Pontiac 2020 Vision – Strategic Plan

Portrait/diagnostic

April 2009
# Diagnostic – Pontiac MRC

Context Analysis: opportunities and threats

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1. Pontiac MRC socio-economic Figures

a) Pontiac MRC – General Facts

- Total surface area: 13 848 km² (18 municipalities over 4 178 km² - located mainly along the Ottawa River – and one « Non-organized Territory (TNO, Crown Land) of 9 670 km² - roughly 70% of the territory)
- 42% of the Outaouais region’s total land mass and only 4,6% of its population
- Centrally located: 1 hour from Ottawa, 3 hours from Montréal, 4 hours from Toronto, 6h from Québec, 8 hours from New York
- Resource MRC (2001) – tax credit from manufacturing businesses
- Strong dependence of the MRC’s municipalities (between 93% and 100%) to forestry transformation activities in regards to manufacturing jobs (MRNF, 2001)
- Single-industry MRC (2008)
- 14 municipalities with a negative development index, of which 5 are considered as very devitalized: Thorne, Otter Lake, Fort-Coulonge, Chichester and Rapides-des-Joachims
- Multiculturalism et bilinguism
- Strong in human capital
- Weak in entrepreneurship
- Contrast with the Outaouais region (especially the city of Gatineau and the Collines-de-l’Outaouais MRC)
- Québec-Ontario Interdependence (commercial exodus)
- Proximity of a market of over 1,2 million people (Ottawa-Gatineau)
- Presence of major roads and train networks

a) Economic Situation

- Workers aged between 25-64 (2006) : 4 743
- Rate of workers aged between 25-64 (2006) : 59,2 %
- Average work income for workers aged between 25-64 (2006) : 32 193 $
- Social-assistance rate (2006) : 10,8 %
- Low-income households rate (2006) : 13,0 %
- Dispensable personal income per individual (2007) : 16 597 $
- 61% of the population lives under the low-income level of 20 000$ (2004)
- Level of economic dependency ($ per 100$ of work revenue – 2004) : 36,49 (Outaouais : 15,42 ; Québec : 19,16)
• 23% of income from government transfers (Outaouais: 11%)
• Mean family-income (2004) : 44 000$ (Outaouais : 59 900$ ; 54 400$)
• 90% of businesses have under 20 employees
• Network of professionals: Chamber of Commerce, tourism association, artists’ association, community development corporation, fine meats cooperative, « coop of solidarity »...
• Provincial slaughterhouse project
• Tourism and recreation: PPJ Cyclopark (Route verte), Chutes Coulonge, Parc Leslie, rafting/canoe/kayak, hunting and fishing...
• Sectors that create the most jobs: health and social services, manufacturing, retail business, agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing...
• Mobile labour force : 24% outside of Québec, 5% in the Vallée-de-la-Gatineau MRC

b) Demographic Situation

• Total surface area : 13 848 km
• Population density (2007) : 1,2 people/km²
• Demographic dependency (population deemed as dependant, including minors, or inactive / active population) : 50,8% (Outaouais : 39,8% ; Québec : 43,4%)
• Total Population (2007) : 14 940
  o Aged 0-14: 2 361.
  o Aged 15-24: 1 843.
  o Aged 25-44 : 3 400
  o Aged 45-64: 4 725.
  o Aged 65 and over : 2 611
• 50% of the population aged 15 and over do not have a diploma
• Average age: 41,8 (Outaouais : 38,2 ; Québec : 39,9)
• People living alone (2004) : 10,4%
• Evolution of the population since 1996 : -5,2%
• Natural rate of growth (birth minus deaths) : -39 individuals
• Demographic perspective (variation 2026/2001): 6,5 % (Outaouais : 19,5% ; Québec : 9,3%)
c) Social Situation

