

Award for Geography in the Service of Government or Business

Robert Pampalon

Robert Pampalon's work has played a significant, pioneering role in expanding geography of health in Québec and in applying it in government practice and policy. To begin with, he has written one of the first doctoral dissertations on the geography of health in Canada and is the author of the earliest geography of health examination of the Québec population. His book, *Géographie de la santé au Québec*, published in 1985, was the first ever description of geographic variation in terms of mortality and morbidity in Québec and laid the foundation for geographic analysis of the Québec population's health. A second major book, *La santé à la carte* (1990), also printed by *Les Publications du Québec* presents a geographic exploration of the 1987 Santé Québec survey results. He has also written articles for reference works, including chapters in *l'Enquête québécoise sur les limitations d'activités* (1998) and in *l'Annuaire du Québec* (2004).

After 25 years at Québec's Ministry of Health and Social Services, Dr. Pampalon is now a researcher at the National Public Health Institute of Québec where he coordinates environmental and social impact assessment studies on the health of the population. He is involved in various research networks and has participated in several studies with Canadian universities. He is also an associate professor at the Université de Montréal's Geography Department and at Laval's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine. He lectures at the undergraduate level and supervises graduate students, and gives presentations intended for the scientific community, local health advocates or the general public.

In addition, Robert Pampalon is active in policy-making processes and government program evaluations. He worked for the Rochon Commission, the Lebon and Bédard Committees and assisted the Québec government in developing its Health and Welfare Policy (1991). He also oversaw a task force which was charged with the implementation of a regional resource allocation plan used today by the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

Dr. Pampalon's recent accomplishments, which have led to the now so-called "Pampalon Index", are undoubtedly his greatest contribution. Taking an essentially geographical approach, his deprivation index for health and welfare services planning helps understand the overall importance of social inequalities and their impact on population health status and on their utilization of health care services. A number of administrative data bases have incorporated the Pampalon Index, which has provided managers and decision-makers with an instrument capable of guiding government actions towards the needs of the Québec population. This is just one instance in which the work of Robert Pampalon has placed the geographical approach at the centre of Québec governmental actions and interests in the field of health.