

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

*Votre succès,
notre réussite*



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“My hat goes off to the SÉO team. The result of this extraordinary effort is that SÉO has taken on more than ever its role as an economic development leader in the Francophone and in Ontario’s Francophone and bilingual economic space.”

Denis Laframboise
President

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

A YEAR OF GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS AND VISIBILITY

The Board of Directors has been very impressed with the SÉO’s accomplishments over the past year.

Indeed, thanks to the leadership of our new Executive Director, Patrick Cloutier, and the hard work of his team members, the SÉO suddenly stepped on the accelerator and made a huge leap forward in accomplishments in 2021-2022. I will leave it to our Executive Director to list all of them in his report.

As Chair of the Board of Directors, my hat goes off to the SÉO team. The result of this extraordinary effort is that the SÉO has assumed its role as an economic development leader in the Francophone and bilingual economic space of Ontario more than ever.

The Board of Directors and management took advantage of this new momentum at the SÉO to meet with politicians to explain who we were, what we did, and how we could support them. We also reached out to members of Chambers of Commerce and other similar groups. As a result of the end of the COVID lockdown, we have increased our presence at various public events.

Throughout the year, to carry out its projects, the SÉO team established partnerships and reached out to other organizations whose expertise was complementary to its own.

The Gala des PME (recognition event for SMEs) on October 28, 2021, was also a golden opportunity for the SÉO to raise its profile in the business world, but also in the eyes of politicians, who attended the event in large numbers.

Over the past year, we have also had the opportunity to speak with members of government, including Ontario Ministers Mulroney and Fedeli, about our current projects and mandates. Most importantly, the Board and management have taken this opportunity to express the SÉO’s willingness to work with them to help them achieve some of their goals.

In fact, given that 2022 was an election year, the SÉO prepared a position document which showcased its expertise and listed its expectations of the next government. These ranged from recognition of our expertise in entrepreneurship and employability to better financial support for our incubator. It was also proposed that the next government make SÉO a partner of choice, particularly in the area of Francophone immigration.

My most sincere wish for the coming year, in addition to the SÉO continuing to stand out, is that the governments recognize not only the SÉO’s expertise, but also that of each of the province’s Francophone organizations and that the funds distributed are targeted according to their expertise and mandates.

In the meantime, the SÉO will continue to develop projects and initiatives that fall within its mandates and areas of activity — entrepreneurship, employability, and community economic strengthening — and will reach out to partners whose expertise is complementary to its own.

Our ultimate goal should be to work collaboratively to enrich Ontario’s Francophone and bilingual economic space.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Board of Directors, the staff, our funders and all our partners.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A SUCCESSFUL YEAR!

What a fantastic year, but more importantly, what a year of great achievements!

One of our most important projects during this period was, without a doubt, the establishment of the first virtual Francophone business incubator in Ontario.

Inaugurated with great fanfare in early November 2021, this little gem has generated a great deal of interest because of its flexibility and wide reach. Thanks to it, Francophones, no matter where they live, can learn the basics of entrepreneurship from the comfort of their homes. We would like to acknowledge the more than 20 community partners who have helped us build this valuable program.

Over the past year, we also revived a biennial event, the Gala des PME, which had not been held since 2016 and whose objective was to celebrate the successes of small- and medium-sized Francophone businesses in Ontario.

Once again, we were able to count on the financial support of several community partners. The gala, which was held on October 28 and attended by about 100 people, attracted some 50 participants, and allowed us to celebrate the dynamism of the Francophone and bilingual business community. The event was a great success!

On the employability side, the Pan-Canadian Business Integration Program, which has since been renamed ProAction, has really taken off. Although it began in 2020-2021, this program, driven by the SÉO in collaboration with its partners, the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba, the Société de développement économique Colombie-Britannique and RDÉE Canada, has helped many immigrants find jobs that match their skills and aspirations.

Also, in the area of employability, the Ontario government has mandated the SÉO to find solutions to the severe labour shortage in the tourism sector. A series of tools and resources adapted to the transformational needs of employers and the expectations of Francophone job seekers have been developed.

In the area of community economic strengthening and entrepreneurship, a new program called the Early Childhood Entrepreneurial Program, has been developed through the SÉO and consists of two components: an early childhood learning platform for the EntrepreneuriatSÉO business incubator, and an information document for future early childhood business people.

While they were busy developing all these new features, team members continued to deliver our other services in entrepreneurship, employability and economic strengthening of communities with great success. I want to salute them all and take my hat off to them. I would also like to thank the members of the Board of Directors for their unwavering support throughout the year.

We ended the year and began the new one in a very strong position. The SÉO is in excellent financial health. Our programs are well underway. All our teams are in place. The future is bright.

**“What a fantastic year,
but more importantly,
what a year of great
achievements!”**

Patrick Cloutier
Executive Director

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ONTARIO'S FIRST VIRTUAL FRANCOPHONE BUSINESS INCUBATOR



One of the SÉO's biggest accomplishments over the past year has been the establishment of Ontario's first virtual Francophone business incubator.

The SÉO business incubator, called EntrepreneuriatSÉO, is a virtual business incubator that offers a complete training program in French for Francophone entrepreneurs who want to develop products or services and start a business. EntrepreneuriatSÉO allows them to acquire the technical entrepreneurial skills necessary to do so.

