



Press Release: English speakers in Montérégie facing increased unemployment and ongoing economic disparities as compared to Francophones

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Outreach

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Montérégie, September 17, 2024 – English speakers in Montérégie are facing growing challenges in the labour market, with higher unemployment rates, lower incomes, and persistent barriers to accessing essential French language training, according to a [new report](#) by the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT).

Building on the organisation's [previous work](#), the report offers an in-depth analysis of the employment situation for Québec's English-speaking population in Montérégie, highlighting the community's ongoing challenges.

The report reveals that a higher proportion of English speakers live below the low income cut-off (LICO) and that English speakers continue to earn a median after-tax income that is \$2,800 lower than their French-speaking counterparts (\$36,000 vs. \$38,800).

The report also notes a widening unemployment rate gap between English and French speakers in Montérégie. Since the 2016 Census, the unemployment rate for English speakers has increased from 7.5% to 9.1%, while the rate for French speakers has remained steady at 5.8%.

Low French language proficiency is identified as a key barrier to employment in the region's predominantly French-language labour market. Participants interviewed in the context of the report acknowledged the importance of learning French. Still, they pointed to challenges in accessing the necessary French language courses, such as high costs and long waiting lists for language courses.

"Our clients are highly motivated to enhance their French skills for better job opportunities, yet they frequently face challenges accessing the necessary resources through government channels. English-language employment service providers are well-positioned to guide English-speaking job seekers to the crucial language resources needed to succeed and advance in Québec's labour market," explained Pauline Wiedow, Executive Director, Montérégie West Community Network.

"We are actively working to address the French language proficiency gap in the region by providing informal language exchange opportunities. However, limited financial resources prevent us from expanding these into more structured training programs. There's an urgent need for more investment in targeted language training services to successfully equip the English-speaking community with the necessary skills to enter, re-enter, and remain competitive in the labour force," added Karoll-Ann Carrier, Executive Director, Montérégie East Partnership for the English-speaking Community.

The report also brings attention to a shortage of long-term career opportunities for English speakers with postsecondary degrees, particularly in management and administrative roles.

Chris Lapointe, Executive Director, of the Assistance and Referral Centre, agrees with the report's findings: "The region's job market is heavily focused on trades and local small businesses, which creates a disconnect for English speakers with postsecondary degrees. Many feel that their qualifications are not aligned with the available job opportunities, leading them to seek career advancement elsewhere."

PERT standing alongside their partners from MEPEC, MWCN, and ARC has called on the government to strengthen partnerships with local organisations and develop targeted employment services combined with French language training to address the diverse needs of the Montérégie community.

Nicholas Salter, Executive Director of PERT, emphasised the urgency: "The statistics show us that there has been no improvement in the economic vitality for English speakers in the region since the last census. The situation will not improve unless the government includes the needs of the English-speaking community in its plans to deliver employment services, address poverty, and implement French language training."

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About PERT

Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit multi-stakeholder initiative focused on addressing the employment and employability challenges facing Québec's English-speaking community. For more information about

the Provincial Employment Roundtable, visit www.pertquebec.ca.



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About the Montérégie East Partnership for the English-speaking Community

The Montérégie East Partnership for the English-speaking Community is a community organisation which provides resources and services to the English-speaking population of the Montérégie-Est.

For more information, visit www.mepec-pemca.org.

About the Montérégie West Community Network

The Montérégie West Community Network aims to develop a strong and vibrant English-speaking community in Montérégie Ouest by connecting community groups, individuals, organisations and businesses.

For more information, visit www.mwcn.ca.

About the Assistance and Referral Centre

The Assistance and Referral Centre's goal is to assist and empower people of all ages to access services, information, resources and activities in English on the South Shore.

For more information, visit www.arc-hss.ca

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