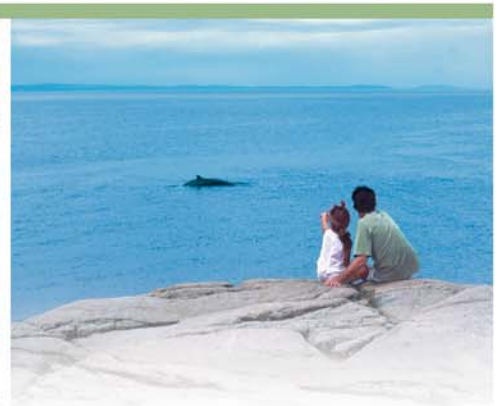


# Integrated Management of the St. Lawrence



**Governance Mechanisms**

**March 2007**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE CANADA–QUEBEC AGREEMENT ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

On behalf of the partners of the St. Lawrence Plan, we are proud to provide you with this report, which summarizes the governance mechanisms proposed for launching the implementation of integrated management of the St. Lawrence River (IMSL).

IMSL is a major commitment undertaken by governments under the Canada–Quebec Agreement on the St. Lawrence 2005–2010. While pursuing the objectives of protecting and restoring natural environments, ensuring the public's participation in improving the St. Lawrence ecosystem and mobilizing communities around issues, such as wetland protection and shoreline access, this new phase of the St. Lawrence Plan will lay the foundations for a new, more inclusive and participative governance model. The public and users are seeking to become more involved in decisions determining the long-term development of the St. Lawrence River.

The St. Lawrence River is still subject to “historical” pressures and is faced with an increasing number of complex problems, such as controlling exotic species and climate change. Uses of the river are more intense and varied, which has resulted in conflicts among users in some areas. Managing protection, restoration, enhancement and development initiatives related to the St. Lawrence River has become a complex challenge that must be met by everyone.

The governance mechanisms set out here were developed by taking into account the opinions of a number of organizations who will be invited to do their part by serving on the St. Lawrence Committee or the regional round tables that will be established. We are in the process of launching the implementation of IMSL by creating a provisional St. Lawrence Committee, which will develop the mandates and operations of the official St. Lawrence Committee in greater detail, as well as determine the conditions for establishing St. Lawrence round tables. The successful implementation of IMSL depends largely on your commitment, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your continued interest in the future of the St. Lawrence River.



**Albin Tremblay**  
Chair for Canada, St. Lawrence Plan



**Pierre Baril**  
Chair for Quebec, St. Lawrence Plan



# 1

## TOWARD A NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL

The St. Lawrence River is one of the world's major rivers, a key waterway that is a source of life of unparalleled richness. Defining this river's importance to Quebecers is difficult, however. Here are a few figures: the St. Lawrence River's watershed covers approximately 45% of Quebec's territory, with more than 99% of Quebecers living in the watershed<sup>1</sup>; 60% of the province's population lives directly along the banks of the river, which supplies most of them with drinking water.

Significant economic activities are sustained by the St. Lawrence River and the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence. Some activities are expanding steadily, while others are in the process of being developed. Such activities are often related to regional development. With respect to the natural environment, the St. Lawrence River compares favourably with other major rivers in the world. More than 500 protected areas are found in and around its islands, archipelagos, shorelines and riverine lakes, not to mention its marine and aquatic environments. The fact that the St. Lawrence's natural sites are becoming increasingly popular with tourists is a clear indication of the river's remarkable richness.

Nearly 20 years of joint government action stemming from the four phases of the St. Lawrence Plan have generated tangible socio-economic and environmental spinoffs, including better water quality, public participation in improving the

St. Lawrence ecosystem and the mobilization of riverside and coastal communities for defining local issues and carrying out targeted initiatives.

Nevertheless, the St. Lawrence River remains a fragile, complex ecosystem. A number of problems persist, while new issues are emerging, requiring a more integrated and participative governance model.

Here are some examples of current or emerging issues of concern to governments, the scientific community, user groups or the general public:

- Climate change;
- Integrated development of recreational tourism;
- Sustainable development of shipping and recreational boating;
- Sustainable exploitation of marine resources;
- Urban clean-up;
- Wetland protection.

