USE 2017
understanding small enterprises

Building a case for SB-specific OHS research and intervention priorities in Québec : a work in progress

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Presentation outline

Québec OHS system

Litterature overview

Building a case :

- Measure
- Describe
- Interventions in SBs

Proposal

Conclusion


CANADA
Carte Politique
OCÉAN ARCTIQUE
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(KALAALLIT NUNAAT)
(DANEMARK)
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Baie de Baffin
ALASKA
(É-U d'A)
Golfe d'Alaska
YUKON
Whitehorse
TERRITOIRES DU NORD-OUEST
Yellowknife
NUNAVUT
Iqaluit
OCÉAN ATLANTIQUE
Baie d'Hudson
COLOMBIE-BRITANNIQUE
OCÉAN PACIFIQUE
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Québec OHS system

Canada (2016) :population 36 M
Québec (2016) : population 8 M, active labor force 4,5 M
business locations counts 255 989
95 % small businesses (SBs) (<50) 33, 1 % of lf

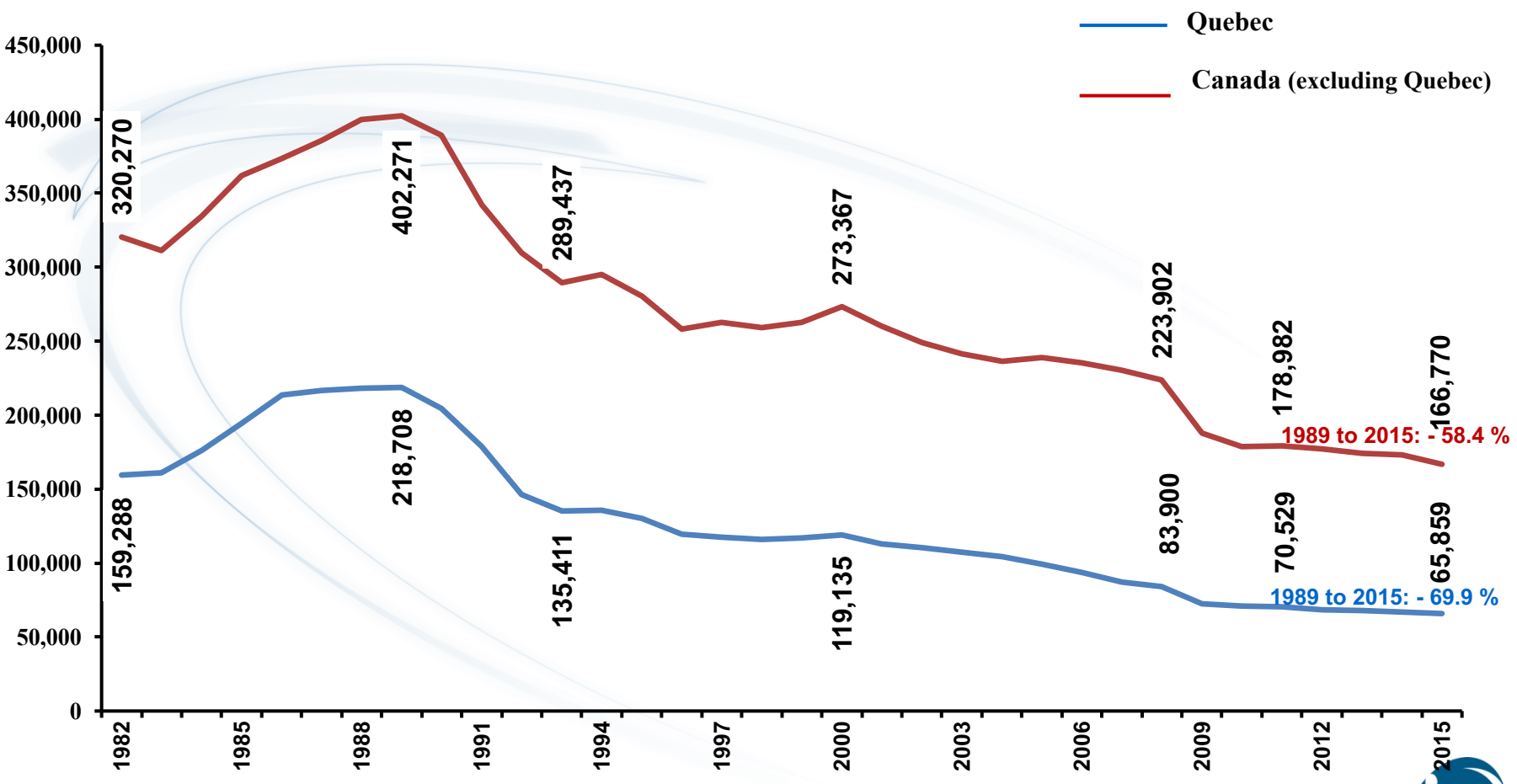
Work, Health, OHS : provincial jurisdiction

