

## Timmins forum looking at Francophone immigration

Event being held in Northern Ontario for first time

by: [Maija Hoggett](#)



Northern Ontario Francophone Immigration Support Network project co-ordinator Christian Howald and Université de Hearst international student Endi Kodila. Maija Hoggett/TimminsToday

A forum this week is bringing together agencies from across the province to talk about Francophone immigration.

The third biennial Provincial Francophone Immigration Forum is being held Nov. 8 and 9. College Boreal and Université de Hearst are co-hosting the event.

“According to the Northern Policy Institute we need about 5,000 immigrants a year if we want to maintain our demographic dependency ratio, which means all of Northern Ontario has a shortage and in Timmins especially because the workforce is aging,” said Christian Howald, Northern Ontario Francophone Immigration Support Network project co-ordinator.

Having more Francophone immigrants, he explained, maintains the demographic ratio for Francophones and Anglophones, diversifies the economy and opens new avenues for international trade.

There are already partnerships in place to encourage the immigration.

Howald said there is an annual recruiting fair that allows companies to recruit through the Canadian Embassy in Paris and Brussels. He added that there are also partnerships with embassies in Tunisia and Senegal.

Students are also a focus of the efforts.

“Another thing the federal government wants us to focus on is retaining international students because institutes like College Boreal and Université de Hearst are already doing most of the work integrating them into the community, so our work now is to make sure we keep them here,” Howald said.

Endi Kodila is an international student at Université de Hearst, where he is studying psychology.

With Howald translating, Kodila said he chose Université de Hearst because he wanted to continue his post-secondary education in French.

One of the challenges he’s had is not being able to get served in French.

Howald translated that the obstacle “also helps develop new relationships where the people he speaks with are patient with helping him learn the language and also being able to surmount it.”

For the Provincial Francophone Immigration Forum, about 100 representatives will be in town, including Interim Commissioner of Official Languages Ghislaine Saikaley.

“Our commitment to communities are increasingly diverse,” said College Boreal president Daniel Giroux in a new release. “To meet the needs of Francophone newcomers, Boreal is committed to offering a wide array of French-language services across Ontario. We are thrilled to host this event for the first time in Northern Ontario and to take part in these important discussions.”

It is being financed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.