



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 13.1.2
Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee
July 18, 2024

TO: Chair and Members of the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee

FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Skilled Talent Recruitment and Retention Strategy pilot program: Final Report

ORIGIN

November 22, 2022 Regional Council motion (Item No. 16.2):

MOVED by Mayor Mike Savage, seconded by Councillor Lovelace

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a strategy with the Halifax Partnership to proactively attract, house, and retain the skilled talent required to address our economy's acute labour shortages, with a focus on skilled tradespeople and labourers needed by the construction industry for housing construction.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

March 21, 2023 Regional Council motion (Item 15.1.4)

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Disburse \$208,572 (net HST incl.) to the Halifax Partnership in 2022/23 with funding from Fiscal Services to undertake enhanced and targeted international recruitment of skilled tradespeople and labourers needed by the construction industry to build housing, and to identify how local employers can help address the housing needs of its employees; and,
2. Report back to Council in 2023/24.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Skilled Talent Recruitment and Retention Strategy pilot program was launched in June 2023 and branded as the Halifax National and International Recruitment Program. The Halifax Partnership (the Partnership) worked collaboratively with the province, industry partners, Destination Canada, and the

business community to proactively attract skilled national and international talent to Halifax to meet critical labour needs with a concerted focus on in-demand skilled trades needed in the construction sector. This report provides an overview and results of the pilot.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee:

1. Forward the staff report dated July 3, 2024 to Regional Council for information.

BACKGROUND

Unprecedented population growth in the Halifax region has resulted in increased pressure on housing supply further resulting in efforts to develop housing at an increased pace and scale to meet both current and future demands. A major factor impacting housing development is the shortage of skilled trades workers in the municipality and province. To help address this issue, and reach the long-term economic and population growth goals of [People. Planet. Prosperity. Halifax's Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy 2022-27](#), HRM provided one-time funding to Halifax Partnership in April 2023 to develop and implement a Skilled Talent Recruitment and Retention Strategy pilot program.

DISCUSSION

The Skilled Talent Recruitment and Retention Strategy pilot program began in June 2023 when a licensed immigration consultant and international recruiter joined the Partnership team to support the initiative.

Pilot objectives were identified and included:

- Identify Halifax employers' skilled labour needs and key geographic markets to target for talent recruitment.
- Identify and meet with more than 1,000 job seekers at national and international recruitment fairs.
- Streamline and support the recruitment-to-settlement processes for Halifax employers and out-of-province workers.
- Identify and recommend actions the private sector can take to address employees' housing needs.

The Partnership has completed the following actions to achieve the program objectives:

Action 1: Hired a Partnership resource to support the recruitment and hiring of national and international talent to address critical labour shortages.

The Partnership's licensed immigration consultant and international recruiter worked directly with Halifax employers and partners to:

- develop job descriptions that would attract candidates from different countries and cultural backgrounds.
- develop effective recruitment presentations and marketing materials.
- promote job opportunities and Halifax as a place to live and work.
- identify candidates that best match job requirements, pre-screen them, and provide employers with a shortlist.
- provide immigration consultation services to guide businesses and candidates through the international recruitment and hiring process including the legal, regulatory, logistical, and settlement aspects:
 - advice on permanent residence pathways for foreign workers.
 - knowledge of immigration and work permit regulations for each target country.

- advice on visa applications, housing, and cultural integration of foreign employees as needed.
- adapt employer recruitment and hiring strategies/plans to improve future talent attraction efforts.

Action 2: Developed international recruitment strategy to support Halifax employers.

The Partnership developed an international recruitment strategy to educate and support local employers in successfully attracting and hiring global talent. The Partnership's labour market team supported participating employers with the following recruitment considerations:

- Defining recruitment and hiring objectives and goals.
- Conducting market research.
- Adapting employer branding and messaging.
- Utilizing global job boards and platforms.
- Cultivating relationships with local networks and partners.
- Advertising in local and regional media.
- Leveraging social media and online channels.
- Developing partnerships with immigration and relocation experts.
- Providing cultural orientation and support.
- Monitoring and evaluating results.

Action 3: Targeted outreach to Halifax employers

The Partnership proactively reached out to over 500 Halifax businesses with a focus on construction and development related businesses to promote the pilot and encourage participation. From October-November 2023, Halifax employers submitted 35 job postings (some with multiple vacancies) for the Partnership to promote to candidates attending national and international job fairs that took place in November and December 2023 and through digital and traditional marketing (see Actions 4 and 5 for details).

Action 4: Developed and executed a marketing and communications strategy to engage local employers in the pilot and attract talent.

The Partnership developed and executed a marketing and communications strategy focused on skilled trades to engage Halifax employers (specifically those in construction and development related industries) in the pilot program and to recruit talent from key national and international markets. Digital and traditional marketing campaigns ran on Meta (Facebook and Instagram), LinkedIn, Google Display, YouTube, in-market digital billboards, and on local radio. Marketing campaigns began in late October 2023 to support the labour market team's participation in recruitment fairs happening in November and December 2023.

From October 2023 to March 2024 (the end of the recruitment phase), there were 4,614 pageviews of the employer-focused *Halifax International Recruitment Program* page on the Partnership's website and over 3,527 pageviews of the *Building Careers. Building Communities. Talent recruitment* page. Fifty-three job seekers submitted 95 applications to job openings listed on the Partnership's website. This is in addition to the thousands of applications received through the Destination Canada job portal.

