

Food or Shelter?

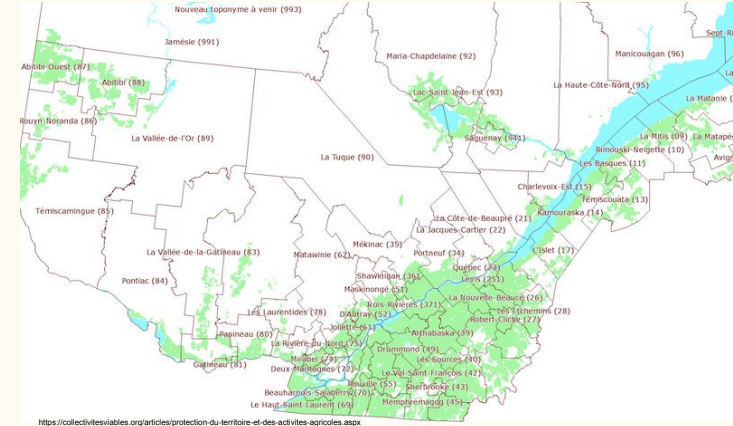
Quebec's Protection of Agricultural Land

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URPL 2631
Case Study #1
Fall 2023



Origins of the Law

- Beginning in 1978, the province of Quebec created laws to protect agricultural land in the most populated areas in the south of the province
- Current framework last saw major amendments in the late 1990s
- Primary goal to protect fertile, food producing land as a means to aid the agricultural sector
- Motivated by nascent environmental movement, powerful agriculture lobby and strong farming tradition
- De-facto creation of an urban growth boundary around all population centers in the province, prevent building on arable land

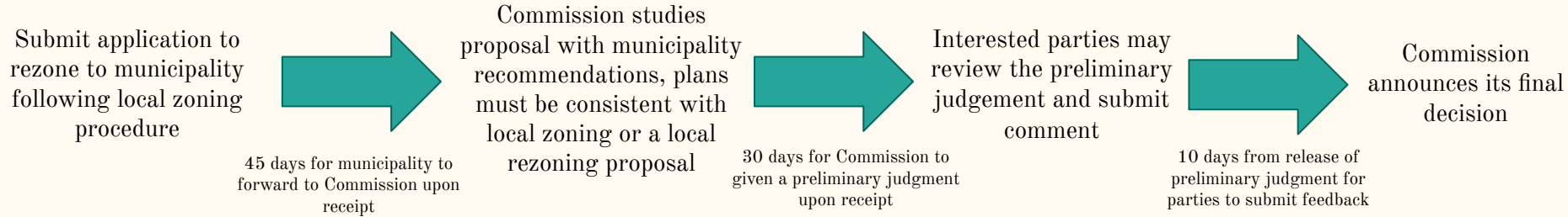


Provisions of the Law



- All agricultural land is overseen by a provincial agency, the Commission for the Protection of Agricultural Land, cities and towns must work with that agency to modify zoning that overlaps with protected land
- Farmers can use land for any agricultural purpose and can be permitted to build structures to support that purpose as well as dwelling units for themselves
- Any rezoning for agricultural land anywhere in the province for any other purpose (residential, commercial, industrial), no matter the lot size (including breaking up lots), needs Commission approval
- Commission decisions take into account local zoning laws, comprehensive plans and recommendations from the affected municipalities

The Rezoning Process



- Formal process last 85 days (~3 months), depending on the project may be need for political or financial maneuvering beforehand