The above list is not exhaustive, nor does it weigh the relative importance of each issue. The issues listed here are intended to demonstrate the need to improve our way of doing things and adopt a more integrated, participative and consistent management approach that takes greater account of the St. Lawrence's carrying capacity<sup>2</sup>.

1. Calculations made using data from the Institut de la statistique du Québec and corresponding to the total population and surface area of the province of Quebec, minus the population and surface area of the Nord-du-Québec Region (10). [http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/regions/profils/region\\_00/region\\_00\\_an.htm](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/regions/profils/region_00/region_00_an.htm)

2. The issues are listed in alphabetical order.

Government partners have recognized this need and the *St. Lawrence Plan for Sustainable Development* provides a first-rate framework for the collaborative implementation of new government mechanisms designed for this purpose. It is over the course of the current phase of the St. Lawrence Plan that this desired change will occur among user groups, municipalities and the public, as well as the government partners affected.

What is the purpose of integrated management of the St. Lawrence (IMSL)? What are the challenges? Which territory will be subjected to IMSL? How is IMSL defined?

### 1.1 Defining integrated management of the St. Lawrence River

The integrated management of the St. Lawrence River (IMSL) is defined as follows:

*Integrated management of the St. Lawrence is a permanent process based on the cooperation of all decision makers, users and civil society in planning and ensuring better alignment of protective measures and the use of resources of this important ecosystem, from a sustainable development perspective.*

The integrated management of activities in a given territory first involves taking into account the authority and powers of resource managers and the accountability of elected officials and governments. This does not involve transferring responsibilities, but rather having user groups and civil society exercise tangible influence at every stage of the decision-making process and during the planning of initiatives that will be implemented.

“Integrated management of the St. Lawrence” (IMSL) is based on the responsible, collaborative involvement of civil society, user groups and public decision makers in selecting and implementing activities and programs that affect the St. Lawrence River and its resources.

“Consensus-building” is the preferred decision-making tool in the IMSL process. It implies equity and gives consideration to the roles of stakeholders and their respective capacities.

Government initiatives are set out in government mandates. The proposed governance process requires the “ongoing participation” of other stakeholders. The process must be “permanent.” IMSL makes it possible to go beyond the limits of legislative and regulatory initiatives.

The concept of the sustainable development of the St. Lawrence River is based on the definition set out in Quebec’s *Sustainable Development Act*:

*Within the scope of the proposed measures, “sustainable development” means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is based on a long-term approach which takes into account the inextricable nature of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development activities.*

*(Quebec Sustainable Development Act, chapter 1, section 2)*

### 1.2 The purpose of IMSL

The purpose of IMSL is to manage activities and uses affecting the St. Lawrence River in a more integrated and participative manner in order to ensure the well-being of communities and the sustainable development of the St. Lawrence River.

This implies taking into account the ecosystem’s carrying capacity, the more integrated management of activities and programs in the various sectors of Quebec society, as well as the greater participation of users, civil society and municipalities in decision-making and activities affecting the St. Lawrence River.

Whether the issues are of an environmental, economic or social nature, or a combination of any of the aspects of sustainable development, integrated management of the St. Lawrence involves meeting at least four major challenges, as follows:

- **Continuing activities for the protection, restoration and clean-up of the St. Lawrence River.** In order to improve and maintain the



environmental conditions of the St. Lawrence ecosystem, activities launched more than thirty years ago must be continued.

■ **Ensuring the sustainable development and enhancement of the St. Lawrence River.**

The IMSL approach supports current uses and openness to new sustainable economic and social perspectives, taking into account the carrying capacity of ecosystems. It is based on the needs of riverside and coastal populations and of all Quebecers in general.

■ **Acquiring knowledge for ensuring informed governance of the St. Lawrence River.**

Knowledge is acquired through collaborative knowledge gathering activities, knowledge sharing, and co-operation among decision-makers, the scientific community, user groups and civil society. Territory-based management requires a better understanding of the ecological, physical, socio-economic and cultural processes and how these processes function in relation to one another.

