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## IMPACT ST-ROMAIN

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ISSUE: Building on mobilization and involvement from local communities

### ITINERARY 2C

Date: Thursday, September 12, 2013

Location: La Source argentée

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## PROMOTER

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### **Presentation of the issue:**

The loss or decline of several companies led to the decay of the municipality. The impact was a reduction of interest from the private developers to invest in a business of local services. Result: the people pulled together and supported the reintroduction of services into their community.

### **Project description:**

A popular consultation and mobilization which led to the creation of a citizen's committee, followed by the creation of a solidarity cooperative. The Board of Directors in place found partners within Ultramar and Dépan Express, sought the expertise crucial in the functioning of their business and sold shares. In less than a year, Impact St-Romain, the new solidarity cooperative, was open for business.

**The key elements to remember according to the promoter:**

- citizen mobilization. On the financial front, this mobilization helped raise 25% of the funds necessary to the implementation of the cooperative, through the sale of shares;
- the project must answer the needs of the community and originate from it;
- find the required professional expertise and accept help;
- support and valuable cooperation from the municipality, who went as far as accepting to relocate its premises to leave the better location and visibility for the new business. In addition, the municipality amended the bylaws to allow recreational vehicles to empty their tanks, in order to attract more tourists and patronage;
- validate the steps with lawyers;
- inform citizens regularly;
- to each his role: the coop is independent;
- implement procedures to maintain the long-term memory. There may be many changes within the Board of Directors. Mrs. Gadbois explains she is no longer part of the Board, but that the latter has provided, within its operating guidelines, sustainability of the expertise in order to inform new members of the Board and ensure the long-term memory of the company;
- respect the rhythm of the people involved in order to keep their motivation, because an accelerated pace requires a lot of availability and energy.

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**RESEARCHER**

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**Summary of the researcher's presentation:**

Josée Charbonneau summarizes her study in parallel to the process to establish the Impact St-Romain Coop. She listed all the required steps to achieve a result which is sometimes positive, but at other times leads to the abandonment of the project.

**The key elements to remember according to the researcher:**

- there are several cooperation models; it is important to choose the right one. Mandated bodies exist who's role is to help define the needs and guide the citizens in the process to form a coop;
- the need to establish a cooperative can come from a loss of service, missing infrastructures, initiatives seen elsewhere that we want to recreate in our community or a request from the municipality to respond to a crisis or a pressing need. The need must be expressed by the community, and greatly supported by the municipality and its citizens.