

2024-2025 Annual Report

An Overview of Progress and
Accomplishments Towards Collaborative
Economic Development in Quebec

SEPTEMBER 2025

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A Word from our Chair

Dear CEDEC Stakeholders and Friends,

The Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) serves as a catalyst for Collaborative Economic and Labour Market Development for the Official Language Minority Community of Quebec (OLMCQ). As architects of purposeful public, private, and civil society partnerships, we strive to create meaningful, measurable improvements in the economic well-being of individuals and their communities.

It is in this spirit of collaboration and purpose that we present CEDEC's 2024–2025 Annual Report. This year's report highlights our unwavering commitment to advancing the OLMCQ's full and active participation in our shared economy. We are shaping a more unified and inclusive economic landscape—one where every Quebecer contributes to and benefits from the prosperity we build together.

Our mission is not pursued in isolation. It aligns directly with the Government of Canada's one economy priority—an inclusive framework aimed at removing internal barriers and connecting Canadians from coast to coast to coast. As Prime Minister Mark Carney put it, Canadians are focused and determined to build "... one Canadian economy ... that will connect and transform our country." CEDEC's efforts are part of this broader movement, demonstrating how local and regional economic development actions can be harnessed to serve national goals.

Our ambition is bold. Our dedicated team of strategic, dynamic, and results-driven economic developers works with intention, evidence, and creativity. Guided by a philosophy of collaboration and innovation, we partner closely with all Quebecers to seize opportunities that:

- ▮ Harness the transformative power of emerging technologies, especially AI.
- ▮ Accelerate the shift to a resilient and green economy.
- ▮ Respond constructively to Quebec's evolving demographic landscape.

These priorities reflect our role as bridge builders—connecting sectors, cultures, languages, and regions under a set of shared economic development objectives and targets. For us, diversity is more than a value. It is a strategic advantage we leverage across Quebec and Canada for the benefit of all. Using evidence, foresight, and imagination, we cultivate the participation of the OLMCQ in strengthening Canada's growth through Collaborative Economic Development.

As we look ahead, we invite you to join us in building an economy powered by unprecedented collaboration, anchored in the conviction that every community—large or small—has a vital role to play in working with others to shape Canada's economic future.

Sincerely,



Leslie Acs

Chair
CEDEC

A Word from our President and Chief Executive Officer

Dear Stakeholders, Partners, and Friends,

I am pleased to join our Chair in presenting CEDEC's 2024–2025 Annual Report. This report illustrates CEDEC's unique role in fostering Collaborative Economic Development for the benefit of the Official Language Minority Community of Quebec (OLMCQ) and all Quebecers. It reflects the commitment and expertise of our team in co-creating bold, shared economic outcomes for individuals and their communities.

Over the past year, CEDEC has accomplished the following:

- ▮ Completed our Overview of Quebec's Economic Landscape (OQEL), establishing a baseline that sharpens our understanding of the province's economic dynamics and opportunities.
- ▮ Completed nine Collaborative Economic Development Dialogues (CEDDs), engaging public, private, and civil society stakeholders to identify and explore promising opportunities aligned with Quebec's economic drivers.
- ▮ Mobilized cross-sector engagement from the Magdalen Islands to the Pontiac and from the Lower North Shore to Montreal—surfacing opportunities grounded in economic insight, local experience, and collective potential.
- ▮ Laid the foundation for our 2026–2028 Flagship Report, which will convert dialogue into direction and action, providing a roadmap to guide CEDEC's contributions to OLMCQ economic and labour market development over the next two years.

- ▮ Strengthened our advocacy for economic and labour market development as a cornerstone of community vitality, advancing Collaborative Economic Development as a tailored, inclusive approach to meet the needs of Quebec's English-speakers and their communities.
- ▮ Launched targeted research to identify strategies for addressing persistent economic disparities experienced by members of the Official Language Minority Community of Quebec.

These achievements were made possible by the commitment and creativity of our valued partners and the many stakeholders who believe in the power of unprecedented collaboration to catalyze economic development.

As our Chair stated, we are proud to do our part in strengthening Canada's economy. The continuing success of our work, however, is contingent upon the active and ongoing support of stakeholders, partners, and friends. I invite you all to deepen your engagement with CEDEC, helping us explore new frontiers of collaboration to build a better economy that results in better lives for ourselves, as individuals, and for our communities.

