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A rebalancing labour market, but with persistent pressures

In the second quarter of 2026, the number of vacant positions dropped for the second consecutive quarter in the Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions, reaching 17,120, down 4.0% from the first quarter of 2026. Meanwhile, payroll employment increased by 0.2%, a progression entirely driven by the Chaudière-Appalaches region, whose increase of 3,840 employees offset a decline of 2,665 in the Capitale-Nationale region.

At a glance

1. The drop in job vacancies reflects a gradual rebalancing of the labour market, while payroll employment remains high.
2. The decline in job vacancies masks contrasting realities: although recruitment needs are easing amid economic uncertainty, labour shortages persist in several key sectors of the region's economy.

"The decline in vacant positions shows a progressive return to a more balanced labour market. Although hiring intentions are slowing down in the more uncertain economic context, recruitment challenges persist in several key sectors that support our region's growth." – Carl Viel, President and CEO, Québec International

Highlights – Second quarter of 2026

Variation from the previous quarter	Capitale-Nationale		Chaudière-Appalaches	
Vacant positions	10,505 (-595)	-5.4%	6,615 (-125)	-1.9%
Payroll employees	374,655 (-2,665)	-0.7%	209,660 (+3,840)	+1.9%
Job vacancy rate	2.7%	-0.2 pp	3.1%	-0.1 pp

What about hiring?

Unemployment-to-job vacancy ratio

The ratio has increased from Q1 2026 (≈0.78) to Q2 2026 (≈1.29).

The increase in the ratio points to a loosening labour market, with more job seekers relative to available positions.

Wage evolution comparison

Capitale-Nationale: $28.25/hr (-1.22%); Chaudière-Appalaches: $26.90/hr (-1.28%).

Wage trends over one year differed between the two regions, which can be explained in part by the persisting uncertainty. Despite the decline in wages in the second quarter of 2026, further data will be needed to confirm a long-term trend.

Analysis

Short-term labour demand slows down in the second quarter of 2026

According to Statistics Canada's Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS), the number of job vacancies stands at 10,505 in the Capitale-Nationale region and 6,615 in Chaudière-Appalaches, down 5.4% and 1.9% from the first quarter of 2026, respectively. Despite this decline, the job vacancy rate remains higher in Chaudière-Appalaches (3.1%) than in Capitale-Nationale (2.7%), a sign that tensions in the labour market remain greater in Chaudière-Appalaches. This decrease coincided with a decrease in payroll employment in Capitale-Nationale, suggesting some moderation in labour demand compared to the beginning of the year.

A sectoral analysis remains essential, as several sectors, including manufacturing and construction, continue to deal with significant labour constraints that may hinder production capacity and lead to bottlenecks in recruiting workers with key skills. Moreover, in a context marked by economic and business uncertainty, many employers may have adopted a more cautious approach to investment and recruitment, thus contributing to the drop in job vacancies.

Vacant positions as a leading indicator of economic activity

The decrease in the number of vacant positions suggests some moderation in hiring intentions. Because recruitment needs tend to respond to economic changes before employment does, vacant positions are a leading indicator of economic activity and labour-market conditions. Therefore, the decline in job vacancies points to a gradual easing of pressure on labour demand, suggesting a normalization of labour-market conditions rather than a marked economic deterioration. This interpretation is consistent with the latest Labour Force Survey.

> "The decline in vacant positions shows a gradual shift toward greater caution in hiring, a trend that could accelerate in the third quarter of 2026. However, this normalization of labour demand does not erase recruitment challenges in several strategic sectors where wages remain a lever to attract and retain talent."
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> – Rosalie Forgues, Senior Economist

Data visualization

Graph 1. Evolution of cumulative job vacancies in the combined regions of Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches

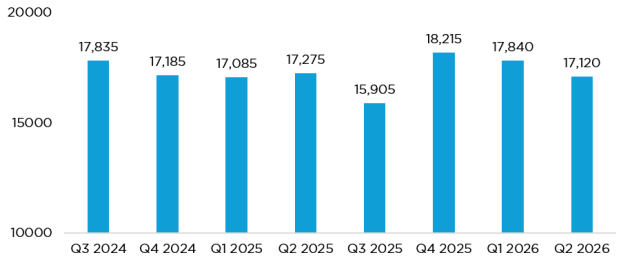

Table 1. Job vacancy rate by region

Job vacancy rate (%)		
	Q2 2026	Q1 2026
Capitale-Nationale	2.7	2.9
Chaudière-Appalaches	3.1	3.2
Quebec Province	2.9	2.9
Canada	2.8	2.8

Sources: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0398-01, and Québec International.

What is considered a vacant position?

According to the JVWS, a job is considered vacant if it meets these three conditions:

- It is vacant on the first day of the month, or will become vacant during the month.
- There are tasks to be carried out during the month for the job in question, so it is not a frozen or suspended position.
- The employer is actively recruiting outside the organization to fill the job.

Rosalie Forgues, Senior Economist
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