

THE MOMENTUM IS THERE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE WITH THE AMBM GROUP

SPRING 2025



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WHO ARE WE?



AMBM, SINCE 1995

Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities

16 member municipalities (15 rural and the City of Winnipeg)

Its role: to be the political voice of its bilingual member municipalities and to ensure political representation at various levels of government (provincial and federal). To support the development of municipalities by identifying and highlighting their needs, while helping governments find solutions to meet them through a dual bilingual and rural lens.

Chief Executive Officer: **Justin Johnson**

President: **Ivan Normandeau**

Website: **ambm.ca**



EWC, SINCE 2017 (CDEM PROJECT IN 2008)

Eco-West Canada

Areas of expertise:

energy efficiency, green transportation, wastewater and waste management, circular economy.

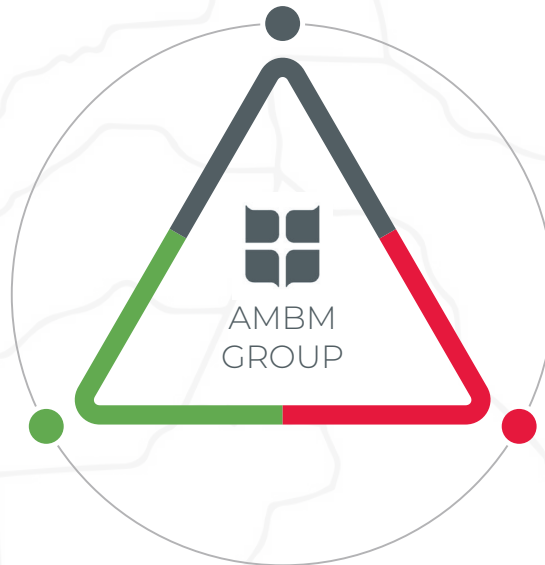
Its role: to promote sustainable economic development in Canada's rural municipalities through the planning and implementation of green economic infrastructure. To facilitate the transition of municipalities to a carbon-neutral economy, fostering their long-term development.

Executive Director:

Dany Robidoux

President : **Ivan Normandeau**

Website: **eco-ouest.com**



CDEM, SINCE 1996

Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba)

5 sectors of activity:

Employability and Immigration, Community Economic Development, Youth in the Economy, Tourism, and Business Services.

Its role: to drive and support the economic development of Manitoba's bilingual municipalities, generating positive spinoffs for the vitality and sustainability of Manitoba's Francophonie.

Executive Director:

Madeleine Arbez

President :

Gab-Riel "Pit" Turenne

Website: **cdem.com**

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA BILINGUAL MANITOBA (AMBM)

PHOTO: COURTESY AMBM/VINCENT BLAIS



IVAN NORMANDEAU
PRESIDENT, AMBM

PHOTO: ALICIA RÉGNIER / POP COMM



JUSTIN JOHNSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMBM

TOGETHER FOR THE SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY OF BILINGUAL MUNICIPALITIES

In a world now more than ever facing economic and geopolitical uncertainty, it is essential to manage growth well and make it a success. Thanks to the support of the AMBM Group, which includes the AMBM, the CDEM (Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities) and EWC (Eco-West Canada), we are proud to see that Manitoba's bilingual municipalities are true leaders in this area.

Between 2016 and 2021, AMBM member municipalities recorded **unprecedented growth of 8%**, well above the provincial average of 5%.

The municipal level of government, which is closest to citizens, families, and businesses, is fundamental to building a stronger and more resilient Canada. Without municipal prosperity and vitality, neither the country nor the province would have a solid foundation on which to build.

That is why the AMBM Group and its member municipalities have **a key role to play in building strong partnerships** with other levels of government and equipping municipalities to realize their full economic potential, thanks in part to bilingual economic immigration.

Our municipalities have immense potential, particularly because of their bilingualism, and we will continue to create the conditions necessary to develop this potential, in partnership

with the provincial and federal governments.

In 2025, we reach the end of a five-year partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the **2022-2025 Strategy to Support Economic Immigration in Manitoba's Bilingual Municipalities**, which is currently being renewed.

Thanks to this agreement, we've been able to make our communities even more attractive and welcoming. We have made them potential destinations of choice for newcomers.

