Merritt
FLOURISH UNDER THE SUN

Report

File Number: 0570

To: **Scott Hildebrand, Chief Administrative Officer**

From: **Will George, Economic Development & Tourism Manager**

Date: March 19, 2020

Subject: **City of Merritt B.C. Provincial Nominee Program (B.C. PNP) Entrepreneur Immigration Pilot Structure Report**

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RECOMMENDATION:

Council should move and second one of the options set out in this report to commence discussion.

Background:

During the BC PNP committee meeting on January 20, 2020, the Committee discussed the current structure of the BC PNP Committee, regarding the level of information required of applicants. The Province requires that a variety of documents to be submitted by applicants at the municipal stage of review, including "business concept plans". Full business plans are not required until the provincial review stage.

At present, staff reviews all applications to ensure basic program requirements, prior to inviting foreign entrepreneurs to come for exploratory visits. However, following the exploratory visits and when applications are presented to the Committee, the Committee has often felt that the "business concept plans" do not provide sufficient information to allow the Committee to recommend the provision of a referral letter. Given the volume of interest in Merritt, the back and forth requests for more information have made administering this program extremely time intensive.

To that end, at the January 20, 2020 meeting, the Committee in a 2-1 vote resolved as follows:

THAT the committee recommend to council that full business plans as opposed to business concept plans be required as part of the BC PNP application process.

For: Manuel Olguin, Kim McLean. Against: Travis Fehr

Staff understands the Committee's reason for wanting further information, as it is trying to ensure that we bring only high-quality, viable businesses to our community through this program. However, staff has three primary concerns with this approach.

First, requiring more information than what the program requires creates a deterrent to entrepreneurs, in circumstances where Council has emphasized the importance of business friendliness. Second, there would be considerable additional staff time cost by adopting this approach. Third, we are careful not to take on the additional work that is ultimately the responsibility of the Province.

As a result, staff recommends that the City of Merritt continue to accept business concept plans instead of full business plans as part of the BC PNP application process.

If this approach were taken, at Council's discretion, it may also be possible to abolish the BC PNP Committee, as the Committee's role would then be limited to double-checking that basic program requirements are met. If the Committee were abolished, staff recommends continuing to work with Community Futures and the Chamber of Commerce through the exploratory visit process.

The majority of communities participating in this program do not have a BC PNP Committee and Council has delegated the authority to issue referral letters directly to staff.

As a note, exploratory business visits from foreign entrepreneurs are postponed until further notice during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Options / discussion

1. **THAT Council direct staff to accept business concept plans as part of the BC PNP application process;**
   AND THAT Council maintain the BC PNP Committee.

2. **THAT Council direct staff to accept only full business plans, as opposed to business concept plans, as part of the BC PNP application process;**
   AND THAT Council maintain the BC PNP Committee.

3. **THAT Council direct staff to accept business concept plans as part of the BC PNP application process;**
   AND THAT the BC PNP Committee be abolished;
   AND FURTHER THAT staff be delegated the authority to issue or refuse to issue referral letters in relation to the BC PNP program.

4. THAT Council provide alternate direction regarding the BC PNP Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Will George
Economic Development, Communications and Tourism Manager