



MONTÉRÉGIE WEST COMMUNITY NETWORK

DEC 2025 & JAN 2026



A word from Pauline



Dear Members,

As we move through December and prepare to close another calendar year, this season invites us to pause, reflect, and appreciate the many moments, big and small, that shaped 2025. It's a time when the world around us feels a little brighter. We see beautiful holiday scenes on television, in shop windows, and in the cheerful decorations that fill our homes and neighbourhoods. Many of us find ourselves flipping through photo albums or scrolling through old pictures, remembering gatherings with family, celebrations with friends, and the cherished presence of loved ones who remain with us in spirit even if they are no longer by our side.

These reflections remind us of how much we have lived, accomplished, and overcome together. They help us recognize the strength of our community and the importance of the connections we share.

As we turn the calendar page to January 2026, we welcome a fresh start. A new year carries with it a sense of renewed possibility, new gifts to enjoy, perhaps a new baby or new faces in the family, new goals to explore, new adventures to begin, and renewed promises to care for our health, our time, and our well-being. There is something wonderfully hopeful about knowing that everything feels new again.

At MWCN, we feel that same spark of optimism. This season brings us joy through shared Christmas dinners, music, creative activities, decorating, and home-baked treats passed from one kitchen to another. But more than anything, what fills us with gratitude is you, our members. Your commitment to this community is what keeps it strong and meaningful. Many of you have volunteered your time, led events, offered support during difficult moments, and helped lift the spirits of those who were struggling. These acts of kindness, often quiet and behind the scenes, make a real difference.

We are deeply thankful for your involvement, your generosity, and the warmth you bring to the MWCN family. You are the heart of our mission, and your presence strengthens our community every single day.

As we celebrate this festive season, we wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with peace, happiness, good health, and renewed hope.

Warmest regards,

Pauline Wiedow - Executive Director

BRINGING PROGRAMS CLOSER TO HOME: STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES

Our office in the Haut-Saint-Laurent region is warm and welcoming. While we have enough room to host a couple of sessions at the same time, our space, like that of many rural organizations, remains limited. Our territory covers 13 municipalities over 1,168 km², and travelling from one end to the other typically takes 30 to 45 minutes.



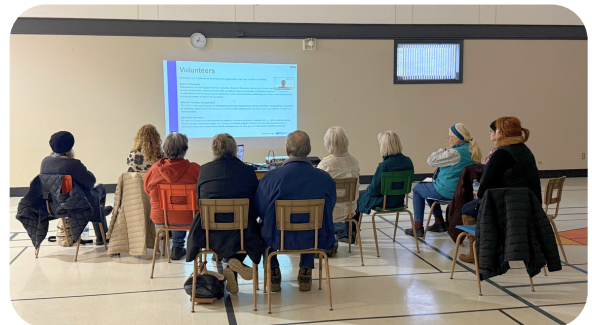
Given our large territory and the transportation challenges, we have had to improvise and learn to adapt. We have been very successful in creating partnerships with other organizations, municipalities, school boards, Legions, and churches, which allows us to bring our programs and activities to different communities.

These collaborations allow us to expand our offerings and positively impact community members of all ages. Seniors benefit from a variety of activities such as health education and health promotion activities, which help increase their knowledge of health and social services and reduce social isolation. In November, we held our first health presentation for a group of very appreciative seniors in Franklin at the Recreational Center. Thanks to a new partnership with the town of Franklin, we were able to use the space free of charge. This allowed us to serve people who otherwise might not travel to our center in Huntingdon due to the distance, and we look forward to bringing more programs there in the future.

Children and families now have even more opportunities thanks to recent partnerships. Our offerings have grown to include summer cooking classes and play groups, expanded intergenerational activities, and additional cultural and physical activities in partnership with the New Frontiers School Board. This year, we are also excited to have extended our Language Links English and French elementary school exchange to Howick, providing children with even more enriching learning experiences.

Collaboration strengthens our communities and fosters a sense of belonging.

We are deeply grateful to all our partners who help us shine and for all the benefits this brings to our community members.



Nora Donnelly - *Community Outreach Coordinator - Huntingdon*

Nadya Kovacs - *Outreach and Project Coordinator - Huntingdon*

YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR FAIR - PINCOURT

The Vaudreuil-Soulanges office was thrilled to host 15 talented student entrepreneurs at our 2nd Youth Entrepreneur Fair on Saturday, November 8th, 2025. From handmade jewellery and bath bombs to an array of candles, a window cleaning business, artwork, and other creative products, students from grade 2 through grade 10 showcased incredible creativity and business skills. Many of the students created their own product displays and confidently explained their creations to visitors throughout the day. Their enthusiasm and entrepreneurship made the fair both engaging and inspiring for everyone who attended.

A huge thank you goes out to our members who donated baked goods for this event. We are incredibly grateful to the 13 wonderful volunteers who generously contributed their time and treats to our bake sale table.

Congratulations as well to Shirley Jean, a member of MWCN, who won the raffle prize of a beautifully crocheted blanket made by Joanne Murray, one of our Chateauguy Knitters!

The participation of the students, families, volunteers and visitors who took part in the event played a huge role in making this year's Youth Entrepreneur Fair a success.



Bryanna Wilson
Outreach and Program Coordinator - Pincourt

3RD ANNUAL HEMMINGFORD ELEMENTARY CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The MWCN Hemmingford office is delighted to be hosting our 3rd Annual Christmas Lunch with the children of Hemmingford Elementary School! What began as a simple one-time event has now grown into a cherished community tradition that brings smiles to the faces of children and adults alike.

