



Seasonality

Project

For sustainable employment growth

Seasonality Project – Phase 2
Update Report:
Towards a Policy on Seasonality

APRIL 2012

REPORT PREPARED AS PART OF THE SEASONALITY PROJECT PRESENTED TO

Seasonality Project oversight committee composed of all participating sectoral workforce committees

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*Commission
des partenaires
du marché du travail*

Québec

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 SEASONALITY PROJECT

In 2010, seven¹ sectoral workforce committees (SWCs), in as many business lines, came together to discuss seasonality issues, and a major Seasonality Project (*Chantier sur la saisonnalité*) began. The purpose of phase 1 was to take stock of seasonality in employment, thoroughly documenting the phenomenon using statistical data and reviewing seasonality programs, measures and initiatives that have been put in place here and elsewhere.² Following this first step, the partners met in January 2011 to share findings and implement phase 2 of the Project. The report on phase 1 proposed potential solutions presented under five categories: local and regional development, industry- and sector-specific strategies, human resources management, active labour market measures and regulatory framework. This is the foundation for phase 2 of the Project.

1.2 PHASE 2: CONSULTATION WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Phase 2 of the Project began in February 2011. It focussed on various collaborative efforts by labour market partners at the sectoral and national levels. The purpose of this phase was to explore the situation in greater depth, propose initiatives and build consensus on recommendations or policies to promote among public authorities and the relevant partners. The seven sectoral discussion groups held over the course of this phase were an opportunity to sound out employers about the realities of seasonal businesses, identify the main challenges faced and determine the extent to which the solutions proposed upon completion of phase 1 were realistic and suitable. Annex A lists the problems and solutions identified by participating employers. The results are divided into three major areas:³ local and regional strategies (geography-based), company strategies (individual) and regulatory interventions.

In general, the employers of the various sectors that were consulted had tried most of the solutions identified in phase 1. Besides a few very limited successes (specific to a region or context or attributable to facilitating factors), many of these solutions showed their limitations, and it was difficult to achieve the necessary conditions for success. These findings are most

¹ Tourism, ornamental horticulture, marine fisheries, forest management, agriculture, food processing and retail. It should be noted that Camo-Route, which was initially involved in the project, participated in the project in a different way. Individual interviews with the representatives of two associations (snow removal and school transportation) were conducted instead. The issues discussed in these interviews are indicated in the summary report of the sectoral discussion groups.

² The reports on phase 1 of the Project are available at <http://saisonnalite.com/etudes-du-chantier.php>.

³ It should be noted that this is a reorganization of the potential solutions identified at the end of phase 1, which had been divided into five categories (local and regional development, industry- and sector-specific strategies, HR management, active labour market measures and regulatory framework). After the first discussion group, it was decided that participants were somewhat unfamiliar with certain terms, which led to a regrouping of solutions into three categories.

obvious with regard to collective strategies. For example, pairing employers requires a high degree of compatibility between businesses in terms of employee duties, wage conditions, counter-seasonal periods, etc. Among the measures that were most successful or where the least amount of concrete action had been taken were improvements to transportation and accommodations. Nevertheless, this is a problem that is very specific to business lines in outlying areas where the labour pool is also seasonal (mostly students). However, one collective solution enjoyed unanimous support: raising the status of seasonal business lines and their economic contribution.

There were also efforts made in the area of individual strategies (improvement of work conditions, flexibility of schedule, etc.). Nevertheless, more tools to help employers in this area (e.g. human resources management manual, salary grid, etc.) could be developed or, if they exist already, better disseminated. In fact, the various SWCs are already very active in this area. It should also be noted that weaknesses in HR management, staffing actions and staff retention actions are not specific to seasonal businesses, but they are more obvious here given the need to build a new work team at the beginning of each season.

Finally, employers were most vocal about regulatory interventions and active labour measures. More flexibility was requested to make programs and regulations, particularly employment insurance and the staggering of working hours, more compatible with the seasonal reality.

