

Successful integration of 350 foreign agricultural workers in the Coaticook MRC

Sherbrooke, January 21st, 2022 –Minister and MP Marie-Claude Bibeau is delighted that 350 temporary foreign agricultural workers benefited last year from the *Ensemble, on sème* initiative aimed at informing them of their rights and to favor their integration among producers in the region through training and social activities. The results were made public this morning during a virtual meeting with the Actions interculturelles team, that implemented the project, with the collaboration of its regional partners.

In July 2020, the federal government announced \$6 million in funding to connect directly with foreign workers through support organizations. The objective is to protect foreign workers against ill-treatment and abuse by informing them of their rights and making them aware of how to exercise them during their stay in Canada. The organization Immigrant Québec, which was mandated to carry out the operation in Quebec, partnered with Actions interculturelles to implement the program within the *Estrie* region from April to December 2021.

Actions interculturelles held information sessions and organized social activities such as a hike at Mont Pinnacle, a walk at the Parc de la Gorge de Coaticook and a visit to the Ayers Cliff Rodeo thanks to a financial contribution of \$175,133. The organization has thus reached 350 temporary foreign workers spread over 52 farms located in and around the riding of Compton-Stanstead. For Louise Gagné, president of Actions interculturelles: “This integration project is essential for temporary foreign agricultural workers. It has allowed human beings to flourish and forge bonds of friendship that were almost impossible before they got involved in this community and cross-cultural exchange.”

Many agricultural producers in the region made sure that their foreign workers benefited from the federally funded initiative. Compton-Stanstead MP and Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Marie-Claude Bibeau, underlined the importance of foreign workers in the region. “These workers are essential for our food security and the proper functioning of our agricultural businesses, and they deserve our full respect,” she declared.

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