



# VAUDREUIL-DORION

Leading City 2017 • culture 21

Leading City 2017 of the Agenda 21 for culture  
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

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## **REINVENTING A NEW SYSTEM FOR GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE**

## **PUBLIC REPORT**

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21 June 2017

# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH TRANSVERSALITY GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE CREATIVITY EMPLOYMENT CULTURAL POLICY KNOWLEDGE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*The city of Vaudreuil-Dorion, Québec, Canada, adopted the Pilot City programme in 2014, and since 2015 has been part of the [Leading City programme](#) for the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture. Within the framework of the programme, the city of Vaudreuil-Dorion received support from Antoine Guibert, expert on the UCLG Committee on Culture, with the aim of working on the issue of governance of culture in Culture 21: Actions. The current document outlines the city's experience and the achievements of this process..*

## GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

In 20 years, Vaudreuil-Dorion has seen a number of significant changes, growing from 17,000 to 37,000 inhabitants. The arrival of new residents from around the world raises important challenges for the social cohesion of the community. In 2010, in response to this situation the ["I am..." programme](#) was created with the objective of supporting culture in order to foster a sense of belonging and establish a united community, proud of belonging to an environment where diversity is valued. Every year, 20,000 citizens participate in some 600 workshops, held during 50 major events. The goal: To establish interaction, awareness for others, and respect for diversity through citizens' active participation in creation, cultural acts, and the reinvention of the community. In addition to working directly on social cohesion, such activities have a concrete effect on the environment, urban planning, community organisations and their goals, physical and mental health, as well as on the business community.

This cross-cutting programme is geared towards the sustainable development of the community specifically calls for the involvement of multiple sectors and local actors. The programme brings together some 120 partners around established initiatives. While implementing the Leading City programme, it was deemed necessary to strengthen and fortify the impacts of this broad actions, as well as to develop more platforms for overall coordination among stakeholders, with shared planning mechanisms. It was also seen as necessary to reinforce and magnify the involvement of local stakeholders as well as their implementation of cultural actions. The aim was to prolong the municipality's cultural actions and create a genuine collective dynamic. Work on governance of culture carried out after 2015 was done under this initiative with the goal of setting up a shared, cross-cutting commitment by all stakeholders and sectors geared towards culture.

The process is also part of a wider reflection on the governance of culture at the municipal level. While significant efforts have been undertaken on the role of citizens in cultural action, it is also vital to question their place in governance models. Citizens and local stakeholders are increasingly aspiring to participate and become involved in public decision-making processes. Furthermore, municipalities tend to shift their traditional paradigms of governance. Generally this is noted by vertical relationships from city to citizen. They do so to look for more horizontal and participatory modes of decision-making and action, and to consider other local public, private, or citizen actors as partners in public action, as well as full-fledged stakeholders in society. Additionally, many actors and levels of government (local, regional, provincial, and federal) intervene in the same area, but with visions and actions that lack cohesion. It is therefore necessary to bring together all local actors and citizens in order to establish synergy, as well as to work together around a shared vision and project for the territory.

## **CREATING THE “VAUDREUIL-DORION CULTURE 21 COMMITTEE”**

To begin the project, a new structure for municipal governance of culture was created in September, 2015. This V-D Culture 21 Committee was mandated with the goal of giving vision and direction to the city’s cultural development. The group involves representatives from different sectors of society and seeks to unite all stakeholders from all sectors in order to develop a comprehensive, cross-cutting vision of culture in Vaudreuil-Dorion.

The V-D Culture 21 Committee is comprised of 30 local representatives appointed by the municipality, including:

- Citizens and artists
- Representatives from public, private, and community organisations from all areas such as -
  - | the economic sector, with the Vaudreuil-Soulanges Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
  - | the education sector, with the Trois-Lacs school board which represents all primary and secondary schools in the region;
  - | the health sector, alongside the Integrated Social Services and Health Centre;
  - | the cultural sector, with cultural organisations such as the Vaudreuil-Soulanges regional museum;
  - | the community and social sectors, with community organisations such as the Vaudreuil-Soulanges youth centre;
  - | the sport and leisure sector, alongside the Gymini gymnastics club.
- The mayor, elected officials, and municipal officials from different departments (leisure and culture, urban planning, environment, communications, and others), thus enabling decartmentalisation
- The different levels of government that affect the territory: the regional county municipality (RCM) of Vaudreuil-Soulanges and the Quebec Ministry of Culture and Communications.

