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**ORHMA Response to Consultation on Immigration Levels
and Municipal Nominee Program (MNP)**

Before COVID-19, Ontario's hospitality industry was wrestling to find solutions to a primary issue of Workforce Development. Entering March 2020 and hospitality businesses have either closed down or were operating with low business levels. We have now entered the long road to recovery with dismal business expectations including wide demand swings. Half of the industry's workforce has still not returned to their hospitality positions. Much of this is due to the dismal business demand but regretfully the industry is not able to fill positions much needed to run the operation. Who would ever think this will be the case in a time of significant business demand drop?

Reasoning behind the vacancy issues include safety, satisfaction with emergency pay and a change of preference in a pandemic that has brought rapid behaviour and habitual shifts.

The primary issue that remains today is that Canadians are not attracted to much of the hospitality related work that is available. Immigration policies need to be altered to be friendly to this industry. After all, the industry was primarily built upon immigrants coming to Canada to start a better life for themselves and their families. This all started before the World Wars but truly accelerated in the 1950's, 1960's and even in the 1970's. Through the many decades many of these people became successful supporting the Canadian economy and giving back to their communities. Many became restaurant owners and managers and now we see a new immigrant generation of hotel owners. They all began at start up jobs and progressively moved up the ladder.

We do not see the ambition from today's workforce as we had then. Perhaps nothing has changed other than the current immigration laws not allowing the same opportunities.

Immigrants can play an important role in assisting the hospitality industry in addressing staffing issues. The difference within the various employment demographics is that new immigrants are willing to perform jobs considered undesirable by people in local communities. The hospitality industry, in turn, will offer long term success opportunities to those that enter it while contributing to the economic growth of this country. Very similar to the successes we seen with immigrants of past years.

1. As a result of COVID-19:

What changes do you foresee to how your/your sector operate(s) in the short-term and in the long-term?

Business demand swings has been a challenge pre-COVID-19 but now the pandemic has heightened this to be critical. Adjustment of workforce is necessary when an operation moves from low demand to shoulder and into high levels and can only be managed if there is not only the right workforce amount but the right workers who are dedicated to work ethics and show up.

The importance of cleaning, food preparation and serving roles have taken a new perspective as these jobs are now closer to be skilled jobs. The increase in recruitment needs have added new costs to those hired to recruit.

Canadian youth and students studying hospitality and tourism are not interested in positions the industry offers and with COVID-19 we are seeing much higher job turnover and less interest. The fear of COVID-19 has changed our ability to recruit and retain front line positions both in the short and long term. This is highly concerning for our future workforce as the pipeline of recruitment due to the crisis has shrunk. Travel and tourism overall are not seen as a prosperous career.

Furthermore, the recent drop in International Students attending Canadian schools is posing another threat to the current and future pipeline.

What role do you see immigration playing in your recovery efforts in the short-term and in the long-term?

The Labour Market Assessment must be made easier to obtain and qualify across the regions. The unemployment rate should not be the only reason-target for regions to meet the criteria to qualify. It is essential to relax the guidelines and restrictions on temporary foreign workers considerably.

It is fair to state that Canada's immigration laws are friendly to skilled jobs in such fields as engineering, science and other PHD recognized attainments in the global pursuit to increase the country's productivity. Wrongfully, hospitality jobs are not viewed as such. This is a policy that needs to change by driving home the critical potential economics that are missed by workforce shortages and crippling investments due to luck of finding employees. A paradigm bust is needed here.

Hospitality jobs have not been the focus and immigration policies remain an impediment to the industry's success. Canada must develop immigration policies that will enable success beyond COVID- 19 in a much-anticipated travel and hospitality boom. Support here in changes from both the federal and provincial governments are sought.

Whether it be Temporary Foreign Workers or International Students who dedicate themselves to our country by coming to school here, paying a premium dollar to attend our colleges & universities, and then at the end of their journey, the government response is to send them back to their home country once the program has expired. This contradicts other immigration programs available in Canada (i.e. refugees or other industries) that allow a much smoother and easier path to obtaining permanent resident status in our country.