■ **Having all stakeholders participate in the decision-making processes and consensus building.** The active and joint participation of decision makers, user groups and civil society in the decision-making process results in mutual influence, more consistent initiatives, and a feeling of collective responsibility that will lead to a more informed governance of activities and uses related to the St. Lawrence River.

### 1.3 Territory targeted by IMSL

IMSL is a territory-based approach. IMSL covers the fluvial (freshwater) stretch and estuary of the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence within the province of Quebec.

Although IMSL focuses primarily on the Quebec portion of the St. Lawrence River, the governance mechanisms that will be implemented for the river will have to ensure functional ties with integrated management organizations concerned with the Great Lakes, tributaries or the portion of the Gulf outside Quebec that are established throughout the watershed. Figure 1 that could be found at the end of the document sets out the territory

targeted by IMSL (inset) and, in greater detail, areas overseen by existing consultative bodies concerned about the St. Lawrence River in Quebec.

Geographical limits on the south shore stretch from the Ontario border to the Magdalen Islands and the Quebec portion of Chaleur Bay, while geographical limits on the north shore stretch from Carillon to Blanc Sablon, including the Saguenay River Fjord and Anticosti Island.

IMSL targets the St. Lawrence River territory, as defined above, and related resources. The physical environment includes the main water course, the river bed, shores, the littoral, wetlands and barachois, approximately 600 islands and archipelagos, riverine lakes, the Saguenay River Fjord and the mouths of close to 250 tributaries.

The vast territory covered by the St. Lawrence River is characterized by great cultural diversity, issues related to the environment or economic development, and the natural characteristics of each region.

In order to implement IMSL, it appears critical to divide the territory of the St. Lawrence into different “areas.” The purpose of this is to allow for the development and implementation of integrated management plans focused on common issues and issues specific to each area, by adopting consensus-building as the main decision-making tool.

The division of the territory is primarily based on existing Areas of Prime Concern or ZIPs (zones d'intervention prioritaire). Three sections of the St. Lawrence River are not currently overseen by ZIP committees, namely the areas north of Montreal, the Charlevoix and the northern part of the Gaspé Peninsula. However, the division of the territory will also have to be reviewed so that existing consultative bodies, such as watershed organizations and integrated coastal zone management committees, are taken into account.

St. Lawrence “areas” will be delineated with ZIP committees, Stratégies Saint-Laurent and territory management organizations, such as MRCs and metropolitan communities, as needed.

## 2 | PROPOSED GOVERNANCE MODEL

In order to implement more participative and integrated governance, it is proposed that governance be based on existing mechanisms, but adapted to the context of IMSL. The mechanisms in question are: The Canada–Quebec Agreement on the St. Lawrence 2005–2010, ZIP committees,

Stratégies Saint-Laurent, watershed organizations and integrated coastal zone management committees.

The proposed IMSL approach is based on seven guiding principles, which are set out in detail in Table 1.

TABLE 1: GUIDING IMSL PRINCIPLES

<b>Collective heritage</b>	<i>It is essential that the St. Lawrence River be recognized as a key part of our collective heritage that needs to be preserved for future generations.</i>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<i>Collaboration is a way of functioning that promotes discussion, the dissemination of information and the commitment of all interested parties in order to carry out programs or activities.</i>
<b>Representativeness and balance of power</b>	<i>Any round table or organization involved in implementing integrated management must represent existing interests within the targeted geographic area and ensure there is a balance of power so that no community of interests can control debate and decision-making.</i>
<b>Respect for jurisdictional authority and rights</b>	<i>The jurisdictional authority of governments is respected under IMSL. Since integrated management is a voluntary process, it must not infringe on recognized Aboriginal rights or treaty rights or comprehensive land claims, nor should it interfere with collective and individual rights.</i>
<b>Precautionary principle</b>	<i>When there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty must not be used as a reason for postponing the adoption of effective measures to prevent environmental degradation<sup>3</sup>.” In addition to this capacity of the state, governments are responsible for taking action when necessary.</i>
<b>Respect for ecosystem carrying capacity</b>	<i>“Human activities must be respectful of the support capacity of ecosystems and ensure the perenniality of ecosystems<sup>4</sup>.”</i>
<b>Informed, collaborative decision-making</b>	<i>Decision-making must be based on the best available knowledge, be it scientific, technical or traditional, and must take the mandates and responsibilities of the participants (accountability) into account. Consensus-based decision-making is given priority.</i>