"This project fills a gap in entrepreneurial training for Francophones," said Patrick Cloutier, Executive Director of the SÉO, "It helps strengthen the province's Francophone economic ecosystem by promoting the development of innovative products and services, the creation of Francophone SMEs, and job creation. I am convinced that this initiative will further promote the growth and development of the Francophone business culture in Ontario."

The need for such a project had been felt for some time.

"We regularly consult with our clients," said Monique Hébert-Bérubé, Manager of Economic Development and person responsible for the business incubator. "Over the past few years, our consultations have allowed us to discover that there is a real need for entrepreneurship training."



Indeed, nearly 40 percent of respondents said they needed more support in developing and evaluating their business ideas. More than 60 percent said they needed one-on-one coaching and assistance in developing a business plan, while nearly 70 percent needed start-up assistance.

Moreover, some 63 percent of requests for support were from women, a similar percentage was from newcomers to Canada, and 50 percent of requests for assistance were from people who identify as a visible minority.

Based on the feedback received over the years, the SÉO had been drawing up plans for a new business incubator for some time. But the project took off when the Ontario government, in its March 2021 budget, announced its intention to expand its business support services through the creation of Francophone business incubators.



EIGHT MONTHS

That's how long it took the SÉO to get the project up and running.

But the outcome wasn't a foregone conclusion. There was a lot to do in a very short period of time. One of the first steps involved in setting up the incubator was securing the support of funders—Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the Ontario Ministry of Francophone Affairs—and establishing partnerships with community organizations.

"The SÉO has gained a lot of experience and enough wisdom to understand and recognize that it doesn't have all the expertise," said Yvette Plentai, Business Development Manager. "That's why we selected more than 20 partners, targeting their expertise for each program."

This collaborative approach with partners has allowed the SÉO to offer high-quality programming, with the creation of specialized components designed to address the specific type of business that prospective participants or incubator participants or the demographic group to which they belong.



Yvette Plentai

Early partnerships include Desjardins, Ryerson University, the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, FARFO, UCFO and RDÉE Canada.

In the meantime, since it was a virtual incubator, it was also necessary to set up a platform to offer these courses. *"The reality for Francophones in Ontario is that they are scattered across the province. It is difficult for someone living in Atikokan in the north to travel to Toronto for training,"* said Monique Hébert-Bérubé. The distance, travel and accommodation costs are high. This is without considering the fact that future entrepreneurs do not necessarily have the means to afford expensive training.

It was a big challenge to set up a learning platform from scratch. *"Setting up such a platform in a short period of time was really challenging,"* explained Monique Hébert-Bérubé. *"My colleague Yvette and I had many discussions and exchanges of ideas about which approach to take. Fortunately, we had incredible partners, like LiveStream Junkies, who had the expertise and knowledge to create technology tools, videos, and prepare all of our e-books, tools, and quizzes in a very short time frame."*

The official launch of the incubator took place in virtual mode in early November 2021. A few weeks later, the SÉO welcomed the first cohort of participants, after a brief but effective promotional campaign.



More than 30 people enrolled in this first cohort, which offered four streams: Immigrants and Start Your Business (the general stream) had seven participants each. Eleven people registered for the Entrepreneurship 50+ component. Ten participants took advantage of the Women Entrepreneurs component.

During this time, the SÉO continued to develop partnerships and new components that will be offered in the next fiscal year.

Another interesting development occurred during this period. Indeed, thanks to a partnership with Desjardins, participants in EntrepreneuriatSÉO are invited to present their business idea at the end of their 14 weeks and have a chance to win one of the \$1,000 Desjardins merit scholarships.

A total of \$13,000 from the Caisse Desjardins Ontario Community Development Fund is to be awarded over the course of 2022, including four \$1,000 bursaries to the first cohort by the end of March 2022. (See photo below).

As of the end of March, the second SÉO cohort had approximately 30 participants, including eleven in the general stream, seven in the youth stream, and eleven in the Black Women Entrepreneurs stream.

In the coming fiscal year, several new components are planned, including Early Childhood, Neo-Agriculture, Sustainable Development, Business Ownership and Acquisition, and many others.

THE MICROPROGRAMS

Last year, through its business incubator, the SÉO also set up microprograms. These were set up so that entrepreneurs could gain additional knowledge, more details on concepts and help our existing businesses to continue to grow.

These microprograms included entrepreneurship basics, digital marketing, social networking, business acquisition and takeover, and managing finances as an entrepreneur.

These microprograms proved to be very popular, attracting over 350 participants. This success has motivated the SÉO to set up new microprograms for the next few years on various themes: How to build a unique brand image, Import-Export - how to succeed! Dare to explore public markets, Introduction to entrepreneurship, Franchising, Digital business creation and much more.



Desjardins presents its first bursaries to the winners of the EntrepreneuriatSÉO business incubator: Lynda Sehi, Regional Advisor, Partnerships and Community Involvement at Desjardins, the winners Julie Grégoire, Clavera Bigirimana and Ghita Benabdellah, as well as Chantal Lajoie, Regional Vice-President at Desjardins; In front, Patrick Cloutier, SÉO's Executive Director, and Thuy Vuong-Blais, Coordinator of the EntrepreneuriatSÉO business incubator, both holding the certificate of winner Albert Bertrand, who attended the event by way of technology.

