

Embracing Diversity

Newcomer Experiences in
Perth and Huron Counties



2017



Social Research &
Planning Council

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Table of Contents

Background	3
Perth County	3
Huron County	4
County Comparative	4
County Attractiveness	6
Introduction	9
Objectives	10
Summary of Findings	11
Part I – Newcomer Experiences	11
Demographic Overview	11
Journey to Canada	13
Common Challenges	15
Health and Wellness	18
Education and Employment	19
Accessing Support Services	21
Overall Community Integration	22
Newcomer Retention	23
Embraced by the Community: Vicrum’s Story	24
Part II – Service Providers and Supporting Organizations	25
Overview of Available Services	25
Innovation in Service Integration	26
Funding and Policy	29
The Need for Better Access to Transportation: Mark’s Story	31
Interviews with Key Stakeholder Groups	32
The Job Market: Ahmad’s Story	38
Organizational Profiles	39
Part III – Other Rural Communities	53
Profiles and Promising Practices	53
Conclusion	62
Recommendations	65
Coordinated Service Delivery	65
Creating Community	66
Increasing Awareness	67
Tips for Welcoming Newcomers	69
References	70



Background

In 2015, more than 75% of Canada's newcomers settled in just seven cities: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa and Winnipeg. Of all the newcomers that arrived in Ontario, only 5.8% settled in rural areas while the remaining majority settled in urban locales, including the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Ottawa, Gatineau, Hamilton, Kitchener, Waterloo, London and Windsor.¹ Given this distribution, rural communities across the country are facing the unique challenge of attracting newcomers to live and work in their municipalities. Due to an aging and declining rural population, recent statistics suggest that these communities will need to implement proactive immigration strategies at the local level to meet this challenge.

Newcomers are essential to the creation of diverse and economically sustainable communities. However, attracting newcomers to rural regions is a difficult task that is compounded by the challenge of retaining those that do come. A better understanding of newcomer experiences of settlement in specific rural areas may help to identify the ways in which communities can work toward meeting the needs of their newcomer populations. This study explores the experiences of newcomers to Perth and Huron Counties and helps to identify how local employers, service providers and community-based organizations can work toward the goal of fully integrating newcomers into society.

The Government of Canada estimates that 100% of Canada's workforce growth over the next 15 years will come from immigration. Unfortunately, not all of Canada is poised to benefit from the presence of New Canadians.

Huron Immigration Partnership Brief, 2010

Perth County

Perth County has a land area of 2,179.03 km² and is comprised of four lower-tier municipalities, including: Perth South, West Perth, Perth East and North Perth. Two additional municipalities located within the geography of Perth County are St. Marys and Stratford, with the latter being the county's most populated municipality. As of 2011, Perth County had a population of 75,112 and 5-year overall growth rate of 1.03%.² In 2011, there were 6,160 immigrants living in Perth County, of which 565 were recent immigrants meaning they arrived between January 1, 2006

¹ Canada Immigration News Letter (2016) <http://www.cicnews.com/2016/10/rural-areas-and-small-cities-across-canada-eager-to-attract-more-newcomers-108558.html>

² Statistics Canada (2011) 2011 National Household Survey.

and May 10, 2011. More than a third of these recent immigrants came from Asia. In 2011, Perth County's unemployment rate was 5.1%.³ As of April 2017, the unemployment rate in the greater Stratford-Bruce Peninsula economic region is estimated to be at 6.3%.⁴

Huron County

Huron County has a land area of 3,397 km² and is comprised of nine lower-tier municipalities, including: Ashfield–Colborne–Wawanosh, Bluewater, Central Huron, Goderich, Howick, Huron East, Morris-Turnberry, North Huron and South Huron. In 2011, Huron County had a population of 59,100 and a 5-year overall growth rate of -0.4%.⁵ There were 4,205 immigrants living in Huron County in 2011 including 215 recent immigrants. The recent immigrants primarily came from the Americas (South America and Mexico), the United States, and Europe. In 2011, Huron County's unemployment rate was 5.7%.⁶ Similar to Perth County, unemployment rates in Huron County have likely increased since 2011 as rates in the greater Stratford-Bruce Peninsula economic region have been on the rise.

County Comparative

As with many rural communities across Canada, Huron and Perth Counties will likely need to recruit newcomers to the area to sustain the workforce. The population of Huron and Perth Counties is expected to decline from 2012 to 2036⁷. The net migration pattern, the number of people moving into the county minus the number moving out, is similar in both counties. More young and middle aged adults (18-44 years old) are leaving the area while more older adults are moving in (see Table 1). This net migration pattern can lead to labour shortages and a shrinking tax base. Attracting and retaining newcomers to rural areas is a way that communities can address these challenges.

3 Ibid. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3531&Data=Count&SearchText=Perth&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&A1=All&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=3531&TABID=1> Per Statistics Canada, recent immigrants are immigrants who landed in Canada between January 1, 2006 and May 10, 2011. Immigrant refers to a person who is or has ever been a landed immigrant/permanent resident. This person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for several years while others have arrived recently. Some immigrants are Canadian citizens while others are not. Most immigrants are born outside Canada but a small number are born in Canada. The places of birth selected are the most frequently reported by recent immigrants at the Canada level.