We will continue to work with municipalities to provide our current and future residents with the best possible career and living opportunities, and our communities with the best conditions in which to flourish. On March 20, 2025, we signed a historic multi-year funding agreement with the Manitoba government that will greatly contribute to this goal.

The AMBM Group and Manitoba's bilingual municipalities have already accomplished a great deal, and the work is just beginning. Thanks to our strong and long-standing relationships with the federal and provincial governments, we are more determined than ever to continue the work and make our Municipalities key drivers of prosperity, economic growth, and front-line partners. The momentum is there.

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

PUSHING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN MANITOBA'S BILINGUAL MUNICIPALITIES

Since the implementation of the *2022-2025 Strategy to Support Economic Immigration in Manitoba's Bilingual Municipalities*, AMBM municipalities have become increasingly determined to be attractive and ready to welcome newcomers, thereby promoting their growth and prosperity, particularly through immigration. Unprecedented momentum in bilingual rural Manitoba.

4

“Our bilingual municipalities are experiencing unprecedented growth, and thanks to the strategy developed with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), we have been able to focus on rural-specific needs over the past five years and gather evidence to inform our long-term planning approach,” said Justin Johnson, CEO of the AMBM.

These advances can be summed up in one key concept: regionalization. “With 15 of our 16 members in rural areas, regionalizing immigration was a fundamental issue in achieving our growth objectives. We had to understand the specific needs and challenges of each community, each local employer, in order to find appropriate solutions.

“We have also ensured - and continue to ensure - that there is strong, modern, and adequate basic public infrastructure in our 16 municipalities, from the smallest to the largest,

to support an enviable quality of life everywhere and enable all our municipalities to plan for long-term growth.”

The AMBM Group is also closely monitoring the progress of federal and provincial infrastructure funding programs, including those for the construction of wastewater systems, housing, and recreational and community infrastructure. “We are raising awareness at all levels of government to apply a bilingual and rural lens in programs because the needs are very real and critical.”

The AMBM Group also works closely with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) on immigration issues, among others. Rebecca Bligh, President of the FCM, confirms that “rural, northern, and remote communities are a fundamental part of the way of life for a large portion of Canadians, and as such, they must have the appropriate resources to thrive and prosper.



▲ JUSTIN **JOHNSON**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMBM.
Photo: Alicia Régnier / POP Comm'

▲ REBECCA **BLIGH**, PRESIDENT, FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES.
Photo: Courtesy FCM

“Our ability to attract, welcome and retain immigrants and refugees is an asset in achieving Canada’s full economic potential. To give newcomers every opportunity to succeed, it is imperative to have welcoming communities that are empowered to provide adequate housing, jobs and services.

“Through the FCM’s Rural Forum, we advocate directly with federal decision-makers to ensure that municipal elected officials have the tools they need to strengthen their communities and build a more resilient future.”

RAISING AWARENESS

But the Strategy’s greatest success is probably that it has made municipalities aware of the

importance of exercising their local leadership to build attractive and welcoming communities.

In other words, “equipping them to become leaders in supporting their own sustainable growth at all levels,” summarizes Justin Johnson. Quality of life, housing, access to local employment, recreation, and safety are important municipal responsibilities, and our municipalities, in partnership with the federal and provincial governments and the AMBM Group, are more ready than ever to take them on.”

In total, the AMBM has launched 15 initiatives since 2020 to help its municipalities become more attractive and welcoming, including an inventory and sharing of best practices in economic

immigration, training and advisory sessions for elected officials, administrative officers and administrative staff of member municipalities, a study on labour market prospects in municipalities to better target the needs for skilled bilingual talent, holding the first edition of the Municipal Economic Immigration Forum for Manitoba’s bilingual municipalities, and the launch of an information kit to promote harmonious coexistence.

There was also a mini-campaign in *La Liberté* and on social media to raise awareness of the mutual benefits of Francophone immigration to rural areas, as well as documentaries on the experiences of eight Francophone or Francophile families who immigrated to a bilingual rural



ANNIE GIRARD, STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMMIGRATION ASSOCIATE, AMBM.
Photo: Marta Guerrero / POP Comm'



KATHY VALENTINO, PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES.
Photo: Courtesy AMM

municipality, and two to Winnipeg. The mini-campaign also included the production of *La parole aux élèves (Students speak out)* video clips, which allowed students from local French-language schools to talk with municipal officials about issues surrounding the role of municipal governments.