At the end of these sectoral discussion groups, active labour market measures and regulatory interventions, in addition to promoting and raising the status of seasonal activities, seemed to be the best solutions.

Employers were not the only ones to share their opinions: employees did too. The addition of a consultation component involving recurrent seasonal workers⁴ at the end of summer 2011 helped gather information from these key players: how do they deal with the situation? Why are they working seasonal jobs? Are there rewards or challenges? The large majority of workers interviewed expressed satisfaction, despite the work's being seasonal. Generally, the nature and duties of the work were the determining factors in applying for seasonal employment. Also, these employees generally do not seek out annual employment. However, this does not mean that the situation is without problems: wage conditions and benefits, especially for those with families, are the main challenges faced by the seasonal workers interviewed.

In order for seasonal workers to be better off and to face fewer challenges related to the seasonal aspect of their jobs, two different options were identified during this consultation. It was determined that there are two groups of employees: those who want to limit their weeks of employment and those who want to work all available weeks.

For the first group, which does not wish to continue working, few solutions are available. Basically, the combination of other jobs during low season must be facilitated while ensuring that employment insurance benefits are not adversely affected. Some measures that could be explored include:

- Authorizing a higher percentage of wage income during unemployment periods without its affecting benefits (active measures);
- Awarding retention bonuses after 14 weeks (HRM);
- Tailoring employment insurance programs to the region (active measures).

For the second group, which is interested in working all available weeks, there would appear to be more options:

- The three above-mentioned measures;
- Facilitating inter-regional moves (collective measure);
- Providing training in their professional field or a complementary field with benefits (active measures);
- Making work conditions more attractive during the employment period (HRM);
- Providing benefits (insurance, RRSP) (HRM);
- Reducing costs to return to work (training, equipment, etc.) (HRM);
- Develop a way of raising the status of the profession (active measures);
- Modifying work standards (normal work week, staggering, etc.) (regulatory framework);

⁴ The combination of a qualitative approach (four discussion groups) and a questionnaire filled out by nearly 120 seasonal workers in various sectors was used to try to reach as many workers as possible. It should be noted that recurrent workers (those who occupy the same seasonal job year after year) were invited to participate in this exercise. The consultation report is available at <http://saisonnalite.com/etudes-du-chantier.php>.

- Reviewing employment support measures (training, placements, etc.) (active measures); and
- Reviewing vacation pay measures (regulatory framework).

At the end of this consultation with employees, active labour market measures and regulatory interventions, in addition to HR management and promoting and raising the status of seasonal activities, seemed to be the best solutions.

1.2.1 DESPITE A DIVERSIFIED SEASONALITY, THERE ARE COMMON THEMES AND SOLUTIONS

Consultations with employers and employees also arrived at a major finding: seasonality is characterized by a wide range of problems. Not only are there different types of seasonal workers (age, origin, rate of return, reason for holding a seasonal job), but there are also businesses that deal with seasonality in a different manner, depending on the intensity of the seasonal economic activity and geographic and economic isolation. An analysis was therefore conducted to find solutions for these groups. This is why a typology of seasonality was developed to describe seasonal businesses and workers.⁵

Despite this diversity, **some themes remain relevant and promising for all sectors given their cross-cutting nature**, meaning that they equally affect businesses such as small regional B&Bs that are open only a few months a year and food processing plants with a peak season, located near an urban centre:

- 1) Seasonal work policy and status, in order to raise the status of seasonal work and recognize its economic importance;
- 2) Supporting measures for seasonal activity and regulatory framework intervention;
and
- 3) Work conditions and HR management.⁶

Again, there seems to be convergence towards the most promising solutions identified through the consultations with employers and employees. These three themes, associated with issues and possible solutions, served as a basis for the last step of phase 2 of the Project: solution-based work sessions. For each of these themes, between 12 and 25 participants were invited to discuss whether the solutions would be feasible and how they could be implemented. Depending on the theme, these meetings brought together unions, employers, stakeholders (including sectoral committees) and labour market organizations and partners (departments involved, Emploi-Québec, CLEs, etc.) that are likely to implement each of these measures.

