



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation
Division: Economic Development
Report Number: 2020-277-Planning, Development and Recreation
Prepared By: Bob Peters, Division Manager
Meeting Date: February 24, 2020
Subject: Attracting Remote Workers

Purpose

To provide Council with a report regarding a strategy to attract and retain remote workers.

Recommendation

That Council receive Report 2020-277-PDR.

Financial Implications

Current resident attraction efforts are included in the 2020 Economic Development budget.

Strategic Priority Implications

Attraction of new residents is a major component of the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan which was adopted in 2016. This report also addresses the economic development and workforce attraction components of Council's strategic priorities for 2019-2022.

Background / Discussion

Defining Remote Work

A remote worker is someone who works from a non-traditional location rather than commute to the office. This is most often someone who works from home, or could choose to rent a co-working space (eg a desk rented by the hour). In most instances, remote workers are required to spend some time in the office, perhaps as often as once or twice a week.

Remote work, alternatively called 'telecommuting' or 'alternative workplace arrangements' can provide benefits to both the employer and the employee. The benefit to the company is less office space requirement, as less employees in the office requires fewer dedicated desks. The benefit to the employee, especially in large cities, is avoiding long commutes. For some workers whose employer accommodates flex time, an additional benefit is the ability to accommodate personal lifestyle needs, such as caring for family members or dealing with an illness.

Flex work is a closely related term that speaks to flexible working arrangements that may exist between an employer and employee, such as different hours of work, and could include the concept of remote work.

Contract work, sometimes also referred to as the 'gig economy' speaks primarily to people who choose to take on short-term contract employment rather than full-time permanent work. Many contract workers also choose to work remotely.

Remote Work in the Workforce

Remote work, flex work and the gig economy are trendy topics that have caught the eye of many organizations, employers and workers.

The federal government has a policy for accommodating alternative workplace arrangements, as does MPAC. Some professionals, such as realtors, split time between work and home offices. A Conference Board of Canada report from 2010 quotes a survey that found 70% of full-time workers aged 18–29 would be more satisfied in their jobs if they could work remotely using cloud software.

Still, not every company or worker is prepared to consider remote work options. Concerns may include productivity and innovation gaps due to lack of collaboration and teamwork.



According to the 2016 Census, 6% of Canadians worked at home in 2016; 7.4% if farming is included. This represented a continuing decline in remote workers from previous surveys in 2008 and 2010.

In Cornwall, the number of people working from home in 2016 was 3.7%.

The federal government did consultations on flexible work arrangements, which include telework, and released a report in 2016. The lack of data on telework/flexible work was cited as an issue.

Although more recent Census numbers will not be available until after the 2021 Census, anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of remote workers in Cornwall has increased in recent years.

Cornwall offers a number of benefits to remote workers who may consider relocating from other communities, such as lower cost housing compared to larger centres such as Ottawa and Montreal and access to high-speed internet services. Cornwall is a full service city that offers an enviable lifestyle that is rewarding without the headaches of large urban centres. At the same time, remote workers in Ottawa, Montreal and/or Toronto may find these benefits offset by the need to travel long distances on the occasions where they are required at the office, a cost employers may not cover.

Economic Development Strategy

Cornwall's Economic Development Strategy was updated in 2016, and touches on the main activity areas of the department. These include marketing, business retention and expansion and development of the Cornwall Business Park, amongst other things. Bringing new investment into Cornwall and helping existing companies expand in Cornwall is the cornerstone of any successful economic development program.

The Strategic Plan recognizes that one of the potential barriers to growth in Cornwall relates to workforce and for the past several years major employers and investors have identified a concern over workforce supply. A key action plan in the Strategic Plan is to attract people; as population growth is seen as necessary to sustain Cornwall's overall economy.

When Council established its Strategic Priorities for 2019-2022, it identified a priority as *Attracting, enhancing workforce that meets demands of local employers*. A second priority was *Economic development and pursuing diverse*

population growth of 50,000, under which a secondary objective was identified to attract remote workers.