Sincerely,



John Buck
President and
Chief Executive Officer
CEDEC

01

Introduction and Business Overview



In his May 21, 2025, mandate letter to the Federal Cabinet, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney set out seven objectives. Collaboration is at the heart of them, and it is the means through which he has asked his ministers to deliver results.

When it comes to collaboration, CEDEC is at the forefront. We enable connections that generate innovations to create jobs, connect job seekers with available job opportunities, create and grow businesses and social enterprises, and improve the design and delivery of services and products. Through collaboration, we create new possibilities for investment and trade.

We are relentless advocates for, and pioneering practitioners of, unprecedented collaboration within the Official Language Minority Community of Quebec (OLMCQ). This includes between the OLMCQ and the Francophone majority of Quebec, and across the public, private, and civil society sectors of the economy.

Driven by this collaborative spirit, CEDEC and its partners are transforming economic development opportunities into measurable, tangible economic benefits for English speakers, their communities, and the broader Quebec society.

In very specific terms, the **OLMCQ 2023-2033 Collaborative Economic Development Ten-Year Plan** provides a unifying framework to bring together diverse areas of expertise, resources, and community efforts to:

- ▮ Create or expand 250 businesses and social enterprises.
- ▮ Create or fill one thousand jobs.
- ▮ Attract \$5M in additional new economic investments in the community.
- ▮ Create a \$25M Collaborative Economic Development Leverage Fund.
- ▮ Reduce by 50% the economic and labour market disparities between the English speakers in Quebec and Francophones inside and outside of the province 2021 census data.
- ▮ Extend, through co-investment and co-deployment, the application of CEDEC's Collaborative Economic Development approach to generate tangible economic benefits.

These targets aim to strengthen the OLMCQ's contribution to the growth and development of Quebec's economy. They have been designed to address the documented economic disparities in employment and income faced by Quebec's English-speaking communities. By addressing this issue, the Ten-Year Plan aims to promote greater equity, resilience, and shared prosperity among all Quebecers.

CEDEC believes that collaboration is the driving force of innovation and productivity. It delivers far more than any one individual, group, community, or region can achieve on its own.

COLLABORATION: MUCH MORE THAN A MEETING OR A POLITE CONVERSATION

Collaboration is not simply a soft skill or a buzzword for economic developers. It is harder to do than many people think; however, it brings the greatest potential for producing positive economic outcomes. CEDEC recognizes that effective collaboration is both a challenge and a powerful opportunity—especially when diverse stakeholders bring unique interests, priorities, and perspectives to the table. We consider each stakeholder's individual goals while weaving together distinct viewpoints, resources, and capacities into a unified effort to achieve maximum economic impact.

By leveraging economic data, information, and research, and linking these to lived experience and professional expertise, CEDEC works to align self-interest and broader societal interests, designing objectives that balance both. It pursues the achievement of these objectives through concerted action to create value for individuals and their communities.

CEDEC refines the art of convening, catalyzing, and facilitating collaboration across sectors, industries, and communities. Through CEDEC's commitment to fostering innovative, sometimes unexpected cross-sector connections, stakeholders discover more effective and creative ways to work together, unlocking economic development potential.

In October 2024, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages cited and supported CEDEC's work with the following recommendation: "That the Government of Canada recognize that collaborative economic development is one of the socioeconomic models best suited to the needs of Quebec's English-speaking communities." Additionally, the Committee asked that the Federal Government "take collaborative economic development into account when implementing positive measures targeting the socioeconomic development of these communities."

This recognition strengthens CEDEC's position as the designated and federally funded OLMCQ organization, responsible for economic and labour market development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUELS PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

CEDEC believes that economic development is the foundation of social progress and cultural development. Through Collaborative Economic Development, English-speakers in Quebec can create new economic development and growth opportunities to reduce economic inequalities, improve social cohesion, develop arts and culture, strengthen education, health care and social services, and act as responsible stewards of our natural environment.

A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

Today's economy knows no borders. CEDEC's expertise helps bridge the gaps between communities, bringing interprovincial, national, and global connections within reach of local and regional businesses and social enterprises of all sizes. Our experience helps organizations create and enhance their trade of goods and services that meet local, regional, national, or international needs. We open the pathways for businesses and social enterprises to contribute in a meaningful way to the economic growth and success of our province and our country.