⁵ The report with the typology of seasonal businesses and workers is available at: <http://saisonnalite.com/etudes-du-chantier.php>.

⁶ The issue of HR management was closed after discussions with the various SWCs as it was found that this matter had already been thoroughly covered by the SWCs.

1.3 UPDATE

This report provides an update on phase 2 of the Project. It is based on the three themes that were reviewed and discussed and for which solutions were proposed. The update also provides more information about the findings identified in phase 1 of the Project. In fact, as mentioned above, an iterative process was followed at the various stages of phase 2 of the Project, progressively eliminating the less promising options in order to focus on the most strategic themes that brought together all seasonal business lines.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
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SEASONAL WORK POLICY AND STATUS

ISSUES AND FINDINGS

- There is a lack of recognition regarding the importance of seasonal economic activity and the legitimacy of seasonal workers.
- The recognition and promotion of seasonal work and raising its status form the foundation on which stakeholders have to work in the immediate future in order to attract and retain a workforce that is essential to the various sectors involved.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a policy for seasonal economic activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was discussed whether a policy or a strategy would be best. A strategy seems too limited to cover all the dimensions of the phenomenon. A policy involves a broader recognition of the issue and can be implemented by a range of strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend that the implementation of a policy on seasonality be discussed at the forum with the relevant policy makers. This action was identified as important mid-way through phase 2 based on the findings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the value of the economic contribution of seasonal work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments, like society, need to fully appreciate the importance of seasonal economic activities before addressing the issues experienced by seasonal workers. Tourism, fishing and processing, agriculture and processing, horticulture and forestry are and always will be sectors that are totally or partially seasonal. They are indispensable to society and form the basis of other non-seasonal economic activities and the well-being of the population. They generate indispensable economic, social and environmental benefits that no other sector is able to provide, particularly in certain regions. All policies must be based on a clear recognition of the permanent existence of these sectors and their contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend preparing a document outlining the economic scope of seasonal activities pertaining to job creation, added value, settlement patterns, etc. This would be a key component of the business case that may be used by SWCs to make seasonality credible to the relevant government bodies. Seasonality must no longer be perceived as an economic anomaly. • We recommend that SWCs request a review of the classification system pertaining to the occupational outlook for seasonal jobs, which are always classified as activities with limited or acceptable potential as a result.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat seasonality like a real issue that will come up more and more often as the workforce ages and shrinks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of these business lines with regard to labour require specific considerations tailored to their situation. The aging of the population, the shortage of labour and an often-negative geographic mobility in areas where these businesses are operating add to the urgency of acting and adopting a series of appropriate strategies or measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend carrying out a study to characterize the workforce in these seasonal business lines in order to identify the most severe issues. Although this work is already being done in part by the SWCs, it would be wise to create a document centralizing all the information required to formally build the case for all demands.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a seasonal business or sector designation with rights and obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationally, the recognition of the importance of seasonal economic activity is based on a recognition of the businesses and sectors experiencing the phenomenon. Businesses must obtain a status of totally or partially seasonal, which leads to rights and obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the creation of the policy on seasonality, we recommend that a formal discussion be held regarding the recognition of seasonal businesses. To do this, it seems essential to create a specific designation that will help avoid the downgrading of these sectors on the list of job creators. Also, businesses that are formally classified as seasonal will have to observe certain practices and obligations (e.g. provide ongoing training to recurrent seasonal workers).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a seasonal worker status with rights and obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This status for the business or the sector must allow for better employee retention throughout the activity period and year after year, an improvement of skills and versatility of employees, greater productivity, and a better ability to attract employees or get them to come back year after year. In return, businesses must provide employees with employment or career opportunities, access to initial and ongoing training, monetary advantages and benefits. Government-funded support measures (grants, tax measures) may be necessary. • Workers in these sectors and businesses must be able to obtain, under clear and well-defined conditions, a status of recurring seasonal worker with rights and obligations with regard to work policies. The status must allow for greater prestige as well as training, the recognition of skills and job availability. • The status must not create a category of second-class workers. While recurring seasonal workers are currently often perceived as such, the new status must be accompanied by a balanced set of rights and obligations based on the economic reality of their sector(s). • The status will help avoid any arbitrary interpretations, define an eligibility framework and raise the prestige of recurring seasonal worker status and the people who have that status. • Finally, the status should attract new workers who are currently in precarious situations such as resident immigrants who are recurrently unemployed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend, as part of a policy statement on seasonality, that rights and obligations be clearly identified for seasonal workers with seasonal worker status. The concept of obligation must be present to avoid any unfair treatment of other categories of workers or unemployed people. Therefore, this status should allow for a stabilization and eventual increase in income, access to school or professional training/certification, access to benefits and treatment by employment insurance and Emploi-Quebec that takes seasonality into account. Also, it should take into account availability throughout the work period, recurrence, part-time availability off-season, agreement to take training and counter-cyclical employment.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
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SUPPORT MEASURES FOR SEASONAL ACTIVITY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK INTERVENTION

