

## INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

### GUILLAUME ST-ONGE – DIRECTOR OF THE QUÉBEC MARITIME NETWORK (RQM) AND THE FRANCE-QUÉBEC MARITIME INSTITUTE TO SUPPORT THE MARITIME SECTOR (IFQM)

*With a PhD in Mineral Resources, Guillaume St-Onge is a professor and holder of the tier I Canada Research Chair in Marine Geology at the Université du Québec à Rimouski's Institut des sciences de la mer de Rimouski.*

*Recognized worldwide for his research in marine geology and sedimentology, climate change and natural hazards, he has led or participated in many oceanographic missions and expeditions in both hemispheres, including some on the St. Lawrence. He has trained countless students and received numerous awards (including a Fulbright) and distinctions for the quality of his research.*

*He is the first director of the [Réseau Québec maritime](#) (Quebec Maritime Network - RQM) and the [Institut France-Québec pour la coopération scientifique en appui au secteur maritime](#) (France-Québec Maritime Institute for scientific cooperation to support the maritime sector - IFQM). Reputed for his dynamism and experience in federative leadership, Professor St-Onge works to bring key players together and position Québec internationally as a beacon for research on sustainable marine development issues.*



#### **Mr. St-Onge, the Quebec Maritime Network (RQM) groups together marine-sector researchers. Can you explain how it differs from other research consortiums?**

*«The RQM strives to position Québec as a leader on sustainable maritime development issues.»*

It is a powerful tool for research, training and cross-sectoral expertise and infrastructure-sharing. The network spans a wide range of sectors that,

today, groups all Québec universities, many colleges and college technology transfer centres, provincial and federal government departments, community organizations and businesses.

The RQM mobilizes Québec expertise to promote the sustainable development of its maritime resources and environments, thereby underpinning the growth of Québec society.

Bringing together the “best and brightest”, this federation in which key researchers from different sectors in the natural sciences and engineering, social sciences, humanities and health sciences interact with research users is a unique model held up as an example both nationally and internationally.

#### **Can you describe the RQM's vision of the St. Lawrence?**

The St. Lawrence System—Gulf of St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence Estuary and St. Lawrence River—is the main gateway to the North American heartland and one of the world's key watersheds: more than two-thirds of Quebecers and many businesses inhabit its shores.

The St. Lawrence System has shaped Québec's economic and social development for hundreds of years, a fact that explains the diversity of maritime industries found here as well as the area's land occupancy and use.

The St. Lawrence System is a natural laboratory not only for understanding the impacts of climate change on its shores, coastal ecosystems and communities but also for understanding processes of critical importance for many commercial and industrial activities of strategic interest for Québec.

*«The RQM conducts large-scale, innovative research activities aimed primarily at promoting economic and social prosperity by contributing to safe, sustainable use of the St. Lawrence System's resources and potential as a transportation corridor.»*

The RQM develops the St. Lawrence System's resources and Québec's extensive know-how in maritime R&D, while even more concretely promoting Québec's high-calibre competence at the international level.

**The RQM's scientific framework is based on six (6) main principles, including "support for private-sector development". How can the RQM serve Québec's maritime businesses?**

Canada struggles to maintain its ranking as one of the top 20 for converting discoveries into technical innovations. Reluctance to put university and college-level know-how into service and insufficient financial investments in R&D are major obstacles that can prevent industries from innovating.

*«To help close the gap, the RQM funds research projects involving industry partners and encourages an open, cross-sectoral culture of innovation between university, college, government department and maritime industry researchers.»*

Supported by a wide range of members operating throughout the entire St. Lawrence System, and with the help of [Technopole maritime du Québec](#) (TMQ), the RQM also helps identify users' needs and market challenges. Its cross-sectoral, partnership-based approach, combined with the lever effect of its St. Lawrence Odyssey research program, promotes the emergence of cutting-edge research that creates wealth for Québec in the maritime industry's various activity sectors.



Photo credit: Gesche Winkler

**In his book on the St. Lawrence project, Québec Premier François Legault expresses the desire to develop innovation hubs along the St. Lawrence Valley. How do you see this policy direction?**

Like the Premier of Québec, I am convinced that the St. Lawrence System offers considerable advantages for developing research and innovation. I would like to see a very strong maritime component when the St. Lawrence project is eventually implemented since, in addition to being driving forces for training, research and innovation, RQM members along the entire St. Lawrence, in cities and the regions, have state-of-the-art infrastructures and cutting-edge expertise that compare favourably with the world's top research institutions.

*«Should the St. Lawrence project have a substantial maritime component, the RQM, with its cross-sectoral character, could serve as a model for establishing such hubs by federating key researchers and higher education partners to enable Québec to make its mark on the national and international scenes.»*

Developing maritime-sector technology hubs along the St. Lawrence will make it possible to benefit from a vast, well-established network by creating opportunities (economic, social, technological and scientific) for its partners in the field of technologies, marine biotechnologies and sustainable maritime resource development of the St. Lawrence System and its communities.



Photo credit: Jean Cloutier