

Canadian NEWCOMER

How Do Immigrants Benefit from LIPs?



Small communities all over the country are beginning to put The Local Immigration Partnership (LIPs) Program into action.

As a newcomer, what do you get out of it?

Communities across Canada face a common dilemma - the need for growth to maintain and expand their local economies. Communities that don't do anything to attract, include and employ new residents are probably doomed, in the long term, to dwindle away.

Canada's birth rate has been going down steadily since the early 1960s. With the baby boomers now near retirement, the made-in-Canada workforce would not be nearly large enough to maintain the country's infrastructure (e.g., schools, hospitals, housing, roads), resources (e.g., food, water, electricity), and jobs. There wouldn't be enough money left for the government to cover quality-of-life costs including health care, employment insurance and pensions.

The only way to maintain the high standard of living that Canadians are used to - and believe they deserve - is through immigration. This is why immigrants now represent more than 100% of the workforce growth in Canada.

The other main threat to the existence of smaller communities is urbanization. Canada's traditionally rural society has been growing more urban with each passing year, as adults born and raised in small communities move to larger cities. And to complicate this, the vast majority of immigrants are settling in urban areas.

Often the only ones moving out of the cities are Canadians who don't like change. Feeling threatened by the increasing influence of foreign cultures, they sometimes move to smaller communities in efforts to maintain features of their lifestyles they value. It is not uncommon for them to give up the conveniences of the city in exchange for a simpler, more traditionally "Canadian" lifestyle, and then to blame immigration for their loss of those city conveniences - to feel that they were "driven out of their old neighbourhoods". The more intent they become on preserving what they see as Canadian culture, the more hostile they are likely to be towards people from other cultures. Likewise, some people born and raised in small communities have had little contact with people from other countries, and are not used to the idea of accepting them into their communities. This can create barriers where none should exist.

The Welcoming Communities and LIP initiative directly address these concerns by educating residents of smaller communities about what they will gain when more immigrants move into their areas. Once people realize that the newcomers are seldom competing with them for jobs - but instead are taking the vacant jobs so that the communities can continue to grow and thrive - resistance to change starts to break down. As immigrants settle in and become valued contributors to the communities, diversity

starts to become a positive idea rather than something to be feared and protested against. Even communities that don't receive federal funding recognize the value of newcomers, and actively work to attract immigrants by creating websites, employment and education networks, and by putting services in place to serve the new population. As people work to make their communities more welcoming, minds and hearts are opened and what citizens may have first perceived as a threat - clearly reveals itself as a blessing - contributing to a growing population, a healthier economy and a more worldly and vibrant cultural scene. And evidence shows that this approach is working - and is creating opportunities for immigrants across Canada.

Smaller centres offer bigger opportunities

Canada's economy has always been based on natural resources. Oil, mining, farming, pulp and paper, fishing, hydro-electricity and fresh water are all major parts of the Canadian economy. With so many people moving to cities, people willing to live and work in remote communities are getting harder to find. Canada still needs people in the field to gather these resources and bring them to market: miners, foresters, farmers, engineers, logistic and warehouse technicians - professionals from many fields. There is a whole second level of employment that involves providing services to those communities, including healthcare, transportation, teachers, and service industry employees.

Modern technology is now available in some of the remotest places in the world. Things that were once luxuries, like electricity and indoor plumbing have long since become necessities. And 21st century leaps forward in telecommunications have brought television, cell phones and web connectivity to rural areas and isolated communities across Canada, so you'll almost never be out of touch with your loved ones or your ethnic community.

People who move to smaller centres gain experience, often get promoted to higher positions more quickly - and in fact, studies have shown that - because of their education and qualifications that enable them to fill key positions, immigrants who settle in smaller communities are often doing better within five years than Canadians who live in the same communities.

You get to establish a very comfortable Canadian lifestyle. If you want, you can then take your experience to a larger urban centre - move back to the city and do much better than you would have done if you had moved straight to the city in the first place.

But you'd probably be surprised by the number of people who - once they have established themselves as valuable members of society in the smaller centres - treasure their safe, calm lifestyle and the opportunities it offers to all the members of their family... and who settle down happily as citizens not just of Canada, but of Kenora or Wood Buffalo or Antigonish or Prince Albert.

The LIP program isn't just good for Canada, or for any of those small communities. It's good for you, if you plan to settle in one of them.

This story is from the "Local Immigration Partnerships" InfoBlock. To read more stories on this topic, click [here](#).

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