- 18% of the population have bad nutritional habits and 39% are overweight
- 28% of population practice a sport at least 3 time a week
- 38% of the population are smokers
- High level of smoking, alcohol and cannabis consumption amongst teenagers
- 3,9% over people aged 65 and over live in a long-term care facility (CHSLD)
- High school drop out level
- Few immigrants
- Aging population
- Total value of construction permits (2008) : 8 027 000$
- Mean market value of a single-family home (2009) : 91 250$
- A major hospital (Shawville) and 4 CLSC within the Pontiac MRC (+ one in the municipality of Pontiac).
- Presence of Daycare Centers (CPE)
- Over twenty non-profit organizations working in the health and social services sector
- TransporAction : collective and adapted transportation service
- Pontiac Community Development Corporation (PCDC): non-profit organization association

d) Political/legal Situation

- Federal, provincial political representatives
- Selected warden
- 18 municipalities (18 mayors)
- Pontiac MRC Council of mayors
- Public Institutions: MRC, CLD, SADC, CJE (CREP), EQ and other government services

e) Technological Situation

- High speed Internet service (Picanoc) accessible for over 90% of the population
- Cell phone network

Last update : 08/04/2009
2. Sectors to develop: opportunities and threats

a) LAND OF WELCOME: Tourism

Portrait of the tourism sector:

- 106 small-businesses offering products and services related to tourism and that generate over 22,5$ million in sales
- Diversified lodging for travellers - limited in number
- Deficiencies as to the level of relations with Tourisme Québec (French documents, lodgings rating system)
- Very little 3 star/sun or more lodgings
- Implementation of a tourism route
- Average summer occupation rate (lodgings) : 35% (decrease of 5% from 2007)
- Average rental price (one night) during the summer: 78,62$
- Average number of nights (tourists) : 3,1
- Client origin: Québec : 28,2% ; Rest of Canada : 56,5% ; USA : 8,9$ ; Europe : 4,5% ; Other : 1,9%
- Type of clientele : Families : 22,5% ; Individuals : 22,3% ; Couples : 33,7% ; Groups: 20% ; Others : 1,5%
- Recreation and tourism diversity: Chutes Coulonge, Cycloparc PPJ (Route Verte), rafting, canoe, kayak, beaches...
- Important agricultural Fair and emerging Rodeo

Opportunities:

- Numerous natural and heritage highlights
- Cultural and artistic network
- Inclusion of the PPJ Cycloparc PPJ in the Route Verte
- Great potential in recreational, cultural and adventure tourism; growth sectors
- Creation of protected areas around the Dumoine, Noire and Coulonge rivers (all while guaranteeing access)
- Official recognition from the ministry of the Voyageur Tourism Route
- Leading businesses (Esprit Rafting, Cabines de la Chute, Escapade Eskimo, Chutes Coulonge, Parc Leslie...)
- Exceptional sites
- Tourism Association (13 members Board representing the different tourism sectors)
- Development of a brand image (branding) to better portray what is being sold (offered) to whom (structured tourism offer)
- Improvements to the tourism guide
- Develop a network of tourism information relays
- Develop the MRC Pontiac Tourism webpage

**Threats:**

- Basic services: lodgings et restaurants (quantity et quality)
- Access and transportation
- No MRC Pontiac Tourism Policy
- Few promoters
- Little collaboration or coordination between tourism operators
- Fragility of the Tourism Association
- No long term vision / branding
- Other Resource MRC scan also benefit from their recreational and adventure tourism potential (supply surplus / limited demand)
b) LAND OF PLENTY: Agriculture & Food Industry

Portrait of Agricultural and Food Industry Sector:

- 50% of the regional beef production and 37% of milk production
- Other products: horses, sheep, poultry and vegetables
- 1000 jobs (21% of the MRC's active population)
- 278 farms, over 300 producers
- 75% of agricultural land suitable for large crops (2006)
- Over $ 27M generated (increase of 31% since 2000)
- Average age: 53 years (2006)
- 11 transfers in the past 5 years
- Very good weather conditions (light and temperature)

Opportunities:

- Good quality of land
- Local processing (slaughterhouse) and marketing (local purchase)
- Consumer pool of 10.6 million (Montreal, Ottawa-Gatineau, Toronto)
- Resource MRC situated closest to an urban center
- Shawville Farmers' Market and direct sale at local farms (gourmet route)
- Diversification of traditional products (horticulture, maple syrup ...)
- Advertising of organic farming
- Promotion and pride of producers
- Network producers and Chamber of Commerce
- Bilingualism

Threats:

- Replacement, training and entrepreneurship "youth"
- Little added value (especially milk production)
- Relatively high age of the producers
- Uneven participation of farmers to collective projects, tend to work separately
c) **LAND OF RESOURCES: Forests & Natural Environment**

**Portrait of the Forest and Natural Environment Sector**

- Abundant and diverse natural resources:
  - The territory is characterized by 4 main bioclimatic areas: sugar maple-hickory, sugar maple-basswood, sugar maple-yellow birch and yellow birch to fir. There is a wide variety of trees - hardwood and softwood.
  - The productive forest area is 1,084,311 hectares which represents 78% of the territory of the MRC.
  - The total forest, all species combined is 1,686,482 cubic meters.
  - 4 major rivers of a total combined length of approximately 675 km: Ottawa, Dumeine, Black and Coulonge.
  - Thousands of waterways (lakes, rivers and streams).
  - 5 ecological reserves with a total area of 981 hectares.
  - 6 exceptional forest ecosystems with a total area of 220 hectares.
  - 5 projected territories of interest (future protected areas).
  - Abundance of recognized small game and wildlife habitat (wintering deer, heron, etc.).

- 1 community forest of 9,400 hectares
- 1 “groupement forestier”
- 1 forestry cooperative
- 1 wood producers office (marketing of wood from private forests)
- 3,600 owners of private forest
- 1 shingle mill
- 1 pulp and paper mill
- 1 enterprise engaged in forestry sector and woodworking
- 6 sawmills
- A few private sawmills 2000m³ and less
- Approximately 15 forestry businesses
- One woodworking school
- 3 zones of controlled exploitation (ZEC)
- More than 15 outfitters
- Mill sites /infrastructures available
- Loss of 750 jobs (directly and indirectly) after mill closures
- 2nd and 3rd stage transformation almost non-existent
- Very large forest road network
Opportunities:

- Harmonization of the uses of the forest
- Qualified and available workforce (factory and forest)
- Interest from outside the international level - investment / export
- Efficiency sector (biomass, cogeneration, ethanol)
- Forest Bioeconomy
- 2nd and 3rd transformation
- Tourism offered - hunting and fishing
- Contribution to biodiversity (protected areas)
- Diversification on public intra-municipal territory
- Diversification and innovation process
- Sustainable forest management (forest certification)
- Training in carpentry
- Non-Forestry Products (plants, mushrooms, berries ...)

Threats:

- Loss of workers
- Carpentry training without important opportunities
- Difficulty to consolidate the 1st transformation industry
- Tendency to work in silos
- Lack of integration of forest operations and contracts in a context of plant closures
- Competition between regions to obtain the wood (CAAF)
- Forest industry’s credibility towards other users
- Quality of decreasing forest road network
**d) LAND OF PEOPLE: Culture & Community**

**Portrait of the Culture & Community sector:**

- Increase and consolidation of cultural programming (animation)
- Built heritage inventory – better protection and promotion
- Possibility of building on cultural/artistic/heritage tourism potential
- Important historic and archaeological sites
- Artists’ network
- Cultural Policy
- Existing revitalization efforts (Rues principales / Main Streets program in Mansfield-et-Pontefract and Fort-Coulange)
- Several town centers
- Family policy
- New residents welcome program
- Place for Youth (Place aux jeunes) and « Accrocs des régions » programs
- Important number of community organization offering services to the population
- Youth centers (Maisons des jeunes) network
- Two local papers (Pontiac Journal and The Equity)
- Two School Boards (CSHBO + WQSB) : 9 elementary school, 3 high schools, 2 adult education centers, 2 professional training centers

**Opportunities:**

- Use elements included in the Cultural Policy to create new projects
- Important built heritage
- Interpretation sites (first nations history, voyageurs route...)
- Thematic itineraries to be developed
- Repeat an approach similar to the Main Streets program (in Mansfield-et-Pontefract and Fort-Coulange) in other town centers

**Threats:**

- Tendency to work in isolation (no communication, collaboration)
- Lack of financing as well as self-generated income for several non-profits
e) LAND OF COMMERCE: Trade & Industry

Portrait of the Commerce & Industry sector:

- Lack of businesses and services
- Loss of business in favour of Renfrew County
- Québec's fiscal regime = difficult for small-businesses (the worst fiscal regime for small-business owners), in particular in regards to social charges, personal and business taxes
- Lack of youth / youth exodus (business transfers / takeovers)

Opportunities:

- Implementation of local expertises (industrial, strategic and sustainable development officers)
- Local production exportation strategies
- Small-business strategies vs. globalization
- Outside investors
- Innovation / specialized products
- Business exchanges with the County of Renfrew

Threats:

- Negative structural effect with the arrival of major retail stores
- Lack of investors
- Lack of entrepreneurial spirit and culture
- Degradation of infrastructures
3. Comments from municipalities

Following the Vision 2020 tour of municipalities undertaken by SADC, the following general comments were compiled about the need to provide a long term vision/plan of action to the Pontiac. Note that all municipalities were visited.

- Process interesting and motivating
- Process that opens doors
- The role of elected:
  1. define today's reality
  2. Look beyond ourselves
  3. create consensus
  4. build (infrastructure)
- Municipalities should explore what others are doing (worldwide) – go off the beaten track.
- Explore technologies from other countries (ex: waste)

- Vision = Mission
- Need to be proactive rather than merely reactive
- Have more than student jobs
- County economically secure
- Need to attract new people
- All municipalities are in agreement with this process of Vision 2020

- Finding a common solution (between municipalities) - to the problem of waste disposal
- The municipal leaders must work together to discuss solutions to common problems
- Need to support local businesses and offer contracts
- Need for more government money for infrastructures that can support the tourism industry and other industries
- Loss of youth to the cities
- Laws are sometimes barriers to our development
- Need for a "movement" on tourism
- The "green zones" (environmental) cause some problems in development
- Develop and increase employment to keep young people in the Pontiac
- Have secured jobs
- More interaction between schools and the possibility of having a college
- Support and develop the use of high-speed wireless network Picanoc

- Good vision is important, but we must ensure that there will be benefits for our community and not just to others
- Need to create jobs in the Pontiac for the residents of the Pontiac
- There must be economic growth
- Need to combine forces in order to share equally in decision making

- Vision = from status quo to go to a new and higher status
- Did we achieve our potential?
- We need to think and build the future of our municipality
- Increasing prosperity
- Need to develop the territory to keep the young people - they are the strength of our community
- WORK TOGETHER, as citizens, neighbours, municipalities ...
- A new "motto" for a "new" Pontiac: why not?
- No need for new jobs: 50% work in Ontario
- Importance to hire locally - creating employment programs, bilingual, with consideration
- How to create jobs?
- "If it works, it will be good for us"
• Be mobilized and get everyone on board
• Open all doors to avoid all risks
• Know what we want with a 'win-win " vision
• Define daily reality
• Define Pontiac’s real identity

• Importance of technology
• "Little you do not have the strength of the large"
• Know the true will of the MRC to support Vision 2020 in the Pontiac
• Make real citizen consultations involving all those who want to participate
• Citizen mobilization in grouping the Pontiac into 5 sub-territories with a representatives reporting to the MRC (idea of governance)
• interesting ideas that have come from the report
• The 2020 Vision is not the final step.
• Let this Vision be made public as soon as possible

- Importance of integrated sustainable development
• Efforts to promote our natural resources (development of cottage lots)
• Increase tax revenues for the municipality
• Increasing tourism (+ vacationers) to improve services of our merchants and other services
• Importance of lakes and rivers in our MRC
• Developing the territory of Pontiac for the benefit of all
• Importance of economic promotion
• Need help with some costs in some projects ex: PPJ & Pontiac Trail, Parc du Sault des Chats, development of the Ottawa River...
• Desire to work with the MRC and other municipalities
• Residential Development - Development and construction on vacant lots

• Need for jobs in manufacturing
• more and better jobs to keep young people in the Pontiac
• College / CEGEP and exchanges between schools
• Need for infrastructures
• Developing tourism
• Merge - Fire Safety Act
• Having a united voice

• We will work to keep the Pontiac united
• Need to satisfy taxpayers
• Make this municipality a better place to live
• Importance of retirees
• Protection of citizens and the environment
• Ready to accept changes
• Need to deal with the crisis
• Alleyn and Cawood = passageway