



FRED MORLEY

HIRING IMMIGRANTS CREATES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Those who like Halifax, like it a lot.

For those of us who have already chosen to work and live in Greater Halifax, we might well consider adapting a long-standing advertising slogan from a great, local brewer: Those who like Halifax, like it a lot.

What many businesses and residents don't realize is that Halifax is at risk of losing its way of life, not because of the recession or lack of jobs, but rather because of lack of people. There's a war for talent brewing and Halifax needs to be ready for a fight.

How do we solve that problem? One path is welcoming and embracing immigrants into our businesses and neighbourhoods. It isn't good enough to be a Port of Entry. We need to be the destination and have them drop anchor and stay a while.

SmartBusiness, our business retention and expansion program, is the backbone of the Partnership and the pulse of Greater Halifax's business community. Our account team has met with more than 1,800 businesses and of these organizations half indicated they were having some problems recruiting staff.

Two years ago with HRM we created the Greater Halifax Talent Strategy. One of its key pillars is the attraction and retention of immigrants.

Second, working with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association, RBC Royal Bank, HRM and Convergys, the Partnership launched a thought provoking, broad-based traditional marketing campaign called Immigration Works in Halifax to lead employers to a new website called www.immigrationworksinalifax.ca. It contains links to information on the benefits of hiring an immigrant, how to hire an immigrant and what the Partnership can do help navigate the hiring process.

Our Employer Support Program, a third initiative, consists of an account executive who is a well-educated immigrant herself. She provides employers with information,

highlights the benefits of hiring immigrants and how to start the process. She has assisted more than 100 employers.

Fourth, with the support of the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies (ALLIES), a project of the Maytree Foundation and The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Partnership has launched the Halifax Connector Program, which puts newcomers to our city directly in touch with business owners and operators, managers, civil servants and community leaders. It's a simple, but effective referral process.

Pat d'Entremont, a partner at Nicom IT Solutions, says, "I was proud to be the first

Halifax Connector, but I'm one of thousands of well-connected people who can help talented immigrants expand their business networks. It seems like a natural thing to do."

Immigration is one of the ways to avert the perfect storm. We have to understand that if we want to continue to live the lifestyle we currently enjoy, we have to attract and anchor more people here. There's no other option. ✕

Fred Morley is the Executive Vice President and Chief Economist Greater Halifax Partnership.

The Greater Halifax Partnership is the catalyst for economic growth and confidence in Greater Halifax, the economic hub of Atlantic Canada.



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