

Request for Decision

Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program

October 16, 2019

Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Provide Council with an overview of the Rural & Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) project, including the roles and responsibilities of the municipality, of the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation and of City staff, as associated with its implementation.
2. Seek Council's endorsement of the approach used to establish the Community Selection Committee of the GSDC Board.
3. Outline next steps for the program.

Background

The City of Greater Sudbury has been selected as one of 11 communities across Canada to participate in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program (RNIP), 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 will provide 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.

Demographic changes have a direct impact on the supply side of the economy through their influence on the labour force. Population aging and a declining share of working-age people can seriously restrain future economic development. With the aging workforce and retiring Baby Boomers, Greater Sudbury is facing severe labour shortages in practically every occupation and every industry sector. Increased efforts are required to improve the community's ability to attract and retain immigrants to Greater Sudbury.

Without immigration, it will not be possible for Greater Sudbury to maintain the current tax base, impacting the municipality's ability to continue to provide existing service levels. Since 1996, eight out of 11 Northern Ontario districts have experienced a population decline. This decline is projected to continue into 2041 based on estimates prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Finance. From 1996 to 2016, the City of Greater Sudbury grew approximately 6%. For reference, Ontario as a whole has grown by 25.1 per cent in this same period.

The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program is one of multiple initiatives currently being undertaken by the City's Economic Development team to address workforce challenges in Greater Sudbury. It is part of a larger Workforce Strategy that encompasses maximizing employment opportunities for newcomers already living in Sudbury, international students, individuals who are unemployed or underemployed, and Indigenous peoples.

Roles & Responsibilities of the RNIP

The RNIP is explicitly focused on economic immigration, rather than on other types of immigration pathways into Canada (such as those taken by convention refugees, international students, irregular migrants and so on).

As such, IRCC outlined eligibility criteria for the application process that mandated that proposals must be submitted through each community's Economic Development Corporations. In the case of Greater Sudbury, this includes the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation, which is supporting the implementation of the program, with coordination of City staff and in alignment with Council's priorities.

In order to implement the RNIP program in Greater Sudbury, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada requires a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be developed and signed as a contract between IRCC and Greater Sudbury.

As per this Memorandum of Understanding for the RNIP, the GSDC is responsible for:

- Receiving completed applications from potential applicants under the Pilot who are seeking the community's official endorsement;
- Reviewing applications and endorsing applicants where the GSDC has confirmed that the applicant is able to address the economic and demographic needs of the community;
- Engaging with partners, which includes the municipality of the City of Greater Sudbury, the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, local immigrant serving organizations, employers, and any others identified by the GSDC that may provide important perspectives on the administration of the Pilot;
- Ensuring the provision of settlement and integration activities;
- Attracting and recruiting prospective candidates from overseas or those foreign nationals already within Canada;
- Monitoring and reporting on program activities as per IRCC's request.

Community Selection Committee

At its regular meeting of September 2019, the GSDC Board approved the establishment of the Community Selection Committee using a public call-out for nominations, with a resumé and cover letter identifying the candidate's eligibility and willingness to make a two- year commitment. A copy of the signed motion is attached to this report.

Economic Development staff and three GSDC Board members then met to review the applications, interview short-listed candidates, confirm commitment, and short-list for GSDC approval, with the goal of selecting up to the members.

In line with the GSDC Board's suggestions to Council as presented at Council's meeting of September 10, 2019, this report is being brought forward to advise Council of the approach being used to establish the Community Selection Committee.

At the same meeting, the GSDC approved bridge funding from September 2019 to December 2019 to support initial roll-out of the RNIP. Funding in the amount of \$82,000 was approved through the Community Development Fund (CED) to support temporary staffing, marketing needs, and Welcome Packages for RNIP participants over the first months of program roll-out.

In-person training was conducted in October with IRCC representatives for CGS staff, GSDC Board members and members of the Community Selection Committee, together with representatives from a number of local settlement agencies and interested employers. Additional training will be provided by IRCC for members of the Community Selection Committee in early 2020 to equip them to objectively assess applications and choose candidates who have sincere intention to reside in Greater Sudbury.

As recommended by the IRCC as part of their program integrity and fraud prevention process, and in order to respect the privacy and safety of the Community Selection Committee members, their names will be kept confidential.



Pilot Year 1

Through Year 1 of the RNIP Pilot, 100 Primary Applicants, along with their families, will be eligible for Permanent Residence Status. If the program is successful in supporting these individuals in settling in the city, Greater Sudbury's annual allocation will increase from this initial 100 in Year 2 of the program.