We work to provide opportunities in population centres of all sizes. Essential economic development work is being done across Quebec in all sectors, including agriculture and tourism, as well as in research and in technology development. We help activate and empower ideas not just through exposure and collaboration, but also by providing access to insightful research findings, vital infrastructure, and access to resources that innovative businesses and social entrepreneurs need to get things done.

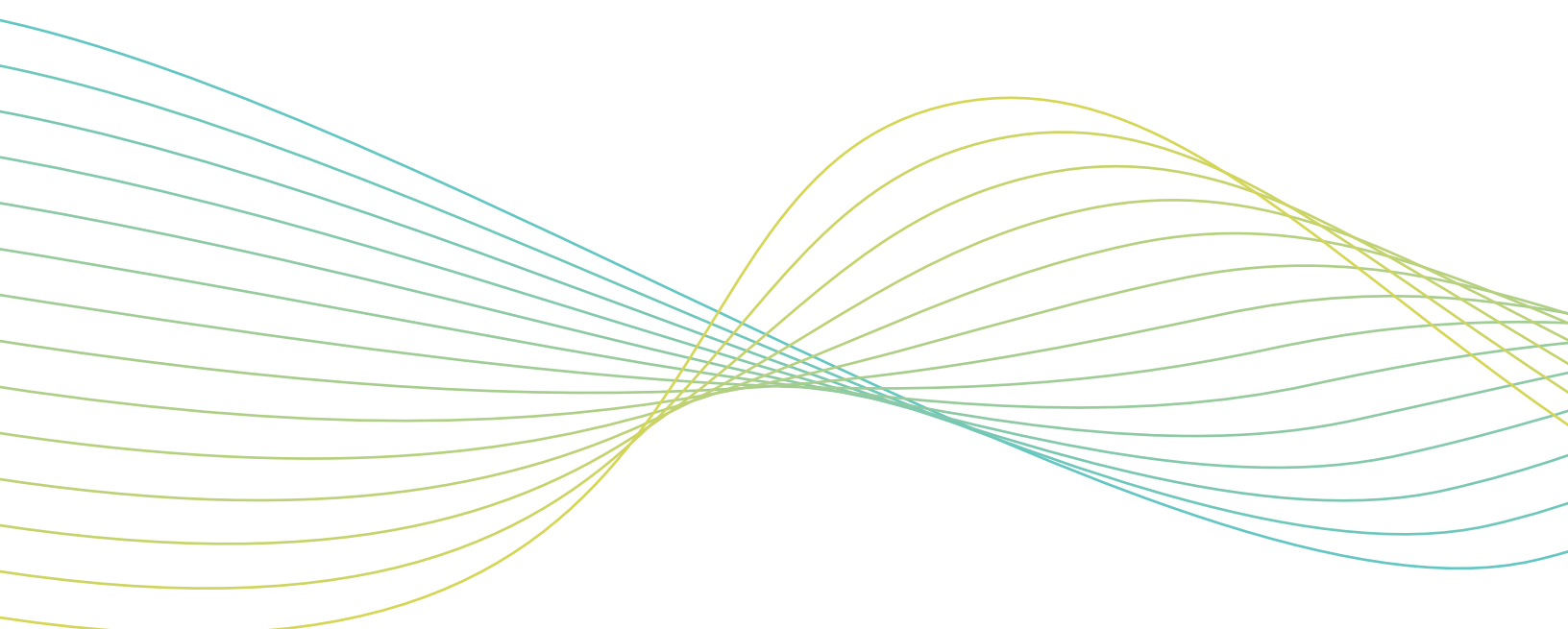
FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: THE ROADMAP TO FUTURE ECONOMIC SUCCESS IS CRYSTALLIZING

The last couple of years have been challenging for economic developers in all sectors. It is not an understatement to say that the current economic and social climates present new challenges and opportunities for continued economic growth and development.

CEDEC recognizes that leveraging Artificial Intelligence, transitioning to a sustainable green economy, addressing workforce development and adaptation, and fully benefiting from the knowledge and skills of newcomers to Quebec are the foundational building blocks of continued economic success.

In this report, we feature several case studies that illustrate how we identified promising opportunities, created and shared data and research results, built economic development capacity through public, private, and civil society partnerships, and sustained economic development initiatives. And, how all of this was accomplished through Collaborative Economic Development.

Most importantly, this report illustrates how CEDEC creates a better economy for better lives for English-speaking Quebecers, their communities, and all Quebecers.





Above: EmployESBC connects English-speaking, bilingual Black talent with employers in the Greater Montreal area.