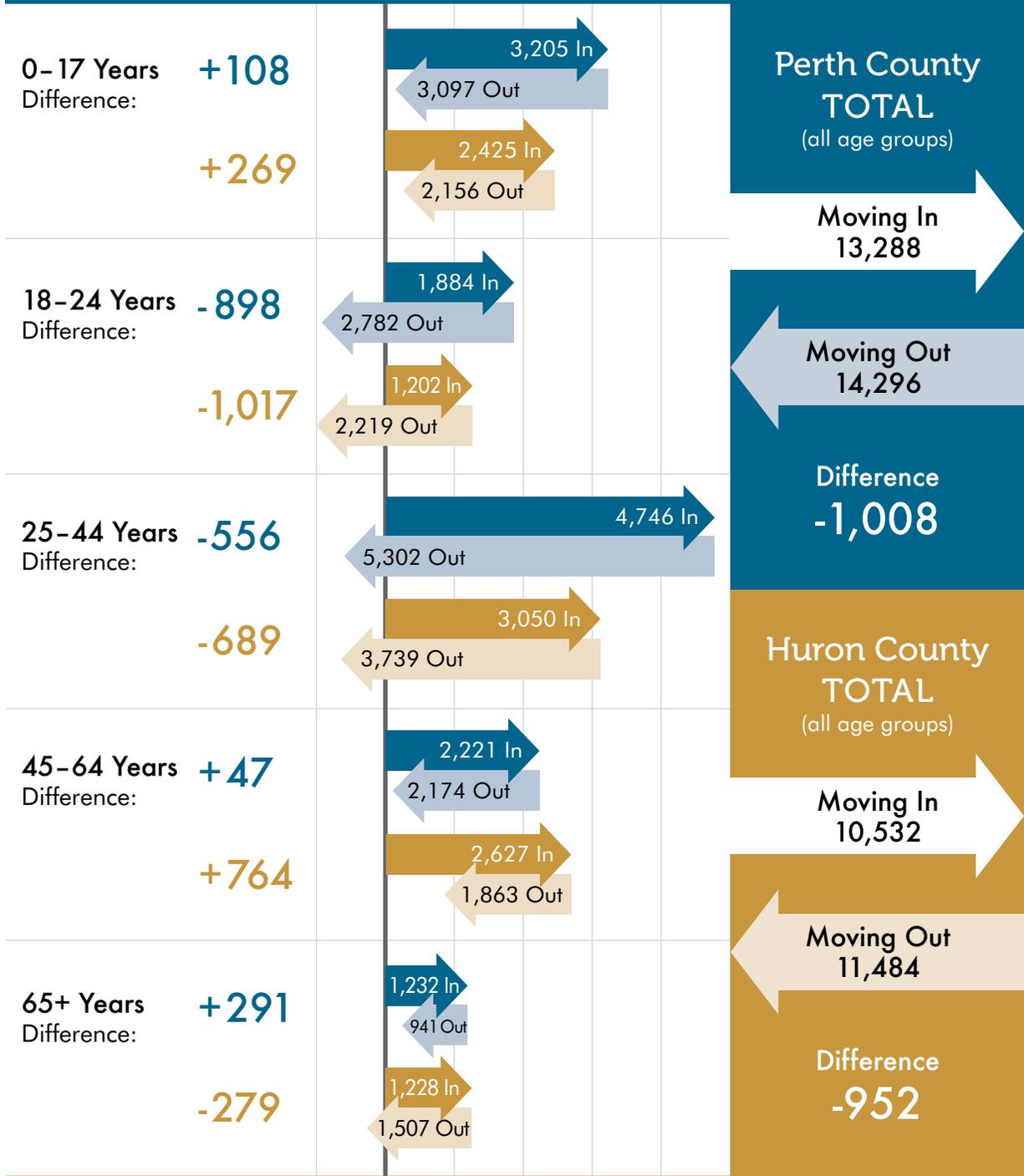
4 Four County Labour Market Planning Board (FCLMPB) (2017) <http://www.planningboard.ca/userfiles/file/April%20Unemployment%20Release.pdf>

5 Statistics Canada (2011) <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=C-D&Code1=3540&Data=Count&SearchText=Huron&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=35&A1=All&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1>

6 Ibid.

7 Social Research & Planning Council (2014). *Quality of Life in Perth & Huron County 2014*. <http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca/srpc/quality-of-life/>

Table 1: Migration by Age in Perth and Huron Counties, 2006-2011

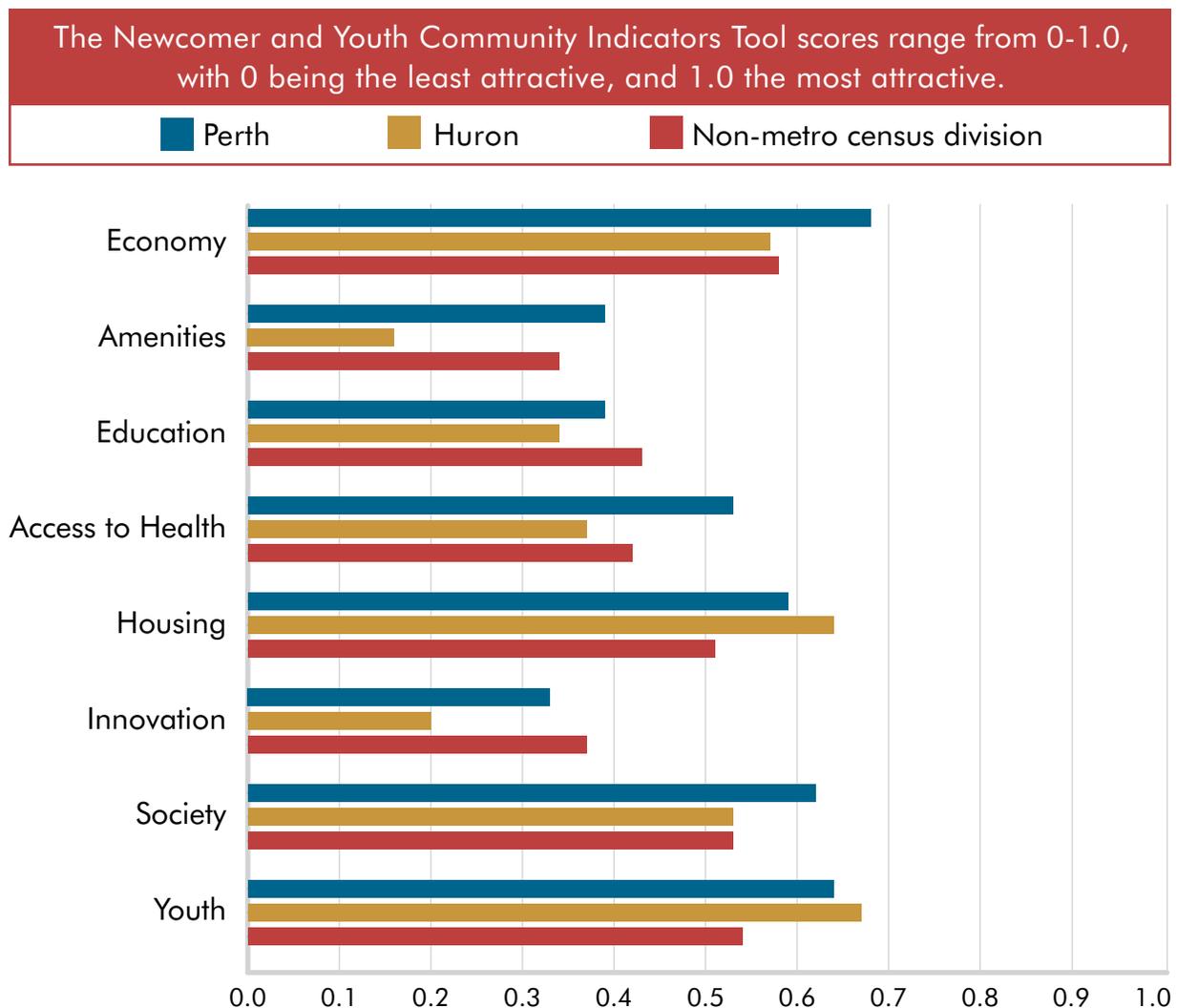


Source: Four County Labour Market Board, based on Taxfiler data from Statistics Canada, 2012

County Attractiveness

In 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) developed the Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators tool to assess the qualities that make a community attractive to newcomers.⁸ The tool includes 55 different indicators based on Statistics Canada, the National Household Survey and other sources. The indicators are organized into eight categories, including: Economy, Amenities, Education, Health, Housing, Innovation, Society and Youth. Figure 1 shows the newcomer attractiveness performance across these indicator categories for both Perth and Huron Counties. It also includes the benchmark average performance of similar non-metro census divisions in Ontario.

