County launches Live and Work Wellington

BY JAIME MYSLIK

GUELPH – Wellington County has launched a new workforce initiative with the hopes of enticing new, young, diverse talent to the area and connecting them with potential employers.

The Live and Work Wellington initiative is the brainchild of Wellington County's economic development department.

County Warden and Puslinch Mayor Dennis Lever explained that while Wellington has an aging population, there is also a decline in population for the 19 to 25 age range and low unemployment (4 to 6%), which means employers are having a difficult time finding workers.

"(The) Live and Work Wellington campaign is intended to meet these challenges by promoting Wellington County as a desired place to live and work and will be directed at local, regional and international audiences," Lever said.

"The campaign will highlight the diverse job opportunities in our region and the great quality of life we have here in Wellington County.

"Our green spaces, historic sites, local foods, festivals and being one of the safest places anywhere will attract new groups to our community."

George Bridge, Minto mayor and chair of the county economic development committee, explained Live and Work Wellington will help county employers meet short-term labour challenges while also supporting long-term economic growth.

"Many of the projects focus on attracting and maintaining workers from the demographic groups who are or will be important to the Canadian labour force - millennials and immigrants," Bridge said.

One of the ways the new program will attract talent is through a virtual county job board which takes local postings from various sites and pulls them into one list.

"It's important because now we have the ability to promote what opportunities we have in the county," said manager of economic development Crystal Ellis.



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- DENNIS LEVER, COUNTY WARDEN AND PUSLINCH MAYOR

"We'll promote this online through our online social media channels. When we're at career fairs and at that newcomer fair we're able to hold up a tablet and actually show them in real time what we've got."

Each municipality in Wellington County is required to enter into an agreement in order to link the township's website with the county's job portal and to use the Live and Work Wellington trademark.

One of the ways Live and Work Wellington is promoting Wellington County is through three videos targeting different demographics.

"They were developed to be a social media friendly kind of snapshot that highlights the quality of life that we have in Wellington County," said Tom Lusis who is in charge of talent attraction for Wellington County.

"They are filmed in a variety of locations throughout the county ... and they highlight the local attractions, the local businesses and many of the people that you'll see in those videos actually live and work in Wellington County."

The idea is to showcase Wellington County as an active place to work and live regardless of age or career stage. There is a video targeting young professionals, another targeting families and another for seniors.

Live and Work Wellington received money from the Ontario 150 Partnership Fund to focus on attracting millennials to the rural labour market and retaining rural youth.

The program, which also received funding from the Citizen and Immigration Fund, focuses as well on immigrants and international students.

Ellis explained that the economic development department will use feedback from business surveys to understand their expectations of employees and surveys from the targeted talent groups to understand their expectations of employers and then they will identify gaps.

A Wellington County press release states some of the activities proposed for the initiative include:

- developing partnerships with Conestoga College and the University of Guelph to raise awareness of employment opportunities in the county;
- developing and promoting the county job board;
- working with employers and member municipalities to support the growth of local immigrant communities;
- facilitating immigration and employment workshops for international students;
- working with Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington to promote and connect immigrants to employment opportunities in the county; and
- providing guidance and advice to employers about immigration policies.

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