CASE STUDY

EmployESBC: Diversity Makes Us All Stronger

The Canadian labour market is undergoing significant change, and these shifts are reflected in the Greater Montreal Area. Among the English-speaking Black population, unemployment rates remain higher than the area's overall average. According to the 2021 census from Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate for the English-speaking Black population in the Montreal Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) stood at approximately 12.8%, which was higher than that of the CMA's Black population (9.8%), Montreal's English-speaking population (11%), and Montreal's overall population (8.4%).

Recognizing the importance of expanding access to employment opportunities for this population group, CEDEC worked to bring together public, private, and civil society sector partners to address this situation. In collaboration with the Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) in Montreal, CEDEC

launched **EmployESBC**—an initiative designed to connect English-speaking, bilingual Black talent with employers in the Greater Montreal Area, supporting stronger workforce participation.

ADDRESSING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BARRIERS HEAD-ON

More than a quarter of Black Canadians live in Quebec (27.3% as of 2021). Employers need a way to access this community's skilled talent pool, and the community requires better ways to access employers. These challenges were what motivated BCRC to collaborate with CEDEC in founding EmployESBC.

To get EmployESBC off the ground, CEDEC and BCRC rallied industry partners, including Sobeys, Una Buro, and the English Montreal School Board, to help provide access to a wide range of potential employers and sectors.