“All of these structural measures implemented by the AMBM have had a significant impact on economic immigration in Manitoba’s bilingual municipalities,” says Annie Girard, Strategic Development and Immigration Associate at the AMBM. “In particular, they have enabled Manitoba’s bilingual municipal leadership to clearly understand

its role in the continuum of Francophone and bilingual economic immigration in Manitoba, and to support and equip municipalities to strengthen their capacity to fulfill their role effectively. In five years, municipalities have made giant strides.”

Today, the work must continue. Among other things, the issue of basic infrastructure remains critical. Kathy Valentino, President of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM): “Water and sewer infrastructure remains a major concern for Manitoba municipalities, with more than 300 projects waiting to be launched for a total of \$1.6 billion. That’s 65% more than in 2023-2024.

“Without adequate funding to complete these projects, many municipalities are unable to grow today, thereby hindering their economic development.”

And that’s not counting Winnipeg, “which will also reach full capacity within four years,” adds Justin Johnson.

“In addition, we must now ensure that we put in place structures capable of providing settlement and integration services on site that are adapted to rural and bilingual realities. This is one of our most pressing challenges at the moment because the sustainable growth of our municipalities depends, among other things, on their ability to retain and integrate new families.”

PARTNERS AT ALL LEVELS

While the AMBM Group has enjoyed the ongoing support of the Government of Canada, particularly Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) over the past five years, the Province has also been a strong supporter.

PHOTOS: COURTESY



GLEN SIMARD, MANITOBA
MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND
NORTHERN RELATIONS AND
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS.



Our government knows that bilingual immigration is an essential component that enhances the vitality of our rural communities. French-speaking newcomers contribute in various ways - particularly when it comes to supporting the economy strength of our bilingual municipalities. With the launch of my invitation to the community to participate in the creation of a long-term strategy on bilingualism, I hope we will be able to build the links between the Francophonie, economic development, immigration in the member municipalities of the AMBM and the vision of a truly bilingual province.



Manitoba is a leader when it comes to enabling growth and vitality of communities through immigration. That is why we have partnered with rural municipalities to establish local immigration initiatives to help local economies and communities across rural Manitoba grow and thrive. We are also committed to building strong bilingual communities to support the preservation and growth of la Francophonie in Manitoba.



MALAYA MARCELINO,
(CENTRE IN PHOTO), MANITOBA
MINISTER OF LABOUR
AND IMMIGRATION.



▲ DANY **ROBIDOUX**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ECO-WEST CANADA.



▲ DENISE **PARENT**, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF DE SALABERRY.
Photos: Marta Guerrero / POP Comm

LAND-USE PLANNING

8

1. A KEY FACTOR FOR SUCCESSFUL GROWTH

When it comes to land use planning and local economic development, municipalities are the level of government with full responsibility and primary legitimacy. To attract and retain new families in Manitoba's bilingual communities, a number of essential services must be available nearby, including housing, transportation, health services, roads, water and sewer services, recreational facilities...

The AMBM Group therefore supports its member municipalities, although EWC has a national mandate, in developing land use strategies.

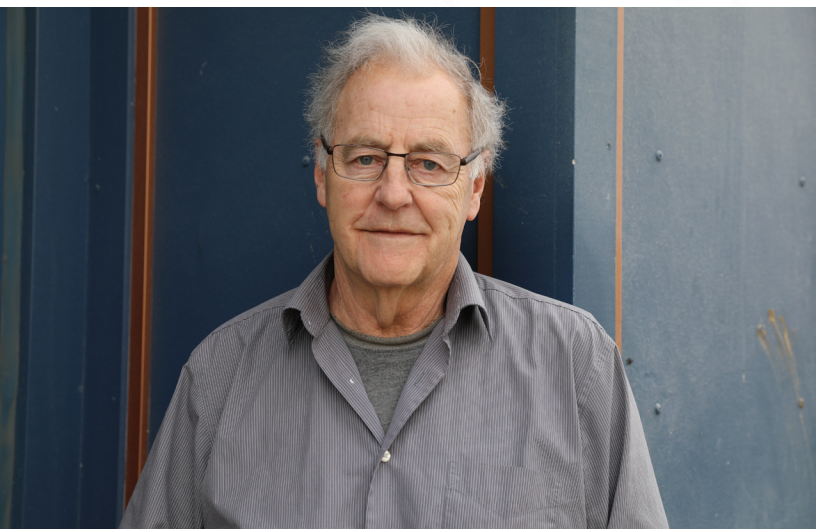
“**D**eveloping solid strategies, with public consultations, is important for aligning all stakeholders behind initiatives that truly meet community needs and for attracting support, particularly financial support,” explains Dany Robidoux, Executive Director of Eco-West Canada (EWC), one of the AMBM's subsidiaries within the AMBM Group.

