

Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program Update

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Prepared by:	Alex Ross Economic Development
Recommended by:	Chief Administrative Officer

Report Summary

This report provides a recommendation regarding the ongoing results of the Rural & Northern Immigration Pilot program as part of the City's workforce development efforts.

Resolution

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury advocates for the RNIP program to be made permanent through Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC) as an important component of talent attraction and community vibrancy for Greater Sudbury;

AND THAT the City directs staff to prepare a business case for one permanent full-time position focused on workforce development and the Rural & Northern Immigration Pilot program as a demonstration of the municipality's commitment to immigration and workforce capacity in the community, as outlined in the report entitled "Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program Update", presented at the City Council meeting on August 9, 2022.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This report aligns with the City's strategic direction related to Business Attraction, Development and Retention, Economic Capacity & Investment Readiness as well as Community Vibrancy.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Pending Council direction, the Business Case will include financial information for budget considerations.

Background

The City of Greater Sudbury was selected in 2019 to be one of 11 communities across Canada to participate in the RNIP. The RNIP is a new program of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and modeled on the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program. For qualified newcomers with confirmed job offers, the

program provides an additional pathway to becoming permanent residents, while at the same time helping to confront Greater Sudbury's labour shortages due to youth outmigration, declining birth rates and aging population. The goals of this program are to retain newcomers as long-term residents in the community and to help employers address the current skills shortage and overcome a key barrier to business growth. The Greater Sudbury Development Corporation (GSDC) is the authorized organization and primary signatory in the agreement with IRCC for the RNIP on behalf of the City of Greater Sudbury.

The GSDC has supported this role and the Sudbury RNIP since 2019 with funding contributions totalling \$346,398 to support wages, marketing and related administrative costs for the Pilot.

Further, in March 2021, FedNor approved funding for the RNIP in the amount of \$480,746 over three years to support the initiative, which was backdated with a start date in February 2020. The agency has been very supportive of this important program, which aligns with messaging from our federal MPs regarding the significance of the pilot to help address labour market needs.

In December 2021, the City of Greater Sudbury approved a contribution of \$96,182 toward workforce and the RNIP for year three (2022), which leveraged both the above GSDC and FedNor dollars.

The hope is that the RNIP program will be sustained in the long-term pending the positive outcomes of the three-year pilot for the 11 participating communities across Canada.

Workforce has been identified as the single most significant obstacle to business growth in the Greater Sudbury region's economy. The goal of the Business Development Officer for Workforce is to improve regional capacity and competitiveness as companies become better equipped to identify and address their labour shortages, thereby giving them the ability to grow their businesses. In recent years, a key component of this role has been the administration of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, but the overall workforce strategy encompasses maximizing employment opportunities for newcomers already living in Greater Sudbury, international students, individuals who are unemployed or underemployed, and the Indigenous and Francophone populations.

The Business Development Officer for Workforce (Human Capital) has already been in place on a contractual basis and the position has been instrumental in securing new partnerships, programs and initiatives, and funding for the City of Greater Sudbury, including the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) program.

Progress to date:

As more foreign workers and local employers become aware of the Sudbury RNIP program, the interest in the program in both 2021 and 2022 has increased considerably, resulting in significant numbers of applications and inquiries for the program over the past two years.

- In 2022 alone, 104 candidates have now been recommended through the program, resulting in 173 total newcomers when we include the family members of those recommended.
- In 2021, 84 candidates were recommended through the Sudbury RNIP program. Including families, this amounted to 215 total newcomers in that year alone.
- Several individuals moved here initially after learning about the RNIP program from abroad, and then applied through the program after securing full-time permanent employment in their field.
- Approved candidates have immigrated to Sudbury from many parts of the world, including North and South America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia
- The majority of applicants are experienced workers, many moving to Sudbury with their spouses and children

Several local companies have now benefitted from the Sudbury RNIP as a unique program to support their labour market needs. The program has been utilized significantly by the mining supply and service sector, which accounts for among the largest proportion of our recommendations. A number of these individuals are in high paying senior roles, some in professional roles such as engineers, project managers, and IT

professionals, and others in skilled trades (millwrights, welders, electricians, labourers and truck drivers).

The second highest category includes individuals from the health care and social assistance sector and early childhood educators, and food / accommodation services also account for a large proportion of recommendations which is reflective of what has been heard from the community regarding shortages in those areas.

Staff also work with employers and support their candidates directly from overseas to apply through the program. Examples of the occupations of candidates coming directly from overseas include engineers, workers in the mining supply and service industry, and experienced managers.

Articles have been published in local media outlets highlighting the success that employers and candidates have had with this program. There has been significant coverage of the program in the media throughout the pilot and staff continue to promote the successes of the program through our active media channels.

Staff continue to improve efficiency as it relates to the RNIP program. This includes the creation of an online portal to provide better support to applicants and capture information more easily and streamlining the review and approval process through the RNIP Community Selection Committee.

Further, the Business Development Officer for Workforce has played a crucial role by overseeing the management and administration of workforce development initiatives including meeting with employers to provide workforce solutions (both RNIP and other solutions), developing, hosting and partnering on events and initiatives to improve Greater Sudbury's workforce, contributing to policy development, and liaising with higher levels of government to communicate challenges and potential solutions on local workforce issues. This includes daily discussions with new employers and attendance at local, national, and international job fair events to represent the city and local employers, as well as organizing networking events with employers and newcomers to Canada (including recently arriving Ukrainian newcomers) and promoting the new Hit Refresh campaign which highlights Greater Sudbury for talent attraction.

Greater Sudbury stakeholders are currently advocating to the federal government to make the RNIP a permanent immigration program in our community. Funding this position is a crucial demonstration of the municipality's own commitment to immigration and workforce, which is a decades-long challenge that will require dedicated staff resources.