



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

COUNCIL REPORT

April 7, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council

AUTHOR: Travis Anderson, Director Tourism and Community
Development

DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services

RE: Community Development Fund Application, Economic
Development Stream – Rural Community Immigration
Program

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations to Council on allocating Community Development Funds – Economic Development Stream, for administration of the Rural Community Immigration Program (RCIP).

Background

The Rural Community Immigration Pilot program offers a pathway to permanent residence (PR) to skilled workers who want to work and settle in rural communities. On January 31, 2025, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced that Sault Ste. Marie was selected as one of 18 communities across Canada to participate in RCIP, a program that replaces the former Rural Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP). RNIP was a highly successful program that assisted 248 local businesses in addressing their labour shortages by attracting 1,031 skilled foreign workers and 853 dependents to the community. Staff are optimistic that throughout the five years that RCIP will operate (2025 – 2030), it will produce similar results for local employers and the community.

By offering a pathway to permanent residence for skilled foreign workers, RCIP will help strengthen the local workforce and provide businesses with greater capacity to recruit and retain skilled talent. The aim is to attract over 1500 skilled professionals and their families to Sault Ste. Marie by promoting the program's benefits. The attraction and retention of a younger workforce will add to the resilience and diversity of the community and mitigate potential impacts as an older workforce transitions out of the working economy. Key criteria and expected outcomes of the program are listed below:

Key Criteria:

- To attract significant investment and employment to Sault Ste. Marie;
- To further diversify the local economy;

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- To increase the municipality's tax base.

Project outcomes:

Attracting and retaining newcomers to Northern Ontario

- 1,500 skilled workers attracted over five years (300/year);
- Assist 200+ new and existing local businesses;
- Maintaining ten partnerships with post-secondary and community service organizations locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally;
- Support Sault Ste. Marie's physician recruitment team in hiring physicians and healthcare workers.

To successfully administer the program, staff will replicate activities executed during RNIP. These activities include marketing and promotion within Canada and abroad, attendance at career fairs locally and externally to the community, active engagement with employers, and staff support with application processing.

The expected cost to administer the program for five years is \$1,025,000; however, FedNor has committed to funding ninety percent of the program costs, up to a maximum of \$922,500. The city must provide the remaining ten percent, or \$102,500. Staff are seeking approval from Council to allocate \$102,500 from the Community Development Fund's Economic Development Stream for our portion of the costs.

Analysis

Staff's application to the Community Development Fund — Economic Development Fund to support the implementation of RCIP is based on its alignment with the criteria listed below.

Program Overview

The Economic Growth Community Improvement Plan – Economic Development Fund stream aims to diversify the local economy and stimulate job growth by attracting new businesses and expanding existing ones.

The key program criteria are as follows:

- To attract significant investment and employment to Sault Ste Marie;
- To further diversify the local economy;
- To increase the municipality's tax base;
- To capitalize upon the significant investments that were made to acquire and service some industrial lands within the Project area.

At the Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors meeting on March 24, 2025, the funding application for the administration of the RCIP program was reviewed. In recognition of the positive economic impact RCIP will have on the local economy, the Board of the EDCE passed the following resolution:

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Resolved that the request for EDF funding from the Economic Development Corporation in the amount of \$102,500 for Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP) be recommended for approval.

With the support of the EDC Board, staff have brought forth the application to Council for consideration.

Financial Implications

No new funds are needed, as the available balance of the CDF is \$1,249,350.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

This item supports the Corporate Strategic Plans Focus Area:

- Community Development and Partnership focus on Maximizing Economic Development and Investment with the commitment to maintain financial viability.
- Community Development – Develop partnerships with key stakeholders and reconciliation.

There are no climate change impacts associated with this report.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Director of Tourism and Community Development, dated April 7, 2025, be received and that Council approve \$102,500 from the Community Development Fund towards administration of the RCIP program.

Respectfully submitted,

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