

Social Housing with Community Support in Québec: A Sociopolitical Perspective

Christian Jetté & Jean-Vincent Bergeron-Gaudin, Université de Montréal

ABSTRACT

The 2022 adoption of a new policy framework on community support in social housing in Québec speaks to a convergence of a multitude of community, government, and municipal actors around this practice. This qualitative study delves into the process by which this approach was institutionalized to demonstrate how community support became a central norm of the social housing field in the province. Drawing from literature on the welfare mix, we situate this phenomenon in the broader context of the transformation of the welfare state, in which nonprofit organizations played an increasing role in providing social housing to vulnerable populations (e.g., people at risk of homelessness). This article demonstrates how power dynamics and negotiations between the state and the third sector were, in this case, a major source of institutional change over time.

RÉSUMÉ

L'adoption en 2022 d'un nouveau cadre de référence sur le soutien communautaire en logement social au Québec témoigne de la convergence d'une multitude d'acteurs communautaires, gouvernementaux et municipaux autour de cette pratique. Cette étude qualitative retrace le processus d'institutionnalisation de cette approche pour montrer comment l'offre de soutien communautaire est devenue une norme centrale dans le champ du logement social. En reprenant les écrits sur le welfare mix, nous situons ce phénomène dans le contexte plus large de la transformation de l'État-providence où les organismes sans but lucratif ont joué un rôle grandissant dans la provision de logements sociaux pour des populations vulnérables (ex. personnes à risque d'itinérance). Nous faisons ressortir que les relations de pouvoir et les négociations entre l'État et le tiers secteur ont été dans ce cas une source importante de changement institutionnel au fil du temps.

Keywords / Mots clés : social housing, community support, institutionalization, welfare mix / logement social, soutien communautaire, institutionnalisation, welfare mix

INTRODUCTION

In May 2022, the Québec government adopted a new policy framework on community support in social housing (Gouvernement du Québec, 2022). Initially developed in the late 1980s by the Fédération des OSBL d'habitation de Montréal (FOHM) to respond to housing needs among homeless populations, this approach is now used province-wide in nonprofit housing organizations, public housing and, increasingly, housing co-operatives (Caillouette & Lapierre, 2022). Community support seeks to ensure housing stability and improve the quality of life among social housing tenants with certain vulnerabilities (aging, mental health problems, disabilities, etc.) through home-based accompaniment. This practice includes a wide range of activities, including support with public services, conflict management between renters, crisis intervention, psychosocial intervention, support at tenants' committees, and community organizing.

This new policy framework was adopted following several years of pressure from Québec's main social housing advocacy groups (nonprofit housing organizations, housing co-operatives, technical resource groups and housing municipal offices), which called for improved government support for this approach. Since the first policy framework on community support in social housing was adopted in 2007, several issues were raised, including inadequate government funding, inequity in funding distribution between administrative regions, overly restrictive eligibility criteria, and a lack of coordination between partners involved in the practice. The new policy framework does respond to some of these criticisms. While it does not address funding, it more clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the various partners involved and insists on a greater degree of collaboration and inter-sectoral action between the health and social services and housing ministries.

How can this convergence between a multitude of third-sector actors, municipal organizations, and government institutions around the model of social housing with community support be explained? This article delves into the history of this practice to demonstrate how community support became a central norm of the social housing field in Québec. Returning to the origins of the practice and retracing its evolution over time helps us see how its institutionalization is the result of a slow, gradual, and evolutive process, in which the nonprofit housing organization network played a very active role. Through political organizing and diffusing its approach toward vulnerable people, this network successfully changed practices in the field of social housing. It also successfully implanted the notion that simply providing people with housing is insufficient unless it is accompanied by community support.

The institutionalization of community support also evolved within the broader context of the transformation of the welfare state in Québec, during which the provincial government allowed for the third sector to play a significant role in developing and implementing public services in various domains (Jetté, 2008; Vaillancourt, 2012; Arsenault, 2018). The authors apply a welfare mix approach (Evers & Laville, 2004) to demonstrate that valuing community support goes to the core of the newly shared responsibilities between the state and the third sector in terms of providing social housing and ensuring the wellbeing of tenants in this type of housing. Through a detailed analysis of relationships between nonprofit housing organizations, housing municipal offices, and various government institutions, this article reveals that power dynamics and negotiations around welfare mix in a policy field can be a major source of institutional change.

This article is divided into three sections. Its first section focuses on certain institutional features of social housing in Québec and presents an overview of the literature on welfare mix and its points of interest for a study of the third sector. The second section presents the data and methodology used to develop our analysis. The third explores the main phases in the development of community support in social housing, from the first experiments by the FOHM in the late 1980s to the implementation of the first policy framework in the late 2000s and following years. The article concludes with an evaluation of how this research can increase understanding of the conditions under which innovative third-sector practices can influence social policy.

