When immigration consulting was like ‘the wild west’

Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Marius and Irma Botden decided to move to Canada to farm, it was like the “wild, wild west,” in terms of predatory scammers who posed as immigration consultants, says Edward Corrigan, a lawyer in London who specializes in immigration.

“Some of the consultants were great – probably some of them were better than lawyers,” he says. “But there were a lot of consultants that were simply people who thought they could make money fast, didn’t know anything and were taking advantage of people.” Fees might have been small, but some banks were paying commissions of $20,000 to $30,000 to line up new customers, he notes.

Corrigan says the federal government introduced legislation a few years ago requiring immigration consultants to register with the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council and obtain accreditation as a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant. Consultants must comply no matter if they are in Canada or elsewhere in the world, and certification includes passing an exam.

According to a Global Fruit promotional document, Soer’s company, Tryland Financial Service, advised “self-employed immigrants” from the Netherlands and other northern and eastern European countries. “Since 1992, over 500 farmers are brought to Canada and U.S.A. with a total investment of $3.2 billion,” the material states. Advice, the document says, has included helping newcomers buy real estate and set up farm businesses as well as providing advice on “tax, legal, financial, economic, innovation, visa, real estate and environmental issues.”

Soer says that although he took kickbacks from accountants for providing the assistance, he only charged one farmer directly. He says he connected immigrants with a consultant and a bank. Today, he says he continues the service, “partly,” but adds coming to Canada “is not an option anymore. Canada has lost its appeal to the world because it got expensive.” Soer is not listed as an immigration consultant in the federal database. BF

Source: When immigration consulting was like ‘the wild west’," Better Farming, October 2014, p. 32