

# More immigrants are coming to Fredericton

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Immigration is booming in the capital.

Lisa Bamford, director of newcomer programs at the Multicultural Association of Fredericton, said Friday immigration has increased from 62 persons annually to 126 in the last two years.

"It is over the past two years we see a bigger increase," she said. "If we look back to the fiscal year previous to that, they have increased 103 per cent."

The top three source countries for immigration are: Korea, at 51 per cent of settle-

ment clients; China, at eight per cent; and Liberia, at seven per cent, said Bamford.

"We have a Korean Internet cafe," she said. "We have a Korean settlement worker."

Bamford made the comments after Greg Byrne, the minister responsible for the Population Growth Secretariat, announced Friday that the number of immigrants in the province's Provincial Nominee Program was up 58 per cent in 2007-08 compared to the previous year.

There were 1,501 immigrants in the program in 2007-08, compared to 952 the year before, he said. In 1999-2000, there were 24 in the

program, said Byrne.

"The added funding we have put into immigration ... has made us capable of processing more applications simultaneously, ensuring that individuals who wish to be working or be in business in our province are able to do so as quickly as possible," he said.

The provincial government wants to attract 5,000 immigrants by 2015 as part of its self-sufficiency initiative.

"Not only are we attracting more immigrants ... we are taking specific actions to make sure they stay by investing in multicultural associations, language training

and other initiatives so New Brunswick will be more welcoming and be more diverse," said Byrne.

The Provincial Nominee Program is a federal/provincial agreement that allows New Brunswick nominees to have their immigration applications fast-tracked through the federal queue and fill important economic and labour gaps in the provincial economy, he said.

Not all immigrants who come to New Brunswick stay here.

Byrne said the retention rate is about 60 per cent. The

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## Population: Retention rate has to go up, Byrne says

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government wants to increase that to 80 per cent.

York North Tory MLA Kirk MacDonald said the province should be doing more.

"Another thing that people are looking for when they determine where they are going to settle is a competitive tax regime, and I still have concerns about increases to the personal, corporate and small-business taxes of this province," he said.

The Liberals increased taxes in their first budget but held the line on taxes this year.

"We also have to provide systems of support for new immigrants, because new immigrants coming to New Brunswick won't necessarily speak French or speak English," said MacDonald.

Bamford said the number of immigrants coming to the multicultural association for second-language training in Fredericton is up by 135 per cent in the past two years.

She said there are 350 adults registered this year. Children in the school system are counted separately, she said.

There has also been a big increase in international students seeking employment services.

"We have gone from serving 70 in 2005-06 to 212 in 2007-08," said Bamford.

"It is a 302 per cent increase over that past two fiscal years."

One area where the province could be doing better in immigration is in family unification, she said. Permanent residents must wait three years for their family to join them, she said.

"It is taking far too long ... when they have family to live with here," she said.

Bamford also said the province needs more awareness about the community sponsorship program. It has been successful in Manitoba, she said.

"That is really under utilized here," she said.



BYRNE

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