Action 5: Collaborated with public and private sector partners to recruit national and international talent.

From November-December 2023, the Partnership's labour market team participated in five national and international recruitment fairs in collaboration with industry associations, the Nova Scotia departments of Labour, Skills and Immigration and Acadian Affairs, Regional Enterprise Networks, and Destination Canada.

The recruitment fairs took place in:

1. London Build Expo – London, United Kingdom
2. Destination Canada – Paris, France
3. Destination Canada – Rabat, Morocco
4. Toronto Building Show
5. Destination Canada

The labour market team met thousands of job seekers during the recruitment fairs, identifying a substantial pool of skilled trades workers and other internationally trained professionals interested in relocating and working in Halifax.

Results and Lessons Learned

Overall, the pilot program was successful in promoting Halifax to nationally and internationally trained workers, specifically those in the construction sector. Marketing and recruitment efforts generated significant interest in Halifax as a place to live and work and career opportunities available in the municipality, resulting in over 4,300 applications for job openings with participating employers.

Through the pilot, it was identified that employer readiness to recruit and hire international talent requires additional effort and support to ensure successful talent attraction. Industry and provincial and federal government partners will continue to be engaged in supporting Halifax employers in recruiting skilled trades workers to meet shortages impacting construction and development related businesses.

Pilot program results are as follows:

1. Identify Halifax employers' skilled labour needs and key geographic markets to target for talent recruitment.
 - a. Met with industry associations and proactively reached out to 500 Halifax employers to identify labour market needs, with a focus on the construction and development sector.
 - b. Collaborated with provincial and federal partners to target candidates in key geographic markets: France, Morocco, UK and Canada.
2. Identify and meet with over 1,000 job seekers at national and international recruitment fairs.
 - a. Halifax Partnership booths at the Destination Canada Mobility Forum in Paris, France and Rabat, Morocco received 6,809 visits which resulted in 4,150 applicants.
 - b. In total (from recruitment fairs and digital marketing efforts in national and international markets), Halifax Partnership received 4,388 applications for the 35 job vacancies with participating Halifax employers.
 - c. The Partnership identified 453 potential candidates and interviewed 94 of the most qualified.
 - d. 42 candidates were recommended to participating Halifax employers.
 - e. As of June 30, 2024, three employers provided job offers to candidates; two are in the construction industry.
3. Streamline and support the recruitment-to-settlement process for Halifax employers and out-of-province workers.

- a. All employers who participated in the pilot were provided with immigration recruitment and consultation services from the Partnership's licensed immigration consultant / recruiter. See Actions 1 and 2 for a summary of international recruitment and immigration consultation services provided to employers.
 - b. In addition, immigration consultation services were provided to eight Halifax Partnership business clients, including conducting follow-ups with immigration authorities regarding the application status of foreign workers.
4. Identify and recommend actions the private sector can take to address employees' housing needs.
- a. All participating employers were consulted regarding housing needs and potential solutions for international candidates.
 - b. Examples of housing solutions were shared with employers (e.g., modular housing, short-term rental options).
 - c. Employers were encouraged to connect with provincial immigrant navigators and to consult www.newinhalifax.ca for housing options and opportunities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for this report. Funding was provided for the pilot program (\$208,572 net HST incl.) as a one-time funding, financed through the 2022/23 Fiscal Services budget.

RISK CONSIDERATION

The pilot program demonstrated ways to help address a known risk in Halifax - the lack of housing to meet population demands and a shortage of skilled construction workers. It is hoped that the results from the pilot will be useful to the Nova Scotia department of Skilled Trades, Labour and Immigration, industry and trade associations and private sector to help mitigate risk.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Halifax Partnership was engaged in the writing of this report.

The municipality's five-year economic strategy, [People. Planet. Prosperity. Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-27](#), has been informed by engagements with and written submissions from more than 2,500 business leaders, residents, and partners throughout the municipality. The skilled talent and recruitment pilot program is advancing action #31 in the economic strategy's Years 3-5 Action Plan (2024-2027) – "*With industry and government partners, undertake targeted, on-the-ground recruitment efforts nationally and internationally to meet labour needs.*"

The Partnership worked with Halifax employers and industry and government partners to develop and implement the Skilled Talent Recruitment and Retention Strategy pilot program.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee could choose not to forward this report to Regional Council for information.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter 2008, c. 39, s. 2:

The purpose of this Act is to

- (b) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass bylaws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (c) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (d) recognize the purposes of the Municipality set out in Section 7A.

Under Section 71, Business and industrial development, the Municipality may:

- (a) solicit and encourage the establishment and development of new, and the establishment, development and expansion of existing institutions, industries and businesses in and around the Municipality;
- (b) publicize the advantages of the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for the establishment and expansion of institutions, industries and businesses;
- (c) pay grants to a body corporate for the purpose of promoting the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for institutions, industries and businesses;
- (d) prepare and disseminate information about the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas for the assistance of institutions, industries and businesses intending to locate or expand in the Municipality or the surrounding area.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments.

Report Prepared by: Denise A. Ryan, Senior Policy Advisor, Government Relations & External Affairs,
902.877.4870
