

Immigration – The Future of Economic Development in Canada

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Abstract

Currently in the Canada immigration is a highly debated issue as newcomers make up a large portion of our workforce, and it affects both governance and economic development. Since immigration is a big topic, this paper will examine policies to attract newcomers to smaller communities that need them. An aspect to the need of attracting newcomers is that most people born in small towns tend to leave for metropolitan cities. This has created a scenario where most of the municipalities in Canada could stop growing in population and economy. The solution lies in the government coming up with policies that will move immigration to smaller communities where they are needed. This paper will examine the three main areas that all levels of government are targeting newcomers to Canada with- technology, pilot projects and strategic partnerships.

Introduction

Immigration is a direct by-product of governance since the federal government creates the policy that sets number of newcomers allowed in the country. Based on 2016 Statistics Canada numbers, newcomers are making up a large portion of our workforce (Citizenship Canada). At the same time, smaller municipalities are experiencing labour shortages due to people moving to the cities. This has created a need for economic development professionals (EDPs) to find ways to attract newcomers to fill the employment void. EDPS are working with all levels of government, to set policies to provide newcomers with support. Governance and economic development play an essential role in the future of Canada; both driven by effective use of technology, pilot projects, and strategic partnerships (Citizenship Canada).

Future Ready Report

The Future Ready Report examines the key aspect that will contribute to the future of economic development. However, with all the main themes there is little emphasis put on immigration. In Canada, immigration currently stands as the primary source of population growth. To this end, for Canada, the future of economic development is going to depend on the proper governance of immigration. On the other hand, some of the aspects of the Future Ready report could apply to newcomers of Canada. In the report there is an emphasis on how technical and hospital related skills are in demand. The Future Ready Report sets out ways in which the government can re-train these individuals or use skills they have already for the emerging sectors. Many immigrants that are coming to Canada have the needed skills, so it is a matter of attracting them to areas

where they are needed most. The Future Ready report does not mention immigration as a key issue, but it can still be used, to frame governance on immigration (Potts).

During the EDCO conference, different professionals in economic development explained that it is challenging to attract newcomers to smaller communities. Newcomers tend to settle in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver since it allows them more employment opportunities as traditionally perceived. However, based on current trends there is much less opportunity in the cities than in the past. In some cases, this creates crime, poverty and other social issues. Since there is a supply of workers (immigrants), and a demand (small communities with jobs), it has created an opportunity for all involved in economic development to use good governance to find a solution (Citizenship Canada).

However, there are several roadblocks in developing a policy on immigration. Firstly, in Canada every person has the right to mobility, under the Charter of Rights and Freedom. It is almost impossible to force newcomers to move and stay in one place once they arrive in Canada. Secondly, it has been challenging to convince newcomers to move due to the lack of resources.

One of the essential tools in the fight to attract newcomers is the internet since it allows EDPs to attract immigrants directly. For this to work correctly, there must be co-operation between many different parties. Traditionally it is with one of the levels of government and employers of business but can involve more parties such as higher levels of government. The critical element to creating websites is they have to provide a lot of digitally friendly information simultaneously focusing on the essential skills the municipalities need (Citizenship Canada).

The government's policy on immigration has brought a significant number of newcomers to Canada. To some, this can be seen as a negative policy. However, this example of governance is vital to the economic development of Canada. According to Statistics Canada, 22% of the population of Canada are immigrants and are highly active in our workforce. Within the theme of immigration, it highlights the direct relationship between good governance and economic development. Since the number of immigrants is set to rise by 2020, the future of economic growth could depend on good policy on immigration (Citizenship Canada).

Technology

Attracting newcomers to areas other than Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver has been historically difficult. There have been many ways to try to entice them to move. One of the challenging parts of doing this from a governance perspective was how to reach them. However, with the use of technology municipalities can build websites that provide newcomers with more choices. These policies have been working since it allows them to communicate in their own language. This shows that an EDP plays a crucial role in coming up with a plan to focus on the needs of their municipalities to find the right fit (Citizenship Canada).

In Leeds and Grenville, they have a website focused on immigration to the area. The first noticeable thing is the text is offered in many languages such Hindi, English, French, Chinese, Arabic and Vietnamese. The importance of this is that it covers the main spoken languages of

newcomers according to Statistics Canada. It is apparent that an EDP has targeted these groups since they are most likely to settle in the community. Another important aspect is that EDPs are showing a picture of the water, which is meant to make newcomers want to move there because it looks nice. In the jobs and employment section it provides many resources available and portals for education. The overall experience of the webpage is that it provides comfort to the newcomer, due to the language options then attracts them to the landscape, and at the end tells them about the jobs. Overall the webpage highlights how an EDP uses community resources to promote relocation (Leeds & Grenville).

