

Immigrant investor help sought

Fed road show hears pitch for better programs

By Don Lajoie, The Windsor Star

August 2, 2012



Citizenship and Immigration Canada parliamentary secretary MP Chungsen Leung speaks with stakeholders during a public consultation Wednesday. Photograph by: Nick Brancaccio, The Windsor Star, The Windsor Star

Local business groups and agencies working with recent arrivals to Canada met with the federal government's travelling road show on immigration Wednesday to push for better programs for newcomers to address Windsor and Essex County's workforce needs.

Chungsen Leung, parliamentary secretary for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, met about a dozen local "stakeholders" on the immigration file and after the meeting said the consultations, held at the CIC offices on Walker Road, had proven useful as the government goes about setting future immigration policy, taking into consideration the differing situations of each region.

Leung said the economy of Windsor and Essex County offers "unique" challenges and opportunities because of the importance of agriculture, with its needs for migrant

workers, the requirements of the manufacturing base, including the auto sector, and the proximity to the U.S. border. He added that was why it was important to get the perspective of business leaders, academics and groups working with immigrants.

Leung said the meetings are meant to address the appropriate level of immigration and the most suitable mix among the categories of economic, family, humanitarian and refugee classes. The talks were also to focus on ways to develop a faster, more flexible and more efficient immigration system.

Gordon Moore, treasurer of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said his organization would continue to press its case for a pilot project to attract immigrant investors and entrepreneurs to the region. He said the idea received a "positive hearing" from parliamentary secretary to Immigration Minister Rick Dykstra last winter and the chamber took the opportunity to reinforce the message Wednesday.

"We delivered our message to do the pilot project for immigrant entrepreneurs," he said. "Over 250,000 immigrants come to Canada and the entrepreneur class represents between 3,000 to 4,000 of them."

He said, given this area's portion of the overall Canadian population, that could mean the region would be in line to receive 35 people in that business class and that could mean \$1.6 million each in investments. He said the program would offer those potential investors counselling on how to go into business in the area, ongoing mentoring to help them become competitive and help them work with financial institutions to secure loans.

"It's a win-win situation," he said. "The chamber would work with them on a business plan to make them successful."

Clayton Smith, vice-provost of the University of Windsor, said he took advantage of the meeting to press for a greater partnership between postsecondary institutions and Citizenship and Immigration to formulate programs that "impact the quantity and quality" of international students coming to Canada and to help those who qualify to remain as permanent residents or citizens.

He said he would go away from the meeting "hopeful" that new immigration policies should be a future focus of the government "to build a stronger Canada."

He described the closed-door meeting as general in nature.

Kathleen Thomas, executive director of the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, said it was important for her organization to bring its perspective to the consultation process.

"Windsor is a very diverse community," she said. "We wanted to discuss the needs of immigrants to have their (foreign work) credentials recognized and break down the barriers for family unification. We need ways to help them find work."

She said the representatives from Ottawa listened to the ideas of the participants but offered few details about where policy might be headed.

© Copyright (c) The Windsor Star