Current Resident Attraction Efforts

Cornwall Economic Development has increasingly focused much of its marketing efforts over the past several years on attracting young workers and families to the city. This has been precipitated for two reasons: to accommodate the needs of local employers and to seek to address the fact that the average age of Cornwall residents is approximately 5 years above the national average.

Although as many as 10% of Canadians may change residences in any given year, most do not significantly move from city to city on a regular basis. A number of factors often act as anchors in keeping residents in one community.

If people do relocate to another community they often do so for a small set of reasons, such as going away to school, starting a new job or moving closer to family. People are more likely to move when they are younger and have not set down roots, when they retire, or when they are pursuing a new career.

Migration trends in Canada suggest that larger urban centres are growing while many smaller urban and rural communities are struggling with stagnant or shrinking populations. For cities with a strong economy such as Cornwall, this has led to increasing concerns over workforce availability.

At the current time, over 200 jobs are unfilled in Cornwall, and an additional new 400 jobs will need to be filled within the next six months. These jobs are in a wide range of sectors, requiring a variety of skill sets and, in many cases, paying well above average wages. These jobs are needed to accommodate the growth of many of Cornwall's largest employers, as well as to replace workers who have reached retirement age.

Employers warn that without access to workers and skilled labour, future investment may be difficult to secure.

This demand for new jobs continues an established trend of job growth over the past several years. From 2010 to 2017 the number of people earning employment income in Cornwall increased by 9%, a figure above the National average (see attached graph) and well above urban centres of similar sizes.



Web and Social Media

The ChooseCornwall.ca website was developed to promote Cornwall as an excellent place to live, work and invest. The site is the cornerstone of our marketing efforts and includes a wide range of information for new residents as well as business investors. It also includes a robust news section where over 200 stories celebrate local business success each year.

A couple of years ago, an online job board was added to provide easy access to local employment opportunities. This job board is praised as being innovative and a welcome resource to local recruiters. Staff is not aware of any municipality providing the same comprehensive service.

Activity on the ChooseCornwall.ca website this year is up over 190% compared to 2019 and information requests in the first 6 weeks have already surpassed the entire amount from 2019. The majority of the requests are from individuals looking to relocate to Cornwall.

The ChooseCornwall.ca website is supported by two other websites: CornwallTourism.com and BusinessEnterpriseCentre.ca. A close link exists between all three sites in recognition that tourism activity and entrepreneurship are two popular pathways to introducing Cornwall to new residents.

Online activity is further bolstered with very strong social media presences. The ChooseCornwall.ca is the largest Facebook group and posts on that platform, as well as Twitter and Instagram deliver excellent reach.

Immigration

In 2016, a separate website was created specifically for newcomers. ImmigrationCornwall.ca offers detailed information on immigration and other settlement factors.

In 2019, the Province of Ontario announced that Cornwall would be one of three communities participating in a Regional Immigration Pilot that is part of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. Although the program has yet to be formally open, Cornwall Economic Development has already received over 150 requests for information from people seeking a pathway to permanent residency.

Career and Job Fairs

For the past several years, the Cornwall Economic Development has participated in the National Job Fair in Montreal where each year staff speak with hundreds of



job seekers who are interested in leaving the Montreal area and relocating to a smaller community.

Cornwall Economic Development also supports the Medical Recruitment effort which profiles the city at a variety of events each year. Cornwall Economic Development will be taking a more formal role in this effort and will be attending medical recruitment fairs to provide information on living and working in Cornwall.

In 2019, the Department attended three university career fairs in Toronto, St. John's and Kingston. The results were very positive: the variety of local employment opportunities were a good fit for graduates, and students leaving post-secondary education are often willing and able to consider relocating for employment. In many instances, Cornwall has been the only municipality attending these fairs.

