

SAULT STE. MARIE

THE SAULT STAR



City wants to recruit workers

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Ward 1 Coun. Paul Christian

Paul Christian wants City of Sault Ste. Marie to hang a big help wanted sign up for all to see.

The Ward 1 councillor is concerned there's too few candidates to fill jobs that will come open in the community over the next decade. He's especially concerned that for every position expected to become available, one-and-a-half residents will be exiting the workforce.

"I think this is an issue that's flown under the radar somewhat," Christian said during an online council meeting on Monday evening. "I don't know if the general public is aware of the situation in the Sault."

More than 25 per cent of the Sault's workforce was more than 55 years old in 2020. Nearly 11,000 residents are expected to retire in about the next decade. The Sault's median age, 47, is higher than the Ontario average of 41. The city needs more workers.

"I think as council we need to keep this front and centre because this can either be a long-term problem for us or a long-term solution for us," said Christian.

Ward 3 Coun. Matthew Shoemaker asked if a database exists to hold skills of persons who want to move back to the city.

"We do in varying degrees," said director of tourism and community development Travis Anderson. There's "regular outreach" from workers keen to relocate. The city assists spouses of persons hired by Sault businesses find employment.

Stepped-up efforts are being made to draw health, information technology, finance and skilled trades workers. Remote work is bringing "at least" half of new people to the Sault with the rest finding work in the city, said Anderson.

Shoemaker wants the municipality to recruit current Ontario Lottery and Gaming employees who work at home.

“I do think there’s an opportunity there and I think it would be worth exploring further targeted measures for those employees,” said Shoemaker.

The city relies on its “pretty robust” social media presence, including Instagram and Facebook, to highlight available positions. Traffic is driven to the Welcome to Sault Ste. Marie website, said Anderson.

The municipality wants to get knowledge-based workers moving after they’ve moved to Sault Ste. Marie.

An adventure pass offers new residents a chance to enjoy an outdoor experience after they come to the city. The incentive is open to anyone who comes to the Sault for remote or full-time work starting June 1.

Options include guided fishing, cross-country or downhill skiing or snowmobile pass and hiking, running or camping equipment from a Sault business.

“The adventure pass is intended to create awareness of the advantages of moving and working in Sault Ste. Marie,” said Travis Anderson, director of tourism and community development in a report to council. “The pass options highlight the incredible amenities and quality of life available to residents. Newcomers can discover exciting attractions, and activities in and around the city.”

Average pass cost is about \$500. FedNor funding is covering this cost.

The municipality wants to attract technology industry workers from the Toronto area. A national marketing campaign began this year.

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