ÉLAN F CONTINUES TO SUPPORT ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS IN HAMILTON



Élan F achieved a second milestone in 2021-2022.

In fact, this program has been enhanced with a business incubation component that closely supports the pre-incubation stage launched the previous year.

"Before going into business, it was essential to ensure the profitability and viability of the initiative, hence the pre-incubation stage," explained Yvette Plentai, Manager of Business Development. "Once validated, interested individuals were invited to register for the incubation stage."



As part of the training, which takes place in a virtual mode, the future entrepreneurs receive extremely valuable coaching and support at one of the most decisive stages of their start-up. Élan F guides and advises these cohorts of approximately 10 participants through both the concrete and conceptual stages of business creation.

During the training, they cover a wide range of topics, from business analysis and building their business, to teaching Canadian business

culture and practices. The training courses take a variety of forms, including meetings with specialists and workshops that go beyond mere theory.

Élan F, a three-year pilot project, is intended to be a gateway for Francophone newcomers to Ontario who wish to start businesses in Hamilton. The program, now in its second year, is managed by the Réseau en immigration francophone du Centre-Sud-Ouest (RIFCSO) on behalf of the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara (CSCHN), the latter being the fiduciary organization for the Communautés francophones accueillantes (CFA) initiative. It is jointly piloted and delivered by the Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO) and the Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario (CCO) through a service agreement with the CSCHN.

CFAs are projects created with financial support from the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) from the 2018-2019 Official Languages Plan titled "Investing in Our Future." Élan F is one of the flagship projects of the 2020-2023 Action Plan of the CFA initiative. Hamilton is one of 14 CFAs across the country (excluding Quebec) that were selected in 2019 following a consultation process.

One of Élan F's objectives is to promote the creation of links between immigrants and the community.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS, ANOTHER WAY TO STRENGTHEN ONTARIO'S FRANCOPHONE AND BILINGUAL ECONOMY

While 2021-2022 was the year of the business incubator, the SÉO did not neglect the other services it delivers to the entrepreneurial world, and which have become its trademark over the years.

In addition to the training, it offers through the incubator, the SÉO supports business people or those who wish to start a business by providing them with coaching and support services whose ultimate goal is to help them succeed. Successful businesses are essential to the development of Ontario's francophone and bilingual space.

Entrepreneurship support services, which are funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), include coaching for entrepreneurs, planning assistance, start-up support through renowned tools such as Growthwheel, training, workshops, information sessions, and much more.

The entrepreneurship team also organizes networking sessions to encourage meetings between entrepreneurs. To this end, over the past year, the entrepreneurship team set the objective of increasing the number of activities for women, particularly networking activities.

"This year, we put a special emphasis on networking activities that specifically target women," explained Monique Hébert-Bérubé, the SÉO's Economic Development Manager. "Entrepreneurship can often be a particular challenge for them."



Monique Hébert-Bérubé



“Being able to network with other women gives them confidence. They have common ground. They can converse, exchange ideas, find solutions...”

Nearly 15 activities—networking sessions, expert panels, testimonials delivered as part of activities aptly named *Parcours de femmes*, collaborative coaching aimed at women, among others—were deployed over the past year. These activities attracted over 750 participants. The SÉO team also organized some 24 other networking activities for women and men entrepreneurs, which benefited more than 430 people.

In addition to the networking events, more than 2400 people registered for the SÉO's many workshops, webinars and other training events through its economic development team. These covered a variety of topics, including finance, promotion, marketing, networking, training, etc.

Also in the past year, more than 2300 people have called on the SÉO's entrepreneurship specialists to support them in the execution of various tasks related to business planning: market analysis, marketing plans, feasibility plans, growth plans, project development, and so on.

The SÉO also reached out to many people through its mentoring and takeover services (separate articles have been written for this annual report). SÉO's leadership role at events such as the Toronto Global Forum in November has also allowed it to increase its visibility and highlight its service offering to the entrepreneurial world, as did the Gala des PME (SME recognition event) hosted by the SÉO in October (a separate article has been prepared to that effect).

Several other activities were also organized during the year, allowing the SÉO to reach several thousand additional people.

In the coming year, the economic development team will continue to offer and enhance its services to entrepreneurs and work with partners to strengthen Ontario's Francophone and bilingual economy.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THE GALA DES PME, PROPONENT FOR THE SUCCESS OF FRANCOPHONE BUSINESSES

The year 2021 marked the rebirth of a biennial event to celebrate the successes of Francophone and bilingual businesses operating primarily in Ontario.

The 2021 edition of the Gala des PME, an event that honours Francophone and bilingual SMEs in Ontario, took place on October 28, 2021. Some 100 people converged on the Ottawa Conference and Event Centre to honour the winners and the entire business community.

Approximately 50 companies responded to the SÉO's call and applied. A jury composed of independent individuals was entrusted with the difficult task of selecting the winning companies.

