

From: no-reply@rmwbext.ca
To: [Legislative Assistants](#)
Subject: Council Meeting Presentation Request – Kevin Weidlich, Beverley Tjarera, Jay Notay
Date: Thursday, November 17, 2022 6:03:13 PM

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

A Council Meeting Presentation Request has been submitted at Thursday November 17th 2022 6:00 PM with reference number 2022-11-17-012.

- **Preferred date of presentation**

12/13/2022

- **Name of speaker/presenter**

1. Kevin Weidlich
2. Beverley Tjarera
3. Jay Notay

- **Organization name (if applicable)**

1. FMWB Economic Development & Tourism
2. YMCA of Northern Alberta
3. Keyano College

- **Do you wish to speak in person or virtually via MS teams?**

1. In person
2. In person
3. In person

- **Presentation topic**

Workforce Immigration & Support Program (WISP)

- **List specific points/concerns**

There would be a fourth speaker: Regional Labour Market Committee, Chair and Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director—Dianna de Sousa.

We recently held a community partner and media launch event for the Workforce Immigration & Support Program (WISP) that Councilor Jane Stroud attended. Councilor Stroud asked the panel of speakers

to come present to Council. The panelists were Kevin Weidlich, Dianna de Sousa, Beverley Tjarera, and Jay Notay,

I think the primary reason Councilor Stroud would like the panel to present to Council is to demystify supporting immigration for our region through the lens of this program. The panelists do an excellent job of explaining what this program means for our community and how it actually supports local.

The WISP is relevant to the RMWB as Economic Development & Tourism would not have been able to receive the community designation from the GOA for this program without the RMWB's formal endorsement. So, the WISP is a result of us all working together. Another relevancy is how we need to continue to be a welcoming region for newcomers as our diversity is one of our regional strengths!

- **Action being requested of Council**

To present an update on the WISP as information to Council.

- **Are you providing any supporting documentation (i.e. PowerPoint presentation)?**

Yes

- **Upload supporting document(s)**

1. [FMWBEDT News Release - WISP Community Launch October 24, 2022.pdf \[217.6 KB\]](#)

- **Name of contact person**

Andrea Haley

- **Phone number (daytime)**

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- **City / Town**

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- **We strive to host inclusive, accessible events that enable all individuals to engage fully. If you require an accommodation to participate, please indicate your request below. Advanced notice is required as some accommodations can take time to arrange.**

If at all possible, it would be highly preferred to be at the very beginning of the Agenda.

- **Acknowledgment**

I have read and understand that my name and supporting materials (if any) will be made publicly available in the Council agenda. My contact information will NOT be included in the public record.

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release – Monday, October 24, 2022

Helping Local Employers Address Labour Crunch

Community Organizations Come Together to Launch Workforce Immigration & Support Program (WISP)

Fort McMurray, AB – Today, Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism (FMWBEDT) in partnership with local community organizations launched the Workforce Immigration & Support Program (WISP). The program helps local employers address labour shortages impacting their ability to effectively run and expand their businesses. The WISP is the region's local approach to the Government of Alberta's (GOA) *Alberta Advantage Immigration Program—Rural Renewal Stream*.

"The labour shortage struggle in our region and across Canada is very real," said Kevin Weidlich, President & CEO, FMWBEDT. "When we think about growing the local economy and creating greater sustainability, our success will largely depend on having a local workforce in place to support small, medium, and large businesses produce products and deliver their services. The competition for labour across the globe is fierce and this program helps us stand out, making Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo the destination of choice for work opportunities, and turning newcomers into permanent long-term residents."

According to the Government of Alberta, there are over 1 million job vacancies in Canada and over 100,000 in Alberta¹ (about double the pre-covid norm). Additionally, the Business Council of Canada noted that 80% of Canadian employers are dealing with labour shortages,² and 56% have been seriously impacted in their ability to run their business.³ Communities outside of major centres experience greater challenges attracting and retaining labour, which prompted the GOA in the creation of the Rural Renewal Stream (our local approach being the WISP). Regions such as Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo, must achieve community designation, which then gives them the ability to fast track qualified newcomer candidates with job offers for permanent residency.

"Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo is key to a competitive, prosperous, and vibrant Alberta," said Andrea Haley, Director of Brand & Marketing and labour portfolio lead for FMWBEDT. "The WISP supports local employers, while highlighting the region as a welcoming place for newcomers to become part of the community, put down roots and build lifelong connections."

The WISP takes a community-driven approach, and includes collaboration with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the Regional Labour Market Committee, led by the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, Keyano College, and the YMCA of Northern Alberta. The program is centered around the employer, who is required to demonstrate practices for hiring local first before expanding their recruitment efforts for roles that are difficult to fill.

¹ Government of Alberta, [Alberta Job Vacancy Report](#): Q2 2022

² Business Council of Canada, [Canada's immigration advantage | Business Council of Canada \(thebusinesscouncil.ca\)](#)

³ Canadian Federation of Independent Business, [Labour shortages are back with a vengeance \(cfib-fcei.ca\)](#)

“We hear regularly from local businesses and employers about their struggle to attract and retain labour,” said Dianna de Sousa, Chair of the Regional Labor Market Committee and Executive Director of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce. “We formed the Regional Labour Market Committee to tackle this issue, together as a region, because it affects the entire business community, and our ability to grow and expand local business.”

