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Shelburne plays host to CIRRO workshop

Shelburne this Thursday will play host to an all-day session on attracting and retaining ?sufficient human capital for economic development,? among other things under a provincial program called ?Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario? (CIRRO).

The event, to be held in the Grace Tipling Hall from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., is aimed at municipal, business and community leaders in an effort, among other things, to teach how to ?implement policies and programs that are friendly to newcomers.?

The session will include provincial government officials among the panelists.

A Town of Shelburne invitation to ?all government agencies and service providers within the County of Dufferin? says one hope is to ?address many of the fears that people have with communicating and including newcomers into our programs and services.?

It notes that the county is becoming a destination for newcomers (immigrants), ?and we need to understand the diversity and culture challenges associated with newcomers.?

In a presentation to town council, Shelburne CAO/Clerk John Telfer said developments for the town need to account for changing demographics.

?Our development needs all have to reflect who are and who will be the residents in our community moving forward,? he said in a written report.

?Consideration of age groups and their preferred programming needs help determine the need and reflect in our decisions associated with recreational, social housing, social services and educational policies.

?Additionally, the Economic Development strategy must provide workforce employment opportunities for newcomers as well as entrepreneurial opportunities for new business owners.?

CIRRO as a program is based on a guidebook prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). Although the June 6 session might be expected to concentrate on economic planning issues, the guidebook also deals with ?Community Attractiveness Indicators for Newcomers,? an analytical tool that provides information to help communities assess their ability to attract and retain sufficient human capital for economic development.

The indicators include issues of housing, innovation, society, amenities, economy, education and overall newcomer attractiveness measurements.

OMAFRA says the tool ?provides communities of all sizes with factual comparative data to support planning efforts, decision making and strategies for attracting newcomers. As a result, communities can understand how to build on their strengths and overcome barriers to successfully recruit and retain skilled and entrepreneurial newcomers, thereby increasing innovation and productivity in the local economy.?

Shelburne's share of the session's cost will be only its donation of use of the Grace Tipling Hall.

By Wes Keller