Figure 1. Newcomer attractiveness performance in Perth and Huron Counties



Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2014). *Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators Tool*. <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/edr/nyci/index.html>

⁸ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2014). *Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators Tool*. <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/edr/nyci/index.html>



As Figure 1 indicates, Perth County is performing better than the benchmark in all attractiveness categories except for Education and Innovation and it is at the top quintile of performance in Economy, Society and Youth. In contrast, Huron is performing below the benchmark in most attractiveness categories except for Housing and Youth. In these two categories, Huron is performing better than both Perth and the benchmark. On the other hand, Huron is particularly weak in the Amenities and Innovation attractiveness categories. These results suggest that the two Counties face very different challenges in attracting newcomers, and this may influence their newcomer strategies.

In 2015, the Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Survey Project was established to gather information about the needs and experiences of newcomers in Perth and Huron Counties. This project enabled stakeholders to develop referral and social networking services to better serve newcomers and assist their integration into local communities. It was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and was supported by the United Way Perth-Huron. The goal of the NONA Project was to establish a computer database to collect and examine information about Perth and Huron newcomers and their settlement challenges. The purpose of the NONA Project was to create a newcomer profile, which would serve as a resource for settlement agencies and employers to create more effective strategies for attracting and retaining newcomers and to secure further support and funding for longer term sustainability.

To gather information for the computer database, a research study was conducted with 70 newcomers. Formal surveys were distributed in individual and focus group formats. Focus groups were typically held in ESL classes. The information gathered represents the experiences of those who participated. It is important to note that all the participants were recruited through a service or support provided to the newcomer. As a result, the information gathered does not represent all newcomers in Perth and Huron Counties and will not represent the experiences of newcomers who are not linked to a service agency or support group. Questions in the survey asked about the newcomer's demographic background, journey to Canada, settlement and integration in Perth and Huron, education and employment.⁹ The survey was designed to focus on the challenges faced by newcomers while settling and integrating into Perth-Huron communities.

As stated in the resulting NONA report, proper integration of newcomers can have significant benefits to Canada, but particularly to Ontario. Rural communities in Ontario are looking to newcomers as a potential solution to the challenge of a population both aging and declining in number, and to foster economic development. However, retention of newcomers in small and rural communities, such as Perth and Huron Counties, is proving to be difficult.

9 (2015). The Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Project.

Some of the challenges that newcomers face when trying to settle and integrate into Perth and Huron Counties are profiled in the NONA report, including the following:

- Limited English language skills
- Unaffordable housing
- Unemployment
- Transportation
- Alienation
- Social Isolation¹⁰

Efforts were made to respond to these challenges including, the establishment of the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron (MAPH), the Newcomer Settlement Huron-Perth Network and the extension of services with The Centre for Employment and Learning. Additionally, a Settlement Counsellor Services Pilot Project was launched with a New Initiative grant from the United Way. A part-time Settlement Counsellor was hired by the Huron Local Immigration Partnership to assist clients with immigration forms, citizenship applications and other government documentation. Since the project's conclusion, which saw low participation from newcomers, no additional funding has been allocated for this position.

In 2015, the Rural Immigration Project Team in Perth County, worked on a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats" (SWOT) analysis. The project was funded by OMAFRA. In a SWOT analysis, an organization studies their internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats to their organization. The results revealed significant gaps in the immigration-related efforts of Perth County. Notably, efforts are fragmented, since there is a lack of formal collaboration between key players, and not enough support from higher levels of government. Furthermore, newcomers are not aware of all the services available to them.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Khan, B., and Labute, B. (2015) "Immigrant Attraction and Retention in Perth County".
<http://waynecaldwell.ca/Projects/workingwithimmigrants/Perth%20County%20Report.pdf>

Introduction

The Social Research and Planning Council's (SRPC) research study on newcomer experiences in Perth and Huron Counties was motivated by several challenges documented in past reports and research studies. SRPC expressed a strong desire and commitment to investigate and understand how rural communities may welcome and integrate newcomer families more effectively in the future. The goal for this study was to investigate newcomer experiences in small and rural communities, specifically Perth and Huron Counties. To assist in accomplishing this goal, the Social Research and Planning Council sought the experience and expertise of Eco-Ethnomics Inc., a consulting firm specializing in community-based research, impact assessment and social innovation. Eco-Ethnomics Inc. was engaged to investigate the topic over several months and produce a research report that built on the NONA Survey results revealing not only the barriers and obstacles that newcomers face in Perth and Huron Counties, but also the service gaps and employment barriers that exist across the region.

The hope is that the research conducted for this study will help to inform new and improved practices and policies that will influence collaboration between service providers, employers, municipal officials and support organizations. The aim is to strengthen the sense of diversity, equity and inclusion in Perth and Huron Counties by effectively integrating newcomer families. In turn, these families contribute to the culture, economy and overall health of their new communities.

Objectives

The main objectives of this research study were well defined and clarified with the Project Advisory Committee at the outset. The following list outlines the objectives of this research study:

1. To investigate and reveal the experience of newcomers in small and rural communities
2. To reveal barriers and obstacles newcomers face in Perth and Huron Counties
3. To identify service gaps that exist
4. To identify employment barriers that exist
5. To identify and profile current practices in communities of similar size and population
6. To compile recommendations for next steps toward attracting and retaining newcomers in the area

Statistics Canada defines newcomers as landed immigrants who have arrived in Canada up to five years prior to a given census year.¹² Defining a newcomer based solely on their time spent in Canada is problematic as it does not account for the fact that a person who has immigrated three years ago or 14 years ago may still be undergoing similar challenges and barriers associated with being new to Canada. For the purposes of this study, newcomers are defined as immigrants or refugees who have been in Canada under 10 years. Although Eco-Ethnomics consultants attempted to recruit focus group participants who fit this description, participants who have been living in Canada over 10 years were not excluded from the dataset so long as they self-identified as being a newcomer.

