has concentrated on her own writing and research projects since 2009, after a career that has included executive positions at the head of major Quebec institutions. From 1990 to 1998, as editor in chief of *Le Devoir*, she successfully re-launched the fortunes of the Montreal daily where she earlier built her distinguished career as a journalist. She went on to found the Grand Bibliothèque du Québec, a merger of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec and the Archives nationales du Québec, which together form the largest cultural institution in the province. She holds nine honorary doctorates and is an Officer of the Ordre nationale du Québec and an Officer of the Légion d'Honneur in France.

Claude Béland

Throughout his career, Claude Béland has been very active in the cooperative movement in Quebec, which he helped to found. In 1971 he joined the Fédération des caisses d'économie du Québec, becoming its chief executive officer in 1979. Under his leadership, the movement shifted toward de-compartmentalization of its financial services and experienced major growth. He is now associate professor in the School of Management Sciences at the Université du Québec à Montréal, a guest lecturer at the Institute of Research on Cooperation at the Université de Sherbrooke, and a member of the board of governors of Université Laval. He is also the former chairman of the board of the Mouvement d'Éducation des Actionnaires (MEDAC) and of the Mouvement Démocratie et Citoyenneté. He is the author of numerous articles on cooperatives and other economic and social issues, and has lectured extensively in Canada and other countries. In 1995 he received the Association of American Communicators Award, and holds many other distinctions and honours.

Jean-Paul L'Allier

Jean-Paul L'Allier is a member of the law firm of Langlois Kronström Desjardins of Quebec City and Montreal. He has been a guest lecturer at Université Laval, where from 2006 to 2010 he was active in teaching and research at the School of Land Use and Regional Development, as well as in the departments the Political Science, Geography and Information and Communication. He was a cabinet minister in the Quebec government from 1970 to 1976, holding at various times the portfolios for Recreation, Youth and Sport, Communications, Public Services and Cultural Affairs. He was Quebec delegate general in Belgium from 1981 to 1984 and honorary Belgian

consul in Quebec City from 1984 to 1988. In 1999 he was elected mayor of Quebec City, where he held office until 2005. Jean-Paul L'Allier has received numerous honours and titles, including Honorary Doctor of Laws from Université Montesquieu Bordeaux IV (October 2002), Commander of the Ordre de la Pléiade (Ordre de la Francophonie et du dialogue des cultures, March 2003) and Doctor *honoris causa*, Université du Québec (May 2006). He has been an Officer of the Ordre national du Québec since June 2004 and its vice chairman since January 2011.

Guy LeBlanc

Since 2005, Guy LeBlanc has been president and CEO of the Bécancour Industrial Park and Port Corporation. He is a former chairman of the Quebec Municipal Commission, and served as city councillor of the City of Trois-Rivières from 1982 to 1990, when he was elected mayor, a post he held until 2001. He is a former co-chair of the provincial coalition "Les Arts de la Ville" (The Arts of the City), and has also served as vice-chairman and chairman of the board of the UMQ. He was also the founder and president of the Sainte Maurice River Basin Management and Development Corporation. He was in professional practice as a notary from 1972 to 2000.

Source:

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