



SAINT JOHN REGION

THE CHAMBER

CHAMPIONS FOR BUSINESS

June 7th, 2022

Hon. Sean Fraser
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Confederation Building, Suite 110
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Via email: sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca

Re: 2022 New Brunswick Allotment for Provincial Nominee Program and Atlantic Immigration Program

Dear Minister Fraser,

I am writing today with an urgent request to increase New Brunswick's immigration quotas for 2022 for the Atlantic Immigration Program (hereinafter "AIP") and particularly the Provincial Nominee Program (hereinafter "PNP").

It is my understanding that the federal government has not yet provided information to the provinces regarding their 2022 allotments, and it is imperative that our province receive the flexibility in immigration we need fuel our economic recovery and maintain our population growth momentum that remains in its fledgling stages.

Through discussions with Government of New Brunswick officials, I understand that they have requested a total of 3,300 spots for newcomers in total through both programs, with a special request to that New Brunswick's allotment be weighted more heavily through the PNP due to the speed and flexibility of the Express Entry stream available through that program.

Our organization supports the province's request, but as we near the halfway point of the year, it is becoming clear that this request for 3,300 is not sufficient. As you are aware, over the past five years, New Brunswick has reversed a population decline trend and surpassed the 800,000-population mark for the first time with the 2021 census. This tremendous success is a result of better retention rates, creating opportunities for newcomers and the province establishing an international reputation as a desirable place to immigrate.

Recently, the Government of New Brunswick has had to pause access to the Express Entry program for food service providers because of high usage of the program – this sector has accounted for 23% of available PNP positions so far this year through the first five months. The provincial government is concerned about running out of available spots to welcome newcomers in other industries such as health – a problem exacerbated by the delay in informing provinces of their allotment for 2022. Of course, the fact that more and more people want to come to New Brunswick is great news, but it is creating a new set of problems for business and government officials.

While we understand the provincial government's rationale for limiting one sector from dominating our provincial allotment, it is critical to understand that this high usage is a result of the deep struggles the sector has faced throughout the pandemic. As one of the hardest hit sectors, many food service employees have retrained and moved on to other sectors – even with employers offering higher wages, signing bonuses and more flexible hours, most food service providers cannot fill all their available positions. The Province's suggested solution is to use the Temporary Foreign Worker program, but with a cost of \$1,000 per labour market impact assessment ("LMIA") amongst other costs, this is not a practical option for many business owners trying to get back on their feet after a very difficult two years.

Entering the summer of 2022, many businesses – particularly in tourism and hospitality – are counting on a bounce back season to help the recovery from their worst two years in business ever. While most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted and people have begun to travel again, the availability of labour and soaring costs of doing business threaten recovery. The federal government's stated plan to make the Employment Insurance system "more accessible" will further exacerbate the issue.

It is therefore imperative that the federal government work with New Brunswick and increase our PNP numbers beyond previous levels and even beyond the current Government of New Brunswick request. The pandemic demonstrated that it is possible for governments to act quickly and decisively when warranted and the current PNP situation is urgent and requires your immediate attention. New Brunswick is on the right path for economic recovery and population growth – we need your help right now to remove barriers that may hamper our current positive trajectory.

Sincerely,

David Duplisea, CEO, Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce

cc: Jenica Atwin, MP, Fredericton

cc: Hon. Arlene Dunn, Minister Responsible, Opportunities NB

cc: Hélène Bouchard, Vice President, Population Growth, Opportunities NB

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce | 78 Prince William Street | Saint John, NB E2L 2B3
www.TheChamberSJ.com | 506-634-8111 | email info@TheChamberSJ.com