ISSUES AND FINDINGS

Some programs and regulatory standards are not always adapted to seasonal jobs in the labour market:

- In some cases, they are not adapted to the reality of peak season or to the intense and irregular schedules of seasonal work.
- Also, they do not always encourage part-time employment during the low season.
- Finally, they do not encourage the development of skills of seasonal workers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace passive employment measures with active ones to encourage increased availability of seasonal workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Regionally adjusted employment insurance programs. ➢ Change the social assistance program to encourage the availability of seasonal workers. ➢ Allow the staggering of hours in seasonal businesses. ➢ Allow vacation to be paid weekly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These measures are specifically for recurrent seasonal workers. It remains to be seen whether they can be applied more generally. • The issue raised by these measures is fairness to other workers, particularly low-wage workers, minimum-wage workers or those who earn slightly above minimum wage. The benefits paid to a single adult without any restrictions is currently \$589/month, and workers may earn \$200 without being penalized. Minimum-wage workers working full-time (40 hours) earn approximately \$1,600/month. • The pilot project that added five weeks in certain regions to avoid having no-income periods between the end of employment benefits and the start of the new season was well received. • Exemptions to regular work weeks are available for a number of seasonal sectors. Other sectors would like to see the measure for the staggering of hours broadened and available every year without having to make a request and fill out a form. • Both employers and employees would like to see vacation paid on a weekly basis so it does not delay employment insurance benefits at the end of the season. However, this measure should not be mandatory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend bringing together the relevant government authorities to discuss the feasibility of integrating proven pilot projects into the legislation. First, during the unemployment period (low season), authorize a monthly increase of up to 40% without it affecting benefits, to replace the currently authorized 25%. And, in the regions concerned, allow for the addition of five weeks to avoid no-income periods. • We recommend bringing together the relevant government authorities to discuss the feasibility of introducing a formula to calculate minimum hours of work to allow employment insurance to take into account not only the region⁷ but also the specific seasonal activity. • We recommend bringing together the relevant government authorities to discuss the feasibility of allowing the annualization of employment earnings without it affecting benefits to claimants involved in short-term casual or seasonal employment and allowing an increase of income for claimants without it affecting benefits if they agree to work short-term seasonal jobs. • We recommend submitting proposals to the relevant government authorities to allow the staggering of hours (exemption to the regular work week) in seasonal sectors that see a benefit and do not currently have access to it.
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⁷ Special measures were taken to improve access to employment insurance benefits for workers in regions with a high rate of unemployment called “designated economic regions.” The Best 14 Weeks measure, which was in place from October 26, 2008, to June 25, 2011, was renewed until June 26, 2012, for people living in a designated economic region.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train recurrent seasonal workers to improve their employability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ so they can complete their secondary 5 education, on a mandatory basis; ➢ so they can improve their skills in their field; ➢ so they can adapt to new techniques and technologies; and ➢ so they can acquire skills in a counter-cyclical seasonal activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perception that training is not cost-effective for society if it does not lead to annual employment must be changed. • It was discussed that wherever possible, access to training should be automatic, or, <u>in some cases</u>, mandatory for workers with recurrent seasonal worker status. However, opinions are mixed regarding the mandatory aspect because, depending on the skills required, training is not always necessary. Employees working low-skill jobs should not be forced to take training unless they want to. Training could be made mandatory for jobs with dangerous duties that require workers to update their skills. Regular training could also take place when technology renewal is a factor. Finally, businesses in which career progression is an option could also have a mandatory training plan. • The travel of workers should be facilitated to obtain the number of participants necessary to organize training sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend that a development plan be formally prepared for seasonal workers to provide direction for both employers and employees and to correct programs that interfere with the training of seasonal workers (e.g. only some training is subsidized by employment insurance and is selected strictly on the basis of occupational outlook, the calculation of which inadequately covers the jobs creation potential of the seasonal sector). • We also recommend that employers be involved in the selection of training and how the sessions will be delivered so training can be tailored to the realities of the businesses and be easily available to a sufficient number of workers (critical mass).