

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

East Kootenay communities unsuccessful with Immigration Pilot Program

A regional working group, made up from regional Chambers of Commerce, College of the Rockies and local economic development agencies will not be receiving what they were hoping for this season. In July 2024, Community Futures East Kootenay (CFEK), on behalf of the communities of Cranbrook, Kimberley, Fernie, Creston, Revelstoke, Golden and the Columbia Valley applied to the Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP) Program. The aim of the application was to join this federally run immigration pilot program, that would allow local businesses to help employees gain permanent residency in Canada.

The group received notice from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) today that they were unsuccessful with their bid to bring the program to the East Kootenay. The list of successful communities has not been released by the IRCC yet, but it is understood there was high interest in the program and only 15 communities across Canada were chosen to take part.

CFEK General Manager Kerstin Renner said they were disappointed with the outcome. “This program would have made it easier for our local businesses to advocate for their workers and provide a fast-track for permanent residency. With the many changes currently happening to immigration pathways, the RCIP program would have been a real support for businesses facing labour shortages in our rural communities.” Renner emphasized RCIP was not designed to be an international recruitment program. Rather, it is aimed at individuals who are already in the community, are working or have studied here and now want to make the region their permanent home and bring their families here.

With changes to the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and the Postgraduate Work Permits for International Students, options available to employees wanting to gain permanent residency in our rural communities has become harder in the past months. “Despite this not being the outcome we were looking for, what this process has accomplished is that we now have a dedicated group of individuals and organizations around the table that will continue to work and advocate for the needs of local businesses and newcomers in our community,” Renner said.

For employers and employees looking to work in Canada, the IRCC has links on their website:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada.html>

For Further Information Please Contact:

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