

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Community Human Services

Community Attraction & Leisure Services – Community Attraction & Promotion

Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Audrey Ansell
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Date: December 9, 2019

Subject: Chatham-Kent Immigration Initiatives Update

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

Immigration and immigrants are essential contributors to the cultural and economic vibrancy of a community. The Community Attraction and Promotion area works with community partners to develop and support immigration initiatives across Chatham-Kent. These initiatives include the Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership project (2010 to date) and the Municipal Immigration Information Online project (2007-2018). This report provides information on developing immigration initiatives that support the CKPlan 2035 goals of Economic Prosperity and People and Culture, and are in alignment with Council's Growth-related priority to grow the population to support economic and workforce needs.

Comments

Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) – CK Regional Immigration Pilot

In Canada, immigration is a shared jurisdiction between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. Immigrants can arrive to Canada through a variety of pathways – as international students, permanent residents, temporary foreign workers or through provincial nominee program landings.

Provinces and territories can nominate (i.e. endorse) prospective immigrants for permanent residence. The province of Ontario, working through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) administers the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). The OINP complements federal immigration pathways and offers immigration pathways for foreign workers that have the professional and/or educational skills needed to succeed in and contribute to Ontario's labour market. The OINP program nominates foreign workers, entrepreneurs and

international students for permanent residence in Ontario and is a 100% online mechanism; 6,850 nominations were issued in 2018, with many of the foreign workers settling in larger cities in the province.

There are three streams to the OINP program;

1. Employer Job Offer stream – supplies international talent to local employers who have labour needs and helps address labour shortages in communities across the province
2. Human Capital stream – provides immigration pathways to individuals with high human capital who can contribute to economic growth in communities across the province, but who do not have a job offer
3. Business stream – targets immigrant entrepreneurs with viable business proposals

MEDJCT is launching a Regional Immigration Pilot based on the OINP. The pilot aims to explore innovative approaches to bring skilled immigrants to rural and small communities. To this end, representatives from the Ministry visited Chatham-Kent in the summer and fall of 2019, to gauge local interest in the OINP and participation in a pilot project. Ministry representatives met with four stakeholder groups (employers, post-secondary college [international students], municipal and settlement sector, and economic development) and gathered feedback on activities, challenges, and the community's capacity to successfully integrate and settle immigrants.

Chatham-Kent has now been selected as one of only three provincial pilot sites for the OINP and will utilize the nominee process for a two year period (January 2020 – December 2022) to address local labour market needs.

The CK OINP pilot will focus on the Employer Job Offer (EJO) stream, with secondary emphasis on the business stream. The key features of the EJO will be;

- Chatham-Kent will have access to 50 OINPs in each year of the two-year pilot
- Eligible occupations range from engineers and IT workers to truck drivers, personal support workers and general farm labourers
- Employers can make a job offer to a foreign worker for a full-time permanent position – these workers may already be in Canada on work permits, or maybe overseas
- Workers can apply for permanent residence via the OINP
- The OINP process is 100% online and supports are available to help employers with the process

The OINP is expected to benefit Chatham-Kent in a number of ways. Due to low birth rates, Canada and Chatham-Kent's future population and workforce growth is largely reliant on immigration. The challenges associated with attracting and retaining talent in Chatham-Kent have been identified and well-documented by employers and the local community. Unemployment is currently at a 10-year low in Chatham-Kent and the local economy is considered to be at full employment. Finding ways to attract a new workforce, particularly skilled workers, is essential to Chatham-Kent's future. In this context, it makes sense for Chatham-Kent to pursue all available avenues to attract immigrant talent and to make immigrants aware of the community and the opportunities it offers.

In terms of next steps, a CK OINP task force will be established and will consist of representatives from local business organizations and sectors, including post-secondary education, settlement, and municipal government and it will work to support Chatham-Kent's employers' Talent Attraction and Retention needs. The task force will help drive connections between employers actively interested in hiring skilled immigrants and immigrants looking to settle in rural Ontario by offering assistance in the form of information, referrals, research and settlement supports.

CK Community Immigration Survey

The municipal Community Attraction and Promotion area is tasked with developing and promoting the community in order to attract visitors, residents and talent and to retain them in the community. A focus on immigrants and immigration is a key part of the story-telling, marketing and community development activity that occurs, in recognition of the fact that population growth, workforce strength and community diversity and vibrancy are in part served by attracting and settling/retaining foreign-born nationals in Chatham-Kent. The Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership (CKLIP) project is 100% funded by the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and is at the forefront of helping to ensure that over 40 community groups collaboratively work to settle and retain immigrant newcomers. The CKLIP is currently developing a strategic plan for its work to settle newcomers in Chatham-Kent and requires data on the settlement needs and experiences of newcomers themselves. Layered on this is the need to have community information that clearly establishes baseline data regarding how Chatham-Kent as a community responds to and welcomes immigrant newcomers.

In support of the CKPlan 2035 goals of Economic Prosperity and People and Culture, and in alignment with Council's Growth-related priority to grow the population to support economic and workforce needs, the Community Attraction and Promotion area, in collaboration with the CKLIP will be releasing a seminal Chatham-Kent Immigration Survey in 2020. The survey will be open to immigrant newcomers, including those who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s, and more recent arrivals and will also seek to solicit input and opinions from the broader Chatham-Kent population. The survey findings will help to guide all efforts to promote Chatham-Kent to immigrant newcomers, retain immigrant newcomer residents, and to ensure that it is well-positioned to support its population and workforce.

CK Local Immigration Partnership Project Funding

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent is the Contribution Agreement holder with IRCC for the CKLIP. The project is 100% funded by IRCC and has been operational since 2010, with the current phase of grant fund due to expire in March 2020. A Call for Proposals was released in 2019 and the Municipality's Community Attraction and Promotion area submitted an application to continue the important work of the CKLIP to enhance the settlement outcomes of immigrant newcomers in Chatham-Kent. The application submitted has been vetted by IRCC and it is anticipated that the Municipality will continue to receive funding that allows the CKLIP to continue for a five-year period spanning April 2020-March 2025. Additional information and confirmation will be provided to Council when available.

Consultation

Consultations with IRCC for the CKLIP and MEDJCT for the OINP Regional Pilot, are ongoing. The CKLIP Council is engaged through regular meetings. The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, St Clair College – Thames Campus, Adult Language and Learning, and Chatham-Kent Economic Development Services have been engaged in discussions regarding the CK OINP.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with participating in the OINP pilot project or administering the Chatham-Kent Immigration Survey. Staff time dedicated to developing/administering the survey or to supporting employers and the taskforce and liaising with the province will be covered from existing operations. The CKLIP is 100% funded by IRCC.

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