3. Sustainable Development Act, chapter 2, section 6(j).

4. Sustainable Development Act, chapter 2, section 6(m).



The two major components of the IMSL are:

- A national St. Lawrence round table, provisionally called the St. Lawrence Committee<sup>5</sup>, which will be comprised of members of the Management Committee of the Canada–Quebec Agreement on the St. Lawrence 2005–2010, other representatives of the federal and Quebec governments, as well as representatives of municipalities, First Nations, user groups and civil society;
- Regional round tables, called St. Lawrence round tables, which will be established by ZIP committees.

A governmental support team will assist the St. Lawrence Committee and the St. Lawrence round tables.

## 2.1 From the existing structure to the proposed IMSL organization

Managers recognize the concerted efforts and excellent collaborative work and initiatives carried out in the field by community organizations concerned about the St. Lawrence River, such as ZIP committees and integrated coastal zone management committees. They also recognize the efforts

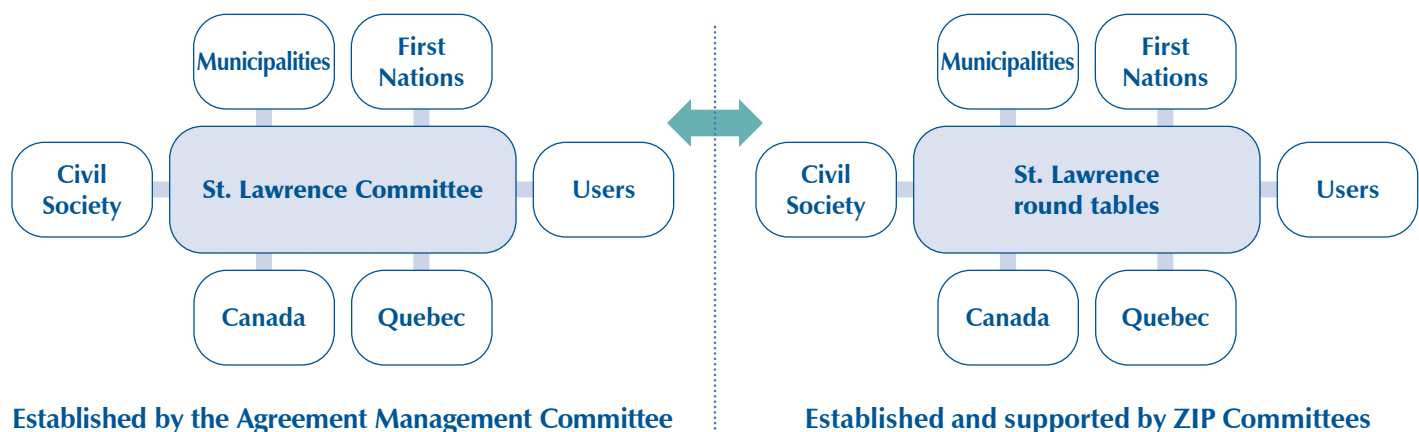
made by some groups of users that are increasingly involved in implementing protective and sustainable development measures for the St. Lawrence River.

Government partners are proposing an organization that promotes local participation in the planning of initiatives and the implementation of resulting integrated management plans.

During phase III of the St. Lawrence Plan (1998–2003), a few user groups of the St. Lawrence River, such as the shipping industry, and representatives of civil society, such as Stratégies Saint-Laurent and ZIP committees, actively participated in setting objectives and carrying out tangible initiatives. However, municipalities, First Nations, major users of the St. Lawrence River, and a number of groups that are highly involved in protecting or developing the river, are still not involved in the process of implementing planned initiatives in a concerted manner.

If one compares the proposed mechanisms with the Agreement’s current management structure, the two main changes suggested are the creation of the joint, standing St. Lawrence Committee and joint, permanent St. Lawrence round tables. Figure 2 sets out the two mechanisms proposed for IMSL.

