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Immigration can bring economic growth

By Lidi Schiefelbusch, BrightEconomy Advisory Board member

One of the new fields of opportunity identified by the BrightEconomy Advisory Board is sustainable economic growth through promoting immigration and Rotorua's lifestyle.

Immigration and lifestyle build strongly on the district's varied mix of urban and semi-rural housing, our big range of recreation and leisure activities, great environment, reasonable housing costs and business overheads.

These strengths fit neatly with growing concerns overseas and pressures in major centres such as Auckland.

Globally, terrorist threats, political instability and crime are leading increasing numbers of people to become more concerned about a secure and balanced lifestyle than about continuing to amass wealth.

Nationally, big city pressures and costs, especially housing costs, are leading people who have skills and qualifications to look at other options, especially for families.

The BrightEconomy Board is now having a survey done to find out how Rotorua is perceived elsewhere in New Zealand and overseas, as the basis for a major marketing programme to encourage people to come to Rotorua to live, work, learn, invest and do business.

The aim is to attract immigrants with money to invest and business skills and knowledge to create new enterprises and employment. We also want to attract people who have the work skills and knowledge that Rotorua businesses need if they are to prosper and grow.

Immigration is high throughout the Bay of Plenty region – the 2001 Census found that 53% of Rotorua residents had lived elsewhere in New Zealand or overseas five years earlier. We believe the 2006 Census will also show high immigration.

What we aim to do now is to ensure that a good proportion of these immigrants have the business resources to make a real contribution to the Rotorua economy, to benefit all of us.