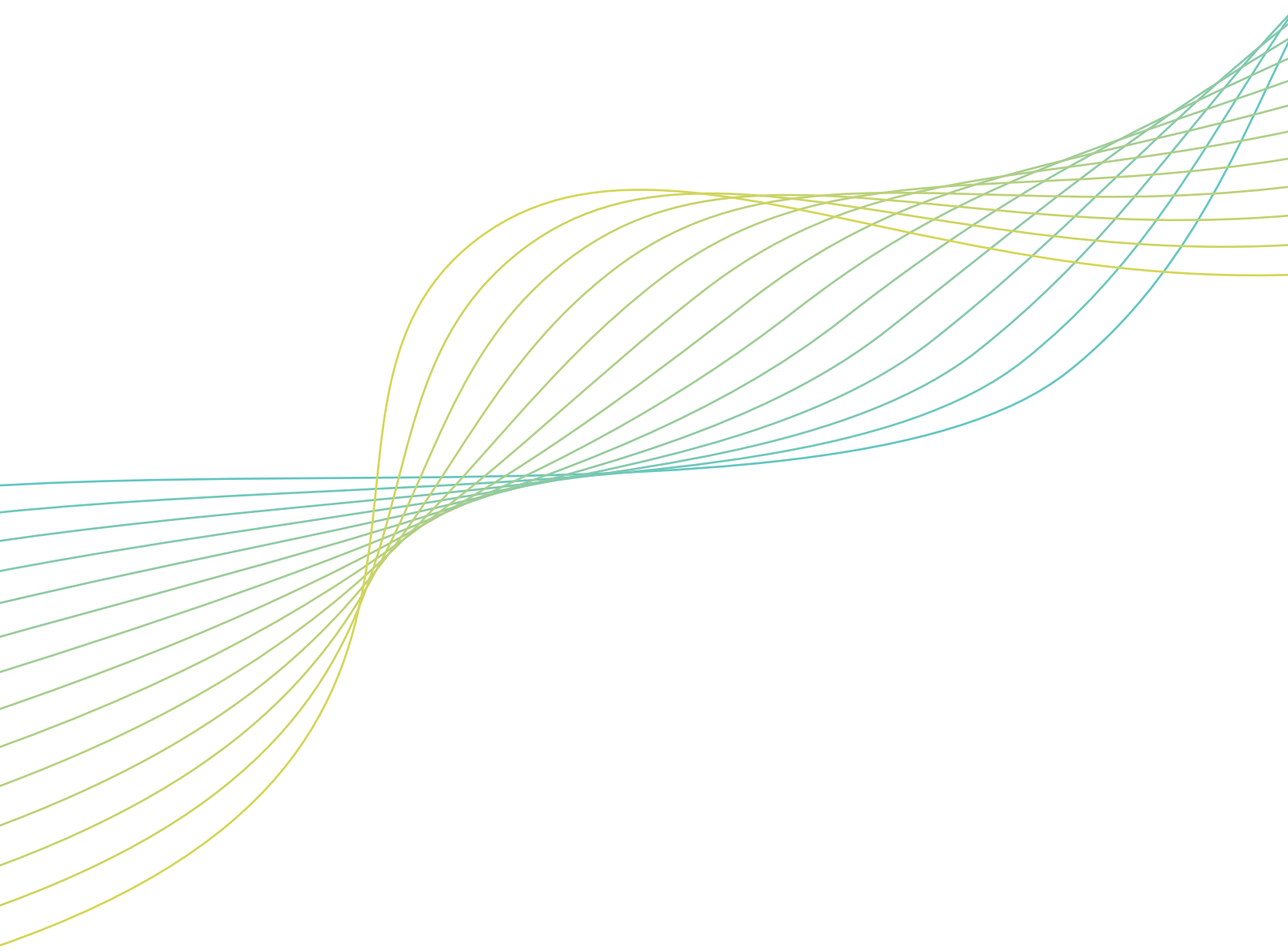
EFFECTING CHANGE

Between March 2021 and March 2025, EmployESBC generated over \$1.65M in economic impact (comprising \$1.04M from direct job placement effects and \$618,000 in induced economic benefits). In 2024–2025 alone, EmployESBC generated

\$800,000 in economic impact, benefiting both Montreal's English-speaking Black community and the broader Quebec economy.

EmployESBC's job placement work underscores how matching trained, bilingual English-speaking Black talent with employers enhances both the economic prospects of individuals and the performance of businesses in the Greater Montreal Area.

This initiative is a clear demonstration of CEDEC's core principles in action: collaborating to build a robust, shared economy and harnessing the power of unprecedented collaboration among public, private, and civil society partners to create lasting, measurable results.





Above: Expedition 51° runs by Salmon Bay, part of the municipality of Bonne-Espérance, on Quebec's Lower North Shore.
Source: Mathieu Dupuis

CASE STUDY

Bringing the Tourism Industry Together

Canadian tourism is on everyone's minds, as efforts turn to creating one, strong Canadian economy. Today, more Canadians are choosing to spend their vacation time—and dollars—at home rather than abroad.

According to the Canadian Tourism Data Collective, in 2022, Canada's tourism sector generated \$129.7 billion in revenue. It contributed \$50.8 billion to GDP (1.8% of GDP), making it one of the fastest-growing economic sectors. Some 708,900 jobs in Canada are directly related to the tourism industry, and 2.07 million jobs across Canada were supported by this sector. According to 2021 data, the tourism sector in Quebec generated \$6.6 billion in spending and attracted 42.8 million visitors. The Quebec tourism industry's footprint is substantial: tourism represents about 2.5% of Quebec's GDP, employs 400,000 people, and encompasses almost 30,000 tourism-related businesses (restaurants, hotels).

With an uptick in Canadian domestic travel, this is an ideal time for tourism businesses to capitalize and collaborate.

Given its past endeavors, CEDEC has worked to create strong partnerships and enhance the attraction of exciting tourist destinations.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF INTERPROVINCIAL TOURISM ALONG THE EXPEDITION 51° ROUTE

In 2021, the Coasters Association (Quebec's Lower North Shore) and Destination Labrador identified a promising opportunity to attract more visitors and tourism spending to their respective regions by creating a single, seamless tourism experience, along **Expedition 51°**, the Quebec-Labrador Highway—a multi-thousand-kilometre route spanning Quebec's northern coastline and the Labrador region of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Until then, no unified program connected travelers to the interprovincial region's many attractions: whale watching, hydroelectric facility tours, historic fishing villages, camping and trailer adventures, drives through pristine wilderness, and scenic ferry trips.

CEDEC helped bring together public, private, and civil society partners to boost tourism traffic, increase tourism spending in local communities, and enhance visitor experiences along the route. Partners included Tourisme Côte-Nord, MRC du Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent, MRC de Caniapiscau, the Blanc-Sablon Tourism Centre, Whiteley Museum, Eskimo Island Boat Tours, and the Labrador Straits Historical Corporation—supported by Visitor Information Centers from the Lower North Shore to Baie-Comeau and across Labrador.

A survey of thirty-four tourism businesses across Quebec and Newfoundland & Labrador was conducted between June and October 2024. The survey measured the initial economic impact of the Expedition 51° initiative. Survey results indicate that 30% of participating tourism businesses reported benefiting from Expedition 51°, with these respondents noting significant gains in tourism traffic since this interprovincial Venture began.