FIGURE 2: PROPOSED IMSL MECHANISMS



5. The names "St. Lawrence Committee" and "St. Lawrence round tables" are given on a purely provisional basis to facilitate reading. Other names could be chosen at a later time by the organizations themselves.

The St. Lawrence Committee's mandate will be to develop and ensure implementation follow-up of an integrated management plan for the St. Lawrence River based on a shared vision, together with local communities. The Agreement Management Committee will be charged with administering and implementing government commitments made under the Agreement.

The mandate of the St. Lawrence round tables will be to develop integrated management plans specifically addressing challenges facing their respective areas that are in line with the objectives established for the St. Lawrence River as a whole.

The following sections set out the roles, mandates and responsibilities of the St. Lawrence Committee and the St. Lawrence round tables.

## 2.2 The St. Lawrence Committee

The St. Lawrence Committee (SLC) is a national round table that will be charged with developing the future five-year St. Lawrence integrated management plan (SLIMP) together with communities. The Committee will then follow up on the plan's implementation.

The St. Lawrence Committee is:

- A joint round table, representative of the three major groups of stakeholders, namely public decision makers, users and civil society;
- An independent, standing committee whose area of action covers the entire St. Lawrence River within Quebec's boundaries.

The roles and responsibilities of the St. Lawrence Committee are as follows:

- Together with the general public, work out a shared vision for the entire St. Lawrence River;
- Establish general objectives, guiding principles and orientations with the St. Lawrence round tables and the general public;
- Together with the SLRTs and communities, identify priority issues that will be addressed in the St. Lawrence Integrated Management Plan (SLIMP);

- Ensure the development, adoption and follow the implementation of SLIMP;
- Serve as a round table for resolving user-group conflicts that are of a global nature;
- Provide governments with advice on any issue related to the St. Lawrence River, including transborder issues;
- Ensure harmonization and the necessary collaboration with existing organizations concerned about the Great Lakes, tributaries and the portion of the Gulf of St. Lawrence outside Quebec;
- Regularly and formally report on its activities to governments and the general public.

St. Lawrence Committee members will be selected based on their integrity, concern for the common good, listening skills and respect for others, as well as their ability to take part in consensus-building processes with stakeholders that have diverging interests. Members must be able to make decisions on behalf of their organizations. In addition, membership criteria, such as the number of members and representativeness, will be established by the provisional St. Lawrence Committee.

The St. Lawrence Committee will have to decide on its final name, establish its operational procedures and develop its own decision-making and conflict resolution tools.

## 2.3 St. Lawrence round tables

A St. Lawrence round table (SLRT) will be created for each St. Lawrence area.

The purpose of St. Lawrence round tables is to allow for regional discussion among St. Lawrence River stakeholders. This will involve:

- Developing shared visions for areas;
- Updating area profiles;
- Identifying priority areas for action in their respective territories;
- Establishing orientations and objectives that are specific to areas;

- Developing action plans based on set objectives.

These elements will be used to prepare the Integrated Area Management Plan (IAMP).

The St. Lawrence round tables serve as discussion platforms and alignment tools between the interested parties. They are direct links to the general public.

The St. Lawrence round tables are:

- Permanent regional round tables;
- Of a joint membership nature and representative of their communities. The proportion of public decision makers, including municipalities and First Nations, users and civil society represented on these round tables will make it impossible for any of the stakeholder groups to dominate debate.

The roles and responsibilities of the St. Lawrence round tables are as follows:

- Serve as a round table for regional issues;
- Develop and implement integrated management plans for their respective areas (IAMPs) based on the regional areas for action identified in consultation with the public and SLRTs of neighbouring areas. IAMPs must also help achieve the general objectives established by the St. Lawrence Committee;
- Establish or maintain harmonization and co-operative ties with organizations outside Quebec that share common issues at the local or regional level;
- Take part in St. Lawrence Committee initiatives through their representatives.

Governments recognize that ZIP committees have acquired excellent skills in developing action plans and ecological rehabilitation initiatives and in taking concrete action in the field. ZIP committees' experience in holding public and joint consultations make them essential partners in implementing IMSL. ZIP Committees are therefore the preferred organizations for implementing and co-ordinating the work of St. Lawrence round tables. The membership of SLRTs could vary from

one area to another. The round tables must, however, be representative of the social, cultural and geographical characteristics of their respective areas, as well as of current or emerging regional issues.