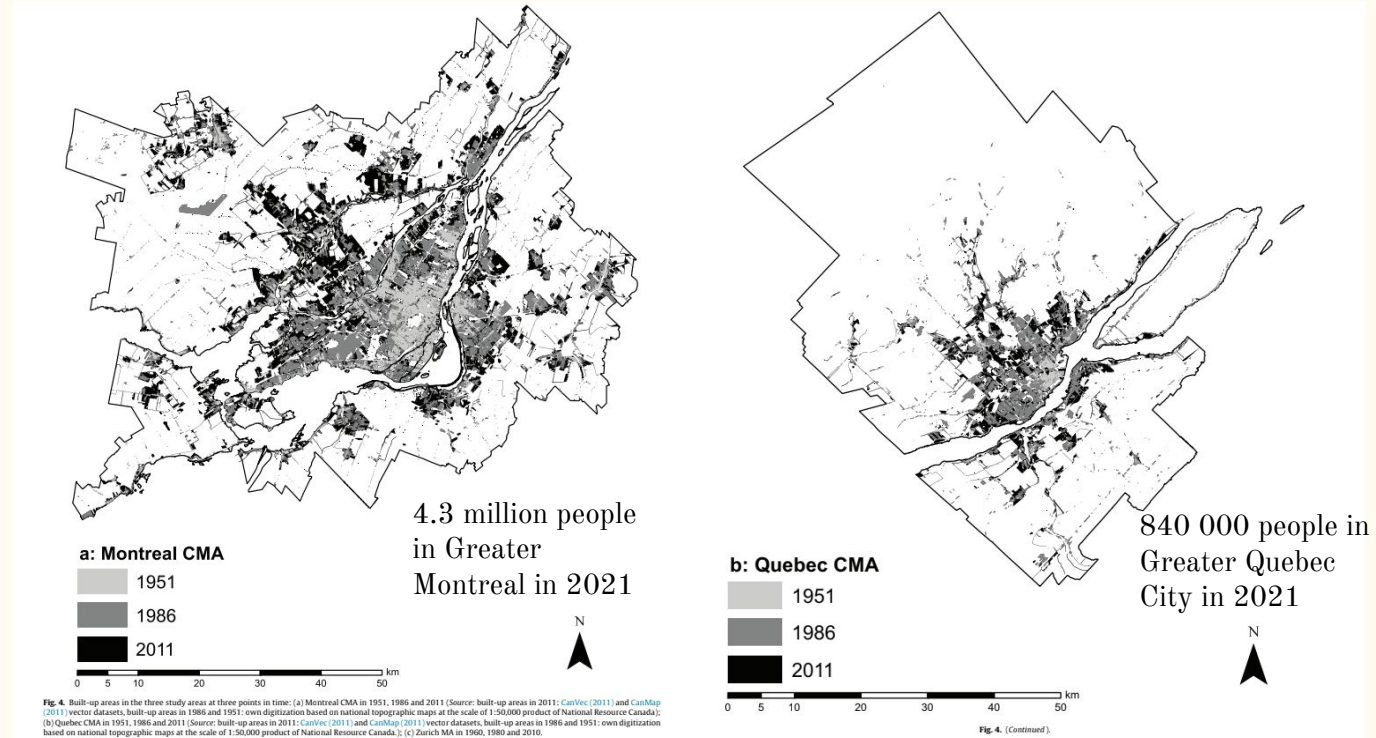
Statistics for Number of Rezoning

Year	Total number of rezoning requests (accepted and rejected)	Percent of requests approved	Percent of total requests that were approved for residential	Total number of hectares requested for rezoning (approved and rejected)	Percent of hectares approved for rezoning	Percent of total hectares requested that were approved for residential
2021-22	1598	68.34	13.89	13702	70.67	0.35
2020-21	1797	70.11	14.75	14794	60.79	0.37
2019-20	1885	73.84	13.42	15779	66.84	0.53
2018-19	2202	72.89	11.94	19126	59.69	0.31
2017-18	2100	71.57	14.62	17600	61.56	0.45

- The Commission has been fairly consistent in the amount of land it permitted for rezoning, save for a sharp increase last year, generally residential uses has been a very small segment

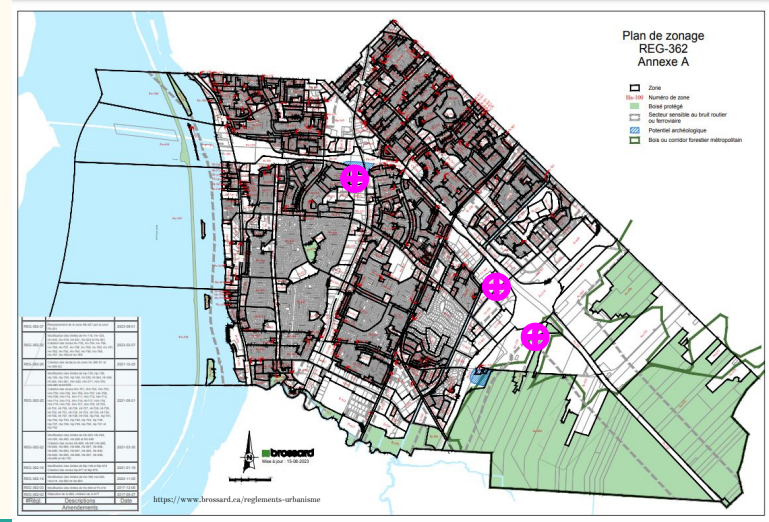
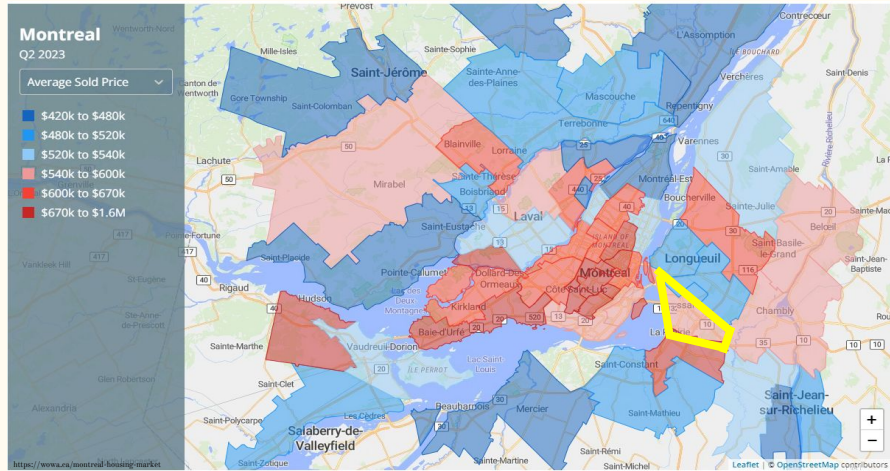
The Growth of Montreal and Quebec City