Among the major economic development projects underway in AMBM municipalities, he highlights the Southeast Manitoba Regional Transportation Initiative, which consists of shared municipal electric vehicle fleets available to individuals for their travel needs.

“Thanks to the feasibility and market studies conducted for this project, we were able to submit

a request for assistance to the federal government for the implementation of this initiative. And with all these preliminary phases completed, we are very hopeful.

“This funding will allow us to purchase even more vehicles of different types - cars, vans, trucks - as well as charging infrastructure across the southeast of the province. The initiative could also be expanded to all the municipalities in the southeast involved: the bilingual rural municipalities of Piney, De Salaberry, La Broquerie, Ritchot, Sainte-Anne, Taché, the Town of Sainte-Anne, and the Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys, as well as the English-speaking rural municipalities of Hanover, Reynolds, Stuartburn, the Buffalo Point First Nation, and the Steinbach Economic Development Corporation.”



▲ ROXANNE **CHANEL**, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER,
CDC LOURD ON.

▲ AUREL **PANTEL**, REEVE,
RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF LORNE.
Photos: Marta Guerrero / POP Comm

The funding application has been officially submitted by EWC, and with the agreement of the funders, it will be transferred to a cooperative or similar entity, which the municipalities participating in the initiative will have to create together to manage the operations of this regional project.

In the meantime, the rural municipalities of Ritchot and Piney are already moving forward on their own. "They have started purchasing electric cars and testing systems to see what would work best for car sharing in their regions, as well as beginning to anticipate the training needs of potential electric car users," says Dany Robidoux.

In terms of housing and basic infrastructure, such as roads and wastewater treatment systems, things are also moving forward in the rural municipalities of the AMBM. For example, the Rural Municipality of Lorne has just received \$1.2 million from the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund.

Roxanne Chanel, Economic Development Officer at the Corporation de d veloppement communautaire Lourd on (Lourd on

Community Development Corporation, CDC Lourd on), which is affiliated with the Rural Municipality of Lorne and supports community development in Francophone towns such as Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Saint-L on, and Somerset, provides details: "We plan to build 47 units of various types of housing between Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes and Somerset within three years, 70% of which will be affordable housing.

"Lately, increasing our housing capacity has become very important because we are receiving more and more economic immigrants and families who want to return to work and live in rural areas. These newcomers are an excellent growth opportunity for us, especially since we have jobs, but we lack housing to accommodate them."

The funding received will initially help "reduce the barriers that are preventing us from moving forward with housing construction, and then attract developers," she said.

Rural Municipality of Lorne Reeve Aurel Pantel explains: "Before we can have buildings, we need to expand the lagoon, build streets,

water lines, rezone, etc. We are delighted to have received these funds and to be able to move forward with this project. The lack of available housing is a major problem in our area."

Despite the support of the AMBM Group and the grants available, economic development often remains a headache for municipalities, particularly due to inflation. Denise Parent, Chief Administrative Office of the Rural Municipality of De Salaberry:

"Take, for example, our De Salaberry Recreation Center, which we want to renovate to provide better recreational spaces for our residents. When we applied for grants, we based our request on the prices at the start of the project in 2020-2021.

"But by the time we raised our own funds, which is a requirement, and received the funds we requested, inflation had caused our costs to skyrocket! We had initially estimated \$5 million and received \$3.7 million. Now we're looking at \$8 to \$10 million. That's almost double. So we have to proceed in phases. It takes a lot of patience and strategy to make these projects a reality."