The program is currently geared towards temporary foreign workers already in the region, graduate international students at Keyano College, and newcomers already working in other parts of Canada on a work visa.

“The WISP will be a game-changer for international student recruitment,” said Jay Notay, President of Keyano College. “Often international students go abroad to study, with the hopes of eventually landing a job with an employer who supports them in becoming permanent residents. Having the WISP means retaining the international students that are already here once they secure full-time employment.”

The region’s diverse population makes it an ideal place for visitors and newcomers. Our region values cultural diversity, and the social and economic contributions of newcomers. An integral part of the WISP are newcomer support services to ensure they can successfully integrate and navigate life in the region.

“Newcomer services are essential in helping immigrants navigate and integrate into life in Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo,” said Beverley Tjarera, Newcomer Services Program Manager for YMCA of Northern Alberta. “Our purpose is to make the transition as smooth as possible through the provision of programs and services that best meet the needs of immigrants. This is an important factor to having open and inclusive communities where newcomers feel welcome and set to live here long term.”

The WISP contributes to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo’s strategic mission to continually grow more inclusive, embody a sustainable source of healthy living, and enduring prosperity for residents, newcomers, and visitors alike. Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo is a welcoming region with people from all over the world who have decided to make it home.

“Living here for close to 30 years, I’m proud of the way we come together and make people feel welcome,” said Mayor Sandy Bowman, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. “Whether you’ve come here from Alberta, another part of Canada, or from somewhere else around the world, there is a place for you here.”

For more information on the WISP or to participate in an Employer Information Session, please go to www.fmwb.ca/WISP.

About Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism | www.fmwb.ca

Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism (FMWBEDT) is a wholly owned, arm's-length entity of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, governed by an independent board of directors and managed by an entrepreneurial, customer-centric team. FMWBEDT's focus is on creating new wealth for the region, measured as economic impact. FMWBEDT is responsible for growing and promoting investment into the region, supporting the growth of startups and existing businesses in the region, and generating tourism and visitation to the region. Our team works in concert with a number of organizations inside and outside the region to boost Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo's reputation and strengthen our region's competitiveness in the national and global economy.

About the Regional Labour Market Committee

The Regional Labour Market Committee is a partnership between FMWBEDT, the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, Government of Alberta—Ministry of Labour & Immigration, Pathways Alliance, Keyano College, Athabasca Tribal Council, and Fuse Social. This committee was formed from the 2021 Regional Labour Market Study recommendations and aims to improve conditions for employers and workers in the Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Labour market.

About Keyano College | Keyano College

YMCA of Northern Alberta | Immigrants & Newcomers | [YMCA Northern Alberta \(ymcanab.ca\)](http://YMCA Northern Alberta (ymcanab.ca))

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Media Contact

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Workforce Immigration & Support Program (WISP) and Community Partners

December 13, 2022

Presented to: Mayor & Council Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Presented by: Kevin Weidlich – Economic Development & Tourism

Dianna de Sousa – Regional Labour Market Committee

Jay Notay – Keyano College

Beverley Tjarera – YMCA Northern Alberta, Newcomer Services

WISP Partners

- Government of Alberta
- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Regional Labour Market Committee
- Keyano College
- YMCA Northern Alberta, Newcomer Services

What is the WISP?

- Region's approach to the Government of Alberta's *Alberta Advantage Immigration Program—Rural Renewal Stream*.
- Supports local employers address labour shortages impacting their ability to effectively run their business.
- Helps us stand out as a region of choice for newcomers.

WISP

Overview

Program Goal

- Attract and retain newcomers to become long-term residents and contribute to the region's workforce.

Program Users

- Employers experiencing labour shortages.
- Temporary foreign workers wanting permanent residency.

Program Outcomes

- Employers retain the labour they need for their business.
- Temporary foreign workers receive fast-track permanent residency combined with newcomer services.

REGIONAL LABOUR MARKET COMMITTEE

Speaker: Dianna de Sousa, Chair

Key Points:

- Global labour market shortage
- Impact on employers
- One tool in the toolbox
- Support hiring local first

FORT McMURRAY WOOD BUFFALO

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& TOURISM**

**Regional Labour
Market Committee**



**YMCA of
Northern Alberta**

KEYANO COLLEGE

Speaker: Jay Notay, President & CEO

Key Points:

- Alignment with International Student Recruitment Program
- Retention of international students in the region
- International and domestic student seats

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YMCA NEWCOMER SERVICES

Speaker: Beverley Tjarera, Manager

Key Points:

- Helps temporary foreign workers remain in the region
- Importance of Newcomer Services
- Values the contributions of newcomers

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& TOURISM**

**Regional Labour
Market Committee**



**YMCA of
Northern Alberta**

Thank you.

www.fmwb.ca/WISP