Essex to explore how it can hire CLEC clients through Career Compass

by Sylene Argent, Local Journalism Initiative

Essex Council has directed Town Administration to develop a plan to fulfill Community Living Essex County's (CLEC) request to explore hiring opportunities through its Career Compass program, and identify ways to participate in its Youth in Action Summer Work Experience program.

That will allow the Town of Essex to demonstrate community leadership and inclusive hiring practices.

Administration will report back to Council on how the municipality can support those initiatives.

These decisions were made at the March 3 Essex Council meeting, where Derek Roy, Manager of Supports overseeing Career Compass, asked the municipality to become a community leader and find a way it could hire some of CLEC's clients, who are looking for meaningful employment.

CLEC is an organization that provides support to over 700 local individuals with an intellectual disability, and their families, and is the largest non-profit employer in Essex County with over 700 employees. It offers the Career Compass employment services program to those it supports.

Roy explained this program tries to match individuals to jobs in their communities.

Part of that is building relationships with potential employers and matching individuals to them, Roy explained.

"Really, what we are looking to do is find a way to work together, find a way where we can help business leaders create some efficiencies in their businesses," he told members of Essex Council.

With job developing, CLEC is looking for commitments from employers to hire someone permanently.

"We really want to work with the Town of Essex. We really want to be able to say we are working with you through Youth in Action Summer Jobs, but also permanent positions in different departments."

He also spoke of the Youth in Action Summer Work Experience program, where individuals, aged 16-29, are employed for six-weeks in the summer, minimally for four-hours per week.

CLEC will hire a student job coach to work alongside the individual for the entire summer, ensuring the work, expectations, and duties are carried out.

Other area municipalities have hired those who participated in the Youth in Action program permanently, Roy noted. The goal with the permanent position is to have that person ultimately working independently, phasing-out the job coach.

CLEC still checks in with that individual and employer, however, to ensure everything is going successfully.

"We want to make sure it is a positive experience, not just for the job seeker working there, but also for the business," Roy said.

He wanted the Town of Essex to be a community leader.

"Business communities will look to the municipality who are setting an example," Roy said. "I think there are many ways we can work together. We have some really skilled job seekers we are connected to and we would love to have further conversation."

Deputy Mayor Rob Shepley spoke of a positive experience in hiring someone through CLEC.

"This is fantastic. The reward that he receives from it and we receive from it, it is pretty awesome. It chokes me up every time I talk about it, because it is pretty inspirational to see," Shepley said.

He hoped Town Administration could prepare a report on how CLEC's programs can fit in with the Town.

Councillor Jason Matyi agreed with Shepley, and supported exploring the hiring opportunities through Career Compass, identifying ways to participate in the Youth in Action program, and demonstrating community leadership in hiring with inclusive practices. He also wanted Administration to report back with recommendations on how the municipality can support these initiatives.

That was made into a motion and passed.

Councillor Kim Verbeek supported the motion. She too has seen the program benefit individuals, and wanted the Town to show leadership and influence other businesses in doing the same.