JOB MARKET

2. EMPLOYABILITY AS A PILLAR OF GROWTH

For many newcomers to rural areas, finding local employment is a determining factor in their decision to stay. As for entrepreneurs, they need labour to support their growth. Employability is therefore a key issue for the AMBM Group, driven by one of its subsidiaries, the CDEM.



▶ SOPHONIE **NERIUS**, ORIGINALLY FROM HAITI, HAS FULFILLED HER LIFELONG DREAM OF IMMIGRATING TO CANADA. Photo: POP Comm'

Originally from Haiti, Sophonie Nerius and her family immigrated to Sainte-Anne in 2023. Why Sainte-Anne? Because she found work there. "My dearest wish was to immigrate to Canada. I saw a job offer at a French-speaking daycare in Sainte-Anne, and my husband and I said to each other: *Why not give it a try?* When I started working there, I was like *Wow, my dream has finally come true!*"

Jobs are certainly an attraction. But there is ongoing work to be done in terms of integration. People need to feel that they are part of a whole in order to thrive.

In this regard, Chris Ewen, mayor of the Rural Municipality of Ritchot and co-owner of the mobile coffee company Perk Events, emphasizes the importance of a collaborative ecosystem: "To

properly support immigrants in Ritchot, there needs to be a relationship between employers, governments, and organizations such as the CDEM and the AMBM, which facilitate the process."

In addition to helping newcomers, the CDEM "provides employers with educational tools and seminars, and above all, helps find the right employee for each position. In Ritchot, we have many different job opportunities, but sometimes it's not the right fit. The CDEM helps make sure it is. We appreciate this support."

STRENGTHENING THE JOB MARKET

In order to facilitate rural employability, the CDEM launched a new project in 2024 as part of the AMBM Group: Renforcement du marché de l'emploi (Strengthening the Labour Market,

RME) in Manitoba's bilingual rural municipalities, funded by PrairiesCAN. Arriving from Senegal in December 2023 with the help of the CDEM's Employability Service, Diodio Dieye, Special Projects and Research Officer at the CDEM since May 2024, took charge of the project. Thanks to her perspective as a newcomer who had gone through the Employability Service, Diodio Dieye was able to bring a dual perspective to her job.

"We are aware of the labour shortage in Canada. Economic immigration is a solution. The RME project supports this, but specifically in Manitoba's bilingual rural municipalities, where the needs are greater," she explains.

In practical terms, in June 2024, the CDEM launched a survey in participating municipalities to learn more about each employer, their needs, challenges, and capacity to hire diverse or Francophone employees. "We focused on two municipalities at a time to get a good feel for what was happening locally."

The RME will make it easier to identify job openings and potential candidates to ensure a successful employment experience. It will also help employers better equip themselves for recruitment and integration, based on their individual challenges. "For example, we can organize workshops on diversity in the workplace, inclusion, bilingualism, or even accounting or marketing."

Fourteen of the AMBM's 15 rural municipalities are participating in this optional project, and the latest is currently joining. Approximately 1,100 employers have been iden-

tified as part of the RME in bilingual rural municipalities. And 276 have already responded to the survey.

"With these responses, we have created a secure database for the CDEM, which will be regularly updated to reflect as accurately as possible the businesses operating in each bilingual rural municipality and their needs. This is just the beginning of the work," says Diodio Dieye.

CDEM Executive Director Madeleine Arbez adds: "One of the most significant impacts of the RME project has been to strengthen and update the connection between the CDEM and employers in bilingual rural municipalities."

ONE CONVINCED EMPLOYEE

Anick Lia Péhé, Director of Les petits génies daycare in Lorette and Saint-Boniface, took part in the RME project because "it's hard to find qualified staff in rural areas. So whenever the CDEM organizes projects or events, such as job fairs, the RME or Destination Canada or Manitoba missions, I take part. Last year, I went to Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire with the CDEM to recruit as part of Destination Manitoba."

The Les Petits génies daycare centre has significant needs. "In Lorette, I have space for four more babies, but I don't have the staff. I hope the RME project can help me find the people I need.

"The RME will really help rural daycares, like many other businesses. It encourages employers to keep going. You don't feel alone," concludes Anick Lia Péhé.