Québec OHS System :

- **OHS Legislation**:
  - Prevention → LSST (RLRQ, chapitre S-2.1)(1979);
  - Compensation and RTW → LATMP (RLRQ, chapitre A-3.001)(1985)
- **CNESST** (Québec's Commission for standards, equity and health and safety in the workplace): labor standards, inspection, funding, compensation, rehabilitation, RTW
- **Bi-partite system** (B of G: employer associations and unions): priorities, planning, $
- **Partnership** with public health actors, paritary sector associations, safety mutuals
- **IRSST** the largest OHS research center in Canada
  - **partner of NIOSH**, WHO collaborator, member Sheffield and PEROSH groups
  - private non-profit organization
  - tri-partite scientific committee: orientations, funding

OHS in Québec: Evolution from 1982 to 2015

Number of accepted injuries with time-loss compensation, Quebec and Canada (excluding Quebec), 1982-2015



Source : Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC)

OHS System: Consultation and Mandate

Consultation with stakeholders, OHS partners, researchers

Early 2017, preparation for IRSST 2018-2022 research agenda

- Employers and union representatives from all industrial sectors
- Team workshops with OHS researchers and practitioners

➢ **OHS management in SBs a major topic of concern**

- OHS culture, management, role of owner-manager
- Lack of internal resources, difficult access to external services
- New labor force issues: aging, immigrant and temporary workers, labor force shortages

➢IRSST Mandate: Status report and research agenda proposal for SBs

Build a case
Convince stakeholders about priority and pertinence of SBs agenda
Propose agenda for improved prevention and RTW interventions

IRSST Team Collaboration :

- Labs
- Chemical and Biological Hazard Prevention
- Mechanical and Physical Risk Prevention
- **Sustainable Prevention and Work Environment**
- **Rehabilitation and Return to Work**

Approaches: multidisciplinarity, multi-method, fieldwork, participation of stakeholders, employers and workers

OHS research on SBs : Literature overview

1. Measure risk in SBs: evaluate, compare > intervention priorities, effects

Frequency, severity

2. Describe determinants of OHS : explain risk in SBs > orientations, targets

Internal : workers, employers, perceptions, work conditions, isolation, ressources, insecurity
External: SE factors, resources in OHS system, networks

3. Intervene on risk factors in SBs > facilitate and support change : prevention, RTW

What ? Priorities, targets???
number of SBs, diversity, dispersion, general and specific needs

How? approaches, programs, strategies costs, duration and complexity of interventions, evaluation of results

Who? Resources, social and technical expertise, budget, partnerships

SBs present enduring, unresolved challenges to OHS systems for both prevention and return to work

Building a case

Measure

Invisibility of SBs in Québec OHS compensation and RTW data

- Number of employees not accounted for in compensation claims, data
- Long-held conception of similar work conditions and OHS profile regardless of number of employees
- Risk: rates vs numbers: **small N of accidents yet high rate in SBs?**

➢ **Obstacle to establishing priorities and appreciating effect of OHS interventions on risk**

OHS practitionners: qualitative info *(Champoux, Brun, 2010):*

- **Risk level in SBs is high, due to faulty control of risks**
- Workers are more exposed than in larger work settings
- Improvements in OHS conditions take more time

➢**Difficult to transfer practical knowledge into strategic planning**

Measure: Quantitative data on OHS in Québec SB's

- Secondary analysis of OHS compensation data (2004-2006) :

Estimate number of employees : employer annual aggregate remuneration and average annual remuneration for industrial sectors, and income replacement data *(Duguay Busque Boucher 2012)*

  - Frequency-gravity indicators (FGI) , gravity indicators:
  - ➢ ***Estimated*** **standardized ratio FGI SB / MLB : 1,58 (average), significant sector variations**
  - ➢ ***Estimated*** **Average number of lost days: 67% higher in SB relative to MLB**

- Formal CNESST investigations of serious and fatal accidents 2006-2008

N 116; 40% all fatalities 2006-2008 *(Champoux unpublished data)*

  - ➢ **62% of fatalities in SBs VS 34% labor force in SBs**
  - ➢ High frequency of serious, fatal accidents in SBs

- EQCOTESST Québec survey on work and employment conditions, occupational health and safety *(Champoux Prudhomme 2017)*

  - ➢ **N small, accidents rare, difficult to quantity risk by business size**
  - ➢ No global association between business size and accidents frequency or perception of health status
  - ➢ **MSD frequency, business size effect** in association with:

    gender, age, education, prof cat, industrial sector, duration of employment, job insecurity, part-time work, unionisation, physical constraints such as load handling, efforts, standing posture, and cumulative physical constraints