The makeup of the committee aims to promote:

- Participative governance with the presence of artists, citizens, and civil society organisations;
- Internal decompartmentalisation within the municipality, by uniting different departments and municipal services;
- Horizontal governance by bringing together local actors from all sectors in one local project;
- Vertical governance with the presence of different levels of government.

The composition aims to push cross-cutting in cultural development and orient all sectors of society towards culture. This would make it possible to establish an unprecedented dialogue by bringing elected representatives, citizens, municipal officials, as well as actors from various public and private organisations to the same table. The goal is to encourage common reflection, exchange, and enable a shared vision to involve and engage all of society.

## **A COLLECTIVE AND CROSS-CUTTING DECLARATION ON CULTURE**

In order to define a collective vision, shared by all societal stakeholders, geared towards the place and role of culture in the future of Vaudreuil-Dorion, a collective declaration was drafted. Its goal was also to present a common vision that brings together all actors across society. Meetings were held as of September 2015 with the V-D Culture 21 Committee so as to bring together commentaries and suggestions for the contents of the declaration. As a representative body for various sectors of society, the committee's objective is to set up a cross-cutting and common vision on the place and role of culture in the future of the community. Above all, it must enable all local actors to commit to their actions independently.

Citizens' meetings open to the public were also organised in the autumn of 2015 to stimulate community reflection, exchange, and to allow everyone to propose elements that reflect their vision. During these sessions, citizens were presented with a project where they could express their dreams and ideas on carrying out a project for the region's future. One session also brought together children, encouraging them to draw their dream city. In this way, ideas from all members of society were incorporated.

Through these participative exercises the My commitment to culture Declaration was adopted in February 2016 during a massive citizen event which brought together some 100 people. The declaration was not only signed by the municipality, but also by all societal actors, citizens, and both public and private organisations who were invited to sign it. Its objective was to promote broad, cross-cutting involvement from all sectors of society. This public event provided an opportunity to present Agenda 21 for culture to participants, as well as to hold a lecture by Stéphane Lavoie, General Director of TOHU, the Cité des arts du cirque [City Circus Arts].

## COMMITMENTS

The declaration was accompanied by commitments that the signatories could adopt. Through the website, the commitments have been made adaptable to both citizens and organisations (legal entities), allowing each to engage within their own capacity. A number of potential commitments were proposed, and stakeholders could choose which they wanted to adopt, as well as propose new ones.

The goal of these engagements is to promote the implementation of concrete cultural actions, and to make cultural development a shared responsibility. The aim here is to reverse the traditional vertical relationship of governance from municipalities towards its citizens, thereby fostering a more horizontal, participative, and democratic relationship. In this way, all regional stakeholders, citizens, and the municipality act in the same capacity as equals, or partners in building community well-being. Public, private, business, and citizens' organisations can all individually engage in their own ways under a large collective project. It is also a question of amplifying the municipal activities by engaging other stakeholders from all spheres, in order to create a true, local movement towards culture that extends beyond the municipality.

The declaration and the commitment are tools that seek to enable a true mobilisation project for local actors involved in concrete activities related to culture. The goal is to subsequently promote these stakeholders and to set up regular meetings between signatories to continue mobilising more actors. The declaration and commitments are meant to be flexible and adaptable to real, dynamic local implementation. In this sense, it is not necessarily a question of putting in place "binding" instruments, but rather of mobilisation, pride, and training for all local stakeholders.

Presently, members of the V-D Culture 21 Committee, including the Vaudreuil-Soulanges Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Trois-Lacs school board that represents schools throughout the territory, the Integrated Social Services and Health Centre, the Vaudreuil-Soulanges MRC, and the Vaudreuil-Soulanges regional museum, have already officially signed the declaration and committed to its goals.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Alongside these activities, in February of 2016, the city of Vaudreuil-Dorion also carried out a self-assessment exercise on its cultural policies and actions in relation to the Culture 21: Actions document, and was approved by the United Cities and Local Governments Committee on Culture in March of 2015. Four workshops were organised, involving twenty participants from all sectors, with the aim of assessing the stage of implementation for each of the one hundred (100) actions that make up the nine (9) areas of Culture 21: Actions. This self-assessment from around the world to identify their strengths, as well as areas requiring greater attention.

## **CONCLUSION**

With this action related to governance of culture, the city of Vaudreuil-Dorion has engaged in a unique way with the definition and implementation of a new approach to cultural public policies that rely on culture, sustainable development, and citizens. The process was carried out in 2015 within the framework of the Leading City programme, marking the first step for Vaudreuil-Dorion towards a new model for governance of culture that is more citizen-oriented, participative, cross-cutting, horizontal, and democratic.

# CONTACTS

For additional information about this exercise, please contact:

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