Expedition 51° stands as a model of how collaboration and innovation can strengthen economic development across regions and jurisdictions, positioning communities in both provinces for lasting growth.



Above: Fishing is an economic driver and a tourist attraction at the Grosse-Île fishing port. Credit: Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Magdalen Islands) ©GouvQc/Louise Mondoux.

A SHARED VENTURE IN THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS

The Magdalen Islands—a 12-island archipelago in the Gulf of St. Lawrence—face unique tourism challenges due to their remote location. Local tourism operators have long sought to boost visits and spending from cruise, ferry, and air travelers to strengthen seasonal businesses and jobs.

To help tourism operators on the islands, CEDEC brought together public, private, and civil society partners to enhance island experiential tours for visiting cruise ship passengers—tours showcasing the traditions and history of the English-speaking community on Grosse-Île. Venture partners in this endeavor included Escale Îles de la Madeleine, Autobus les Sillons, the Cap Dauphin Fishermen's Cooperative, the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders, the Municipality of Grosse-Île, and La Maison du Potier.

This collaboration is expanding operators' reach, enriching the visitor experience, and building a stronger shared economy in this rural region. The experiential tour business is projected to nearly double from 2024 to 2025, and then again from 2025 to 2026.

CRUISING THE SEAWAY—INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

CEDEC's success in building strong tourism partnerships in many parts of Quebec has sparked interest from cruise ship operators along the St. Lawrence Seaway, who have recognized the organization's ability to bring together the efforts of local operators, public agencies, and private enterprises around shared tourism goals. This recognition has opened the door to discussions about how a similar collaborative approach could be applied more broadly, linking multiple ports of call and creating a more cohesive cruise ship passenger visitor experience along the Seaway.

The potential impact of taking advantage of this opportunity is substantial, given industry characteristics. In 2023, more than 1.2 million cruise passengers disembarked in Canada, with Quebec experiencing a 59% increase in passenger traffic since 2016. Ports along the Seaway—from Quebec City to the Magdalen Islands—see cruise ship passenger tourism as an exciting economic development opportunity.

CEDEC is currently assessing the feasibility of greater collaboration among cruise operators, port authorities, tourism boards, local attractions, and communities. Central to this opportunity is developing a better understanding of the demand for port-of-call tourism in Quebec and the business relationships required to respond to it. A market study to examine both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) dynamics is planned for early in 2025–2026. This study will help CEDEC strengthen connections between cruise lines and local suppliers, as well as between cruise ship passengers and local businesses, attractions, and experiences.

The study will also take a detailed look at passenger preferences. Early insights show that travelers value unique, high-quality, and authentic experiences, from guided cultural tours to regionally and locally distinctive products. The average passenger currently spends about \$153 during a port visit—spending that could grow with more targeted and bundled offerings across multiple ports. By mapping these preferences against local strengths and assets, CEDEC hopes to work with partners to identify promising economic opportunities to expand tourism packages, diversify visitor experiences, and extend visitor stays.

At the same time, the market study is analyzing the supply side, including the role of wholesalers, the market power of cruise lines, and the readiness of local operators to meet demand. It will also look at ways to integrate services—such as transportation,

local product sales, and seasonal workforce placement—to underpin a better, more seamless visitor experience. This aligns with CEDEC's Collaborative Economic Development approach, where the focus is not only on attracting visitors but on ensuring communities have the capacity, partnerships, and infrastructure to fully benefit from increased tourism trade.

With actionable market insights, CEDEC will be better equipped to work with public, private, and civil society partners to foster stronger, more coordinated partnerships along the St. Lawrence Seaway, offering cruise ship operators and local communities greater economic benefits through collaborative efforts. As always, the goal is a shared, sustainable tourism industry that delivers measurable benefits—bringing more passengers, more spending, and more opportunities to Quebec's St. Lawrence Seaway port communities.

DIVERSIFYING OFFERINGS IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

The Sutton Region in Quebec's Eastern Townships is a prime destination for culinary and cultural tourism, with visitor numbers climbing steadily in recent years. This growth has prompted local businesses and tourism operators to explore ways to share expertise and resources, while expanding offerings tailored to visitors' interests and budgets.

On-the-ground intelligence gathered in 2024 and 2025 revealed that some businesses were experiencing growth rates of 40 to 60%. Visitors were seeking local events featuring new foods, cultural experiences, and outdoor activities, as well as packaged options that catered to a range of income levels.