▲ CHRIS EWEN, MAYOR, RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF RITCHOT. Photos: Marta Guerrero / POP Comm'



▲ MADELEINE ARBEZ (RIGHT), EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CDEM, AND DIODIO DIEYE, WHO COORDINATED THE RENFORCEMENT DU MARCHÉ DE L'EMPLOI (STRENGTHENING THE JOB MARKET) PROJECT.



▲ ANICK LIA PÉHÉ, DIRECTOR OF LES PETITS GÉNIES DAYCARE CENTRE IN SAINT-BONIFACE AND LORETTE, PARTICIPATED IN THE CDEM'S RENFORCEMENT DU MARCHÉ DE L'EMPLOI (STRENGTHENING THE JOB MARKET) PROJECT.

RECEPTION AND SETTLEMENT

3. RECEPTION, A PRIORITY FOR THE FUTURE

More aware than ever of the benefits of economic immigration for their growth, AMBM member municipalities, with the help of the AMBM and its two subsidiaries, the CDEM and EWC, are developing more and more tools to facilitate this immigration. However, once immigrants arrive, local reception and settlement services are less systematic. This will be one of the AMBM Group's priorities for the coming years.



▲ MADELEINE ARBEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CDEM.



▲ ARMAND POIRIER, MAYOR, RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF TACHÉ.
Photos: Marta Guerrero / POP Comm'

When it comes to settlement support for Francophones, there are still disparities between Manitoba's rural municipalities. Madeleine Arbez, Executive Director of the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (the Economic Development Council for Manitoba's Bilingual Municipalities, CDEM), comments that "there are things; our partners on the immigration continuum offer certain services. But reception is first and foremost a collective responsibility. Because if a newcomer is in a bind, they want someone who is directly available, not an expert in Winnipeg!

This is important for feeling integrated into the community."

Armand Poirier, Mayor of the Rural Municipality of Taché, points out that "the federal government encourages Francophone immigration and settlement in Francophone and bilingual municipalities. But because of the lack of housing in rural areas, most settle in cities. So reception and settlement services were concentrated in cities, where the newcomers were. But now, with the **Strategy to Support Economic Immigration**, it's becoming extremely important to receive them properly in rural areas."



▲ IRÈNE **BOHÉMIER** (LEFT) AND GISÈLE **CHARTIER**, TWO AMIS DU COIN (FRIENDS FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD) VOLUNTEERS IN LORETTE.



▲ NEWCOMERS FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE, WILFRIED **KOLKAN** AND HIS FAMILY WERE WELCOMED BY AMIS DU COIN. Photos: Camille Harper / POP Comm'

In the rural municipality of Taché, the residents of Lorette took matters into their own hands. In the fall of 2024, they created a volunteer committee called Les Amis du coin (Friends from the Neighbourhood).

"I met people who were in need, then the food bank called me to help another family, and I said yes," says Irène Bohémier, a founding member. So I called Gisèle (Chartier, another founding member). I figured there would be more and more families to help."

A committee of four volunteers was formed, including Sylvie Huard-Huberdeau and Claude Courchaine, not to mention all those who offer their help on an occasional basis. Les Amis du coin is currently focusing only on French-speaking families, who face the additional barrier of language.

"We see what's needed and we help," explains Gisèle Chartier. We do a lot of driving, because newcomers don't have driver's licenses yet. We take them grocery shopping to their appointments, to work, and to practise driving so they can get their driver's license.

It's amazing how many people are willing to help or give. When there's a need, we ask and we find a way."

Irène Bohémier continues: "We help them with everything: furnishing their homes, getting ready for winter, but also finding a doctor and dealing with administrative procedures."

Wilfried Kolkan, originally from Ivory Coast, arrived on December 1, 2024, with his wife and three children. After three weeks in Winnipeg, he received support from Les Amis du coin. "I met Gisèle at Mass on December 2, then Irène. It was one of the best encounters of our lives.

"Les Amis are 90% responsible for our settling in and our daily well-being. For example, my youngest son's suitcase was lost, and everything he's wearing today is thanks to Les Amis! We didn't have to buy anything. The same goes for dishes and furniture. We received nothing but donations.

"Gisèle and Irène also took the time to drive us to our appointments, to church, and to the grocery store. Even when I

was learning to drive, I would drive every day with their husbands. They are our guardian angels. I can't thank them enough."