The website shows that technology has provided municipalities and economic development officers with tools they would not have had 30 years ago. This creates an opportunity for municipalities to attract newcomers needed for the future of their economic growth in Canada (Leeds & Grenville).

Pilot Projects

The first pilot project that is implemented by the federal government. The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot focuses on attracting newcomers to smaller communities. Key components of this project are to meet labor needs to help local economic development; and to test a new way to provide newcomers of different skill levels. By looking at immigration based on where they are needed, the government of Canada hopes to spread newcomers evenly across Canada. The pilot project deadline has passed, but it provided a chance for municipalities to sign up and benefit. The pilot project has provided smaller towns the opportunity to build their economy at a lower cost. If the project works, it will allow the towns to grow their cities by providing employers with skilled labour (Perkel).

Due to the rising number of immigrants, there has been a push for the federal government to create incentives, to attract immigrants to smaller incentives. The need for this is that 80 percent of immigrant move into the three biggest cities in Canada. At the moment the federal government has not implemented any such policy. However, the province of Manitoba has created a policy that provides incentives to newcomers to settle in smaller municipalities rather than Winnipeg. This policy has led British Columbia to create a similar incentive program. This policy sets guidelines that newcomers who are nominated have to start a business and stay in the town for one year. This initiative shows how good governance can create a chain reaction with other provinces. By doing this, the outcome could be that immigration is focused on small communities that need them, and it will drive economic development for the future.

The issue with this policy in British Columbia is that it is focusing on immigrants that have good fortune and resources. Since this program requires the newcomers to have a net worth of \$300,000 and to put at least \$100,000 into a business. Even though this pilot program seems to be an example of good governance, creating it is only providing opportunities for the very few upper class. In contrast, Manitoba's policy does not have financial restrictions, Manitoba's appears to have a better policy. There is hope since British Columbia's EDPs have said they have talked about focusing on immigrants with skilled trades.

Case studies

One main governance issue is that it can be difficult for smaller municipalities to attract newcomers. In a case study of Morden in Southern Manitoba, it highlights the struggle small towns are having with unemployment rates and finding workers. The municipality has partnered with employers to aid them in the active recruitment of newcomers. The case study provides an example of how partnerships and good governance may be the answer to spreading newcomers across the country.

Based on a case study from Simcoe County the traditional trend of newcomers only settling in big cities is changing. It shows that the county has received 650 immigrants. One of the main contributing factors to this change has been the county's local immigration partnerships which have created an online immigration portal. Simcoe County's main policy on attracting newcomers is to specifically target persons with skills that match the need of employers. The case study shows an example of how good governance and targeting specific skills promotes economic development for the future.

The importance of both case studies identify a demand for immigrants in smaller communities across Canada. By creating targeted campaigns, that focused on connecting skilled newcomers with employers it could generate growth in areas that need it the most. The contributing factor that is also driving the secondary migration is that many immigrants find it hard to find good work in cities. By implementing good governance through policies and strategic partnerships it could result economic growth (Perkel).

Strategic Partnerships

For municipalities to attract newcomers there have been many strategic partnerships formed across Canada. For small communities to survive in the future attraction of newcomers of newcomers is vital. Small communities can collaborate with neighbouring municipalities by pooling their resources to achieve the best outcome. Most of these partnerships are done within a geographical location that include the Northeastern Ontario Immigration.

Northeastern Ontario Immigration is a partnership between several municipalities within a geographical location. They provide service for immigration and highlight key aspects of each community. Their collaborative efforts to attract more newcomers is more successful people than they could on their own. In the Leeds website it has the same features but improved social media features. Northeastern Ontario shows that governance is pushing for municipalities to collaborate in order to attract newcomers.

Conclusion

Immigration is key for economic development in the coming years. There is statistical evidence showing both the decrease of people in small towns, and an increase in immigration as the

primary source of population growth. Due to this, EDPs have been implementing some strategies to solve the challenge. This has been achieved by implementing new partnerships, policies, pilot projects, the signs of good governance on the subject. Good governance plays a pivotal role to ensure newcomers find the right fit in smaller rural communities.

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