Describe : Internal risk factors

Exposure / Work conditions

SBs workforce: multiple factors of vulnerability

Economic constraints and capacities in SBs

OHS management

Describe : Internal risk factors

1. Exposure/Work conditions

- **EQCOTESST Québec survey** *Secondary analyses (Champoux, Prud'homme 2017)*

Objective: Compare SB (<50) to MB (51-199), LB (>200)

Significant differences between SB and MB, LB workers

- **Physical constraints of work** affecting OHS in SBs (proportions exposed, frequency of exposure)
  - Handling of heavy loads, standing position, strenuous work using tools, machinery or equipment, vibration and noise levels
- **Cumulation** of high intensity physical demands of work, especially back and upper limbs
- **Industrial sectors for SBs**: services, retail, restauration and accommodation, arts, primary industries, public services, construction
- Work related health inequalities known to vary mostly with physical work constraints, which mask effect of socio-economic variables such as business size

- **Exposure to shown/probable human carcinogens** (solar radiation, night work, diesel exhaust fumes, wood dust, ionizing radiation,etc.) found in industrial sectors and occupations significantly associated to SBs *(Labrèche et al. 2017)*

Describe: internal risk factors

2. SBs workforce: multiple factors of vulnerability

Significant differences between SB and MB, LB workers (*EQCOTESST Québec survey Secondary analyses*)

- **Worker characteristics :** young, little education and experience, manual and mixed jobs, skilled and non-skilled manual work

- **Employment characteristics** : low seniority, insecurity, low pay, no union, no breaks, rare paid holidays or sick days

Immigrant workers *(Côté 2014; Prudhomme et al. 2017; Gravel et al. 2013)*

- **Increasing numbers** , both metropolitan areas and regions (temporary workers)
- **Difficult integration into workforce**
  - Linguistic , cultural obstacles
  - Unskilled workers or over-qualified, unprepared:
  - Overqualified workers 43% among migrants vs 29% among natives
- **Over-represented in SBs**
  - Ethnic enterprises, or employed via agencies
- **Specific risks**: Hazardous work conditions, no training, difficult communication
- **Uninformed about rights** and services, insecure jobs, weak joblink
- **No measure of risk level available** Qualitative info from OHS practitionners, social services

Describe: internal risk factors

3. Economic constraints and capacities in SBs *(Champoux Brun 2010)*

Employers' and employees' largely shared views:

- Legislated OHS objectives, individual and collective responsability
- Risk perception, prevention, compliance
- Individual, informal approach to risk management : expertise and judgment of employee

- Financial constraints, competition, irregularity of contracts, insecurity
- Preoccupation with cost reduction
- Survival of the company and jobs
- Stress on flexibility, adaptation to insecurity of contracts, frequent production changes

Practitionners opinion:

- OHS problems rarely linked to breakdowns or unexpected errors
- Decision-making : short-term criteria and benefits
- Operation at limit of standards and good practices
- Conformity to norms: improvisation, circumvention, objections, perception of negative impact of productivity

- **Conflicting objectives**:
  - **Safety values**, compliance to norms
  - Flexible approach, risk perception, reducing costs, **keeping business alive**

Describe: internal risk factors

4. OHS management

- **Distinctive representations, practices and difficulties in SBs** *(Champoux Brun 2003)*

Main obstacles to OHS improvement : Costs, insecurity, priority to production, lack of training
Employers in charge of OHS management, risk identification and control, generally satisfied

- **Prevention activities, more frequent if also benefit production**:

Risk identification, inspection, maintenance

OHS management activities rare : OHS committee, training, risk audit, accident investigation
Formal participatory structures : absent 95%

- **Return to work management**: *(Côté 2014; Côté et al. 2017)*

Mostly documented in LBs *(Durand et al. 2017)*
SBs: Small N jobs, **limited possibility** rotation, alternative jobs, light work
Limited resources for risk evaluation, adaptation work stations, training, communication
Limited obligation: Legally protected joblink 1 year in SBs (vs 2 years >20)

➢ **Significant OHS management differences between SBs and MBs, LBs, and within SBs**

Describe: external risk factors

"Upstream" perspective on OHS in SBs : look beyond attributes of the workplace and those who work there *(Eakin Champoux MacEachen 2010; Champoux Baril Beauvais Brun 2013; Champoux Brun 2015; Côté 2014; Côté et al 2017)*

- **Socio-economic factors**: economic system, globalisation, industrial structure, subcontracting, unionization

➢ **OHS structures and processes** (regulations, policies, services, resources, professional practices)