12 Statistics Canada (2010) <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-562/note-eng.cfm>

Summary of Findings

Part I – Newcomer Experiences

As part of this study, three focus groups were conducted with newcomers across Perth and Huron Counties, two in Stratford and one in Huron County. Preceding this study, the NONA survey gathered information from 70 participants. The newcomer focus groups from this study were held over two consecutive days in February 2017 and lasted between two and three hours. In Perth, the newcomer focus group was held at the office of a local service provider. The participants in Huron were identified with assistance from Huron businesses, informal networks and the Centre for Employment and Learning. In total, 22 newcomers participated in the newcomer focus groups and there was a relatively even gender-split, with 10 females and 12 males. Below is a demographic overview of the participants in the NONA survey and three additional focus groups, followed by insights and information gathered during the survey and focus group sessions. The NONA survey and focus groups, with a total of 70 participants, are collectively referred to as the NONA survey. The three additional focus groups, with a total of 22 participants, are referred to as the focus groups. The findings have been organized into cross-cutting themes that speak to the unique experiences of newcomers who have moved to and are living in Perth and Huron Counties.

Demographic Overview

Participants in the NONA survey and focus groups came from a range of places around the world, such as: Czech Republic, South Korea, Thailand, Syria, Philippines, Colombia, Mexico, Honduras, Brazil, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, China and Vietnam. Furthermore, the diversity of native languages they spoke included: Czech, Korean, Thai, Kurdish, Arabic, Spanish, Visayan, Vietnamese, Farsi, Chinese, Portuguese, Amharic and Tagalog.

Length of Time in Canada

Fifty-nine per cent of the 92 participants had been in Canada for more than three years (45 of 70 NONA survey respondents and 9 of 22 focus group participants). Sixteen per cent of participants (10 from NONA survey and five from focus groups) had been in Canada for 1-3 years. The remaining 23% had been in Canada for less than a year (13 from the NONA survey and eight from focus groups). Two NONA survey participants did not disclose how long they had been in Canada.

Age

The majority of the newcomers participating in the NONA survey or focus groups were in their 30's and 40's (see Table 2).

Table 2: Age of participants by type of data collection

Focus Groups		NONA Survey	
Age Group	Number	Age Group	Number
<25	3 (14%)	<29	16 (23%)
26-35	5 (23%)	30-39	25 (36%)
36-45	6 (27%)	40-49	14 (20%)
46-55	4 (18%)	50-59	11 (16%)
56+	4 (18%)	60+	4 (6%)

Gender

Sixty per cent of participants were female; 45 of the 70 NONA survey participants and 10 of the 22 focus group participants. One NONA survey respondent did not answer the gender question.

Marital Status

The majority of participants were married. Fifty of the NONA survey participants were married, 14 were single, and none reported being separated, divorced or widowed. Fourteen of the focus group participants were married and the remaining eight stated they were single, separated, divorced or widowed.

Employment

Employment status was asked of the NONA survey participants and focus group participants (see Table 3), however, there was an important difference in the question asked of each group. NONA survey participants were given "maintaining family household" as an employment status option while the focus group participants were not. It is likely that the unemployment category would be smaller for the focus group participants if "maintaining family household" was listed as one of the answer options.

Table 3: Employment status of participants by type of data collection

	Focus Groups Number (%)	NONA Survey Number (%)
Full-time employment (30+ hrs/wk)	5 (23%)	18 (26%)
Part-time employment (<30 hrs/wk)	4 (18%)	9 (13%)
Maintaining family household	Not asked	14 (20%)
Self employed	0	2 (3%)
Unemployed	9 (41%)	15 (21%)
Other (e.g. retired, student)	0	3 (4%)
Did not answer	4 (18%)	9 (13%)

Journey to Canada

Each year, approximately 250,000 immigrants and refugees settle in Canada.¹³ Therefore, it is critically important that Canadians have a better understanding of the push-and-pull factors that influence people’s decisions to immigrate to Canada, and more specifically why they choose to settle in more rural areas.

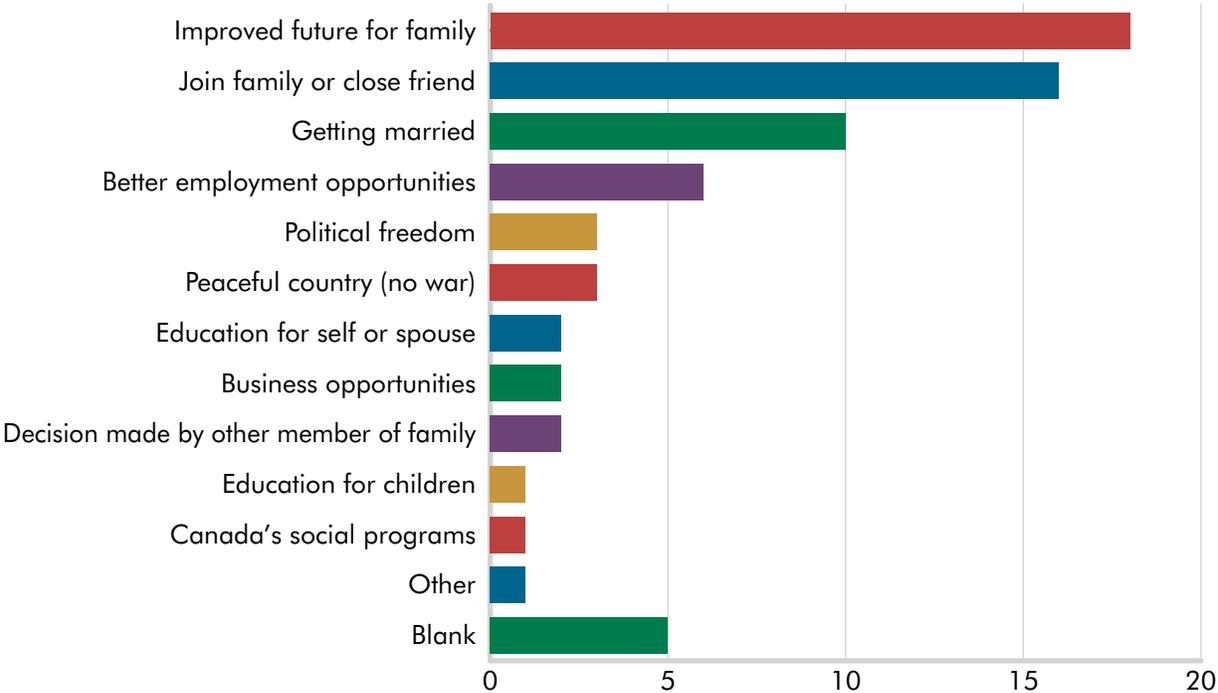
For focus group participants in both Counties, coming to Canada afforded them and their family members a life that was better than what they had in their country of origin. They saw Canada as an opportunity to have a new beginning. In fact, participants from Huron County stated that the opportunity for a new future, for a good education for their children, and for interacting with people from all over the world is what attracted them to Canada. They also mentioned being attracted to the vast Canadian landscape, with its “beautiful and clean environment”.