At the end of the competition, Nathalie and Chantale Deslauriers of Studio Shanthaly in Embrun won the Woman Entrepreneur Award. Lexine Ménard of Lexine Photographie Corp. in Embrun won the Young Entrepreneur Award. Michelle Savoie of Voyageur Wilderness in Atikokan won the Eco-Responsible Business and Excellence Awards for all of her achievements. The Immigrant Entrepreneur Award was presented to Oumar Soumaré of TeMeF in Mississauga. Vanessa Viau, Aude Martel and Samuel Doucet

of Kyan Cuisine in Embrun were selected for the Coup de cœur award. Finally, the Denis Laframboise Award, which honours an individual who has demonstrated, among other things, a significant commitment to his or her company, community and Francophone culture, was presented to Melissa Deschênes of Design de Plume in Sudbury.

This was the first time that the Denis Laframboise Award was presented. The award, named after the current SÉO president, recognizes his significant contribution to the organization over the past ten years.

A dozen politicians of all stripes and from all levels of government also accepted the SÉO's invitation and attended the event, which was hosted by Alain Jean-Mary, weather reporter for Radio-Canada Ottawa. Guests were also treated to video tributes from Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Minister of Francophone Affairs Caroline Mulroney and Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson. The event would not have been a success without the financial support of more than 20 companies and organizations.

"I am very proud of the success of this event, which was designed to honour the entire Francophone and bilingual business community in Ontario," said the SÉO's Executive Director, Patrick Cloutier. "As I mentioned on the night of the event, small and medium enterprises, the SMEs, are the backbone of the economy. They play an essential role in the creation and redistribution of the collective wealth. These same SMEs are an integral part of each of our communities. They sponsor our sports teams and other community organizations. It is to this community that we paid tribute last October. We will honour them again in 2023. It's a date."



Patrick Cloutier

Gala DES PMEs 2021



On October 28, the Société Économique de l'Ontario honoured small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. Above, the winners: Oumar Soumaré of TeMeF in Mississauga, Chantale and Nathalie Deslauriers of Studio Shanthaly in Embrun, Aude Martel and Samuel Doucet of Kyan Cuisine in Embrun, Lexine Ménard of Lexine Photography in Embrun, and, inset, Michelle Savoie of Voyageur Wilderness in Atikokan and Melissa Deschênes of Design de Plume in Sudbury.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

YEAR OF CHANGES FOR THE SÉO MENTORING PROGRAM

The year 2021-2022 has been a transformative year for the SÉO's mentoring program for entrepreneurs.

Indeed, the SÉO has joined the Elo Mentoring platform, a Montreal-based Startup founded in 2018. This tool has the advantage of having a database that includes the names of more than 600 mentored persons (also called mentees) and mentors.

"People who sign up for the SÉO's mentoring services can benefit from the expertise and guidance of a few hundred specialists," said Monique Hébert-Bérubé, Economic Development Manager. "In addition, thanks to this platform, mentors can themselves benefit from mentoring services!"

In fact, each person can help and find support according to their needs. When registering on the platform, participants can therefore register as a mentor, as a mentee, or both.

Another advantage of this interface is the possibility of offering different types of mentoring given that mentees are autonomous. They can search for specialists in their fields of expertise and openly contact these people. They are therefore able to ask a mentor specific questions or directly request a match for a longer period.

The SÉO also has a mentoring area on the platform through which program leaders can freely match participants.

To do this, they meet individually with people who want to join the mentoring program.

NEW RULES

The rules for participating in the MentoratSÉO program have also evolved. Indeed, mentors are not necessarily entrepreneurs. They can also be individuals whose professional career has allowed them to acquire specific expertise.

As for the people who benefit from the mentoring services, they must be entrepreneurs or business owners with at least six months in business or have been recommended by an economic development officer. Mentees must have already started their own business or have come from SÉO's services such as the EntrepreneuriatSÉO incubator.

Several information and recruitment sessions were organized to encourage registration in our mentoring program. Nearly ten long-term matches were made.



TESTIMONIALS

Mentor: Thomas Delespierre, founder of Tomadel property management and real estate agent in Toronto:

"As an entrepreneur, I was fortunate to have received good advice from friends, mentors and various Francophone organizations in Toronto. Now that I'm further along in my professional career, I'm happy to accept to become a volunteer mentor for the SÉO. It's a way for me to give back to the community what I received, but also a very enriching human experience. Thanks to the matching, I have developed a strong friendship with my mentee Laurent. Being from different industries, I also learned a lot about other aspects of business, which is a passion for me. It is also a pleasure to see Laurent's career evolve. Thank you, Laurent and thank you to the SÉO!"

Mentee: Laurent Gérin, Founding Engineer of the Canadian branch of ClearCalcs:

"I found out about the SÉO program when I was looking for mentoring opportunities focused on Franco-Ontarians. It came at the perfect time in my career, as I was about to launch a new team in Ontario for our company. I was fortunate enough to be matched by the SÉO with Thomas Delespierre, a real estate entrepreneur in Toronto. I would say that Thomas is an expert at bringing situations back to the big picture, both for my career and for the company. Thanks to Thomas and the mentoring program, I see new doors opening every day and more opportunities for growth. I tip my hat to the work of the SÉO in finding great matches, and for creating a great mentoring network that I am very happy to recommend to everyone! And a huge thank you to Thomas for his support, our fruitful conversations, and his friendship. It only makes me look forward to giving to the next person in need."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BUSINESS ACQUISITIONS, ANOTHER WAY OF BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR

Acquiring an existing business is another interesting way to go into business for someone who aspires to be an entrepreneur.

