

40. Creating a National Employer-Driven Immigration System

Issue

Several areas of Canada outside the major urban centres are facing a demographic challenge that is resulting in a critical labour skills shortage. The federal government can address this issue by creating a permanent, national expedited immigration system modelled after the Atlantic Immigration Pilot that meets the needs of business.

Background

Statistics Canada 2016 Census data show that many non-major urban areas of the country are struggling to grow their population. The four Atlantic Provinces, Quebec and British Columbia all have more than 18 per cent of their population over the age of 65. Based on a medium-growth scenario, StatsCan forecasts the percentage of citizens older than 65 will grow to close to 25 per cent by 2036.¹ A stagnant and aging population poses a significant challenge to economic growth – fewer new businesses are created and existing businesses have a more difficult time recruiting labour talent.

With several provinces facing a declining birth rate and an aging population, these jurisdictions are increasingly looking abroad to bolster their population and meet labour force needs.

The federal government, with support from the provinces and territories, has responded in recent years by attempting to create an expedited demand-driven entry system for newcomers. This has included development of an Express Entry program in 2015 under which skilled workers seek permanent residency.

The federal government launched a new program in March 2017 called the Atlantic Immigration Pilot. This program will allow an additional 2,000 immigrants to settle in the four Atlantic Provinces in 2017. All applicants arriving under the Pilot must have a job offer from a designated employer and an individualized settlement plan (created by the employer and an accredited settlement agency) for them and their family. Employers who extend a job offer to immigrants under this program do not require a LMIA. The Pilot has a three-year term.

The Pilot program has achieved some early and substantial success. By the end of June – three months after the Atlantic Immigration Pilot was launched – 454 employers in the four Atlantic Provinces had been designated under the program with 2,830 positions identified to be filled.² Atlantic Canada is not alone in requiring such an expedited immigration system to meet population and labour skill needs.

Recommendations

That the federal government address the demographic and labour skills needs of Canadian business by:

1. Building upon the early success of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot by extending the pilot on a national basis in 2018;
2. Applying lessons learned from these pilot programs nationally to help develop permanent flexible and streamlined employer-driven programs that meet immigration and labour skills needs on a regional basis;
3. Including provisions in the program to further partner with business when establishing settlement plans, and to expedite financial support for integration services and other retention programs to match demand to ensure the long-term success of immigration efforts in all regions.

¹ Statistics Canada 2016 Census: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/rt-td/as-eng.cfm>

² New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour – Population Growth Division, Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, Prince Edward Island Department of Economic Development and Tourism – Office of Immigration, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour – Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism

SUBMITTED BY THE GREATER MONCTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Co-sponsored by the Atlantic Provinces Chamber of Commerce

THE IMMIGRATION POLICY COMMITTEE SUPPORTS THIS RESOLUTION.