SOCIAL HOUSING AND THE WELFARE MIX

The history of social housing in Canada is closely linked to how the federal system operates and the tension between levels of government in this field (Suttor, 2016). In Québec, as in other provinces, the federal government was the primary leader in designing and funding social programs until the 1990s. Prior to this period, social housing largely took the form of public housing, where all residents paid a fixed percentage of their incomes in exchange for housing. Starting in the 1970s, the federal government also provided parallel funding for the development of housing co-operatives and nonprofit organizations, which were recognized as encouraging a greater degree of socio-economic diversity among tenants (Bouchard, Frohn, & Morin, 2010).

At the time of the federal government's retrenchment of social housing development in 1994, Québec was one of the only provinces to continue to fund these new projects (Suttor, 2016). In 1997, the provincial government adopted the AccèsLogis program, which exclusively served housing co-operatives and nonprofit housing organizations, collectively referred to as "community housing" in Québec. The program used a selection process that targets three population demographics through its various components: 1) moderate- and low-income households, 2) seniors who are losing their autonomy, and 3) populations with specific needs (e.g., homeless individuals). Its creation highlighted the shared responsibilities between the government and the third sector in social housing. Québec's social housing stock is currently composed of 62,000 public housing units (Fédération des locataires d'habitations à loyer modique du Québec, 2023) and 82,000 community housing units, of which 30,000 are co-operatives (Confédération québécoise des coopératives d'habitation, 2023) and 52,000 are nonprofit organizations (RQOH, 2023).

According to Bendaoud (2018), this shift toward nonprofit housing can be explained through a learning process that took place within the public administration, in which this type of social housing was found to be preferable to public housing due to its relative advantages, including its lower cost and broader ability to reach vulnerable populations. Other authors insist that it was collective action and significant organizing from community groups that was responsible for the program's adoption (Arsenault, 2018; Dufour, Bergeron-Gaudin, & Chicoine, 2020). According to Vaillancourt, Ducharme, Aubry, and Grenier (2017), AccèsLogis is an empirical illustration of policy "co-construction," meaning that civil society actors participated in its development, as well as "co-production" of services, meaning that they also participated in service implementation.

This reconfiguration of welfare mix in the social housing domain, observed in other domains (e.g., health and social services, child-care services, etc.) in Québec during the same period, was crucial

to understanding community support, as it was the nonprofit housing organization network that initially developed this approach. As we will see later, the FOHM, the instigator of community support, was quickly identified by government actors in the housing sector to develop a new model of social housing for homeless individuals, precisely because these actors were aware of its greater capacity to reach this population.

The concept of “welfare mix” was introduced in the literature to discuss the phenomenon of role redefinition that took place during the welfare state crisis of the 1980s and 90s. Questioning the classic opposition between the state and the market, this concept shines a light on the importance of family and community, including third-sector organizations (Evers & Laville, 2004), in producing wellbeing. This approach posits that the inter-relationships between this mix of actors is a key component of welfare state regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1999) and is also a lens with which to understand their transformations over recent decades (Powell & Barrientos, 2004). Indeed, the welfare mix can evolve and take on different configurations depending on the context and periods, from a simple privatization scenario to a veritable plural economy. In this case, actors mobilize a diversity of resources, both market-based (pricing), redistributive (public funding), and reciprocal (donations, volunteering, and activism) in nature to ensure their mission of wellbeing.

These various configurations of the welfare mix are based on its institutionalization, which makes it possible and determines the degree to which its characteristics are innovative or democratic (Lévesque & Thiry, 2008). Institutionalization thereby becomes a crucial angle from which to study how this mixing is negotiated between actors, leading to phenomena of hybridization (Billis, 2010), not only of resources, but also of governance and decision-making models (Evers, 2005). As such, the state, even while serving as a service provider in the context of a mixed economy, remains the central body that oversees the regulation of social dynamics. In this capacity, it has the power to attach orientations and specific dynamics to public policy that other actors cannot ignore (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2018).

Analyzing institutionalization thus allows us to address the definition of welfare, the nature of providers, access to decision-making processes, power dynamics between different actors, and resource allocation. Using a sociopolitical perspective, this angle can also help reveal how the negotiation of the welfare mix in a policy field such as social housing can be a source of institutional change.

METHODOLOGY

The results presented in this article are part of a broader research study on the transfer of innovative practices from the third sector to the public sector.¹ Community support in social housing was selected as one of four case studies for this project. Each will be subject to an internal analysis and compared to the others.² Our research approach employs an essentially inductive and qualitative logic. Case study methodology was used to conduct a detailed empirical analysis (Yin, 2018) of innovative practices in the third sector and their institutionalization.

More specifically, the present analysis draws on a corpus of semi-directed interviews conducted with key informants involved in developing community support in social housing. These included representatives of nonprofit housing organizations and housing municipal offices, public officers

from the health and social services system and the housing sector, and researchers in the field of social housing. We conducted a total of 21 interviews to trace the practice's institutionalization at the provincial and the regional levels.³ Only interviews concerning the provincial level are used in this article (eight interviews).