“Buying an existing business is an excellent way to become an entrepreneur without starting from scratch since it already has staff, assets and relationships with customers. Also, business acquisitions can also be an interesting option for people who wish to immigrate to Canada.”

Since the average age of business owners is increasing, and many of them wish to retire but have no successors, the SÉO has been trying for a few years to support these people, called transferor, by putting them in contact with potential buyers, called transferee.



Over the past year, the SÉO has continued to enhance its expertise in this area, while organizing activities to support transferees and transferors. These activities included the development of a microprogram in the form of a webinar series presented by resource experts accounting, business law and finance. This microprogram provided interested individuals with a better understanding of how to successfully acquire a business.

The webinars presented covered a variety of topics, including the human factors to consider in the process of a buyout, merger, acquisition or divestiture, the steps to take for immigrants who are interested in acquiring a business in Ontario, the financial and legal considerations for transferors and transferees, and the benefit of a living plan for business owners.

More than 60 people from different backgrounds and interests participated in the webinars. They were mostly from Ontario and Quebec. But many were from other countries, including France, several French-speaking countries, some Caribbean islands, and even Kosovo, India and Qatar.

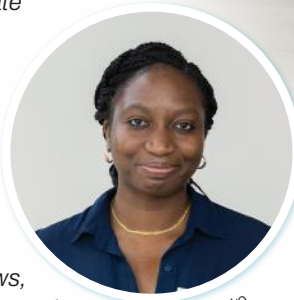
In the coming year, the entrepreneurship team will continue to organize various activities in the field of entrepreneurship while sharpening its expertise in this area.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

THE SÉO'S EMPLOYMENT MANDATE - MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER!

With the erosion of the workforce becoming more and more prevalent, the SÉO's employment mandate has become more important than ever. As such, over the past year, its specialists have been relentless in their pursuit of the important mission of supporting employers and Francophone immigrants seeking to find employment in Ontario.

"The SÉO's employment support mandate is essential, especially in this time of worker shortage," said Aïssatou Sonko, SÉO's Manager of Employability and Immigration at the SÉO. "Over the past year, we have continued to assist Francophone newcomers by assessing their skills, by helping them write their resumes according to the Canadian model, helping them prepare for interviews, connecting them with potential employers and more."



Aïssatou Sonko

In 2021-2022, the SÉO employment support team, funded by the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), has accompanied more than 300 Francophone immigrants in their journey. It organized 35 training workshops and reached nearly 350 people. More than 80 of them participated in entrepreneurship awareness workshops. The SÉO was also able to reach some 300 additional people through seven training workshops and services dedicated to employers. Finally, through 15 networking sessions between employers and qualified candidates in various sectors, the employment crew reached over 700 people.

In total, the SÉO's employment specialists have reached over 1500 people through its various support and coaching services, workshops, networking sessions and various other activities.

JOB FAIRS

In addition to workshops and other activities, the employment team organized, co-organized or participated in activities designed to connect job seekers with employers.

For example, in January, the SÉO played a leading role in organizing Sudbury's first Francophone job fair in collaboration with the Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury.

The employment assistance team also co-organized the Virtual Forum for employers in Cornwall-SDG and Prescott-Russell in June 2021, in collaboration with the Réseau de soutien à l'immigration francophone de l'Est and other partners.

Furthermore, the Virtual Job Fair, co-organized with RDÉE Canada, brought together 82 employers, 57 community stakeholders and 5288 candidates. These results include all provinces and territories outside of Quebec since this is a national project. The SÉO contributed 40 percent of the results.

The team also participated in the Destination Canada Mobility Forum. In preparation for this virtual fair, 37 employers entrusted the SÉO with their job offers. During this event, the SÉO welcomed more than 10,000 visitors and received more than 5000 applications.





NORTHERN TOUR

One of the major initiatives of the employment team is definitely the Northern Ontario tour held during the fall, an initiative that was first held in 2020.

The first objective of the eight-district tour was to gain insight into the needs of employers, particularly in the area of labour. The goal was also to gain insight into the challenges facing employers, businesses and other organizations involved in economic development.

The purpose of the tour was also to diagnose the labour, settlement, and economic development needs in the various northern districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Rainy River, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming.

More than thirty conferences were offered to listen to and list the needs of businesses, but also to present the concrete results of the strategies implemented in 2020 and 2021 to address the critical labour shortage issues. The team also met with more than a hundred employers and took advantage of its visit to promote the SÉO's services to the region's political, social, and economic actors.

Among other things, this tour allowed the SÉO to collect and distribute more than 30 job offers within the framework of the Mobility Forum—Destination Canada, organized in November in virtual mode by the Canadian Embassy in Paris.

In the coming year, the employability team intends to continue to contribute to the economic development of Ontario's Francophone and bilingual ecosystem by helping immigrants find employment and Francophone employers recruit quality employees.

- More than 300 immigrants received SÉO's support
- More than 40 workshops were held and more than 600 people were reached
- More than 1500 people were directly affected by SÉO's employment activities



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

PROACTION PROGRAM EXPANDS

Following the success of the pilot version conducted in Ontario by the SÉO from 2018 to 2020, the ProAction program, formerly called *Programme pancanadien d'intégration en entreprise des nouveaux arrivants* (pan-Canadian newcomer enterprise integration program), entered a new three-year phase in April 2021.

"Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), it has been extended to 2024 and has expanded the program's scope to Manitoba and British Columbia," said program manager Adra Berezintsev.

In collaboration with RDÉE Canada, the SÉO coordinated the program at the national level, while at the same time working on its implementation in Ontario. The Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM) and the Société de développement économique de la Colombie Britannique rolled out the program in their respective provinces.



Adra Berezintsev

In the unprecedented context of a pandemic, the ProAction program helped organizations and businesses recruit highly qualified immigrants and helped the latter find a job in a sector of activity that corresponds to their interests, their skills and their field of expertise. With close to 60 placements and 50 signatory companies in all three provinces, the results of this first year are positive and very encouraging.

Of the 180 people who called on ProAction, 110 were eligible and benefited from personalized coaching, including the revision and adaptation of their resumes to Canadian standards and participation in web workshops to upgrade their cultural, social, linguistic, and professional skills. In Ontario alone, 17 job search support workshops were offered through the program.

To increase chances for job seekers to land a position, the SÉO successfully initiated several events to connect job seekers directly with employers. One such event was held in person on December 8, 2021. Some 36 people, including employer mentors and mentees as well as the SÉO's key ProAction partners, accepted the invitation to attend.

Several recruitment campaigns were held with companies such as TFO, Decathlon and Deloitte. The SÉO also organized a virtual job fair where 33 exhibitors and employers met with approximately 300 people (out of 900 registered). In total, approximately 260 jobs were showcased at the event.

Additional innovative initiatives are in the works for 2022-2023 to enable ProAction to help even more people and bring the program to more businesses or organizations.



Above, members of the SÉO team at an information session about ProAction. From left to right, Denis Laframboise, Chair of the Board of Directors, Véronique Blanchard and Delphine Dubrous from the ProAction team, Siham Chakrouni, Special Projects Manager, Adra Berezintsev, ProAction Program Manager, Mareva Cestor from the Economic Development team and Patrick Cloutier, Executive Director.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

THE SÉO CONTINUES TO SUPPORT RACIALIZED WOMEN THROUGH CARRIELLES

Once again, the Carrielles program has proven its worth and has been renewed for 2121-2022 thanks to the partnership with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the financial support of the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Over the past year, Carrielles has made some 200 matches and 150 interviews. More than 120 racialized women have been able to enter the Ontario job market.

"The program is very much appreciated by racialized women because it allows them to acquire a better knowledge of the Canadian job market and facilitates their employability through personalized follow-up. Not to mention that these women become our ambassadors by referring us to newcomers in Ontario," explained Soriba Kanté, coordinator of the Carrielles project.



Soriba Kanté

The main objective of Carrielles is to ensure a quick and easy transition into the labour market with professional assistance for accepted refugees or permanent residents who are racialized or belong to a visible minority. These Francophone immigrant women must also want to build a professional career in Ontario.

Working primarily in three regions (Ottawa, Toronto and Sudbury), Carrielles' recruitment specialists take a demand-driven approach and work directly with employers or employment sectors with significant labour needs to match them with women newcomers who belong to a visible minority group and who have the skills, career interest and abilities to do the job.

"Since there is no specific formula that applies to everyone, the personalized follow-up has allowed women to get a job because they better understand how the Ontario labour market works," stated, for her part, the manager who oversees the program, Siham Chakrouni. *"This increases their confidence in finding a job and, above all, their self-confidence."*



Siham Chakrouni

Carrielles will continue in the coming year. It is hoped that it can become a permanent SÉO program, as it fills a real need.

• 200 matches

• 150 interviews

• 120 women found employment

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

TOURISM, A PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE SECTOR

The tourism industry is one of the economic sectors most hard hit by labour shortages in recent years. To support the industry, and with the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the SÉO has developed a number of innovative tools and solutions.

“The tourism sector has been particularly affected by the labour shortage,” said Siham Chakrouni, manager of the Tourism Labour Project at the SÉO. “The lockdown and slowdown in tourism activities have only exacerbated the situation to the point that tourism operators have found themselves without employees or with very few of them. That’s what motivated the SÉO to take on this issue and propose these tools and solutions.”



Siham Chakrouni

The SÉO and some observers also noted that connecting job seekers with employers was difficult. Thus, in collaboration with partners from across the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant sectors, the SÉO began by conducting studies and performing a market

analysis to draw a better picture of the current labour market in Ontario as it relates to tourism. The goal was to identify the needs and expectations of employers and job seekers as well as the issues they face.

“The SÉO’s main concern was to ensure that the services it would be implementing met real needs,” said Anne-Marie Forcier, coordinator of the tourism workforce project. “The picture we painted of the situation was very telling.”



Anne-Marie Forcier

Over the past year, many resources have been created to help industry stakeholders make informed decisions about hiring and managing their workforce.

The SÉO will soon have a toolkit that will be part of a service offering, the details of which will be announced shortly. These tools will include a compendium of best practices in the tourism workforce, a mapping of Ontario’s tourism ecosystem, a critical path for the integration of the Francophone and bilingual workforce in Ontario’s tourism sector, a study of the tourism market in Ontario, a virtual skills development program for Francophone and bilingual owner operators, a toolkit of best practices in organizing webinars and training, surveys and interviews (tourism stakeholders and associations), and much more.

