



Section 54 of the Public Health Act: Towards the Inclusion of Health in all Policies

Adelaide, April 14, 2010

Dr. Alain Poirier, National Public Health Director and Assistant Deputy Minister,
ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

Dr. Luc Boileau, Chief Executive Officer, Institut national de santé publique du Québec

Québec 

Outline of the Presentation

2

- ❑ A few facts about Quebec
- ❑ Public health within the Quebec health and social services system
- ❑ Origin of the health impact assessment (HIA) in Quebec
- ❑ Strategy for application of Section 54 of the Public Health Act (PHA)
 - Implementation of an intragovernmental health impact assessment mechanism
 - Development and transfer of knowledge on public policies conducive to health
- ❑ Challenges and perspectives

A few facts about Quebec

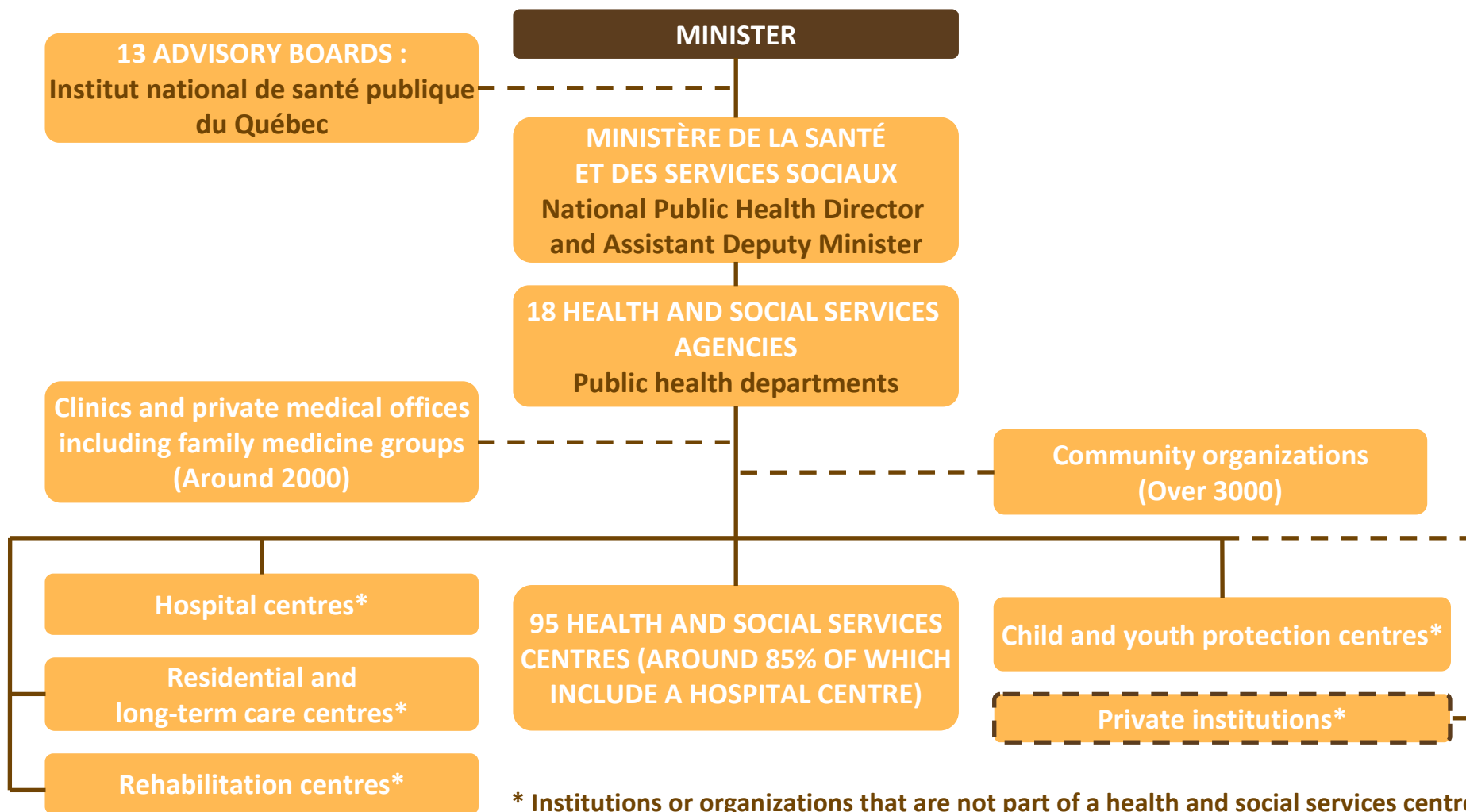
3



- ❑ Canada's largest province in terms of area: 1.7 million km²
- ❑ Canada's 2nd most populous province - 23% of Canada's population
- ❑ French is the official language
- ❑ Part of a federation: 10 provinces and 3 territories
- ❑ Management of the health care system is primarily a provincial jurisdiction