Armand Poirier confides that, "immigration was a bit of a surprise here, but our community is very welcoming and generous. If the thrift store - one of my first projects in municipal politics - identifies a new family, it is ready to give them what they need to settle in comfortably. It even organizes closed-door events so that families can choose without embarrassment.

"There are also Les Amis du coin, and all of this makes a big difference in the integration and quality of life of these families. They know they have people they can count on. I'm proud of my community."

In the future, "we want to formalize the approach so that everywhere across our municipalities, there are quality welcome and settlement services tailored to each environment, hand in hand with our partners in the immigration continuum," concludes Madeleine Arbez.

VILLAGE OF SAINT-PIERRE-JOLYS

4. AN INNOVATIVE PLATFORM FOR BILINGUAL IMMIGRATION

The Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys is becoming a true pilot platform for defining the future of Francophone and bilingual economic immigration in rural Manitoba. Village Mayor Raymond Maynard and Chief Executive Officer Tina Bubenzer explain.

In 2025, the Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys was selected to join several initiatives promoting successful immigration: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and the Francophone Community Immigration Pilot (FCIP).

"We are developing a strategic and holistic vision for the Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys, not only to attract newcomers, but also to better retain them and integrate them into our community," explains Tina Bubenzer, Chief Administrative Officer of the Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys.

"The LIP will enable our local stakeholders to work together to create a win-win environment for everyone. As for the FCIP, it will help us attract new skilled Francophone and bilingual talent to our community."

Saint-Pierre-Jolys is the only Manitoba municipality selected to participate in this new federal FCIP, which brings skilled Francophone and bilingual newcomers to participating communities to live and work. These newcomers going through

the program will then have more points toward obtaining permanent residency.

"It's a big project, so we're working with the AMBM and the CDEM," Tina Bubenzer continues. We received training from IRCC. There are several steps to follow, such as defining our priority sectors. Everything has to be approved by the federal government before we can engage Village employers in the process."

Among the first initiatives organized in Saint-Pierre-Jolys was a job fair on March 26. "We had 30 employers and more than 130 people showed up, says Tina Bubenzer. These included bilingual newcomers settled in Winkler or Lorette who might be interested in benefiting from the FCIP and coming to live and work in Saint-Pierre-Jolys."

Saint-Pierre-Joly also took part in the RME (Renforcement du marché de l'emploi, or Strengthening the Labour Market) project led by the CDEM to identify sectors in need of workers.



▲ FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: TINA **BUBBENZER**, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, VILLAGE OF SAINT-PIERRE-JOLYS; RAYMOND **MAYNARD**, MAYOR; MARC **PROULX** AND MAUREEN **SICOTTE**, VILLAGE COUNCILLORS.
Photo: Marta Guerrero / POP Comm'

“Together, the LIP and FCIP programs really allow us to achieve the same goal, thanks to the support of the AMBM Group: to create all the conditions necessary to successfully welcome French-speaking and bilingual economic immigrants to the Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys,” says Raymond Maynard.

“For us, it was the right time. We’ve been trying to expand the village for a long time, but now we have the tools and conditions to do it right. We are currently building a 36-unit apartment block, and more housing will be built soon. If we want to attract and retain newcomers, we not only need employers ready to welcome them, but also the ability to house them!”

The Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys can invite up to 25 people to settle in the village and become permanent residents through the FCIP, and this number will be reviewed annually until the program ends in 2028.

“We are really creating momentum for economic prosperity and bilingual and Francophone popu-

lation growth for the village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys and the entire region,” says Tina Bubbenzer.

In addition, the fact that Saint-Pierre-Jolys is becoming a successful pilot platform for Franco-phone and bilingual economic immigration in Manitoba will also contribute to achieving a goal of the Manitoba government reiterated on March 20, 2025: to become a truly bilingual province.

“AMBM municipalities like the Village of Saint-Pierre-Jolys have a role to play in this,” says the Mayor.

In 2024, the Village adopted the Municipal Maturity Model (3M), which serves as a roadmap for increasing and improving services in both official languages within the village.

The AMBM hopes that this pilot project in Saint-Pierre-Jolys, which will undoubtedly boost the village’s growth and prosperity, will be replicated in other rural municipalities with government support.