

# Fonds de recherche du Québec

*Société et Culture*  
*Santé*  
*Nature et Technologies*





# SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

The fourth year of my mandate began with the events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Santé (FRQS): a joint neuroscience conference with the Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (Inserm) on September 15th, an evening to recognize the Fonds' former chairpersons on September 16th and a seminar entitled *De l'infiniment grand à l'infiniment petit: la recherche intersectorielle pour la santé de demain* on the future of intersectoral health research on September 17th. Hosting these initiatives enabled the FRQS to take stock in the progress made to date and strengthen its ties with the Inserm—France's health sciences funding agency—which was also celebrating 50 years.

In addition to the activities reported here to promote research development and make representations at the provincial, national and international levels, I have been increasingly focused on the theme of science and society, especially since groups in Québec have called into question certain scientific consensuses such as vaccination and climate change. Following my message to the community in March 2015, in which I expressed my concerns on the issue, I met with several representatives from media outlets and institutes that lead, disseminate and promote research to discuss the topic. We explored initiatives that could be undertaken by the Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ), universities, colleges and the organizations that disseminate information. In September, I organized a science and society activity for the boards of directors of the FRQ. In December, the FRQ will hold a forum to determine the courses of action to follow in 2016–2017.

In keeping with the theme of science and society, I met with several provincial ministers and MNAs to inform them of the role of the FRQ and of the importance of public research. In April, I organized a scientific activity at the National Assembly of Québec—an event that the FRQ will now hold at least twice a year to help elected officials better realize the ways in which research contributes to the advancement of Québec, its regions and its ridings.

Finally, in September of last year, I launched the FRQ's policy on the ethical conduct of research—a measure that was welcomed by the research community. Members took part in several meetings to raise awareness of the initiative.

Despite the many budget constraints in 2014–2015, the FRQ still awarded over \$200M to fund research and researcher training—an amount comparable to the one granted the year before. The government is expected to reinvest in research as the budget becomes increasingly balanced.



**Rémi Quirion**, OC, CQ, PhD, FRSC  
Chief Scientist Officer of Québec

## Chief Scientist Officer's Report

# 2014-2015

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# CONTEXT

The year 2014–2015 was marked by the resignation of the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports and of Higher Education, Research and Science and Technology in March 2015, which led to the merger of the two departments and the appointment of Mr. François Blais as Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research. Despite the many departmental and ministerial changes, the FRQ remained in regular contact with the Ministry and the Cabinet. This important collaboration ensures that research is at the forefront throughout the government.

The year was also marked by government budget cuts. Every department and government organization was called upon to meet the financial objectives. It was in the context of these constraints that the FRQ implemented their 2014–2017 strategic plans with a total budget of \$200M, which remained stable despite the difficult economic conditions.

In fact, the government announced a series of strategies and action plans on issues that impact the FRQ and the research community, including the Plan Nord toward 2035 and 2015–2020 action plan, which was made public in April and calls for the founding of the Institut nordique du Québec. In June 2015, Québec presented the Maritime Strategy, which includes a major research focus that involves the creation of the Réseau Québec Maritime to bring together all of the stakeholders in the province's maritime economy, including universities, research centres, the government and industry and the Institut maritime France-Québec, which creates ties between Québec to the world's second maritime nation.

Also in June, the government launched a 2015–2018 action plan entitled *La radicalisation au Québec: agir, prévenir, détecter et vivre ensemble*, which includes a research component and call for proposals to social sciences and humanities researchers for the development of a research program to document radicalization leading violence in Québec. The results will be used to create prevention tools.

Finally, in August 2015, the Cabinet appointed Louise Poissant as the scientific director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC). Louise Poissant had a long and successful career as a researcher and research administrator and will certainly make an invaluable contribution to the fulfillment of the mission of the FRQSC and the implementation of the FRQ's directions. She takes over from Mr. Normand Labrie, whom I would like to thank for his commitment and role in the development of the mission of the FRQSC.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## ❖ Scientific missions and agreements

### Development of national and international partnerships

In light of his role in the development of research in Québec, the chief scientist officer was called upon to participate in several missions outside Québec and host foreign delegations. Here is an overview of some of his activities.