Public health within the Quebec health and social services system

4



* Institutions or organizations that are not part of a health and social services centre

Origin of the HIA in Quebec

5

- ❑ International movement for the promotion of health (Ottawa Charter, 1986)
- ❑ Recognition of the impact of decisions made in other sectors on the health of the population and on the social inequalities of health
- ❑ Need to develop public policies that are conducive to health
- ❑ Issue of consistency in government decisions
- ❑ HIA: a tool of choice for taking health issues into account in the various spheres of government activity

Origin of the HIA in Quebec

6

- ❑ Review of the Public Health Act in 2001
- ❑ Establishment of conditions conducive to carrying out the essential functions of public health
- ❑ Implementation of a dynamic link between the various actors at the central, regional and local levels
- ❑ Legal framework for acting upon public policy



Origin of the HIA in Quebec

7

Public Health Act

Section 54. *The Minister is by virtue of his or her office the **advisor of the Government on any public health issue.** The Minister shall give the other ministers any advice he or she considers advisable for health promotion and the adoption of policies capable of fostering the enhancement of the health and welfare of the population.*

*In the Minister's capacity as government advisor, the Minister **shall be consulted in relation to the development of the measures provided for in an Act or regulation** that could have significant impact on the health of the population.*

Strategy for Application of Section 54

8

- 1. Implementation of an intragovernmental health impact assessment mechanism**
- 2. Development and transfer of knowledge on public policies conducive to health**

Strategy for Application of Section 54

9

1. Intragovernmental health impact assessment mechanism

The definition used in Quebec

A combination of procedures, methods and tools through which a policy, program or project can be judged as to its potential effects on public health and the distribution of those effects within the population

Strategy for Application of Section 54

10

Goals

- ❑ Enable ministries and public agencies to assess beforehand the potential impacts on health of the various measures put forth in the form of bills and regulations
- ❑ Promote mitigating measures and inform decision-making

The ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) supports HIA through :

- ❑ Access to relevant expertise
- ❑ Tools to assist in decision-making

Strategy for application of Section 54

11

Achievements of the MSSS

- ❑ Establishment of a network of ministerial respondents
- ❑ Distribution of a briefing document on determinants of health
- ❑ Distribution of a practical HIA guide
- ❑ Distribution of a liaison bulletin

<http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/article54>



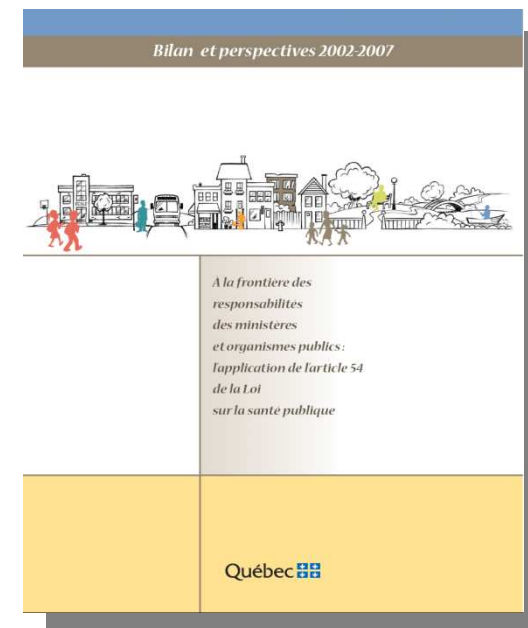
Québec

Strategy for Application of Section 54

12

Requests for Advice

- ❑ 2003-2010 : 327 requests for advice directed to the MSSS
- ❑ Most of the requests are from the *ministère du Conseil exécutif* (Cabinet), but with the prior involvement of the MSSS in over half of them
- ❑ 54% of bills and regulations / 46% of other initiatives (policies, strategies, action plans, project authorization certificates, funding, etc.)
- ❑ Primarily involves the areas of the environment, agrifood, employment and social solidarity



Latest information published by the MSSS in 2008

Québec 

Strategy for Application of Section 54

13

Findings

- ❑ Greater awareness-building and participation by partners and an increasing ownership of the process within ministries and public agencies
- ❑ Requests for projects other than bills and regulations
- ❑ However, many requests are sent in at the end of the process
- ❑ Some bills and draft regulations still do not include an HIA

Strategy for Application of Section 54

14

2. Development and Transfer of Knowledge

Goals

- ❑ Increase and consolidate interdisciplinary research capacities
- ❑ Develop tools to support the development of public policy conducive to health
- ❑ Support research to assess the effects before and after implementation of public policies
- ❑ Foster the transfer of knowledge to appropriate decision-makers and professionals