Also in 2019, Cornwall joined Kingston and Ottawa to support STUFF, a new magazine aimed at helping guidance counsellors, students and young job seekers to consider staying in Eastern Ontario and pursuing employment opportunities in the region. At Cornwall's suggestion, the organizers of STUFF have organized the first ever STUFF Job and Career Fair, to be held in March 2020.

These efforts were, in part, successful in helping local employers fill over 700 new jobs in 2019.

In 2020, the Department will attend several additional career fairs, in addition to once again exhibiting at the National Job Fair. These efforts are backed up by a comprehensive advertising and social media campaign and are supported by an expanded lineup of brochures and information resources that include a newly redesigned Career Guide, a New Residents Guide and a Newcomers Guide.

As the needs of local employers rise, and enrolment at St. Lawrence College continues to increase, a concern over available apartment and housing has been noted.

Remote Worker Attraction Strategy

Cornwall's current resident attraction resources and marketing efforts are targeted at young and skilled workers, regardless of whether they work in traditional workplaces or have alternative arrangements.



The focus remains on celebrating the vibrant quality of life in Cornwall, local sports and cultural amenities, and the affordable nature of community. Those efforts will continue and be expanded in 2020.

In speaking with thousands of young people over the past few years who have expressed an interest in moving to Cornwall, remote work has not been identified as being a major topic of interest. It does not appear to be a major focus of post secondary education institutions or other stakeholder institutions - certainly not to the same degree as is immigration. Despite this, the key messages of our resident attraction efforts are also of interest to remote workers, and our focus in 2020 is to reach more people in key metropolitan centres.

Although the Economic Development Strategic Plan does not specifically address remote workers, anecdotal evidence suggests that Cornwall may be an attractive option for remote workers. To accommodate that interest, new information specifically targeted at remote workers has been added to the ChooseCornwall.ca website, and the redesigned New Resident Guide will include a section on remote work when it is released in March.

Furthermore, Cornwall Economic Development will seek to leverage its partnership with the Ottawa Business Journal to reach young professionals in the Ottawa area with targeted messages in both advertising and editorial channels.

The Department continues to support local publications that celebrate life and have external reach, including, but not limited to, Cornwall Tribute and Perch magazines. The 2020 Cornwall Living magazine will also continue to include articles aimed at attracting new young people.

The Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre will continue to promote its services and the popular Starter Company Plus program via a new website to be launched in the second quarter of 2020.

Cornwall Tourism will also be launching a newly designed website in the second quarter of 2020 that will offer enhanced visuals and information on visiting and enjoying life in Cornwall.

Cornwall Economic Development will also be leveraging its partnership with the Ontario East Economic Development Commission in its efforts to attract more residents to the region. Staff will be attending an Ontario East event on March 5 in Peterborough where the topic will be front and centre.



Finally, CREATE will soon be fully established at the Cotton Mill with a new focus on providing co-working space and other services. Promotion of co-working space is one strategy to support remote workers in connecting to their new community and helping to prevent social isolation. Cornwall Economic Development is prepared to support CREATE to promote and deliver information to remote workers about the new development.

Cornwall's resident attraction strategy is inclusive, in that it seeks to reach job seekers, entrepreneurs, young families, immigrants and remote workers – amongst others. Throughout all of the above marketing efforts, information will be collected and will serve to help direct future efforts.

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| Document Title: | Attracting Remote Workers - 2020-277-Planning, Development and Recreation.docx |
| Attachments: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minutes-Away-AD.jpg- OBJ City Ad PROOF.pdf- Average Urban Centre Growth Rate of Persons Earning Employment Income 2010-2017.pdf |
| Final Approval Date: | Feb 18, 2020 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Mark A. Boileau - Feb 14, 2020 - 1:35 PM

Tracey Bailey - Feb 16, 2020 - 9:17 AM

Maureen Adams - Feb 18, 2020 - 11:46 AM