In response, CEDEC has begun exploring targeted opportunities to boost tourist traffic and spending in Sutton through stronger collaboration among tourism operators, local businesses, social enterprises, and the community.

02

Collaborative Economic Development Dialogues



FORGING PARTNERSHIPS TO TRANSFORM RESEARCH INTO TANGIBLE ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

In 2024–2025, CEDEC initiated a series of Collaborative Economic Development Dialogues (CEDDs). The purpose of these dialogues was to bring together public, private, and civil society stakeholders to identify promising opportunities, informed by the results of the organization’s

Overview of Quebec’s Economic Landscape (OQEL). The CEDDs were divided into nine complementary themes, with each dialogue seeking to deliver the following:

- Encourage a shared understanding of Quebec’s economic landscape.
- Pinpoint economic opportunities that could be developed under the promising theme being explored.
- Build informed and shared judgment about which opportunities were most promising based on the evidence, as well as the lived experience of participating stakeholders.

DIALOGUE BUILDING COLLABORATION

Bringing together people from diverse organizations has a powerful, galvanizing effect. Drawing on CEDEC’s unique Collaborative Economic Development Model and extensive experience in creating the right conditions for collaboration, we know that convening representatives from the private, public, and civil society sectors within a targeted industry setting or sector can rapidly surface promising opportunities to explore. Examples of the discussions in two CEDDs are provided below—the first deals with the green economy and the second with the care economy.

THE GREEN ECONOMY

CEDEC’s research into Quebec’s economic landscape highlights the growing potential of the green economy as both an environmental necessity and a driver of business growth, cost savings, and community well-being. Across the province and beyond, innovative organizations are aligning sustainability with economic purpose—ranging from food rescue and waste reduction to sustainable tourism, green consulting, and modular housing design.

Examples include Aangen, a social enterprise that transforms rescued food into meals and reduces packaging waste; the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA), which integrates sustainability into tourism while respecting Cree cultural values; and Synertium, a consultancy helping organizations assess and advance their sustainability practices. TinyBox Systems adds to this innovation by designing modular, low-carbon homes that address both the housing affordability crisis and environmental impact.

These initiatives demonstrate that sustainable practices can generate competitive economic advantage, strengthen communities, and open new markets. Whether through small, practical changes—like switching to refillable containers or evaluating the capacity to decrease non-essential waste production—or ambitious projects like net-zero housing, the green economy offers diverse opportunities for economic and social benefit when environmental responsibility is embedded into business strategy. The green economy is creating jobs, inspiring innovation, and delivering measurable value for people and their communities.