Strategy for Application of Section 54

15

Funded Research

- ❑ Concepts and methods for analyzing government actions
 - Healthy Public Policy Research Group Web site:
<http://www.gepps.enap.ca>
- ❑ Public policy conducive to healthy lifestyles
- ❑ Public policy and the fight against poverty
- ❑ Assessment of the impacts of public policy on health
- ❑ Social inequalities of health

Strategy for Application of Section 54

16

The Agreement between the MSSS and the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) to support the application of Section 54

- ❑ Centre of expertise and reference created in 1998 by the *Act respecting the Institut national de santé publique du Québec*
- ❑ Its mission is to support the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, regional public health authorities and network institutions in carrying out their responsibilities
- ❑ Provides multidisciplinary expertise and specialized laboratory and screening services

<http://www.inspq.qc.ca/english>

Strategy for Application of Section 54

17

- ❑ One particular function of the INSPQ, as stipulated in its Incorporating Act (Section 3.2) is to *inform the Minister of the impacts of public policy on the health and well-being of the public*
- ❑ Evidence-based reports on public policy and health produced, to support the Minister in his role of advisor to the other ministries (Section 54 of the PHA):
- ❑ Training and support for the development of tools within the scope of HIA
- ❑ Knowledge-transfer activities
- ❑ Public Policy and Health Portal and monitoring
<http://politiquespubliques.inspq.qc.ca/en>

Strategy for Application of Section 54

18

The screenshot displays the website for the Institut national de santé publique Québec. At the top left is the logo with the text "Institut national de santé publique Québec" and the provincial emblem. A navigation bar includes links for Home, Contact us, INSPQ, Québec Portal, and Français. Below this is a menu with categories: About this site, Health Impact Assessment, Publications from Quebec, Conference presentations, Useful links, and Survey.

The main content area features a large banner for the "PUBLIC POLICY AND Health PORTAL" with a background image of soccer players. To the right of the banner is a yellow "NEWSLETTER" section with a dropdown menu for "2010-03-29 Newsletter" and a "Go" button, along with a "Subscribe!" call to action.

Below the banner is a "SEARCH" section with a text input field and a "Go" button. To the right, under "WHAT'S NEW IN THE PORTAL?", there is a news item dated "25 mar 2010" titled "Santé et adaptation aux changements climatiques: quel transfert de connaissances intégré et comment?". The text describes a symposium on climate change and health.

On the left side, there is a "THEMES" section with a scrollable list containing "Transport", "Environment", and "Education and employment".

At the bottom right, there is a box titled "TWO GUIDES FOR QUEBEC" with links to download guides: "Guide pratique pour l'EIS" (English version pending) and "Health determinants booklet".

Strategy for Application of Section 54

19

National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (NCCHPP)

<http://www.ncchpp.ca>

- ❑ Supports those involved in public health throughout Canada in their efforts to promote public policy conducive to health, while informing them on the best strategies to use
- ❑ Development concentrated on:
 - Methodology of public policy knowledge review
 - Health impact assessments
 - Multisectoral and multijurisdictional approaches
 - Health inequalities
 - Ethics and public policy conducive to health
 - Deliberative processes

Strategy for Application of Section 54

20

The importance of developing and transferring knowledge on public policy conducive to health

- ❑ Multiple innovations showing government commitment and investment by partners in public health
- ❑ However:
 - Be sure to answer the needs of intersectoral partners regarding knowledge
 - Be sure that knowledge transfer is carried out at the right time
 - Strike a balance between an expert-based approach and assistance in decision-making

Challenges and perspectives

21

- ❑ **Support changes in practice for greater use of HIA**
 - Support partners in the economical and social spheres
 - Ensure the quality of HIAs in the government environment
 - Develop effective means for knowledge transfer, especially for affected decision-makers and professionals

- ❑ **Develop strategic monitoring in order to act at the beginning of the decision-making process**

Challenges and perspectives

22

- **More generally, strengthen intersectoral actions at all levels of government**
 - Create horizontal and vertical synergies so as to remove certain obstacles and take advantage of all opportunities
 - Recent intersectoral initiatives:
 - Government Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion
 - Government Sustainable Development Strategy
 - Government Action Plan to Promote Healthy Lifestyles and Prevent Weight-related Problems
 - Towards a government policy for health and well-being in Quebec

For More Information

23

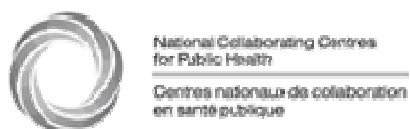


<http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/article54>



<http://www.inspq.qc.ca/english>

<http://politiquespubliques.inspq.qc.ca/en>



<http://www.ncchpp.ca>



<http://www.gepps.enap.ca>

Québec 