

# Effect of policy, politics and structures on intervention in Québec small businesses

*Preliminary results*

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# Research objectives

- Fight invisibility of SBs in Québec OHS institutions:  
No OHS statistics according to workplace size
- Complement recent Québec research results:  
OHS practitioners reveal high level of risk in SBs, ineffectiveness of prevention approaches, and absence of formal recognition by institutions
- Interview various stakeholders to link SBs situation with broader issues and debate about OHS institutions and services in Québec
- 242 161 establishments, 95,8% SB <50  
3 079 400 insured workers, 34,9% If in Sbs

# Methods

- 17 semi-directed individual interviews: policy makers, high management of OHS institutions, employers associations and unions, public service organisations, researchers
- 3 semi-directed focus group interviews: safety inspectors (N=7), work health practitioners (N=13), OHS sector associations (N=11)
- Qualitative analysis
- Official documentation, annual reports, interviews, publications

# Social and economic context of policy

- Strong economic growth 1970's, primary and secondary sectors of economy, large businesses
- Social change, creation modern institutions under center-left government 'favorable to workers'
- Progressive, humanist discourse, human rights
- Important labor conflicts, strikes

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- Succession economic crises since 1980's
- Modified power struggle in favor of employers
- Dominant discourse: financial, effect of global economy, reduced state presence
- OHS as insurance

# OHS policy

## LSST (1979) Prevention policy :

- Classification of industrial sectors : N accidents (resources, big industry); SBs invisible
- Measures and processes: primary prevention, participation
- Implementation: requirements and services 'temporarily' restricted to 'priority' sectors, and >20
- Union estimates: 85% of labor forced excluded in 2009 (industrial restructuration, growth of SBs, autonomous work)
- Gradual shift towards self-regulation, some prescription for specific risks, ex: machine safety
  - « *We forgot about SBs* »
  - « *We did not foresee the social and economic changes* »  
(policy maker)
- **LATMP (1985) Compensation policy**

# Bipartism, theory and practice

- All decisions based on **consensus**
  - Remove OHS from shopfloor bargaining
  - **Government** : observer, criticized for « abdicating social responsibility »
  - **CEO** political nomination, frequent turnover
  - **Employers**: premiums fund CSST, resent sharing decision making with unions, find compensation too high, want to reduce premiums
  - **SBs**: employers rep since 2005, little power
  - **Unions** agreed to remove OHS from CA, want application of all requirements and services for all sectors
  - **SBs** workers not unionized, not represented
- .....
- Paralysis of system, perpetual confrontation  
« *Employers control OHS regime* »
  - Both parties lobby government directly

# Bipartism, theory and practice

Paralysis most detrimental to prevention:

- Full application of legislation to all sectors never achieved despite support of OHS network
- Inspection resources: same N as in 1980, yet 60% increase businesses and If
- Committees meet for years without results, ex: norms, prevention measures, toilets on construction sites, asbestos
- Funding for training and defense of non unionized workers refused
- Funding for sector associations remains voluntary and limited
- Fines remain same as in 1979

# Effect on interventions for SBs

- Big industries pay more premiums, use larger share of free services, despite having more resources
- Fewer planned interventions and programs, annual inspections abandoned even in priority sectors
- Fewer 2% businesses inspected annually
- No follow ups for maintenance of prevention measures after implementation of new norms: safety guards removed, sandblasting with cheaper and more dangerous product reappears
- AR orientation particularly tough for SBs

# Double structure and SBs

- OHSB manages prevention and compensation
- Compensation biggest budget, prevention budget decreasing
- Whole regime driven by financing of compensation costs, now insurance regime
- Financing and orientation of OHS regime has evolved through amendments: retrospective tariffication, safety mutuals, claims tribunal
- Huge sums spent in claims disputes, even in SBs: safety mutuals access to personalized financing
- Non unionized SBs employees particularly affected, rebound on welfare, ombudsman and non profit defense associations

# Conclusion

- SBs disadvantaged within Quebec SST system :  
invisibility and legislation geared to LBs
- Economic constraints for SBs worsening :  
competition, outsourcing
- Evolution of OHS system affects all businesses,  
but SBs in particular
- Results reveal crisis within whole OHS system in  
Québec
- SBs situation stress need for broad debate about  
government role relative to implementation of  
legislation, institutional orientations and collective  
goals