

Survey gauges migrant happiness

The online survey asks about home country, mother tongue and employment status.

By JENNIFER O'BRIEN, SUN MEDIA

There's not many Thai people in Chatham-Kent, but that's OK with Jian Sizeng.

Originally from Bangkok, Sizeng -- who goes by the first name Brian -- recently opened Rice & Noodles, a Thai restaurant in the place he calls home.

"This is a good place to live. The people are so friendly and nice," said Sizeng, who first settled in Toronto, but headed southwest.

"I worked for many restaurants in Toronto, but it was hard to make a living," he said. "A small city is easier and relaxed."

Sounds like Sizeng is satisfied so far, but today the Chatham-Kent Cultural Coalition is launching a "satisfaction survey" to learn more about newcomers to the community and their needs.

In the online survey, participants are asked to answer questions and identify their home country, mother tongue and employment status.

"We set the study up to give us determination about who was moving to Chatham-Kent," said Evelyn Radomski, a statistical analyst.

"We are hoping to identify the number of cultural groups in Chatham-Kent and provide a profile of the Chatham-Kent newcomer so we can see what services are needed to help them," she said.

"We want to be welcoming and see our areas grow."

The survey comes in the wake of recent census results that say of Chatham-Kent's population of 110,000, only 10,000 -- fewer than one in 10 -- were born outside Canada.

The 2006 status said immigration growth in Chatham has been slow, with only a 0.8 per cent jump in immigration since 2001.

Cultural Coalition staff and others who work with newcomers say those numbers are much too low because Statistics Canada didn't account for secondary immigration that occurs when immigrants land somewhere else, then move to Chatham.

Tracy Callaghan, executive director of Chatham-Kent's Adult Language and Learning Centre, said immigrants are underserved because their numbers are underestimated in the area.

"Chatham-Kent is not a primary immigration site, but lots of immigrants end up here because of family or friends," said Callaghan, who has about 125 immigrants registered for English as a second language classes.

"So because secondary migration isn't tracked, Chatham Kent is underserved and immigrants don't have access to the (government-funded) programs available in bigger centres."

Sarnia-Lambton found itself facing the same issue when census results last year showed that community also had only seen a 0.8 per cent growth in immigration.

Ted Zatylny, head of a new resident attraction and retention program in Sarnia-Lambton, said the community is launching an immigration portal and aims to attract more people from inside and outside Canada.

ON THE NET

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