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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

## New Moisson Estrie general manager seeks to strengthen community ties

By Michael Boriero  
Local Journalism Initiative

There is a new face at the top of Moisson Estrie with Christian Bibeau recently stepping into the general manager role at the regional community food bank serving roughly 28,000 families, couples and individuals throughout the Eastern Townships.

And while Bibeau was brought in to usher the organization in a new direction, he told The Record that he has no plans to completely rock the boat. Moisson Estrie has dedicated employees, a committed volunteer

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## Bishop's garage sale makes a big return



GORDON LAMBIE

Laurence Williams, sustainable development advisor for Bishop's University

By Gordon Lambie

Thrifty students and community members flocked to the old W.B. Scott arena on the Bishop's University campus on Tuesday for a new version of the refugee sponsorship garage sale. Once a spring tradition in

the community and on the Bishop's University campus, the sale was restarted this year as a part of Bishop's Orientation week.

"We're offering students the opportunity to furnish their apartments at a lower cost," said Laurence Williams, the University's

sustainable development advisor, sharing that the sale was scheduled from noon to 8 p.m. on Tuesday to try to ensure that as many people as possible would be able to come.

Williams explained that the arena, which is slated for eventual demolition,

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# Local News

The provincial unemployment rate was 4.1 per cent in July, which is below the Canadian average of 4.9 per cent and close to its record low of 3.9 per cent.

## Quebec's party leaders offer competing views on immigration amid labour shortage

By Morgan Lowrie  
The Canadian Press

Quebec's main party leaders sparred on Monday over the number of immigrants they would accept each year if elected, as the province grapples with both a labour shortage and concerns over the decline of French.

Three of the five major parties in Quebec have indicated they would reduce or maintain current immigration levels if they form government on Oct. 3, despite near-record low unemployment and calls from labour groups to bring over new workers.

Parti Quebecois Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon had the most drastic reduction proposal, promising Monday to slash immigration levels back to pre-2003 levels in order to protect the French language and Quebec culture.

St-Pierre Plamondon, whose sovereigntist party is polling last of the major parties, suggested reducing the official levels from 50,000 a year to 35,000, combined with other measures such as insisting 100 per cent of economic immigrants speak French upon arrival, is the best way to ensure the language's staying power in the province.

"The linguistic and cultural reality of Quebec implies that we find a model specific to Quebec, that we are not obliged to adopt the Canadian model."

he told reporters in Quebec City.

His plan comes as business groups around Quebec have urged the political parties to accept more newcomers if elected in order to fill what they say is more than 200,000 vacant jobs around the province.

The provincial unemployment rate was 4.1 per cent in July, which is below the Canadian average of 4.9 per cent and close to its record low of 3.9 per cent. Statistics Canada also said there were 224,370 vacant jobs in the first trimester of 2022.

St-Pierre Plamondon rejected the idea that more immigrants will help ease the labour crunch, saying the new arrivals also consume goods and services, such as health and education, which in turn requires yet more workers.

Only two parties – the Liberals and Quebec solidaire – have said they would raise annual immigration rates above the current 50,000 if elected.

Liberal Leader Dominique Anglade said Monday that St-Pierre Plamondon is clearly "disconnected" from the reality on the ground and is not listening to employers who are struggling to find workers.

"The reality today is the biggest economic brake we have is the fact we don't have enough people," she told reporters in Trois-Rivieres. "How many organizations, how many associations have come out to say it?"

She's proposing an initial

immigration target of 70,000 a year if elected, then plans to work with individual regions to determine their real needs going forward.

Quebec's official permanent immigration levels have been set at between 40,000 and 50,000 annually under the Coalition Avenir Quebec government, but the province will take in nearly 70,000 immigrants in 2022 to make up for shortfalls during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anglade said her proposal only keeps levels at what Quebec is currently accepting.

Quebec solidaire co-spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, meanwhile, suggested the province could accept between 60,000 and 80,000 newcomers, but would rely on experts to make the final determination.

Coalition Avenir Quebec Leader Francois Legault said he would maintain the targets at around 50,000 per year, which he said best matches the province's "integration capacity."

He cited census data showing the percentage of Quebec residents who predominantly speak French at home declined to 77.5 per cent in 2021 from 79 per cent in 2016.

"Above 50,000, I'd like to know what Mrs. Anglade and Mr. Nadeau-Dubois will do to stop the decline of French," he told reporters in Gatineau on Monday.

Legault acknowledged that bringing in more immigrants was one of the solutions to the current labour

shortage, but said there was a need to balance economic needs with language protection.

He said the province should aim for a higher quality of life rather than demographic growth.

"It's not a goal to climb to 10, 20, 30 million people in Quebec," he said. "We're 8.6 million residents. I think that's a size that allows us to offer quality services."

Legault was asked about whether limiting immigration would inevitably cause Quebec's population to decline relative to other provinces, given Canada's plan to accept over 450,000 new permanent residents by 2024.

Quebec's influence in Canada comes from being a nation, and not solely its demographic weight, he said, calling Canada's immigration policy "extreme" and predicting it will likely cause "integration challenges" even in other provinces.

The Quebec Conservative party has proposed gradually reducing immigration targets while working to increase automation in the workplace and raise Quebec's birth rate.

Leader Eric Duhaime declined on Monday to say how many immigrants a Conservative government would accept, but said he didn't believe the current 50,000 target "was a problem" at the present time.

With files from Caroline Plante, Patrice Bergeron and Frederic Lacroix-Couture

## Bishop's garage sale

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had become a storage space for a variety of items including office and residence furniture, lost-and-found objects and donations for the last garage sale in 2020 that never ended up happening.

"During covid some people just left stuff here" she said.

Because of the accumulated clutter, there was no call for donations associated with this sale.

"The goal was really to empty the arena and stop using it as a storage space," Williams shared, adding that the sale has been built into the school's sustainable development plan while maintaining its historical goal of raising funds for the student refugee sponsorship program. "It's a new take on an important tradition."

Ahmad Soliman, who came to Bishop's through the program from Syria, was excited to see the sale taking place this year, having been told about the ones that used to take place before he started at the school.

"I never got the chance to see one because it was cancelled during the pandemic," Soliman said. "I am really

excited because now I see what the process is to collect the funds and support students like me."

The student said that it was very encouraging to see people come out to support the cause.

"Some students are afraid to be away from their families and come here," Soliman said of the student-refugee program, "but you get a lot of support here from the community and from the university. Don't be afraid, just take this challenge and it will be good."

Aside from supporting the refugee sponsorship program, Williams shared that the preparations for the sale through the summer were carried out in partnership with youth from the Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi youth employment service.

"These are people who have difficulty accessing employment, so they came here for the work experience," she said.

By early afternoon Williams said that the sale already had more visitors than she was expecting.

The sale was clearly appreciated by those present, many of whom were

students.

Some of the community members The Record spoke with noted that there had been very short notice from an off-campus point of view, about the event taking place, and they questioned the decision to hold the sale on a Tuesday.

Asked about that choice, Williams said that it was important to the organizing team for the sale to take place during the first week of school for the benefit of students, but that they didn't want to hold it on Labour Day.

"This week is the first week of school and there are a lot of events happening on campus," she said, pointing to Tuesday as the next best option.

Asked about what happens with any leftovers after the sale is done, the sustainable development advisor said that every effort will be made to ensure that whatever is left ends up dealt with in as environmentally friendly a way as possible, although she acknowledged that this likely means either being passed on to an organization specializing in second-hand sales or to the ecocentre.



GORDON LAMBE

Ahmad Soliman, one of the student refugees benefitting from the sponsorship program at Bishop's university