SLRTs in marine sectors will benefit from the presence of integrated coastal zone management committees.

Compared with ZIPs in the fluvial (freshwater) stretch of the St. Lawrence, ZIPs in the saltwater portion of the St. Lawrence River are vast, which is a challenge for IMSL in terms of achieving concerted action. ZIPs on the north shore of the Gulf cover 5,054 km of coastline, whereas each of those in the southern part of the estuary and Chaleur Bay cover nearly 400 km of coastline. The saltwater section of the St. Lawrence is also distinguished by the presence of integrated coastal zone management committees (ICZM committees, see Figure 1), which bring stakeholders together on a more local scale to address issues, thereby promoting the participation of communities and the planning of tangible initiatives.

Within the framework of IMSL, ICZM committees will help develop IAMPs thanks to their knowledge of their areas, especially when it comes to major socio-economic issues and their action plans. On the one hand, SLRTs will benefit from the consensus-building experience acquired by members of ICZM committees. On the other hand, SLRTs will make it possible to work out an overall vision for the territory and incorporate the objectives and initiatives identified by ICZM committees from a broader perspective, thereby favouring a synergetic effect.

# 3

## IMPLEMENTING GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

The governance mechanisms that will be implemented, a set of adapted tools and adequate planning will serve to implement an original, efficient IMSL approach. To this end, a government team will provide the St. Lawrence Committee with administrative and technical support and will help establish the St. Lawrence round tables.

Flexibility, adaptability, progressive implementation and complete coverage of the territory are four criteria that must be met to ensure efficient IMSL implementation.

IMSL will begin with the establishment of the provisional St. Lawrence Committee, which will be comprised of current members of the Agreement Management Committee, some other government representatives, and municipal, First Nation, civil society and user group representatives. Its main tasks will be to determine the criteria for the final membership of the SLC, specify its mandate, and determine the roles and responsibilities of its members and the boundaries of St. Lawrence “areas.” The division of the territory into “areas” will be carried out with the local community.

Once the SLC is formed, the goal for 2010 will be to establish a consensus on a shared vision for the sustainable development of the St. Lawrence, objectives and orientations, and determine priority issues to be incorporated into the first St. Lawrence integrated management plan.

At the same time as the SLC is created, the necessary steps will be taken to establish SLRTs.

It is proposed that the ZIP committees carry out the following duties in addition to their current mandate:

- Establish St. Lawrence round tables for the areas or portion(s) of area under their responsibility;
- Provide secretarial services for and co-ordinate SLRTs;
- Support SLRTs in the development of IAMPs;
- Co-ordinate public consultations and communication activities for SLRTs;
- Follow up on the implementation of IAMPs.

As co-ordinators of St. Lawrence round tables, ZIP committees will be charged with administering the business of round tables. As members, they will take part in discussions, consensus-building and decision-making.

Stratégies Saint-Laurent oversees all the ZIP committees, provides them with assistance and serves as their representative when dealing with governmental authorities. Within the framework of IMSL, Stratégies Saint-Laurent will help establish the St. Lawrence round tables by helping ZIP committees fulfill their new mandate.

Terms of reference will be developed by the government support team to provide guidance for organizations involved in establishing SLRTs.

## CONCLUSION

As proposed, integrated management of the St. Lawrence is a realistic objective that can now be met thanks to integration and involvement efforts made by governments, non-governmental organizations, and a number of user groups over the last twenty years.

Governments have the opportunity to implement a unique and innovative governance model in Canada. Organizations involved in the governance of water in Quebec, be they governmental or not, have reached a degree of maturity that makes the greater involvement and real participation of civil society and users in the decision-making process regarding the St. Lawrence River possible.

The implementation of IMSL is under way. However, in order for this project to successfully materialize, project partners will have to commit the funding needed for operating the governance mechanism and implement the resulting action plans. In doing so, they will be showing their other partners, who will be asked to help implement protective and sustainable development measures for the St. Lawrence, their strong commitment for action.







ENLARGED - MAP 2