Interview questions examined the main dimensions of the practice's institutionalization, such as relationships between actors, access to decision-making, negotiation of how the policy framework would be implemented and resource allocation. Lasting between 60 and 120 minutes, each interview was transcribed and subsequently coded by themes (Miles & Huberman, 2003). These data were supplemented by government and academic literature on community support.

This material allowed us to reconstruct and sequence the evolution of community support with great precision, following its main turning points. The authors previously published a report with our complete results in 2021 (Bergeron-Gaudin & Jetté, 2021). The following section contains a synthesis of these results.

PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

This analysis demonstrates that, overall, the institutionalization of practices from the third sector is a slow, gradual, and evolutive process—slow, in the sense that 20 years passed between the earliest experiments on social housing with community support and the adoption of the first policy framework on the approach; gradual, in the sense that the institutionalization of the practice took place in a stepwise manner and was not only limited by a formal framework from the government; evolutive, in the sense that this process is dynamic and ongoing, and progresses constantly based on the reconfiguration of relationships between the actors involved. We now turn to the five phases of community support development.

Early experiments, 1987–1993

The 1980s were marked by a major economic crisis that questioned the welfare-state model developed in Québec since the 1960s, which leaned heavily on the development of the public sector. This crisis had many consequences, including on the rental market, which offered fewer and fewer possibilities for disadvantaged people, leading to a significant increase in the number of people without housing. In this era, there were over 15,000 members of this community in Montréal (Roy, Noiseux, & Thomas, 2003). It was in this context that the first nonprofit housing organizations in Montréal were created. Some took the form of rooming houses and offered small-scale units. These organizations sought above all to provide economically disadvantaged people with decent, clean, and safe housing.

1987 was a crucial year in the history of community support in social housing. To begin, the United Nations named it the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Governments were invited to seriously examine this social problem to find solutions. 1987 also saw the creation of the FOHM, the organization that originated the practice of community support. At its start, it brought together 22 nonprofit housing organizations, comprising 900 units spread across 64 different buildings (Drolet, 1993). Tenants in these buildings had various demographic profiles but were united by

their difficulties accessing decent housing on the rental market and economically disadvantaged status. FOHM member groups distinguished themselves in their direct interventions with people at risk of homelessness, a population that public housing struggled to reach.

In 1987, following the United Nations' call to action, the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MHSS) released a non-recurring sum of \$800,000 for private nonprofit housing that included services for tenants (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007). Management of this budget was conferred to the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ),⁴ which decided to launch a pilot project to develop rooming houses that also offered services to residents. The Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal joined the project, but proposed that the FOHM oversee building management, given its expertise in the field. The two parties signed an agreement for a total of six rooming houses, for a total of 193 units (Jetté, Thériault, Mathieu, & Vaillancourt, 1998). As an SHQ representative involved in the project explained, "For funding community support, the budget was given to the [Municipal Housing] Office, but it came from the SHQ because it fell outside of the norm" (Interview 4).⁵ This agreement would prove fundamental for the practice because it was within these rooming houses that the FOHM would develop its approach.

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the FOHM committed to an intensive process of experimentation. Over time, it formalized its approach and noted the ensuing positive effects:

We define ourselves as a permanent housing resource with community support for people who have often experienced what we call "revolving door syndrome," meaning that they spent several short-term stays in the network of community organizations working with homeless people or in the institutional network. We're located at the end of one circuit and the start of another. (Drolet, 1993, p. 7, authors' translation)

As such, the FOHM filled a void in the service offer for homeless populations by prioritizing long-term interventions. The people who it welcomed in its units often had just experienced significant losses in their lives—their jobs, health, social network, social status, or home. In such a situation, "moderately priced housing with community support is the key to pulling out of the tailspin" (Drolet, 1993, p. 7, authors' translation).

The fundamentals of the practice—which remain unchanged today—were already established: the right to housing, the freedom to choose one's housing, the possibility for tenants to take on normal roles, social integration, experiential learning, and flexibility in terms of interventions. This practice was initially put into use by two support workers mandated with resolving potentially litigious situations, contacting external resources as needed, and leading various activities (selection committees, tenants' assemblies, etc.). Tenant janitors for the buildings were also brought into the practice to ensure a certain level of safety and to react in crisis situations (Drolet, 1993).

The outcomes were rather conclusive. "Because of the community support developed by the FOHM, residential stability statistics in [the] buildings show that 53% [of] tenants kept their units for at least 2 years" (Drolet, 1993, p. 10, authors' own translation). This success rate is significant, given that pilot project participants were already homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Public recognition, 1994–1999

The pilot project in the six rooming houses was renewed for the second half of the 1990s, but no additional funding was released for the practice. The FOHM needed to find ways to increase interest in social housing with community support among the housing and health and social services networks, especially as the homeless population continued to grow. From 1988 to 1998, the number of homeless people in Montréal increased from 15,000 to over 28,000 (Roy et al., 2003), and became more diverse. The proportion of young people and women experiencing homelessness increased and problems grew more dire (multiple addictions, mental health disorders, violence, and suicide). In addition, homelessness began spreading to other cities in Québec.

