



Committee Report

To: Warden Mitch Twolan
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Kara Van Myall
Director of Planning and Development

Date: October 15, 2020

Re: Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy (2021 - 2025)

Staff Recommendation:

That the Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy (2021 - 2025) report be received; and,

That the Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy (2021 -2025) and recommended actions as outlined be endorsed as the County's Strategy for Workforce Development and Attraction.

Background:

The continued success of Bruce County relies heavily on the collective capacity to attract and retain a skilled workforce. A strong and committed workforce will support the long-term growth of Bruce County communities and build a foundation for continued prosperity into the future. The County's long-term economic success depends on the strength of businesses in their efforts to attract, retain, and build skills in order to stay open, expand, and hand over to the next generation. It is with this spirit in mind, that the Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy titled "Find Your Career in Bruce County", was built. This Strategy will guide collective efforts through 2025 and set the stage for a solid future.

Two committee reports were brought forward on this initiative as it was being researched and developed. On April 16th, 2020, the "Workforce Attraction Strategy Phase 1 Update" was presented which delivered the research to form the basis for the overall strategy. On June 18th, 2020 the "Workforce Attraction Strategy" report was presented. It illustrated the additional research compiled and acknowledged newly added recommended actions to further address the evolution of challenges related to workforce and to move the Strategy forward.

To recap the highlights of the initial research, the County is facing several workforce challenges, including:

- a shrinking labour pool;
- a significant amount of outbound youth migration;

- a mismatch between skills needed and those currently available; and
- a number of issues related to specific sectors.

Companies are struggling to grow their businesses because they are unable to fill vacant positions, hire the skills they need, or have difficulty executing their succession plans. Primarily, these challenges are related to the shortage of workers in Bruce County. Long-term sustainability of businesses requires addressing these challenges now.

Workforce Development & Attraction Strategy Preamble:

The Workforce Development and Attraction Strategy was created to grow and support the local labour force, spur business growth, and advance an inclusive community willing and able to take on the challenges of today and tomorrow. This Strategy explores innovative ways of attracting, retaining, and training employees, which will help employers overcome labour force challenges.

Grounded in the latest data and research, this Strategy describes the current climate, including service area gaps; verified and further refined through consultation with local industry stakeholders and community organizations. It further defines the short, medium, and long-term actions needed to address these labour force realities. Advancing these actions over the next 5 years will position the County, its businesses, and its workforce to support the next generation and strengthen the Bruce economy.

Feedback received at the June 18, 2020 meeting has been taken into consideration and suggested actions have been added within the Strategy, i.e. the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and message alignment in the Explore the Bruce campaign to brand Bruce County as not just a place to visit, but also to live and work.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impact:

The impacts of COVID-19 are still ongoing, and the immediate future is currently undetermined, but the businesses in the region are making every effort possible to move forward in a safe and productive way. Businesses are being proactive and taking advantage of existing grants to pivot, adapt or alter their business models to meet current demands. This is why, “Continuous Data Collection” one-prong of the 4-pronged approach to successful workforce development, is so important.

The following reports are a snapshot in time as to the current research that is being undertaken as part of the actions under “Continuous Data Collection”.

1. The Four County Labour Market Planning Board reported on September 4th 2020 that the unemployment rate for the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region (The Region) increased by 0.1 percentage point to 8.7% in August. At the same time, the provincial unemployment rate decreased by 0.7 percentage points to 12.1%.” The Region still maintains a significant difference (3.4%) from the provincial average in regard to our unemployment rate. The 2020 Employer One survey for Bruce County indicated that 59% of employers experienced hard to fill positions in 2019 and 26% have spent over a year trying to fill these positions. This continues to demonstrate the challenges in the Region.

2. The Rural Ontario Institute's reports in "COVID-19 Impact on Rural Employment: Ontario in the Canadian context in August 2020" that rural employment increased by 1.5% in Ontario from July to August, 2020, as compared to a 2.1% increase in urban areas. This is showing promising signs that our economy is slowly starting to turn around but again off from the provincial average.
3. The Statistics Canada's report "Then and now: Participation rates in college and university studies of 18- to 24-year-olds", participation in college and university studies among young adults aged 18 to 24 years increased by 29% in Canada between 2000/2001 and 2018/2019. Specific to Ontario, there was an increase of 34% to 47% of young adults that are now participating in Post Secondary Education. This further identifies what is happening to the current workforce supply as more young adults are pursuing further educational studies. According to Statistics Canada, 48% of students lost jobs or were temporarily laid off and 26% worked reduced hours who had jobs before the start of the pandemic. 49% of students lost job prospects going into the start of the spring/summer season which is traditionally a large market for students to build their financial reserves for the coming fall in pursuit of their post-secondary education.
4. The Government of Ontario COVID-19 Impact Survey is in progress closing September 30th 2020. The results will be forthcoming and could be analysed against the Bruce County Covid-19 Business Impact survey to gain further understanding of workforce related issues. The Conference Board of Canada, in partnership with the Future Skills Centre, is formulating a job transitions database that will provide different stakeholders with a unique tool for labour market planning.

There are many actions, initiatives, surveys, and reviews in process at the moment and it will be necessary to closely monitor for results and pursue opportunities when presented.

Conclusion:

The Workforce Development and Attraction Strategy highlights short, medium, and long-term actions. The priority in the short-term is to continue to stay abreast of and understand the current and future labour market needs. The medium-term will help bridge the gaps between education and skills in order to attract more people to the workforce. And finally, the long-term actions will support communities and employers in retaining their current workforce alongside continuing to attract the desired workforce.

Similar labour market challenges exist across the Province and the Country, so a concentrated effort by all levels of government and employers will help to overcome these challenges allowing for the continued growth and prosperity of the region. In addition to the coordination needed at the broader regional level, it is important to acknowledge that the greatest impact on workforce development can occur when there is coordination between the County, the local municipalities, and the local business community. Bruce County's Macro Approach will support the coordination of collaborative efforts.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

In January 2020, Bruce County was successful in obtaining Rural Economic Development (RED) program funding to supplement the Workforce Attraction Strategy and the \$70,000 will be used to support the implementation of the actions around attraction and retention of newcomers and immigrants. The Province is supportive of carrying over this funding to support the realities of project advancement in light of the restrictions related to COVID-19.

In February 2020, Bruce County applied for Rural Economic Development (RED) program funding for the Bruce County Skills Training and Development Plan Implementation project for the amount of \$34,000. Funding became available October 1st, 2020 for this project and the implementation of the related actions are underway.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

None


Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal #3 Find creative new ways to engage our public

Goal #7 Stimulate and reward innovation and economic development

Written by: Pierre Valley and Manpreet Kaur Sangha, Economic Development Officer's,
Planning and Development

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Datars Bere". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandra" being the most prominent.

Sandra Datars Bere
Chief Administrative Officer