

British Columbia News

Immigration pilot program helps drive economic growth

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/19170>

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Courtenay - B.C. will benefit from a new immigration pathway that will help spur economic growth in smaller centres throughout the province.

The Province has launched a new Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) Entrepreneur Immigration Regional Pilot. The pilot is focused on attracting entrepreneurs from around the world to establish businesses in regional communities. This will help meet the communities' economic development needs and encourage investments outside urban areas.

“Due to an aging workforce and a preference for city living, some smaller towns can face challenges growing their local economies,” said Bruce Ralston, Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology. “This pilot will attract new businesses that create jobs and spread investment around the province so more British Columbians can benefit from shared prosperity.”

The B.C. PNP is the Province's only direct economic immigration tool to attract experienced entrepreneurs and high-demand foreign workers. It provides a permanent immigration pathway for people who choose to live and work in B.C.

“Courtenay and Comox offer diverse economies and an attractive lifestyle for newcomers and their families,” said Ronna-Rae Leonard, MLA for Courtenay-Comox. “The Entrepreneur Immigration Regional Pilot will help us attract the right investments, skills and people to help the region thrive.”

The City of Courtenay and the Town of Comox were among the first of more than 30 communities to join the pilot. To be eligible to participate, a community must have settlement and business supports in place to help newcomers successfully integrate.

“It is important to expand economic and employment opportunities in the Comox Valley,” said Bob Wells, chair of the Comox Valley Regional District. “By supporting foreign entrepreneurs, we are one step closer to a stronger, more dynamic community.”

The new pilot complements the existing PNP Entrepreneur Immigration base category that is currently in place, but has different financial criteria to reflect the lower cost of starting a business in a smaller centre.

“The Comox Valley continues to be one of the fastest growing regions in the province,” said Russ Arnott, mayor of Comox. “We want to attract new people and new businesses to drive economic growth and job creation.”

B.C. is an attractive place for newcomers from around the world who are looking to establish a business and begin a new life in a small centre.

“After looking throughout B.C. we saw great potential to run a business here in Courtenay,” said Zhengfu Zhao, local business owner. “My family was able to start this wonderful journey because of the B.C. Provincial Nominee Program, and we're incredibly proud to have established roots here and grown our restaurant in Comox Valley.”

The pilot will be delivered for an initial two-year period.

Learn More:

To learn more about the B.C. Provincial Nominee Program, visit:

www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/B-C-Provincial-Nominee-Program

To learn more about the participating communities, visit:

<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/BC-PNP-Entrepreneur-Immigration/EI-Regional-Pilot-Community-Profiles>

To read the release in traditional Chinese, visit:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BC_PNP_Entrepreneur_Immigration_Regional_Pilot_Chinese.PDF

To read the release in Punjabi, visit:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BC_PNP_Entrepreneur_Immigration_Regional_Pilot_Punjabi.PDF

A backgrounder follows.

Media Contacts

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Backgrounders

Information on the B.C. Provincial Nominee Program Entrepreneur Immigration Regional Pilot

The following municipalities and areas within three regional districts around B.C. are participating in the pilot. Additional communities will be added as they enrol:

- Barriere
- Burns Lake
- Castlegar and surrounding area
- Courtenay, Comox and areas within the Comox Valley Regional District
- Gibsons
- Kimberley
- Mackenzie
- Merritt
- Nelson
- Port Alberni
- Powell River
- Prince George
- Quesnel
- Rossland
- Sechelt
- Squamish
- Sunshine Coast Regional District
- Terrace
- Trail
- Tumbler Ridge
- Vernon
- Williams Lake

To enrol in the pilot, communities must have a population of fewer than 75,000 and be located 30 kilometres away from a municipality of more than 75,000. They must also identify three priority economic development

sectors.

Successful applicants must maintain a minimum of 51% ownership (local partnerships are permitted) of their business and live in the community. They must also have more than three years of experience as an active business owner or more than four years as a senior manager within the last five years.

Interested foreign entrepreneurs are required to visit the community and present their business idea to make sure their business plan is consistent with the community's economic priorities.

Applicants to the B.C. Provincial Nominee Program Entrepreneur Immigration Regional Pilot must have a personal net worth of \$300,000, make a minimum investment of \$100,000 in a new business and create one new job.

For the existing B.C. Provincial Nominee Program Entrepreneur Immigration base category, applicants may start or purchase an existing business, must have a net worth of \$600,000, a business investment of \$200,000 and create one new job.

Foreign entrepreneurs invited to apply must submit an online application within four months of their invitation.

In 2018, 152 invitations were issued through the B.C. Provincial Nominee Entrepreneur Immigration base category. The entrepreneur immigration program has generated more than 2,000 jobs since 2010.