Importantly, one newcomer from Syria made it clear that the most important thing for her family was “to feel safe and don’t remember war.” Individuals in Perth explained their reasons for immigrating in more general terms, citing that Canada represented visions of freedom for them. Respondents from both Counties spoke about opportunity when asked what they thought Canada would be like before they emigrated away from home.

Results from the NONA survey (see Figure 2) indicated that 68% of newcomers came to Canada for family-related reasons: a better future for their families, to join family members who had already immigrated here, or to get married.

¹³ Government of Canada (2015) <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/menu-fact.asp>

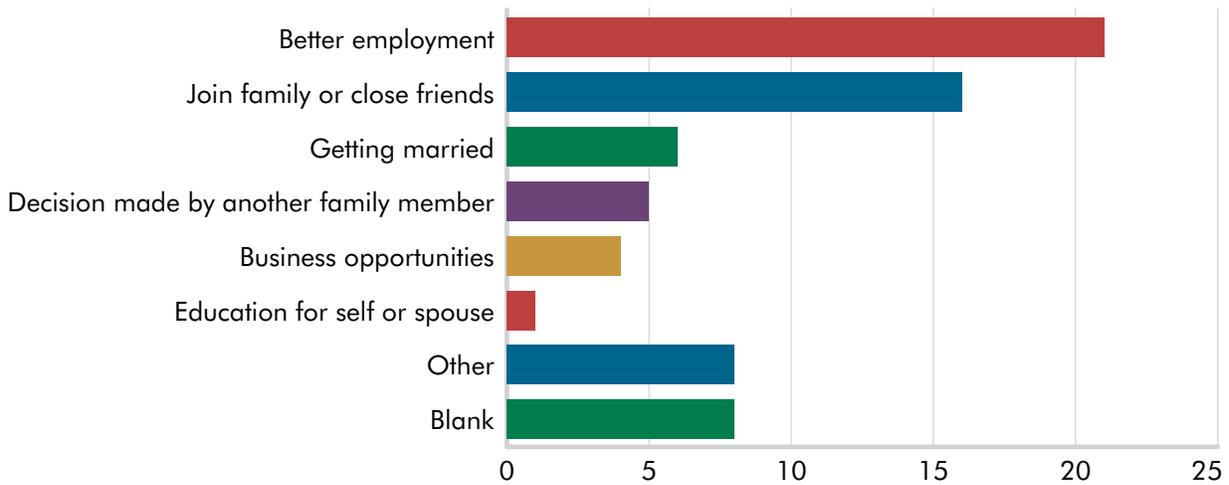
Figure 2. Reasons why newcomers came to Canada (NONA Survey)



Interestingly, 91% of the total focus group participants (n = 20) lived in a city back home. All 13 participants in Perth came from a city, while seven of the nine participants in Huron came from a city. In Perth, the allure of job opportunities was stated as the most compelling reason for participants to settle there while other factors included the high cost of living in an urban area such as Toronto and the connection to relatives and sponsors. To rationalize their move to a rural area, eight of the nine Huron-based focus group participants explained that they came to a rural community instead of a city due to their established relationships with partners, family members, and sponsors. In addition, one participant noted they originally lived in the Greater Toronto Area but the cost of living was high and they preferred the fresh air, good people and nature of the rural area.

NONA survey results were similar to the focus group findings (see Figure 3). The top reason for moving to Perth and Huron Counties was improved employment opportunities. The second and third most cited reasons were to join family or close friends and to get married.

Figure 3. Reasons why newcomers moved to Perth and Huron Counties (NONA Survey)



Common Challenges

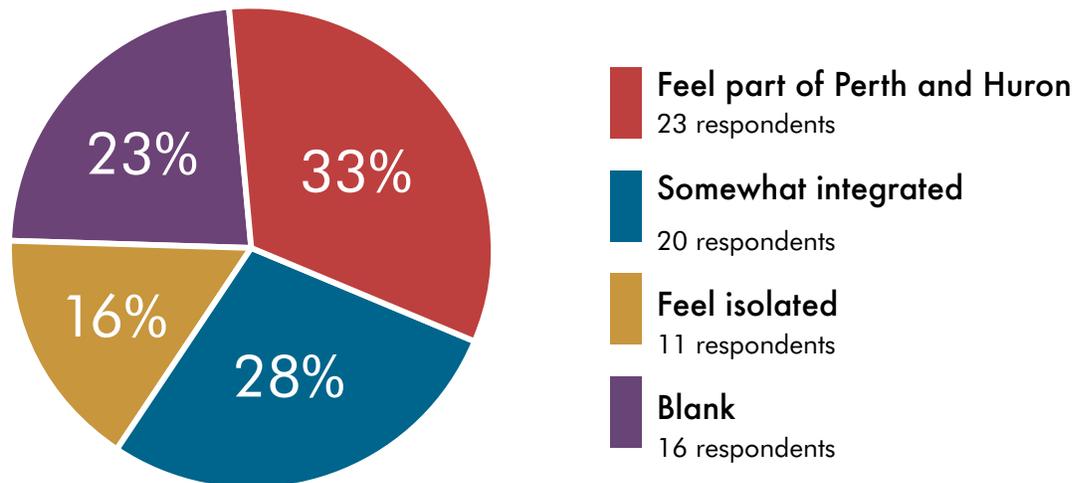
Each newcomer brought forward their own unique challenges of living in Canada, some of which, are common to Canadians living in Perth and Huron. In Perth, focus group participants stated they were worried that living in Canada would be difficult, and one participant felt afraid because they did not know what to expect being so far away from their home country. Participants in the Huron focus group were divided in their experiences. Those who had been living in Ontario longer expressed feelings of loneliness and, at times, depression from social isolation and the barriers to employment. However, individuals who had arrived more recently expressed feelings of happiness and excitement.