Over the course of 2022-2023, the SÉO will work to promote and share these tools with industry, as well as integrate them into existing SÉO programs.



ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITIES

THE SÉO CONTRIBUTES TO THE RECOVERY OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

While the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic surprised everyone in March 2020, it continued to cause challenges for the travel and tourism industry in 2021.

“Despite efforts to adapt supply to this new domestic market, the arrival of new variants of COVID-19 has seriously slowed hopes for the 2021 tourism season,” said Isabelle De Bruyn, SÉO’s tourism manager.

Once again, the SÉO has been proactive and has demonstrated its ability to adjust its service offering to meet the needs of the members and partners of Route Champlain. The team worked on several fronts, including promotion and business adaptability.

With the financial support of Destination Canada and Destination Ontario, the SÉO invested over \$100,000 to participate in six collective promotional campaigns and update its digital tools, in order to promote and extend the journey of local and domestic tourists along Route Champlain and Salut Canada, the pan-Canadian Francophone tourism corridor.

New strategic alliances have increased the visibility of Route Champlain, Salut Canada (formerly the Corridor Francophone) and its members in niche Ontario markets (culinary, cycling, Aboriginal tourism, etc.) through access to new networks such as Attractions Ontario and the Great Taste of Ontario. A Champlain Heritage Adventure Tour was developed specifically for travel specialists in the Highlands region from Haliburton to the Ottawa Valley, Ontario’s first French and bilingual export-ready product.



Isabelle De Bruyn

AN ADAPTATION PROGRAM IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

From the end of March 2020 to the end of June 2021, total funding of \$84,000 was granted to six Francophone tourism businesses under the Francophone Tourism Revitalization Program in Southwestern Ontario. These funds, entrusted to the SÉO by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev), enabled these operators to adapt their offer to meet the expectations of tourists in complete safety.

The new partnerships developed with the SÉO to address the pandemic and its devastating impacts on the tourism industry, revealed the importance of continued collective effort to support the reopening and the beginning of a bumpy recovery.

In addition, active participation in key industry events each year reinforces the leadership and visibility of the SÉO as the expert in the development and promotion of Francophone and bilingual tourism in Ontario, by promoting its services to tourism businesses and its structuring projects such as Route Champlain and Salut Canada.



ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITIES

CHILDCARE SPACES ... THE SÉO TO THE RESCUE!

The lack of childcare spaces is regularly in the news. Over the past year, the SÉO has helped to keep the issue in the headlines through the development of its *Early Childhood Entrepreneurial Program*.

“The current shortage sometimes forces Franco-Ontarian parents to enroll their children in English-language childcare services, which contributes to their assimilation,” said Yvette Plentai, manager of the Business Development. *“In some cases, parents prefer to stay home with their children. As a result, the labour market has to do without their talents or their knowledge, and this at a time when there is a labour shortage.”*



And the problem is not going to go away any time soon. According to a 2021 study by the Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (AFÉSEO), more than 6000 spaces will be needed to meet the demand of Ontario's Francophone families.

The *Early Childhood Entrepreneurial Program* has two components: an early childhood learning platform for the EntrepreneuriatSÉO business incubator, and an information document whose objective is to orient and guide current and future players in the sector in developing an early childhood centre.

Starting in September 2022, future entrepreneurs who enroll in the Early Childhood component of EntrepreneuriatSÉO will be able to take advantage of the new platform.

The information document, titled *Opening Resource: Early Childhood Centre*, addresses a dozen topics related to starting an early childhood centre in a Franco-Ontarian setting, including the skills needed for owners and the steps to get there, certification and required authorizations.

This resource also includes a chapter on the Francophone community in Ontario, designated bilingual locations in Ontario, the French Language Services Act, and childcare needs in the Franco-Ontarian community.

Over the next year, the SÉO will propose the creation of a Virtual Francophone Employment Centre in Ontario dedicated to early childhood. This will connect employers in the sector with qualified job seekers who are eligible to work in Canada.

“The SÉO's Business Development and Employability and Immigration departments will work together to provide customized coaching to entrepreneurs and early childhood educators or individuals seeking to transition to a new career in early childhood,” added Yvette Plentai.

The components of the entrepreneurial program were developed with the financial support of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada (RDÉE Canada).



ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITIES

THE SÉO SUPPORTS THE NEXT GENERATION THANKS TO JEUNINNO

It was another great year for JeunInno, an SÉO program funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and whose purpose is to counter the exodus of young people from francophone communities, develop their sense of belonging to their regions, cities and towns of origin and contribute to their prosperity.

Through this program, which includes a range of activities designed to stimulate leadership, creativity, and entrepreneurship, the SÉO has reached 375 young people aged 15 to 18.

Activities on the themes of *Career Videography*, *Arts and Business*, and *Leadership in Tourism* were particularly popular with youth. A club, called *Club JeunInno en affaires*, was also set up to promote exchanges, share ideas and propose solutions to various issues.

Over the past year, in collaboration with the Northern Policy Institute, the SÉO conducted a study on youth outmigration in Northern Ontario to get a better picture of the current situation. The study was very well received and demonstrated that it is possible to convince youth not to leave their communities.

The study also asked youth about their interests, what initiatives or projects they would like to see implemented, and what their future plans are. The research found that youth in Northern Ontario are interested in entrepreneurship and would like to receive help to pursue it. Francophone respondents were also interested in mentoring and access to shared workspace.