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to temporary foreign workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of temporary foreign workers are recurrent workers who have been coming to Quebec for 5, 10 or 15 years. They are firmly committed, and their interest in working for their employers is mutual. Ongoing training during slower work periods would be a great asset for the productivity, ability to adapt to new techniques and career development of these very dedicated workers. This would involve cost-sharing (employers – Emploi-Quebec or federal bodies) in terms of training and extending the stay of the workers. • It was also discussed that it should be easier for temporary foreign workers to become permanent residents after a certain number of years, as is the case in other Canadian provinces. • This proposal admittedly involves a major change in perspective with regard to seasonal economic activity. With regard to sectors without opportunities, they must be perceived by the departments involved as major economic sectors with a shortage of workers or at risk of such a shortage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend conducting a study to analyse the feasibility and regulatory implications of awarding the status of permanent resident to temporary foreign workers. • A change in salary to take into account the higher level of skills/experience of some workers and the coaching role that they would take on should also be discussed with the relevant authorities as part of Canada’s agreements with foreign governments.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote seasonal employment to resident immigrants through training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident immigrant workers are already solicited for seasonal work; this solution would be to improve their return rate through training, skills development and greater prestige. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recommend conducting a study involving these particular clients, who already occupy seasonal jobs on a casual basis. The study would focus on their interests and their reasons for repeatedly taking seasonal jobs.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
WORK CONDITIONS		
ISSUES AND FINDINGS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work conditions (wages, benefits, job insecurity, etc.) do not encourage workers to keep seasonal jobs or attract new workers. • The same goes for the number of weeks worked, which sometimes encourages workers to quit or does not allow them to be paid benefits off-season. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each seasonal sector, assess the importance and feasibility of providing recurrent workers with a group benefit plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These insurance plans have specific requirements depending on the number of participants, the managing organization, the number of months worked and the payment of premiums during unemployment. Each of these elements must be carefully assessed in each sector. Some resistance may also be felt from certain workers who find that the benefits do not outweigh the cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend conducting a feasibility study in each of the sectors concerned, based on the HortiCompétence approach, to evaluate the possibility of a group benefit plan (e.g. can SWCs all be responsible for the file? How high would costs of pooling be? Etc.).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each seasonal sector, assess the importance and feasibility of providing recurrent workers with a group retirement fund plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It seems that issues related to private retirement funds will be the focus of government discussions over the next few months. Employers could soon be obligated to provide employees with these plans. In fact, this obligation will be effective January 2013. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend conducting a feasibility study that would assess the costs and the keys to the success of this type of group plan in a seasonal employment context.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make conditions of employment more attractive salary-wise for the employment period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was general agreement that the development of skills should lead to a salary increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the fact that little influence can be exercised over salaries in private businesses and the fact that SWCs are already actively raising awareness and providing tools to businesses that demonstrate an interest in acting at this level, we recommend analyzing the appropriateness of developing pay schedules allowing for progression and recognition to facilitate recruitment and the retention of seasonal workers as in other business lines. • Seasonal workers seek recognition of experience. We recommend that the status of recurrent seasonal worker be accompanied by similar measures to link skill development and raises.