In this context, nonprofit housing organizations in Outaouais and Québec City took an interest in the FOHM's approach. At that time, neither region had a federation like the one in Montréal. As such, nonprofit housing organizations in these regions used the development of community support to justify the creation of political structures. A representative of housing groups in Outaouais comments: "In Gatineau the network of nonprofit organizations was not really organized, there were a few nonprofit organizations created over the past years, but not for vulnerable people who required community support. So there was no network, but there were needs" (Interview 21).

The research community also started to show an interest in the FOHM's practice at this time. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) published a report in 1995 on the primary initiatives in Canada and the United States pertaining to the issue of housing for homeless populations that recognized the innovative nature of the practice (Jetté et al., 1998). The first evaluative study of the practice was conducted by the Laboratoire de recherche sur les pratiques et les politiques sociales (LAREPPS) in 1995. This study sought to examine how community support improved residents' quality of life in three of the six rooming houses in the pilot project. It would go on to play a fundamental role in the history of the practice in three key ways. First, it helped formalize the FOHM's approach. The various forms of interventions and activities included in community support are described comprehensively and in detail. Second, it gave the practice more credibility. It provided the FOHM and its allies with scientific arguments to highlight the importance of developing a funding program specifically for community support. Finally, it provided values that measured the real impacts of the practice. As a FOHM representative said at the time, "[The study] opened up quite a few doors, and we had a bigger audience. Already at the Ministry, there was still, we had a certain amount of attention, but now we could draw from something that was verified" (Interview 3).

The study's conclusions were very positive: community support helped reduce the risks of homelessness, modified how healthcare services were used, reduced the risk of harm and recidivism, ensured better coordination and greater effectiveness of interventions, and strengthened social ties (Jetté et al., 1998). Above all, the study confirmed that community support has a real effect on residents' quality of life. Its authors directly called on decision-makers within the health and social services network to ask them to seriously consider the possibility of providing direct funding for the practice. According to them, it would only be logical for the MHSS to take on this role, considering that, in the absence of community support, FOHM tenants would solicit support from their institutions in any case (Jetté et al., 1998).

During this same period, in 1997, the Québec government adopted the AccèsLogis program, releasing its first funds for the practice of community support. The MHSS provided \$1,000 in funding per unit to allow for new housing projects to provide their tenants with support (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007). This announcement referred only to the second component of the AccèsLogis program, which was designed exclusively for people above the age of 75, or those who were experiencing a slight loss of autonomy. As such, the FOHM rooms did not qualify for this first wave of funding.

Yet this “\$1,000-per-home” measure still represented an important step for the approach. For the first time, the MHSS provided financial support for the development of social housing with community support. From 1997 to 2002, this initiative helped support the construction of 730 units for seniors (Interview 1). After five years, the budgeted amounts were renewed, but no additional funding was released. As such, it is still the case today that this measure only applies to 730 units that received funding between 1997 and 2002. It should be noted that this first wave of funding targeted seniors and not people at risk of homelessness. The provincial government decided at that moment not to extend funding to the third component of AccèsLogis, which did focus on clients with specific needs (e.g., homeless populations). This choice was far from trivial and would come to resemble future developments in the practice.

After approaching the FOHM in the mid-1990, nonprofit housing organizations in Outaouais and in Québec City sought to create their own regional federations. The Regroupement des OSBL d'habitation et d'hébergement avec support communautaire en Outaouais (ROHSCO) and the Fédération régionale des OSBL d'habitation de Québec-Chaudière Appalaches (FROHQC) were both created in 1998. This regional political structure-building was closely linked to the process of diffusing community support. The second half of the 1990s also served as a backdrop for the creation of the Association nationale des OSBL d'habitation et d'hébergement pour personnes âgées (ANOHPA). Created in 1995, this association was composed of over twenty members, but would close its doors in 2000 (Ducharme, Aubry, & Bickerstaff-Charron, 2005), for reasons we will explore in the next phase.

Extension of networks, 2000–2003

The creation of the Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation (RQOH) in 2000 ushered social housing with community support into a third phase. The approach spread to new destinations and was the subject of demands from new actors: first, the nonprofit housing organization community recognized on its own that the practice could be applied to other vulnerable populations, rather than being limited to people at risk of homelessness; second, municipal housing offices started to appropriate the vocabulary related to the practice.

When it was founded, the RQOH brought together five regional federations (Montréal, Outaouais, Québec and Chaudières-Appalaches, Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean, and Montérégie). The creation of the RQOH led to the dissolution of the ANOHPA, the seniors' housing association created a few years earlier. Following a meeting between this association and the three federations working to further community support in Montréal, Outaouais, and Québec City, the nonprofit housing organizations came to the conclusion, for strategic reasons, that there should only be two provincial associations in its sector (Interview 18). A representative from the community highlighted that the

discussions surrounding the creation of the RQOH were still lengthy and the FOHM had to accept some compromises along the way:

The FOHM was playing a provincial role, but it was a regional organization. So [the three federations built around community support and ANOHPA] discussed for a year and their conclusion was, “We’re going to take a model like co-ops, we’re going to make federations that include everyone, so the FOHM is going to have to make an effort to open up.” (Interview 1)

This convergence was not without its hitches, but it encouraged these various federations in their negotiations with the provincial government.