The priority sectors for Year 1 are Mining Supply and Services, Tourism (including Restaurants and Hospitality), and all occupations and all industries if an individual has been living in the community for more than two years (as is the case for many international students now attending a local post-secondary institution).

As noted, Economic Development staff are coordinating additional recruitment efforts as part of the overall Workforce Strategy that will leverage the Pilot Program to increase immigration through other pathways, as well as increase interprovincial migration to Greater Sudbury.

Mandatory Criteria for Community Endorsement

In order to be eligible for consideration by the Community Selection Committee, an individual candidate must meet the Mandatory Criteria mandated by IRCC, including:

- **Work Experience**
 - One year of relevant continuous work experience in the past three years
 - An international student may be exempt from the work experience if his or her post-secondary program is longer than two years and he or she has spent 16 of the last 24 months in the community studying.

- **Job Offer from a Sudbury employer**
 - The job must be full time and permanent.
 - The job must be non-seasonal.
 - The wage must meet or exceed the Job Bank's minimum wage for the specific occupation.
 - The candidate must demonstrate that their past experience will allow them to perform the duties of the job offers.
- **Skill Level**
 - The job offer must be at the same skill level, 1 level above, or 1 level below the NOC (National Occupational Classification) that applies to your work experience. If your experience is in a NOC skill level D, then the job you're being offered must be in the same occupation.
- **Language Requirements**
 - Candidates must meet the language requirements based on the NOC category that applies to the job offer. This can either be the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) or Niveau de compétence linguistique canadiens (NCLC). The minimum language requirements vary depending on the occupational classification that applies to the job offer
- **Educational requirements**
 - Candidates must have a Canadian high school diploma or an educational credential assessment report showing that they have completed a foreign credential that is equal to Canadian secondary school.
- **Settlement Funds**
 - Candidates must prove they have enough money to support themselves and family members while they are getting settled in the community.
 - Candidates are exempt from settlement funds if they are already working legally in Canada when they apply.
- **Intention to live in the community**
 - To participate in the pilot, candidates must plan to live in the community.
- Candidates must receive a recommendation from the community in which they intend to reside, which is the role of the Community Selection Committee. Candidates will be ranked and chosen based on criteria that speaks to the likelihood that they will settle long-term in the community. This includes:
 - Language skills, education, and past work experience of their spouse
 - Language skills in the second official language
 - Past visit to the community
 - Family living in the community
- As part of the City's Economic Development team, the Business Development Officer - Human Capital will work with employers in the targeted industries to assess their workforce, identify recruitment opportunities, assess diversity-readiness of the business, and identify whether the RNIP is appropriate for their skills shortages.
- The Business Development Officer - Human Capital will work with employers to build the capacity of Greater Sudbury's employers to conduct international recruitment through training opportunities, workshops and so on
- Once candidates have obtained job offers and have begun the process for application to the Pilot Program, their applications will be assessed by the Community Selection Committee.

Next Steps and Recommendation

The Memorandum of Understanding between Greater Sudbury and IRCC is expected to be fully executed by November 1st 2019. The application process, community criteria and federal criteria will be published on the investsudbury.ca website in early November 2019. Applications will open in December 2019 and the first candidates will be pulled for processing in January 2020.

As part of the Economic Development team, a Business Development Officer - Human Capital has been seconded with the funding support of the GSDC in order to administer and roll out the RNIP as well as engage in other activities to support local employers in addressing workforce challenges.

In alignment with these efforts, the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) has received funding for April 2020 to March 2025 to continue to support the coordination of settlement services, identify gaps in service delivery, and engage in anti-racism initiatives. Negotiations for this funding are expected to commence after the federal election in October 2019. The Sudbury LIP continues to work and coordinate with settlement services and engage in activities that work towards ensuring that the City of Greater Sudbury is a great place for newcomers to live, work and play.

As noted previously, the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation has approved bridge funding from September 2019 to December 2019 to support initial roll-out of the RNIP. Funding in the amount of \$82,000 was approved to support temporary staffing, marketing needs, and Welcome Packages for RNIP participants.

In order to support the efforts of the RNIP pilot in Greater Sudbury, staff recommend that Council endorse the approach used to establishing the Community Selection Committee of the GSDC Board, which includes members of Council and the Board itself, together with community members who have been fully vetted through the program.

A staff-initiated business case for Budget 2020 will be brought forward for Council's consideration, to assist with staffing needs related to the RNIP, as well as to support program implementation and newcomer integration.

Staff will bring forward an update to Council in early 2020 to report on the implementation and progress of the initiative.

Resources

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/rural-northern-immigration-pilot/about.html>

<https://investsudbury.ca/how-can-we-help/immigration-options/>