For some of the focus group participants, the way in which Canadians socialize was also brought up as a cultural difference that was challenging for them to get used to. For example, one individual described the way of life in Canada as a “basement culture”. In their words, “the people here... it’s a basement culture. They live in their basements. They say ‘Hi, good morning!’ and nothing further. You have a line. You don’t cross it.” The cultural difference referred to in this individual’s comment seemed to be describing a reserved nature of Canadian social life that is in stark contrast from their own country’s culture.

Most of the participants in the NONA survey moved from an urban setting in their home country to the rural areas of Huron and Perth. Some of the challenges they report are echoed by Canadians living in rural areas; feelings of isolation and lack of appropriate, affordable housing. Sixteen per cent of newcomers surveyed in the NONA report spoke to feelings of social isolation

and loneliness while an additional 28% of newcomers felt only somewhat integrated into Perth-Huron (see Figure 4).¹⁴ Similarly, in 2011/12, 26% of Perth residents and 27% of Huron residents reported that they did not feel a strong sense of belonging to their community.¹⁵

Figure 4. Newcomer self-identified feelings of isolation and integration in Perth and Huron Counties (NONA Survey)



Newcomers also identified social isolation and the cold weather as two other challenges that are difficult to overcome. Perth and Huron residents that do not have a car also report that they are isolated and have difficulty participating in everyday activities, a situation that becomes even more challenging during winter weather¹⁶. Finally, finding housing was identified as one of the top three challenges faced by newcomers moving to Perth and Huron (see Figure 5). A *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys*¹⁷ and *A Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron*¹⁸ both identified a need for safe, affordable, and appropriate housing for families and individuals with low incomes.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Social Research & Planning Council (2014). *Quality of Life in Perth & Huron County 2014*. <http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca/srpc/quality-of-life/>

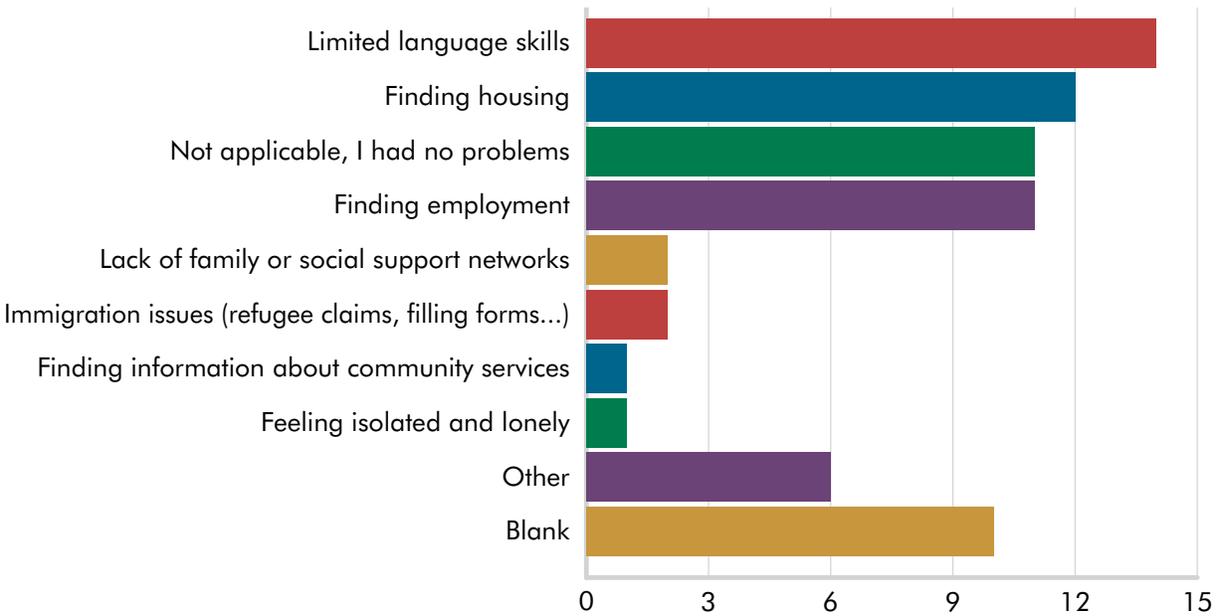
¹⁶ Social Research & Planning Council (2012). *The road ahead: A study of transportation needs across Huron and Perth Counties*. <http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca/srpc/transportation/>

¹⁷ OrgCode Consulting Inc. (2013). *A 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys*. https://www.stratfordcanada.ca/en/insidecityhall/resources/A_10-Year_Housing__Homelessness_Plan_for_Stratford_Perth_County_and_St._Marys.pdf

¹⁸ OrgCode Consulting Inc. (2014). *A Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron*. <https://www.huroncounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Housing-HomelessnessPlan.pdf>

Newcomers participating in the focus groups and NONA survey reported that two of their top three challenges were an inability to fully communicate in English and a lack of relevant job opportunities. (see Figure 5).¹⁹

Figure 5. Challenges faced by newcomers moving to Perth and Huron Counties (NONA Survey)



Navigating through the healthcare system has also proven to be challenging for newcomers in the Huron focus group, a challenge that is shared by Canadians in rural and urban settings. Huron focus group participants unanimously agreed that getting an appointment with a specialist doctor was extremely difficult. However, one participant also described his experience of receiving care at a hospital in the larger municipality of Mississauga, which included long wait times, and felt that “no one cared about me.” The same participant noted the wait was less in Huron when he was visiting the hospital. Comparatively, in Perth, focus group participants who had visited doctors, therapists, and churches, overwhelmingly concluded that accessing health and wellness services had been easy. Canadians have also experienced challenges navigating the healthcare system. A 2012 report, *Loud and Clear: Seniors and caregivers speak out about navigating Ontario’s health-care system*²⁰ documented problems seniors and caregivers experienced, while a recent *Globe and Mail* article²¹ highlighted the growing field of private advocates who are being paid by patients to help them navigate the healthcare system.

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ The Change Foundation (2012). *Loud and Clear: Seniors and caregivers speak out about navigating Ontario’s health-care system* documented problems seniors and caregivers <http://www.changefoundation.ca/loud-and-clear-seniors-caregivers/>
²¹ Grant, Kelly (April 14, 2017). *Patients resort to paying consultants to help navigate Canada’s Byzantine health-care system.* *Globe and Mail.*

Finally, participants in both Huron and Perth Counties identified the cold weather as being a challenge. Participants in Perth were unique in noting that they found it difficult to access public transportation and/or obtain a driver's license in the rural community.