The nonprofit housing organization community also discovered in the 2000s that social housing with community support could be used for other types of vulnerable populations, including people struggling with mental health disorders, people with intellectual disabilities, or people experiencing a slight loss of autonomy. As a representative from the field noted, broadening community support to include other clienteles was closely linked to the creation of the RQOH:

The first mandate that [the nonprofit housing organizations network] had was, aside from being recognized as a network, was community support. And starting from that moment around the table, you didn’t just have nonprofit organizations (NPOs) for people living alone, you have NPOs for seniors, we started saying that community support was a practice that was good everywhere, that was also good for NPOs for seniors. (Interview 1)

Hoping to both increase recognition for community support and build unity among its members, the RQOH decided to extend the practice for strategic purposes. The association’s first objective was to have a specific funding program for the practice adopted (Interview 2). Several social groups also demanded improved funding for social housing with community support, including the Front d’action populaire en réaménagement urbain and the Réseau Solidarité Itinérance du Québec (Roy et al., 2003). Over the years, the RQOH developed a lobbying strategy and expanded its alliances.

This strategy netted results: the government agreed to create an inter-ministerial committee (MHSS and SHQ) to evaluate the costs related to developing the approach. In early 2003, the committee produced a brief that estimated annual needs in community support at \$1,200 per unit (RQOH, 2004). The provincial government reacted positively to the brief. In February 2003, the RQOH received an outline of a press release from the office of André Boisclair, the minister for housing at the time, announcing the adoption of a funding program for community support. However, provincial elections were called on March 12. And despite urging from the RQOH, André Boisclair did not make the planned announcement on investments for community support. On April 14, 2003, the Parti québécois was ousted by the Québec Liberal Party, led by Jean Charest. The agreement was then rendered obsolete. As a representative from the RQOH at the time explained, the opposite is important for nonprofit housing organizations: “When I arrived, everything my predecessor had done had basically vanished, or at least all of their contacts with the government had just vanished, so I had to start from scratch. But what we’d successfully developed in the previous year was proving that we had support from the SHQ” (Interview 1).

During this period, the municipal housing offices underwent sweeping transformations. In 2002, among a whirlwind of municipal fusions, the National Assembly passed Bill 49, which substantially modified the *Act respecting the Société d'habitation du Québec*. First, the bill recognized that a municipal housing office does not only manage buildings and that it can “implement any activity of a social or community nature that fosters the well-being of its clientele” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2023, article 57). This new legislation would facilitate the development of community support in public housing. Municipal housing offices were no longer limited to being responsible for the physical buildings they managed, but also for the social and community life present in those buildings. In addition, Bill 49 also sanctioned tenants’ right to form associations of lessees.

While community initiatives in public housing remained relatively disparate and largely concentrated in Montréal, Bill 49 reframed the role of municipal housing offices in the field. From there, the development of this type of activity in public housing took on speed. “The changes to legislation that took place in 2002 had an undeniable effect on reinforcing the practices of social and community development, already underway in some territories, drawing support not only from the offices but also from residents’ associations, community organizations and CLSCs” (Morin, 2007, p. 156, authors’ translation). From that moment, municipal housing offices began organizing more social and community events, information sessions, and educational workshops.

The municipal housing office network quickly tried to establish an understanding that its support activities approached community support in nonprofit organizations. The issue was important. Such recognition could help public housing access funding that would eventually be unlocked for community support. The Regroupement des offices d’habitation du Québec (ROHQ) would take on that work. In 2003, the ROHQ published a study that demonstrated the scope of need in terms of community support in public housing. The study noted that:

Offices intervened either directly or through partners in various support activities for residents in low-income housing: support for tenants’ committees, community organizing, conflict management, welcome and referral services, psychosocial support, civic accompaniment, support for recreational activities, and food or domestic support. (ROHQ, 2008, p. 4, authors’ translation)

The ROHQ sought to take a position in discussions on community support while highlighting that the practice was not strictly the prerogative of nonprofit organizations (Interview 5).

In the early 2000s, the federal government also returned to the issue of housing through the National Homeless Initiative (NHI), the budget of which was largely directed toward community action partnerships (Roy et al., 2003). Funds allocated to Québec as part of this budget could provide funding for social housing projects with community support. While it is impossible to determine the precise total of funds invested for community support, a source from the housing sector highlighted that the amount was considered large at that time: “there are several housing units with community support that have been added via NHI, many, several hundred only in Montréal” (Interview 4).