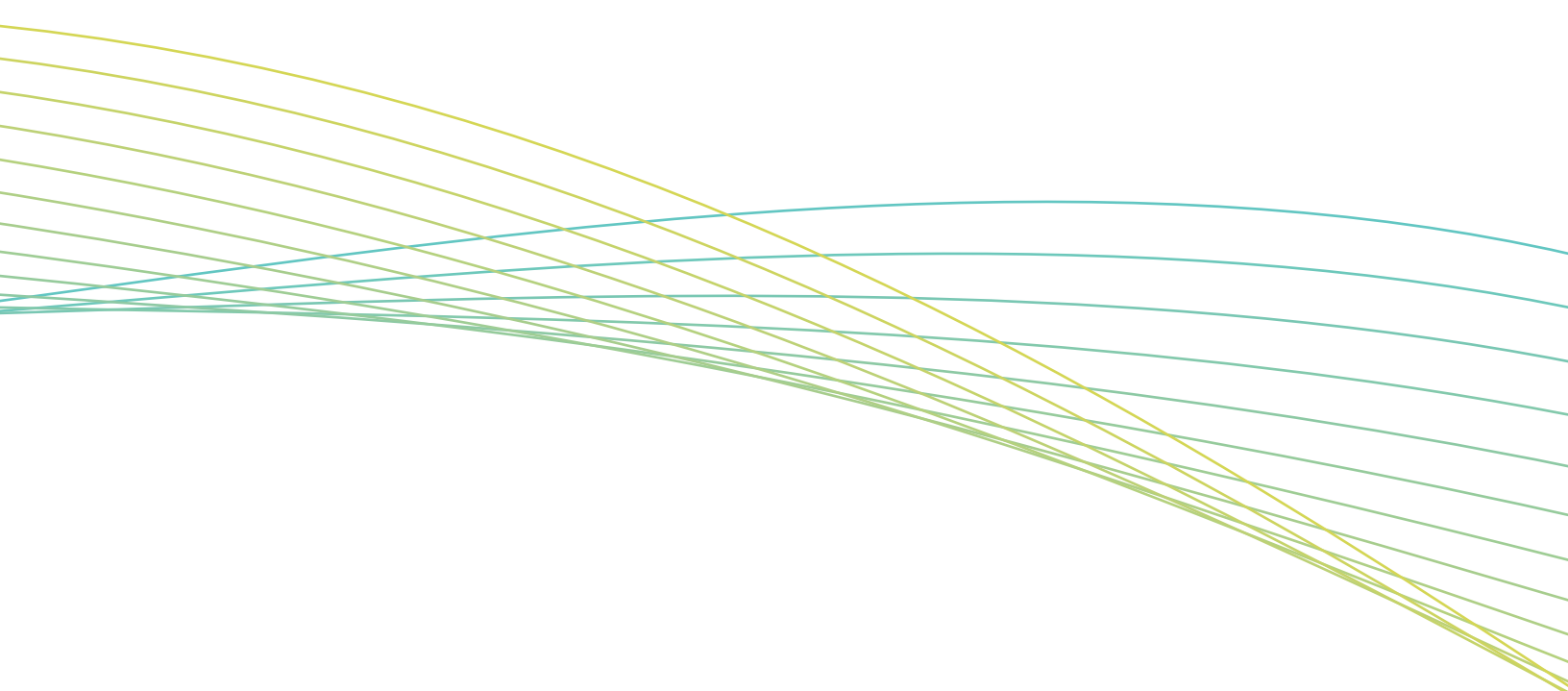
THE CARE ECONOMY

CEDEC’s work in mapping Quebec’s economic opportunities highlights the care economy as both a powerful driver of economic growth and a vital social support system. The sector spans child care to elder care, creating jobs, fostering inclusion, and enhancing community well-being. Across Quebec, innovative leaders are demonstrating how

quality care services can also generate economic opportunities, from specialized childcare for neurodiverse children to comprehensive senior living facilities.

The Little Red Playhouse in Montreal-West has become a model for inclusive early childhood education, addressing significant gaps in services for children with special needs. In Gatineau, the Connexions Resource Centre serves as a hub for mental health and senior care services, identifying unmet needs such as respite care for caregivers and highlighting potential avenues for small business growth. Meanwhile, the Wales Home in the Eastern Townships has expanded its workforce and services to meet rising demand for senior care.

These examples underscore that strengthening the care economy requires valuing care work, improving training and wages, and investing in infrastructure and innovation. By supporting care providers and fostering public, private, and civil society partnerships, Quebec can expand access to quality services while creating sustainable economic benefits for individuals, families, and communities.



03

A Better Economy for Better Lives; Let's Build it Together



CEDEC is transforming economic development opportunities into measurable, tangible economic benefits for English-speakers, their communities, and the broader Quebec society.


As both a catalyst and a convener, CEDEC has demonstrated through concrete action, partnership, and innovation that Collaborative Economic Development is not only a robust framework but a powerful engine for producing tangible economic benefits for individuals and communities. From the success of EmployESBC in unlocking workforce potential and meeting talent needs to the tourism collaborations that have increased visitor traffic and spending across Quebec, our work highlights what happens when diverse stakeholders unite around shared objectives.

As we move into 2025–2026, CEDEC will build on these achievements, focusing on harnessing AI and emerging technologies; accelerating the shift to a resilient green economy; expanding workforce participation, and creating inclusive growth through

cross-sector partnerships. These are not abstract goals—they are actionable opportunities that demand the leveraging of evidence, foresight, creative and imaginative thinking, and unprecedented collaboration.

The road ahead is filled with both promise and challenge. We envision a Quebec economy that leverages existing resources more effectively, integrates sustainability into every sector, and creates jobs that benefit both local communities and the provincial economy. This vision links the OLMCQ and broader economic development in Quebec to helping build one Canadian economy—an economy that connects and transforms our country by demonstrating how local and regional economic development can serve national goals.

Achieving this vision will only be possible if we move forward together. We call on partners, stakeholders, and government departments and agencies to deepen their engagement with us, share their expertise, and commit to co-creating one Canadian economy—connected, resilient, and thriving.



Join us in shaping a better economy,
for better lives, in 2025–2026 and beyond.

CEDEC | A BETTER ECONOMY
FOR BETTER LIVES