Health and Wellness

In Huron County, most focus group participants felt they had been emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically well since moving to Canada, though not having family members with them contributed to a sense of social isolation. One individual who recently suffered a miscarriage expressed feelings of loneliness since her family was not with her in Huron. Furthermore, she was so unhappy with the healthcare she received after suffering from this tragic and emotionally taxing incident that she chose to fly home (a long and costly journey) to visit a specialist due to long wait times. Another woman expressed that her experience living in a rural environment made her depressed. Lack of employment can also contribute to poor health; this was evident when a 57-year-old male participant, who was unable to obtain work as an electrician, described himself as being physically strong, but mentally drained from being unemployed.

Privately sponsored refugees tend to do better than government assisted refugees²², this is likely due to higher community support (social capital), and is consistent with comments made in the focus groups. In the Huron focus group, eight participants had visited health care professionals, including doctors and dentists. From a satisfaction standpoint, the five refugee newcomers who had sponsors looking out for their healthcare needs were happy with the healthcare they had received. Similarly, 12 of the 13 Perth focus group participants felt emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically well. In addition, 85% of the participants in Perth agreed that Canada is safer than their homelands and this sense of security had a positive impact on their overall health and sense of wellbeing.

²² Dhital, Dikshya. (2015). *The Economic Outcomes of Government Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Canada*. <https://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/32311/1/DIKSHYA,%20Dikshya%2020151.pdf>

Education and Employment

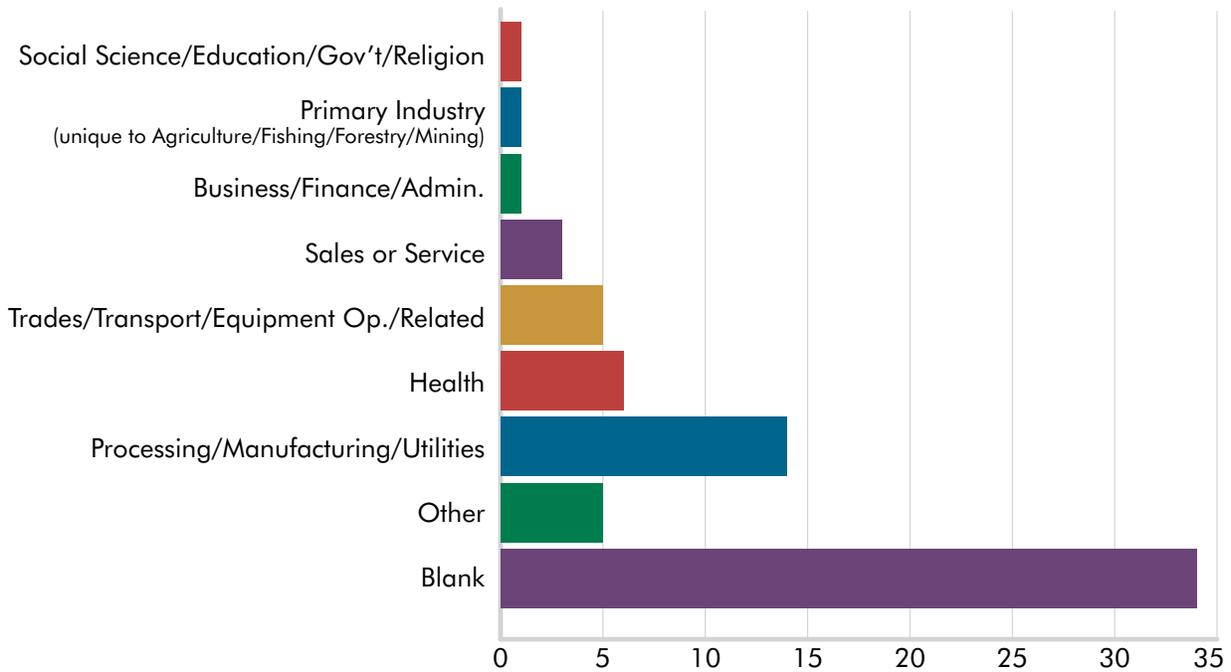
Focus group participants had positive experiences with their children's education in Canada, however, their own experiences in the education and employment sectors were characterized by frustration and sadness.

Many participants stated that access to a good education system was a prime reason why they chose to come to Canada. More specifically, they wanted their children to be able to gain opportunities through the educational system that would eventually lead to good jobs. One participant's hope for her children's education was affirmed in her first weeks of being in Huron. She explained, "when I saw the teachers—how they talk with the kids—I thought, this teacher loves my kid like me."

Despite their children having access to good education, many of the participants expressed anguish over their own educational problems and corresponding employment issues. Of the total number of participants, only one stated that their educational, training or work experience had been recognized in Canada. Four participants from the Huron focus group had professional experience in the trades and in the education sector back home, whereas three participants self-classified their occupation status as "stay at home". In Perth, focus group participants indicated that they had received medical, driving, engineering, accounting and personal support worker (PSW) training back home.

Although about half of the NONA Survey participants chose not to respond, of those that did, they reported working in diverse sectors, including processing, manufacturing, and utilities (see Figure 6). Other reported sectors included health, sales or service, and trades.

Figure 6. Current occupations for newcomer respondents (NONA Survey)



Of the nine focus group participants residing in Huron, six were not currently employed, a few of which expressed their dissatisfaction with the job opportunities. The individuals who were working in Huron also lived in Huron and were happy with the work they had found, however, only two said they had a good relationship with their boss.

In regard to becoming more job-ready, focus group participants noted the difficulty in returning to school in a new country after years of professional experience and explained that they would need to study more to have an equal opportunity here. Similar results were seen in the NONA survey, however, 72% of those surveyed had not taken steps to increase their level of education since moving to Canada.²³ One man in the Huron focus group expressed deep sadness as he described his experience of being underemployed for years as an electrician in Canada and eventually becoming unemployed when new laws were passed that prohibited him from working without first passing a professional examination in English. Another participant had given up trying to find employment in his field, stating, "I think it's impossible. I have a master's degree in teaching from Korea. It's not useful here. I'm trying to find other fields." This sense of hopelessness, owing to credentials not being

"If I got work I'd be happy. Working makes everyone happy."

Participant, Huron County

23 (2015). The Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Project.

recognized, spanned across the group. It also led to some individuals considering and/or taking up employment in a field they had not worked in before. This theme is consistent with other research looking at employment barriers immigrants experience in Canada²⁴.