The City of Montréal, in turn, reacted in 2002. Concerned by the situation of homelessness in its territory, the municipal administration signed an agreement with the health and social services and housing networks that provided an annual investment of \$300,000 for community support projects. As part of this agreement, five buildings with a total of 232 units received funding. This investment brought the total funding for community support to nearly \$2 million per year, excluding the amounts made available from the federal government via the NHI. However, given the recognition acquired by the practice over the previous years, this amount remained modest.

Development of the First Policy Framework, 2004–2007

During its first few days in office, the Québec Liberal Party abandoned the idea of a funding program for community support. Rather, the new government decided to form an intersectorial committee charged with defining the conditions under which the practice would be transferred across the province. This was the start of efforts that would lead to the adoption of the first policy framework on the practice (Interview 4).

From the beginning, policy framework production was placed under the joint responsibility of the MHSS and the SHQ. A committee composed of stakeholders from the health and social services and housing networks was created, including representatives from nonprofit housing organizations and public housing. In total, the intersectorial committee counted 10 members.

The title of the document underwent several changes. The final title, *A Policy Framework on Community Support in Social Housing*, was only determined in 2007 (Vermette, 2012). According to one representative from a nonprofit housing organization, the government used different terms, largely to avoid the issue of a funding program. “They told us, ‘It’s not going to be a funding program because there won’t be money invested in it specifically, it’s going to be something that will use the existing budget lines in the agencies, it’s going to be a province-wide framework’” (Interview 1).

The committee’s work took place from 2004 to 2007. Tensions arose both between the health and social services and housing networks and within nonprofit housing organizations, certain members of which were concerned that the term would be clawed back (Interview 9). The RQOH sought to ensure that the framework would be as compliant a representation as possible of the approach that its members had developed. For its part, the municipal housing office network repeatedly insisted that its support workers had to manage increasingly complex issues and that community support therefore had its place just as much in public housing. While the committee was under the joint responsibility of the health and social services and housing networks, it was largely MHSS representatives who led the meetings. A government representative from the housing network, who contributed to work on the framework, commented on the dynamics within the committee:

One of the reasons it went so slowly was because of a lack of trust, the distrust that the community sector had for the health care system. You know the story of the elephant and the mouse? You don’t negotiate with the elephant, you don’t sleep with the elephant when you’re a mouse, because all he has to do is turn over and he’ll crush you, that’s what was said in the sector. ... There were some people who didn’t want a framework in the sector, even for NPOs, because they said, “They’re going to claw back our practice.” (Interview 4)

It is true that the issue of funding was never directly addressed by the committee. The framework needed to allow for a wide diffusion of the practice but was not supposed to provide indications for its funding. This point remained a major source of tension between the RQOH and MHSS (Interview 1).

In May 2007, the Minister of Health and Social Services, Philippe Couillard, announced a \$5 million investment for community support, without having alerted the stakeholders working on the framework. News got out discretely during the study of budget credits for 2007–2008. This investment was supposed to follow the implementation of the framework and targeted seniors. As such, housing for this population should have received priority in funds distribution. An MHSS officer involved in the case explains: “There was the 2005-2010 action plan on aging, it was part of that, it was a ministerial priority” (Interview 9).

The framework was officially adopted in November 2007, with the title *A Policy Framework on Community Support in Social Housing: An inter-sectorial intervention from the health and social services and housing networks* (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007). The document confirmed the shared responsibility of both the housing and health and social services networks as regards the practice. The framework also recognized that all social housing providers (nonprofit organizations, municipal offices, and co-operatives) could make use of community support, upon the condition that they offered permanent housing. In addition, the framework planned for the creation of a national committee to follow up and regional co-ordination bodies to foster the implementation of the practice.

This period saw several other major events. In 2005, well before the adoption of the framework, housing offices had already organized a series of regional meetings on community support, to transpose the experience of collaboration between the health and social services and housing networks to a more local level (ROHQ, 2008). The MHSS and SHQ agreed to support and fund this effort. Eleven regional conferences were organized from May 2006 to December 2007. A total of 1,315 support workers from across the province participated. This process allowed housing offices to be one step ahead on the diffusion of the policy framework.

Taken by surprise by this initiative, nonprofit organizations tried in turn to obtain support from the MHSS and the SHQ to organize a province-wide tour on community support. As a representative from this network explained, the MHSS and the SHQ had no choice but to accept this request, due to the pressure on them and in the interest of equity. “There was so much hue and cry that they were forced ... to shell out for a tour that was set to start the next year [2007]” (Interview 1). The format selected for this tour was somewhat similar to that used by the municipal housing offices with their regional meetings. From fall 2007 to summer 2008, the network held a total of eight regional meetings that brought together approximately 1,000 support workers (RQOH, 2011). Added to the municipal housing offices' efforts, this made a total of 19 regional meetings on community support in the span of two years.