In recent years, the international student model specifically in Ontario has shown that we are far from making it successful even though some steps have been taken. We train students in Ontario and the system allows these students to leave the Province. We are not setting them for success to stay long term in this country and obtain their permanent residence. After three years they become ineligible for their permanent residence, leave the country and recruitment starts all over again. This is not a sustainable model. COVID-19 has just made this issue much more challenging. Perhaps the question is that government does not wish them to stay?

2. Subject to potential impacts, changes or shifts due to COVID-19, the current plan sets notional targets for 2021 to welcome 351,000 newcomers and in 2022 to welcome 361,000 newcomers. What are your views on this level's trajectory, and where do you think levels should go in 2023?

The projected increase of 10,000 is far from the number hospitality requires. We need significantly more. The student pipeline is gloomy with dismal interest expressed in hospitality fields stemming from the crisis and impact to overall travel and tourism. Canadians more and more are staying away from hospitality jobs a behaviour heightened with COVID 19.

We need more newcomers coming into the country who are willing to work in hospitality jobs such as cleaning and food preparation. We have now begun to even see shortages in front desk and serving positions. COVID 19 has made these jobs even more important. Added to these concerns is the aging workforce largely employed in housekeeping.

3. What priorities should form our immigration planning and mix in the short-term and in the long-term?

Create a temporary foreign workers program that answers the need of the business in regions considering that unemployment numbers do not tell the whole story. Streamline the Labour Market Assessment Program attainable.

Work with other Ministries and other levels of government to support housing projects for these workers.

Modernize the International Student Program to enable students to attain the permanent resident status much easier in order to stay in this country and contribute to the workforce.

Hospitality is in a critical employment state and these worries will only become worse. The Government of Canada needs to examine the feasibility of addressing labour needs through a program similar to the Agri-Food Pilot by attracting experienced non seasonal workers who can settle in Canada and become permanent employees.

Municipal Nominee Program (MNP)

4. What is the key gap you see the MNP program addressing that isn't covered well by other programming?

The comments presented here deal with the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) to exemplify the need for the MNP to fill the significant voids.

We cannot compare to the PNP as it impossible to obtain based on the current guidelines and restrictions. Yet the program seems to be successful in other sectors. Specifically, in Ontario hospitality is not competitive against other provinces and we lose our students to jobs in other provinces due to friendlier qualification policies in obtaining permanent resident status.

Here is a one letter send to an employer by a student forwarded to me at the time of writing this report:

I am extremely sorry for not getting back to you timely. Unfortunately, I have to inform you that I won't be able to work in Ontario at this time.

Sadly, my immigration consultant has advised me to move into a different province as I do not meet the eligibility requirements for the PR process in Ontario. Therefore, I have made plans to move to Nova Scotia which I believe would benefit me to the betterment.

While I am very grateful for all your support and guidance provided, I will truly miss working at (name Omitted). (Name Omitted) has provided me a great opportunity and enhanced my skills to enter the industry. I am standing with confidence to enter the hospitality Industry is because of the foundation (Name Omitted) provided, which I am really thankful for.

I hope to keep in touch with you and I will keep you updated about my future plans.

The position of Cooks is not recognized as a skill job in the PNP and this alone plays a key reason for the tremendous shortages we see in this profession pre COVID 19 and during this crisis.

We would recommend full knowledge of the program by municipalities to support employers.

The projected targeted number of 5,000 in MNP might need an increase pending other policy changes.

5. What would success look like in the short term and long term and what is needed to get there?

Focus the MNP on sectors of need and in the PNP voids addressed above.

One rationale of the PNP failure to support hospitality jobs might be the overall immigrant quota allowed in Ontario due to the focus of regionalizing immigration to provinces away from the traditional Metro areas where immigrants typically are destined to live and in turn hurting Ontario regions overall.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Yours in hospitality,



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