Solutions Explored	Consultation Report	AGECO Recommendations on Follow-ups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to extend the employment period by prolonging the work season in sectors where this is possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some sectors, businesses were able to extend the active period by importing raw materials or diversifying their activities. These were individual initiatives, some of which might have received financial support from the government as part of pilot projects. This type of support must become the norm. Part-time work in the same business or sector is sometimes a safer path to take. In numerous sectors, extension is difficult or not a possibility at all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recommend that proposals be submitted to the relevant authorities to obtain permanent financial support for these initiatives. We recommend that SWCs identify these initiatives in their respective sectors to create a “catalogue” to share this type of practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to extend the employment period by pairing businesses with counter-cyclical activities in sectors where opportunities may exist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pairing of businesses has often been discussed as a partial solution to seasonal work. However, successes are quite rare. Regions where seasonality is widespread have very few options off-season. The availability of jobs requiring similar skills or abilities is a barrier, as is distance. Forestry and sugar maple growing in the Lower St. Lawrence, as well as marine products processing companies in Gaspé, are the best success stories. Emploi-Québec can and must play a definite role in information, matching and monitoring for all projects that plan to make use of pairing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recommend demanding that permanent resources be in place at Emploi-Quebec to coordinate the pairing of businesses in a proactive manner.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve conditions for access to employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transportation of workers was brought up as an issue in professional and geographic mobility. The rising cost of gas sometimes makes the journey too expensive relative to the potential income. The absence of public transportation in peri-urban and rural areas is also an issue that is not specific to seasonal work and that would require a more comprehensive assessment. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the availability of accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The absence of accommodation available to seasonal workers is also an issue for some businesses. Few innovative solutions were identified. 	

2. CONCLUSION

In Phases 1 and 2 of the Seasonality Project, this issue of fundamental importance to the economic development of Quebec was explored from every angle. The study identified and analysed the current situation, statistically speaking, local and foreign experiences in attempting to mitigate the problem, the opinions, experiences and suggestions of employers, unions, workers and stakeholders. This comprehensive exercise identified a number of realistic solutions that would help resolve, in whole or in part, problems regarding the recognition of seasonal economic activity and the related work.

The various sectoral committees as well as the sectors themselves (businesses and workers) must now review these findings and see if they can find a concrete solution. A series of recommendations was proposed in phase 2 of the Project (see table above). The recommendations require, in a number of cases, the involvement of governments and their agencies, both provincial and federal. These agencies would have to be informed and made aware of the realities experienced and understand how the proposed solutions are both realistic and suitable for resolving the problems. This will pave the way for the next step in the Seasonality Project.

ANNEX A
INVENTORY OF ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS
DISCUSSED WITH EMPLOYERS

Table 1.1
Inventory of Issues and Solutions Discussed With Employers

Sector	Category 1 Collective Strategies	Category 2 Individual Strategies	Category 3 Regulatory Interventions
Commercialization and ornamental horticulture services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The approach of bringing employers together has already been tried (Réseau Stabili-Travail) but was discontinued, mostly owing to the difficulty of gathering enough interested employers and the salary gap between paired employees. • The promotion of ornamental horticulture jobs remains to be done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intense physical aspect of the work means employees are less willing to find another job after the ornamental horticultural season, but employers were able to explore other avenues of diversification (decoration, snow removal, etc.). • Technological innovations help decrease workforce needs. • Marginal benefits are offered by employers to increase the loyalty of their seasonal employees. • Some employers do not encourage their employees to find work during the winter, so they can rest for the next season. Others developed complementary business activities or created employment pairing. • Attracting semi-retired workers is not easy (work is strenuous) in ornamental horticulture and in other sectors. • The inflow of temporary foreign workers is a heavy burden, administratively speaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment insurance is a major irritant (pressure on employees to change sectors). • The application of the terms and conditions of staggering of hours is a constraint in ornamental horticulture.