The \$5 million investment that accompanied the implementation of the policy framework was not the only funding measure taken between 2004 and 2007. In 2005, as part of its new action plan on mental health, the Agency of Health and Social Services of Montréal allocated \$703,000 in funding for community support (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007). This amount funded 23 nonprofit

housing projects for a total of 619 units. For the first time in the history of community support, funding for the practice extended beyond Montréal's city limits. In 2006, in preparation for the implementation of the policy framework, the Agency of Health and Social Services of Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean set aside \$100,000 in its budget for community support, divided between 12 nonprofit housing projects for seniors experiencing a loss of autonomy that managed a total of 222 units (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007).

Elsewhere, after having been renewed for a second phase from 2004 to 2006, the NHI was replaced by another federal program, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Active as of 2007, this second strategy represented another potential source of funding for social housing projects with community support in the field of the fight against homelessness, despite uncertainty around the amounts allocated to the approach.

Implementation of the First Policy Framework, 2008–2014

During the implementation phase of the policy framework, the MHSS sought first to allocate funding between the province's administrative regions. Generally, when new resources are allocated, as in this case, the MHSS uses a calculation method that considers the health and social services offered in each region as a function of population size. Regions already well served would therefore receive a lower percentage of funding, whereas those with less well-developed service offers would receive a greater share (Interview 1). Adopted in the interest of equity, this calculation method theoretically helped reduce inequities in services that were implemented here and there across the health and social services system. The \$5 million budget for community support was divided up following this method. Certain regions received more significant shares of funding, while others had to make do with less. The distribution of funding by region is presented in Table 1.

The problem with the MHSS method of calculation is that it fails to consider the specific nature of the program. Funding was distributed based on the service offer and number of inhabitants in each region, regardless of the actual scope of need to which the program could respond. As an SHQ representative explained, in the case of community support, this calculation did not even account for the number of social housing units in each region: "The problem with the distribution model from the ministry was that it wasn't indexed to the

Table 1: Funding for community support in 2007–2008 by region

Region		Funding
01	Bas-Saint-Laurent	\$103,373
02	Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean	\$153,088
03	Capitale-Nationale	\$276,330
04	Mauricie	\$385,140
05	Estrie	\$374,489
06	Montréal	\$578,582
07	Outaouais	\$229,199
08	Abitibi-Témiscamingue	\$108,430
09	Côte-Nord	\$87,609
10	Nord-du-Québec	\$57,471
11	Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	\$63,766
12	Chaudière-Appalaches	\$216,908
13	Laval	\$314,140
14	Lanaudière	\$258,587
15	Laurentides	\$512,214
16	Montérégie	\$1,280,673
Total		\$4,999,999

Source: Vermette (2012: 8)

amount of units already present in the territory. ... The people at the ministry that we were working with didn't [want] to get into that" (Interview 4). This model of resource allocation can also give rise to certain incoherencies. This issue is made manifest in the case of community support. As indicated in Table 1, certain regions, such as Montérégie, accessed very large amounts of funding despite little development for the practice in that area. Conversely, other regions, such as Montréal, received much smaller amounts of funding, which only partially responded to its needs.

Regional agencies of health and social services took over from the MHSS once funding had been allocated between the regions. These agencies were responsible for applying the policy framework in each region and selecting which projects could receive funding. Some opted to put consultation mechanisms in place to involve local actors from the health and social services and housing networks in the implementation of the framework. Most of these agencies issued a call for submissions and invited all social housing providers (nonprofit organizations, housing offices, and co-operatives) to submit projects. At times, funding was directly issued to local bodies in the health and social services system, allowing them to manage the next steps. The implementation of the policy framework at the regional level varied considerably from region to region. Multiple factors had an influence on this process, including the political power held by nonprofit organizations and municipal housing offices in the region, the degree to which actors involved in the implementation understood the approach, and the degree to which allocated funding corresponded with the region and its needs.

In total, 148 projects across Québec receiving funding as part of the policy framework implementation process, representing a total of 22,588 units and 24,234 people (MHSS, 2009, as cited in Vermette, 2012). However, this process had scant follow-up. At the regional level, annual reporting to health and social services agencies varied greatly from region to region. Some agencies simply asked organizations to submit their annual reports, while others asked for a specific report on their community support activities. At the provincial level, there was even less reporting. A committee had been put in place to oversee this task, but it only met once, in February 2009 (Vermette, 2012). However, the framework mandated this committee with "measuring the pace of implementation of the proposed approach and if needed . . . determining adjustments to be made" (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007, p. i). The application of the policy framework was never evaluated by the provincial government. A representative from the SHQ with knowledge of the process mentioned that the actors involved were already very busy with the implementation of the policy framework and that reporting and evaluation procedures for a program that only received \$5 million was not a priority for the health and social services network (Interview 4).

Funding for community support continued to increase after the implementation of the first policy framework, but at the regional level. Some agencies, as in Montréal, Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean, and Chaudière-Appalaches, injected additional funding for community support from their own budgets. Others simply distributed funding received from the provincial government. The transfer of community support to the regional level followed a variety of models (hierarchical, administrative, or partnership) (Jetté & Bergeron-Gaudin, 2017). While the provincial government was fairly inactive in terms of funding following the implementation of the framework, it should be mentioned that its policy on aging, "Aging and Living Together," adopted in 2012, included objectives such as bolstering community support in social housing. The implementation report for this policy indicates that

this increased support translated to \$9.12 million invested in the practice by the health and social services network in 2013–2014 (Gouvernement du Québec, 2017).

