

Local News

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‘Breaking point’: Legault asks Trudeau to slow influx of asylum seekers

By Caroline Plante
The Canadian Press

Quebec Premier François Legault is asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to slow the influx of asylum seekers entering his province, which he said is nearing a “breaking point.”

Legault made his request in an official letter to Trudeau sent Wednesday afternoon, a copy of which was obtained by The Canadian Press.

“We are very close to the breaking point due to the excessive number of asylum seekers arriving in Quebec

month after month. The situation has become unsustainable,” Legault wrote.

He said that in 2022, Quebec took in more asylum seekers than the rest of the country combined.

The closure of the unofficial Roxham Road crossing point south of Montreal in August 2023 “momentarily” slowed the flow, Legault said. “However, the arrivals have continued to increase at airports. The number of people arriving on a visitor visa and applying for asylum is also increasing significantly.”

Nearly 60,000 new asylum seekers were registered in Quebec in the first 11 months of 2023, which has put “very significant pressure” on services, the premier writes.

“Asylum seekers have trouble finding a place to live, which contributes to accentuating the housing crisis,” the letter said. “Many end up in homeless shelters, which are overflowing.” He said organizations that help asylum seekers can’t keep up with demand. Legault said the children of asylum seekers are also straining schools that already have a shortage of teachers and space.

The premier reminded Trudeau that asylum seekers who are waiting for work permits receive financial

assistance from Quebec. Last October, 43,200 asylum seekers received \$33 million in aid.

Legault expressed particular concern over Mexican nationals, whom he said represent a growing proportion of the asylum seekers coming to the province.

“The possibility of entering Canada from Mexico without a visa certainly explains part of the influx of asylum seekers,” he said.

“The airports, particularly in Toronto and Montreal, are becoming sieves and it is time to act,” he added.

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Meals-on-Wheels

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Meals to senior residents in the area. In the kitchens, they prepare soup, salad, a main and dessert which are then driven to the homes of people who request the service. The meals cost \$6.50 which, compared to the cost of groceries, is a pretty good deal.

“Our broader mission is to make it easier for seniors to continue living in their own homes,” Suitor says.

And she says that the volunteers are always making an effort to keep costs down.

“They will look out for specials and stock up when we can, we have some freezers, which helps a lot with that as well,” she says. “We can stock up and use it for a few different meals at different occasions.”

Suitor emphasizes how important

relationships with the community are. The organization also receives donations from Moisson Estrie, a group that helps to redistribute donated and purchased groceries from local grocery stores in the Townships.

“We’re able to rely on some assistance from Moisson Estrie,” she says, “and that does really assist in keeping our costs down.”

Christian Bibeau is the executive director of Moisson Estrie. They regularly provide food deliveries to Meals-on-Wheels, as well as 55 other organizations in the area.

“We go there every week and we know that the food that they’re cooking and distributing is great,” he says.

He says that more people each year are requesting help from them.

“If there’s something we don’t want to do, it’s beat our record,” he says.

“Again this year, we’re going to have more people that came here than the year before.”

The rising costs of food have made it tough for organizations to fulfill the need in the community.

Meals-on-Wheels helps to provide people with affordable and diverse food options throughout the week. Finding affordable options, according to Bibeau, is a challenge for many people right now.

“We know that’s also true for a lot of organizations around the Townships,” he says. “That puts a lot of pressure to get more food to make sure we have enough to help those people.”

Suitor is grateful for the food that Moisson Estrie provides each week.

“It’s different from week to week and we never know what to expect until the delivery arrives,” she says. “It’s a mix

of figuring out how to use all those different things to make it work.”

Bibeau values the relationship with Meals-on-Wheels and understands how important it is for the community.

“Organizations like Meals-on-Wheels are very precious,” he says. “We’ll give as much as we can because we know how important they are in the community.”

Passing the wrench

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Has made the decision to re-open his father’s garage. He made the announcement on Facebook recently.

“My dad is handing over the reins to me,” shared Patrick. “Under his watchful eye and with his guidance and support I hope to build a reliable business of my own,” he added.

Patrick was inspired to re-open the garage after noting that many businesses in Potton have closed and wanting to give something back to the area he grew up in he felt that this might be the best way.

“I have worked in various garages over the years and gained knowledge and experience in almost every automotive field from dealerships to body shops and I have also become a Tesla certified technician,” Patrick said.

Wanting to bring the knowledge he acquired back to a local business, Sherrer officially re-opened “Garage Craig Sherrer et Fils Inc.” on Monday, Jan. 15 and plans to hold a grand

opening in the near future.

“My ultimate dream is to expand into autobody and eventually into antique car restoration,” states Sherrer. “I would always keep general mechanics as one of my services, however.”

Patrick admitted he has some big shoes to fill and he is looking forward to greeting friends and neighbours as they give him the opportunity to take a look under the hood of their vehicles. It is through experience and the faith people have in you that a business builds its reputation. Whether he succeeds or fails, it won’t be for a lack of trying. Patrick is looking to the future with optimism and hope.

To reach Garage Craig Sherrer et Fils Inc. call 450-521-4147. The garage is located at 2593 Ch. De la Vallée Missisquoi.



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