- Largest cities in the province (total population of 8.5 million total in 2021)
- Growth of developed land has continued in spite of the agricultural land protections
- Leapfrogging effect visible in both regions, the more recently developed land (black) is occurring in edge cities, undeveloped pockets (white) visible in areas closer to CBDs
- Rapid transit does not exist in Quebec City and is lacking in many of Montreal's edge cities



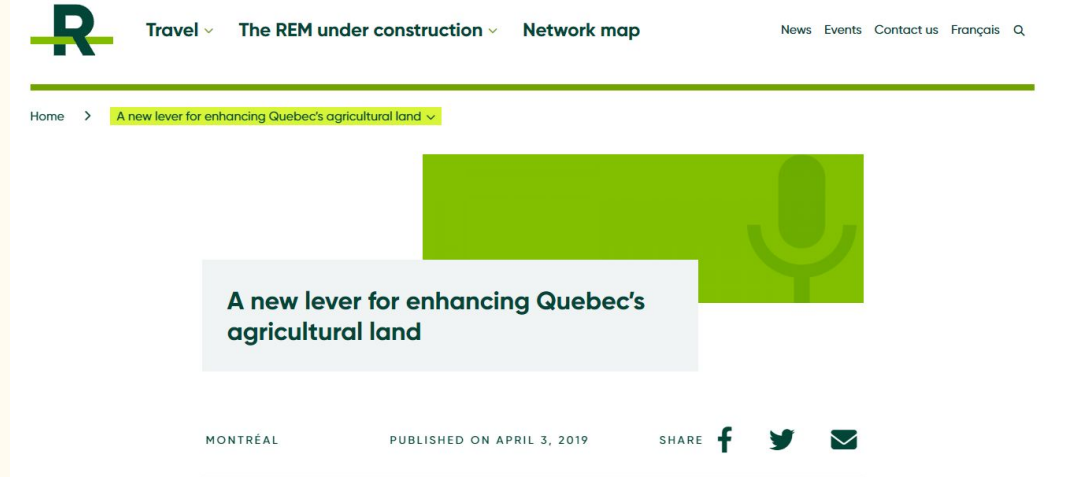
Example of Effects of the UGB around Montreal

- Several of Montreal's suburbs are seeing housing prices comparable to those within the city
- Montreal just opened the first segment of a new light rail system to connect more suburban areas to Downtown
- One town that received three stations is Brossard (outlined in yellow on right) with a population of 91 000 in 2021, about half its land protected for agriculture (green on left with light rail stations in purple)



Example of Effects of the UGB around Montreal (cont.)

- UGB can be leveraged to block or slow down housing
- Brossard wants to enhance their agricultural space around a rapid transit system to promote tourism as supposed to creating housing



Going Forward

- Quebec's growth boundary has contested effects when it comes to its primary use in protecting farm land with claims that the Commission is too permissive
- Knock on effect of creating a UGB is both constraining housing supply and diffusing housing further out from major cities
- Law provides cover to prevent create housing even around rapid transit stations, support is high among environmentalists and farmers, farmers are a politically powerful demographic in Quebec
- Quebec government is currently pursuing investigating new measures to encourage cities to build more densely as another measure to counter sprawl

References

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