Each year, the excitement is palpable as the students bundle up and walk from the school to our community hall. There, they are welcomed into a warm, festive atmosphere to enjoy a traditional Christmas meal featuring turkey, tourtière, all the classic trimmings, and a wonderful dessert table. This sweet spread is made possible thanks to our amazing parent volunteers, who generously prepare and donate cakes, cookies, and other treats to share. Our local grocery store, Le Marché Tradition Hemmingford, is kindly providing beverages for everyone, and we are truly grateful for their ongoing support and community spirit.

We also wish to highlight the incredible generosity of the Karen Kurtz Toy Drive, which will once again ensure that every child receives a special gift. Karen, a true Christmas angel, is deeply committed to spreading holiday joy, and we feel extremely blessed to benefit from her continuous support.

In today's challenging economic times, it is especially meaningful to know that, together, we can help bring the magic of Christmas to life for the children of Hemmingford. Through the kindness, collaboration, and generosity of our partners, volunteers, and supporters, this Christmas Lunch has become much more than a meal — it is a celebration of community, joy, and the true spirit of the holiday season.



Tina Calvarese
Outreach Coordinator - Hemmingford

WHEN MARIE CALLED FOR HELP, AND A ROBOT ANSWERED

Imagine if one of our community's well-loved seniors, let's call her Marie, needed to book a simple service appointment last month. She picked up the phone, expecting a familiar human voice. Instead...

A bright, polite voice replied:

"Hello! I'm your virtual assistant. How can I help you today?"

Marie froze.

The bot kept talking.

And the more it spoke, the more confused she felt.

Marie's experience isn't unique. As more organizations switch to AI voice systems, seniors often find themselves navigating calls that feel fast, impersonal, or simply hard to understand, especially when accents, slower speech, or hearing difficulties come into play. And because these bots collect data, many older adults worry about privacy too.

But Marie didn't give up.

She took a breath, tried again, and eventually discovered a few simple tricks that made things easier:

Marie's Tips for Talking to AI

- Speak slowly and clearly, it helps the bot understand.
- Ask directly for a human, like "Agent, please." Many systems allow this.
- Take notes during the call in case the bot gives steps or confirmation numbers.
- Pause when confused, and repeat your request in shorter phrases, research shows bots handle simpler sentences better (Geriatrics Gerontology Research).
- Be mindful of personal info, only share what's necessary, since voice-bots store data

When Marie finally reached a real person, she laughed and said, "That robot learned more about me than I did about it."

Her story reminds us that AI isn't going away, but with support, patience, and the right tools, seniors can navigate it confidently. And here at MWCN, we're committed to helping our community stay informed, safe, and empowered as technology keeps evolving.

Matt Mardini -*Program Manager*





EMPLOYABILITY REALITY (2024–2025) MONTÉRÉGIE LABOUR MARKET UPDATE



Montréal, one of Québec's major administrative regions, saw modest employment growth in 2024, adding only 800 jobs. The region's labour force activity rate was 65.4%, while the employment rate dropped slightly to 62.5%.

(Source: Statistique Québec, Ministère de l'Économie)

Key Trends (2025)

- **Employment & Wages:** As of October 2025, the employment rate in Montréal was 62.3%, with an unemployment rate of 4.7%. Average hourly wages stood at CA\$34.25.
- **Job Market Shifts:** Between Q2 2024 and Q2 2025, Montréal lost 6,900 jobs, with unemployment rising to 5.2%. The job vacancy rate in Q2 2025 was 3.4%. This points to early signs of a cooling labour market.

Focus on Montréal-Ouest: Youth Challenges

- Unemployment among 15–29-year-olds can reach 50.7% for some groups.
- Nearly one-third (32.4%) of youth earn less than \$20,000/year.
- 3.5% of youth are not in the labour force at all.

Regional Insights: Haut-Saint-Laurent & Vaudreuil-Soulanges

- In Haut-Saint-Laurent, employment for 25–64-year-olds rose to 72.6% in 2021 (from 69.8% in 2016).
- Rural areas dominate the region (93%), affecting job availability and seasonality.
- English speakers face higher unemployment (8.2% vs. 6.8%) and lower incomes (≈\$3,800 less/year) than French speakers.

Montréal-Ouest: Your Path to Employment Starts Here

Employment in Montréal-Ouest is steady—but not everyone has the same opportunities. Youth, rural residents, and English speakers often face higher barriers to stable jobs and fair wages. At MWCN, we're here to help close those gaps and build a stronger, more inclusive local economy. We support employers and job seekers navigating today's bilingual job market.

We proudly serve the MRCs of Roussillon • Haut-Saint-Laurent • Vaudreuil-Soulanges • Beauharnois-Salaberry • Les Jardins-de-Napierville

👉 Ready to take the next step? Let's build your path to employment, together.

☎ 450-691-1444

✉ joanne@mwcn.ca

Joanne Basilières
Employability and Youth Mental Health Coordinator

C MMUNITY

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY
IN MONTÉRÉGIE WEST IS GROWING!

NOW OVER 120,000

STRONG, UNITED, VIBRANT, AND PROUD!

MONTÉRÉGIE WEST COMMUNITY NETWORK

Our Offices in Five Regional County Municipalities

Roussillon - 253 Blvd. d'Anjou, Chateauguay QC J6J 2R4 / 450-691-1444

Beauharnois - 380 Boul de Melocheville, Melocheville, QC J0S 1J0 / 450-691-1444

Vaudreuil-Soulanges 95 5e Avenue, Suite 100, Pincourt, QC J7V 5K8 / 514-425-0399

Haut-Saint-Laurent/Chateauguay Valley - 72 Dalhousie, Suite 201 Huntingdon, QC J0S 1H0 / 450-264-3596

Jardins-de-Napierville - 476 Rue Frontière, Hemmingford, QC J0L 1H0 / 514-249-5539