#### **China**

The chief scientist officer traveled with Premier Philippe Couillard to China on his first international mission. From October 24 to 31, 2014, the delegation from Québec met with several Chinese stakeholders, including the administrators of the Chinese Academy of Science and the Natural Science Foundation of China, to identify leading research and higher education stakeholders in the Shanghai area that could become major partners in Québec universities. The discussions focused on several themes, including tourism, maritime issues, student mobility and personalized health care.

During the mission, two collaboration agreements were set out: the first is on aging, cancer, cardiovascular disease, genomics, neuroscience, immunology and infectious diseases research and the second covers optics-photonics, geology and climate change research.

#### **President Hollande in Québec**

The chief scientist officer played a key role as Québec hosted President François Hollande on November 3 and 4, 2014. Over the course of the two-day visit, two agreements involving the

FRQ and two long-time partners were initialled. The FRQ signed an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation with the Inserm on aging and neurodegenerative diseases that aims to foster France-Québec collaborations through meetings, workshops and conferences, the development of a France-Québec network and possibly the creation of a joint initiative for scientific research and service.

The second accord between the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Nature et technologies (FRQNT) will enrich the tradition of scientific collaboration between France and Québec as part of the international joint research initiatives of the CNRS in mathematics, nanoscience and Arctic and sub-Arctic studies. Under the agreement, researchers from Québec will join French research units in these fields.

#### **Commonwealth Science Conference – Bangalore, India**

From November 25 to 28, 2014, the chief scientist officer traveled to Bangalore, India to take part in the Science Advice Across the Commonwealth panel at the Commonwealth Science Conference. Organized by the Royal Society (UK) and the Indian government, the event brought together some 300 very high calibre researchers from 30 Commonwealth nations to discuss opportunities for collaboration. On his short visit, the chief scientist officer toured several major research centres and discussed potential initiatives, including student exchanges.

#### **Premier's mission to Paris**

From March 1 to 6, 2015, as part of the 18e Rencontre alternée des premiers ministres, the chief scientist

[Inserm CEO Yves Lévy and chief scientist officer Rémi Quirion signed a collaboration agreement.](#)







At the BIO International Convention, representatives of the Québec delegation visited the Merck & Co. laboratories in Philadelphia.

officer took part in Premier Couillard's mission to Paris, France, which was followed by a series of meetings with representatives from French institutions and partners from March 9 to 13. The mission led to several agreements and announcements, including the creation of the Institut franco-québécois en recherche maritime and the renewal of the France-Québec research and higher education cooperation agreement, which was first signed 50 years ago, as well as accords on the Plan Nord and digital initiatives.

### **BIO International Convention in Philadelphia**

Under the leadership of Gaétan Barrette, Minister of Health and Social Services, the chief scientist officer took part in the BIO International Con-

vention in Philadelphia from June 15 to 18, 2015. The conference is the world's largest biotechnologies expo and provided a privileged showcase for Québec. The chief scientist officer met with representatives from the pharmaceutical industry, Québec's biotechnologies industry and funding agencies. The discussions led to partnerships with Canadian company AbbVie, the University City Science Centre (US), Biocon (India), the Wistar Institute (US) and Merck Canada.

### **Bavaria**

A scientific cooperation agreement was signed between the FRQS, the FRQNT and the Bavarian State Ministry for Education, Science and the Arts to intensify the exchange of information in research areas of common interest. The agreement also aims to increase

the number of joint activities and create mechanisms to foster the joint participation of researchers from Québec and Bavaria in international research projects and initiatives.

### **Agence nationale de recherche**

Proud of the success of their first joint initiative in 2010, the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) and the Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR) extended their agreement to launch a new call for projects in the humanities and social sciences on one of three themes: public policy and social innovation in the context of demographic change, the transformation of societies and cultures in the context of globalization and humanities and social science research in the digital age.

## **◆◆◆ Conferences and public affairs**

### **MONTRÉAL SUMMIT ON INNOVATION**

In November 2014, the chief scientist officer spoke at the fourth edition of the Montréal Summit on Innovation organized by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montréal. At a luncheon attended by over 300 people, he discussed the new generations of experts who will lead science and innovation

in Montréal. He later led a panel on the future of collaborations between health institutes and the creative industries.

### **FUTURE EARTH GLOBAL HUB**

At the request of Montréal universities, the chief scientist officer played a key role in the city's bid to become a global hub of the secretariat of

Future Earth, an international research platform that aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and solutions on sustainable development and climate change. The choice of Montréal (along with Paris, Stockholm, Boulder and Tokyo) as an international hub and of Paul Shrivastava of Concordia University as the executive director attests to Québec's drive,

expertise and leadership in sustainable development. Paul Shrivastava's appointment was announced at a press conference attended by all of the major media outlets and led by Premier Couillard, Mayor Coderre and several ministers.



### INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON KININ SYSTEM AND PEPTIDE RECEPTORS

From June 28 to July 1, the chief scientist officer took part in the International Meeting on Kinin System and Peptide Receptors, a high-level seminar organized by the Santa Casa de Sao Paulo School of Medical Sciences in Brazil. He closed the event with a presentation entitled *A brain's traveler: from bioassays to neuropeptide and psychiatry to land as Québec Chief Scientist*. Over 30 researchers from around the world spoke at the three-day conference. The meetings with the director of the Sao Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) and

Québec's delegate general in Brazil are expected to lead to the development of new Brazil-Québec collaborations.

### 6TH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION ON THE PHARMACEUTICAL LIFE CYCLE

In August 2015, the chief scientist officer delivered the opening address at the 6th World Congress of the International and Interdisciplinary Association on the Pharmaceutical Life Cycle. Experts discussed personalized medicine and its interdisciplinary issues, an especially current topic that could yield potentially significant benefits.

## Development of major intersectoral projects

# Events and forums

### Maritime research seminar

On November 7, 2014, an important one-day dialogue session to discuss Québec's maritime strategy was held at Université du Québec à Rimouski (Lévis campus). Several university research stakeholders met to discuss their potential contributions to the development of this promising policy. The findings served to inform the work undertaken by the government to develop the initiative, which was launched by Premier Couillard June 2015.

### Reflection forum on entrepreneurship and creativity

In April 2015, the FRQ organized a reflection forum on entrepreneurship and creativity in collaboration with Bishop's University and Université de Sherbrooke. Some 80 participants from various sectors took part in the

event, which aimed to determine the factors that foster entrepreneurship, explore the role of creativity in entrepreneurship, outline entrepreneurial culture in Québec and inventory best practices to support initiatives. The discussions served to set out avenues



for action pertaining to the needs of businesses, researcher contributions and the role of the FRQ in the sector. Potential partners are currently being contacted to create a research program on the topic.

### FRQ's intersectoral student committee

Created in 2014, the intersectoral student committee reports directly to the chief scientist officer. In the past year, members have set out strategies to promote access to graduate studies, contribute to the excellence of young researchers and take part in efforts to promote research. Several meetings with university stakeholders naturally led to the organization of a consultation on the student condition, which will be held in fall 2015.



## ❖ Promoting research

### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUÉBEC

On April 30, the chief scientist officer and Minister Blais invited the province's MNAs, chiefs of staff and deputy ministers to a science breakfast at the National Assembly.

At the event, MNAs had the opportunity to speak with the chief scientist officer and three researchers on their most recent discoveries and key issues in their fields: climate change in the Arctic, entrepreneurship in Québec and personalized breast cancer care.

### QUOI DE NEUF CHERCHEURS?

*Quoi de neuf chercheurs?* is a five-episode television series produced in collaboration with Canal Savoir that presents some of the research centres and networks supported by the three Fonds. Each episode explains the work carried out by a featured group. The second season is currently in production.

### NEW WEBSITES

In April, the websites of the three Fonds were revamped. With a more promotional focus, the sites highlight FRQ-funded research initiatives by featuring impact stories and videos. The sites were very well received by the community.

### ACFAS CHAIRMANSHIP AND LUNCHTIME TALK

The chief scientist officer was the chairman of honour of the 83rd Congrès de l'Afcas, which was held in Rimouski from May 25 to 28, 2015. The event is the largest scientific conference in the Francophonie and brought together some 3,500 researchers and students in all disciplines on the theme *Sortir des sentiers battus* [getting off the beaten track].

In addition to serving as the honorary chairman, the chief scientist officer led a lunchtime talk entitled *La recherche universitaire et collégiale, un atout pour le développement du Bas-Saint-Laurent? Quels liens entretiennent les élus, leurs équipes, voire le milieu gouvernemental du Bas-Saint-Laurent avec le milieu de la recherche de leur région?* at the Institut maritime du Québec à Rimouski to highlight the ties between elected officials and public administrators and the research sector in order to better account for research results when developing public policies and programs.



[www.frq.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.frq.gouv.qc.ca)

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