Sector	Category 1 Collective Strategies	Category 2 Individual Strategies	Category 3 Regulatory Interventions
Agricultural production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The employment period is extended through agreements with businesses, but varies depending on the production sector. The various tools used for placing employees (e.g. CEA, CUMO, etc.) help businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mechanization of businesses partially resolves the shortage of labour and facilitates recruitment. Foreign workers account for a large portion of hires. The diversification of recruitment pools (students and semi-retired) is a strategy that is becoming more prevalent, but isn't always successful considering the nature of the work. Work conditions are tailored to employee needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment insurance is also a major irritant in agriculture.
Food processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving public transportation is one of the solutions to develop. Communal housing located near the factory would help tremendously. Subcontractors give questionable results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production automation is another potential solution for this sector. The use of foreign workers is a new reality in this sector, but the need is for an unskilled workforce. With regard to work conditions, some offer retention bonuses as an incentive to work longer than the 14 weeks required by employment insurance. According to participants, the union's attitude can be counter-productive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would like greater governmental support for foreign seasonal workers who would like to settle here (landed immigrants). Employment insurance does not encourage the extension of the employment period. We would like CLEs to be more dynamic with regard to recruitment.
Marine fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success of a group of businesses under the governance of Emploi-Québec. The promotion of the sector and profession would be carried out elsewhere in Quebec to facilitate recruitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food processing is a relevant solution to extend the season of certain businesses. Diversification of activities is difficult in the trapping sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would like to improve the flexibility of employment insurance depending on the circumstances. Employers appreciate government training initiatives.

Sector	Category 1 Collective Strategies	Category 2 Individual Strategies	Category 3 Regulatory Interventions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sector does not seem ready to welcome temporary foreign workers despite the potential. The use of semi-retired workers has become a reality in the sector. Some employers are working on developing the sense of belonging of employees and are improving their work conditions. 	
Forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job pairing is difficult because the jobs available are not always appropriate for forestry workers. There is constant uncertainty surrounding the work because of the political and economic context and the current structure of the industry. Forestry workers always require certification. The sector's negative publicity affects recruitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work conditions remain difficult, and there is competition with the mining sector, which pays better. Employers consider workforce training as a strategy to retain employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers should be able to stagger work hours and include vacation in the weekly pay of workers who request it. All approaches meant to improve the work conditions of forestry workers must include a funding report and contracts for the forestry work to relieve the instability of the profession.
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite its potential, pairing businesses is not always successful. For workers, there is a wide gap between the types of jobs offered in terms of skills and work conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain employers have made efforts to improve work conditions to retain staff. The tourism sector is a major employer of youths, but these workers' work habits have changed and they are fewer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The minimum threshold to be eligible for employment insurance does not encourage the extension of the employment period.

Sector	Category 1 Collective Strategies	Category 2 Individual Strategies	Category 3 Regulatory Interventions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation and transportation problems limit the hiring process in certain regions. • Promoting seasonal work would attract more workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-retirees are an alternate labour pool but hiring these workers requires that certain adjustments be made to the businesses. • Recruitment outside the region, in Quebec, is also carried out. • In one of the businesses, internal training is provided off-season. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vacances-Travail program is interesting in terms of the diversification of labour pools. • Subsidized training provided by Emploi-Québec needs to be improved. • The Emploi-Québec website does not allow for recruiting in a number of regions. Does not encourage workforce mobility. • Issues about the staggering of work hours.
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sharing of employees between businesses (same banner or not) to complement part-time can be successful if employers are flexible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improvement of collective agreements is possible to facilitate the management of part-time and seasonal movements. • Well-developed profit-sharing formulas as a retention strategy. • Flexibility of work schedules to keep students. • Successful diversification of recruitment pools (including retirees). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No focus on regulatory interventions.