As part of the JeunInno program, there are many other activities awaiting youth in the coming year.



ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITIES

VICE VERSA, IN SUPPORT OF THE SÉO'S MANDATES

When it created Les Sociétés Vice Versa in 2011, the SÉO was right to identify the growing need for interpretation and translation services in the Francophone economic space in Ontario. This trend has continued to grow, and Vice Versa is more relevant than ever.

Over the past year, the social enterprise has continued to invest a great deal of effort in training community interpreters. This decision is even more crucial since there is a critical shortage of community interpreters, which complicates the integration of Francophone newcomers in Ontario.

In fact, the SÉO actively encourages the training of professionals in this field. That's why it has also created a community interpreting training program in collaboration with MCIS Language Solutions within the new provincial Francophone business incubator.

"This aspect of Vice Versa's activities fits perfectly with the SÉO's objectives," said Yvette Plentai, Manager of Business Development and responsible for Vice Versa. "We need to support the growth and strengthening of communities and facilitate the employability of those who settle in areas where there is a need for Francophones, but where English is the predominant language."



For more than a decade, social enterprise Vice Versa has been providing essential translation and interpretation services to a wide range of clients: communities, ministries, organizations, private companies and individuals who are French, English, allophones and deaf-mute.



Spécialistes en services linguistiques
Specialists in linguistic services

Vice Versa has a team of translation and interpretation specialists who understand the needs of their clients and the contexts in which they must navigate. These specialists know how to navigate through the administrative rigours of the field while demonstrating the empathy necessary to guide a clientele in search of solutions.

The SÉO actively supports the development of official language minority communities. Clear communication being one of the most effective means of building relationships and integrating into a community, we can say without reservation that Vice Versa is one of its most successful tools.

THE SÉO IN THE MEDIA

A YEAR OF HIGH VISIBILITY FOR THE SÉO

The SÉO was featured prominently in the media over the course of 2021-2022.

As a matter of fact, the SÉO was mentioned more than 60 times in news stories, interviews, or newspaper articles. Most of these references resulted from events organized by the SÉO or the distribution of some twenty news releases on a wide variety of subjects.

“A few news releases were issued in response to current events,” explained François Legault, Communications Manager. “But it is especially those related to the Gala des PME and the business incubator that have generated interest.”



Overall, the traditional media responded very well to the initiatives. The business incubator alone generated a lot of interest.

The SÉO has given more than a dozen interviews on this subject to various radio stations and newspapers. In total, the SÉO was featured in more than 20 news stories on the subject.

About 15 newspaper articles or radio reports featuring the SÉO's Gala des PME, its finalists, and winners, were monitored in October and November.

The SÉO has also attracted international media interest over the past year. An interview was given to the *Journal des Français à l'étranger* on its role in providing employment assistance to newcomers.

TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING TO PROMOTE OUR ACTIVITIES

The SÉO has also used advertising to announce various initiatives and highlight its services. These included the new business incubator, our various services in employability and entrepreneurship, in tourism, and more.

Our traditional media advertising campaigns focused on newspapers, their websites and community radio stations in French Ontario.

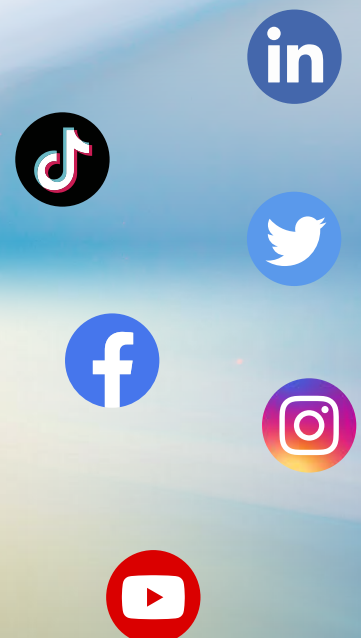
IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Of course, the SÉO also used social media to highlight its activities.

More than 1000 items, in the form of events, publications or videos, have been posted on social media over the past year. They helped attract more than 5000 people to some 200 webinars, workshops, and other similar activities.

These social media posts have also helped to generate interest in SÉO and its services, which has encouraged our clients to contact us or visit our websites for more details.

Of course, the fact that the SÉO has been so visible in the public space over the past year is largely a reflection and result of the many initiatives, activities and events developed or organized by the organization's dynamic and experienced teams.



RECOGNITION

THANK YOU TO OUR STAFF

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Soriba Kanté
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Thuy Blais
Véronique Blanchard
Justine Sanner
Yvette Plentai

THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD MEMBERS

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Martine Bélanger, Vice President
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Kathleen Royer, Treasurer
Julie Tremblay, Director
Annie Ste-Croix, Director
Audrey Debryune, Director
Marcel Blanchard, Director
Frédéric Boulanger, Director
Oumar Soumaré, young non-voting Director



THE SÉO WOULD LIKE TO THANK ITS KEY FUNDERS



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Federal Economic Development
Agency for Southern Ontario

Agence fédérale de développment
économique pour le Sud de l'Ontario



DESTINATION
ONTARIO



An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

THE SÉO IS A MEMBER OF



THE SÉO WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK ALL ITS PARTNERS

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