CONCLUSION: A WELFARE MIX IN MOTION

Community support in social housing underwent several phases before being formally recognized by the Québec government. Despite the promising results shown by the first pilot project from the FOHM in the late 1980s, the approach did not receive official support and funding until 2007. A wide variety of actors intervened at different steps of this process of institutionalization. Nonprofit housing organizations, and later, municipal housing offices, had to be strategic in their efforts to convince the government that the practice should be disseminated across Québec. For its part, the government had to revisit its tendency to cordon off work between different ministries and understand that community support in social housing was a practice that involved the housing sector just as much as it did that of health and social services.

That being said, the overall amounts allocated by the provincial government proved to be well below the amounts demanded by social housing representatives, who in 2012 estimated total need for community support across the province at \$17 million (\$12 million for nonprofit housing organizations and \$5 million for municipal housing offices) (Vermette, 2012). Furthermore, the very methodology proposed by the government for funds distribution—based on the overall service offer in health and social services already in place in the territory as a function of the population—introduced major biases into resource allocation. A region such as Montréal, for example, was put at a disadvantage by this regimented distribution that failed to consider the number of social housing units in the region and other specific factors related to its social and economic characteristics.

These distortions in how funding was distributed could have been corrected over time had there been a greater degree of coordination between actors. However, little follow-up was done for the first policy framework. While certain regions established funding allocation procedures and set up co-ordination bodies, these agreements were made in the context of local arrangements with complex geometries that had no equivalent at the provincial level. Tensions experienced within the intersectorial committee that oversaw the adoption of the policy framework in 2007 were more likely than not related to this near-absence of follow-up until 2019, as the stakeholders involved had little interest in starting a new cycle of negotiations given that certain previously observed stumbling blocks had little likelihood of resolution over the short and medium term. In other words, the negotiation of this welfare mix led to conflicts that were not completely resolved by the 2007 policy framework.

In 2018, main representatives for social housing (nonprofit housing organizations, municipal housing offices, technical resource groups, and housing co-operatives) organized to demand a \$30 million increase in funding for community support. This joint demand reveals that the power dynamics surrounding the welfare mix were never definitive and evolved in parallel with alliances between stakeholders (RQOH, 2018). For a time, these representatives preferred to maintain relationships of collaboration rather than competition for resources. This convergence also speaks to a phenomenon of hybridization that would never completely transcend the normative boundaries by which these representatives defined themselves. They remained aware of the strategic issues involved in de-

veloping their practices, all the more so when instigating innovative practices that stemmed from their very identities, which protect these practices from being appropriated by institutional principles with which they do not identify.

According to the network of nonprofit housing organizations, the new policy framework adopted in 2022 was the subject “of consensus among all concerned parties, [and] allowed for the possibility of a more efficient deployment of community support interventions” (RQOH, 2022). Indeed, while the 2022 framework uses largely the same definition of community support presented in the 2007 document, it does specify that “it is now obligatory to implement or make use of an existing dedicated or contributive coordination body at the regional or territory level” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2022, p. 20). Thus, the welfare mix of community support in social housing remains in motion, reconfiguring itself according to new modalities. Other research will be needed to explore these new modalities of the welfare mix more in detail.

The critical issue of funding for community support, however, remains absent from the new policy framework. As such, the reconfiguration of this welfare mix does not herald a flattening of hierarchical relationships, nor a reduction in the regulatory power of the government in resource redistribution. These zones of discretion remain linked to relationships of power and influence that third-sector actors successfully exercised through the legitimacy of their demands in public spaces.

NOTES

1. This project received financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. It has been approved by the Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et sciences de l'Université de Montréal.
2. The three other case studies focused on, respectively, medications to treat mental health conditions (Jetté, Benisty, Bergeron-Gaudin, & Éthier, 2019), Alzheimer's disease (Carpentier, Bergeron-Gaudin, & Jetté, 2013), and employability (Chalifour, Bergeron-Gaudin, & Jetté, 2016). The innovative practices selected all responded to needs that went unmet by the state or the market (social innovations). They all underwent a partial or complete process of institutionalization.
3. Our study examines the implementation of the first policy framework on community support in social housing in nine administrative regions in Québec to understand variations at this level (Jetté & Bergeron-Gaudin, 2017).
4. The SHQ is the government institution in Québec that is responsible for implementing all housing-related programs and services for the population.
5. All interviews were conducted in French. Excerpts cited here were translated into English to facilitate understanding.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Christian Jetté is Professor at the School of Social Work at Université de Montréal and Researcher at the Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (CRISES). Email: christian.jette@umontreal.ca

Jean-Vincent Bergeron-Gaudin is a PhD candidate in political science at Université de Montréal. Email: jean-vincent.bergeron-gaudin@umontreal.ca