- **Invisibility of SBs, little influence on OHS system**, underrepresented in interventions
- **Conceptions and strategies designed for large businesses, homogeneous unionized workforce**
- **Policy of self-reliance** and reduced services for work milieux
- **Cost control**, service and inspection constraints
- **Limited institutional resources**
- **Separate structures, disconnect** :Inspection and Rehabilitation-RTW services, CNESST, O. Health, Sector Ass., Safety Mutuals
- **Conceptions and codes of practice** for first line OHS practitionners

➢ **Misalignment with resources, work conditions and social relations of SBs**

➢ **Effect on the management of ill health and injury in SBs, for both prevention and RTW**
➢ **Limited efficacy in interventions**

Prevention Interventions in SBs

Global Objectives:
Global approach : values, legislation, institutions, information, persuasion, training
Principles of responsability, self-regulation, financial incentives

OHS management and exposure / work conditions objectives :
Participatory approach: worker participation OHS committee, safety reps
Risk prevention approach: Legislation, regulations, standards, financial incentives, inspection, public and private expertise

Obstacles:

- OHS Participation: voluntary
- Social context in SBS: low skills, insecurity, turnover, immigrant workers, subcontracting, agencies
- Tripartite work relations: ambiguity on responsability
- Work conditions, exposure: tied to financial capacity
- Majority SBs sector rate vs personalized rate
- **Limited internal capacities, limited efficacy, low sustainability, slow progress**

- Costly professional services, consultants
- Limited institutional OHS resources for interventions
- Large number of SBs, important needs
- SBs underrepresented in inspections
- Delay of preliminary inspections, demise of periodic control visits
- Inspections, control visits following serious accidents, complaints, narrow mandate
- Irregular control of conformity to norms, integration of migrant and temporary workers
- **Limited external capacities, limited efficacy, low sustainability, slow progress**

➢ **SBs workers: same legal OHS rights, but different access**

Rehabilitation and RTW interventions in SBs

Objectives:
- Rehabilitation and safe and sustainable RTW
- Maintain employability, autonomy of worker
- Retain skills, experience in businesses
- Reduce premium costs to businesses and compensation costs for the OHS system

Approach:
- Rehabilition: compensation, health care, front line services
- RTW: legally protected joblink, expert services, progressive return, adapted work

Obstacles:
- Low qualifications, limited adaptability of workforce
- Few available positions, short contracts, changing production and insecurity
- **Limited OHS management resources**

- RTW resources, services
- RTW more difficult for SBs workers *(Baril Martin Lapointe Massicotte 1994)*
  - 1 year legally protected joblink in SBs :
  - Problematic access for agency workers
- **Business size : risk factor for unemployment and chronicity**

compensation all injuries: 105 days average
rehabilitation cases (9%): 598 days average (2012-2014)

➢ **SBs workers: same legal RTW right but different access**

IRSST SBs research proposal 2018-2022

Summary:

- Risk level is high in SBs
- SBs are different from MBs and LBs, have specific needs
- General approaches : low efficacy, can result in differential access to rights for SBs workers

➢ Obstacles to prevention and RTW –rehabilitation, same internal and external factors :

- Work conditions
- Workforce characteristics
- Economic constraints
- OHS management
- Ill-adapted institutional approaches

SBs present enduring, unresolved challenges to OHS systems for both prevention and return to work

PROPOSAL

- Maintain global persuasion approaches
- Measure, describe: maintain efforts, multiple sources
- Interventions: Focus on SBs specific characteristics and needs

➢ **Focus on workplace interventions targeting SBs**
➢ **Re-direct institutional intervention resources to SBs, SBs-specific services**

IRSST SBs research proposal 2018-2022

➢ **SB-specific workplace interventions : combine prevention and rehabilitation-RTW objectives**

- Target SBs-specific sector, occupations, workforce with documented high-risk factors
- Target SBs workers at risk of prolonged disability

- Develop pilot-projects in SBS
- Multimodal interventions for targeted risks
- Early interventions by occupational health teams
- Collaboration: Prevention and RTW teams, Occupational health teams, paritary sector associations, inspectors, other social partners

➢ Advantages for SBs managers, workers;
  - Early interventions, follow-ups: increased prevention and RTW efficacy
  - Adapted services, counsel and expertise : cost control
  - Sustainable development and prevention, consider all determinants of activity
  - Protection of human resources, skills

➢ Advantages for OHS personnel:
  - Maximize efficiency
  - Sustainable actions
  - Improve equal access to right and protections

Conclusion

Building a case for SBs-specific agenda:

- Pertinence and priority criteria
- Convince decision makers and stakeholders
- Propose and test an approach

Cumulative results:

- Combination of quantitative and qualitative data
- A step-by-step, patchwork process
- Consultation with shareholders and partners
- Agreement with international research on SBs

➢**A work in progress!!!**

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