One of the themes identified in the focus groups, lack of transportation and financial capital to take advantage of training and job opportunities, is also experienced by low income Canadians in rural areas. Focus group participants reported a range of experiences including unemployment, being on social assistance and full time, part time or occasional employment. Emotions expressed by the participants ranged from sadness and discouragement from not having a job to indifference and happiness at being employed in a position that does not match their academic and professional working experience. One participant with refugee status explained that no employment opportunities were available to him in nursing without a work permit. Importantly, one individual who had a degree in architecture, acknowledged that there are major differences in the field between his homeland and Canada. This would force him to begin his studies again, an obstacle he is unsure he will be able to surpass. Overall, while participants did acknowledge that many institutions within the area do offer training opportunities, they were not able to access them because they lacked transportation and/or the financial capital to do so. This finding is similar to what was found in a 2012 report on transportation needs in Perth and Huron Counties²⁵.

Accessing Support Services

The ability for newcomers to access services specific to their needs is critical for them to be fully integrated within society. Importantly, all 22 focus group participants were aware of different levels of support services within their community, and thus had all accessed physical, emotional, spiritual and/or mental health services since moving to the area. In addition, all participants were currently accessing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to improve their language skills and understanding.

A strong support system is key for anyone moving to a new country and even more important when settling in a rural area. Unfortunately, two participants in the Huron focus group who are sponsored by their relatives felt they did not assist them well enough in accessing services and information. As such, they expressed feelings of loneliness in Huron. However, one participant did feel his family was adequately supporting him, including helping him to write his resume in English.

24 Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2013). *Policy on Removing the "Canadian experience" barrier*.
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/book/export/html/10196>

25 Social Research & Planning Council (2012). *The road ahead: A study of transportation needs across Huron and Perth Counties*.
<http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca/srpc/transportation/>

In regard to accessing support services, focus group participant experiences suggest that these services are not being fully utilized. For example, only three individuals accessed employment services, two accessed recreational services, one individual accessed housing support services, one accessed legal services and none of the participants with children accessed childcare or childminding services. However, six individuals had been to their local library and four did acquire driving licenses from Service Ontario. One participant did correspond with the housing department for months, but required further support and faster service in finding an affordable home. Importantly, employment insurance and medical services were noted as the most helpful services accessed by two participants since moving to the area.

The Stratford Welcomes Refugees Committee reported that there was a smoother transition for refugees when service providers came together in advance to coordinate with one another on how to best serve the refugees needs. An example of services collaborating to better serve newcomers could be seen as families accessing ESL classes were also able to access childcare services at the YMCA daycare located at Northwestern High School where the ESL classes are held. This approach has been referenced by several communities as an emerging practice of interest.

Overall, transportation and social activities in the community were repeatedly brought up as services to be improved. Examples of desired social activities include festivals, art exhibitions, meeting places for dancing, drinking, and karaoke as well as outdoor activities for children.

Overall Community Integration

Community members have made some newcomers feel welcome. In the focus groups, some of the participants described the individuals that they had interacted with in the community as being friendly toward them. The newcomers also felt respected and valued. In fact, two focus group participants expressed that they already felt that this area was their home.

“In the first week I was here, I was happy—I thought it was my home.”

Participant, Huron County

In the Huron focus group, self-identified feelings of integration were diverse. The persistent theme of loneliness made some participants in Huron feel that the community was not welcoming to them. They felt they had to navigate the services and daily life on their own, with little support. As understood from the highlighted quote below, others in Huron have multiple supports and a more positive outlook on living in Huron County. This is consistent with other research that found privately sponsored refugees have greater support and integration in the community²⁶.

26 Dhital, Dikshya. (2015). *The Economic Outcomes of Government Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Canada*.



“We have four churches sponsoring us. A lot of people [are] helping us. We have two specific people who take care of our appointments and our papers and [who are] looking for best choice[s] for [our] studying.”

Participant, Huron County

Newcomer Retention

Overall, most participants wanted to stay in their area. In the Perth focus group, approximately 70% of participants plan on staying while others preferred larger cities with greater access to the job market and social activities. This is slightly higher than what was reported in the NONA survey, which stated that 61% of respondents planned on staying in either Perth or Huron County.²⁷ Together, these studies indicate that the majority of newcomers want to stay in the region.

The focus group and NONA survey provide possible reasons as to why newcomers are undecided or intent on moving away from Perth and Huron Counties; reasons that are also echoed by Canadians living in rural areas²⁸. As with Canadians, younger newcomers expressed a desire to relocate to an urban centre. They cited the allure of the night life and social activities as being attractive to them. Participants who indicated they wanted to stay referenced the quality of life in a small town, the high cost of living in Toronto, and their ability to drive to socialize when needed. Other focus group participants mentioned ties to work and family in Perth. In the words of one man, “everything is very close—you save money on gas. [Stratford is a] safe city if you have kids.” Regardless of their plans for the future, participants agreed that, “it’s boring [in Stratford].” When asked if they wanted to stay in Huron County, focus group participants overwhelmingly said ‘yes’, which was due to their desire to be close to job opportunities and a preference for the countryside. However, for many participants stating “yes”, moving away from Huron County is not possible. Several participants conveyed a lack of choice in that they were tied to Huron County because of a close family member (i.e. parent or spouse) who has a good job and is firmly rooted in the community.

²⁷ (2015). The Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Project.

²⁸ Liu, Yuxi. (2015). *Exploring Strategies for Rural Youth Retention: A Case Study of the Town of Goderich, Huron County, Ontario*. http://www.waynecaldwell.ca/Students/MRPs/Yuxi%20Liu/Yuxi%20Liu_MRP.pdf

Embraced by the Community: Vicrum's Story

A few years ago, Vicrum* and his family moved from Toronto to a small town in Huron County with a population of approximately 1,200. Although a lawyer in his home country, when they immigrated he could not practice in Canada, so he went back to school, upgraded his English and studied to be an IT specialist. This led to a job in the hotel industry that provided him and his family with the opportunity to prosper in their new country.

With hard-earned savings they bought a gas station and a restaurant. They wanted to leave the concrete jungle, the expense of daily life, the rush, the stressful commutes for work and shopping and the resulting loss of time with family for the chance to once again see the stars in the sky and appreciate the open wilderness and freshness of the country. The family knew from their previous experience living in a Canadian "small town" and having previously visited Huron County, that this community, close to, but not itself a large city, could be home. Now, when friends and family visit they don't want to leave. They are happy to spend a few days in the family's beautiful backyard, surrounded by open space and a friendly community.

Highly adaptive and open to new experiences, the family is actively involved in a community that Vicrum describes as becoming more like family than neighbours. And while they may have less money to invest they make a decent living and have created employment opportunities in a community that has not just accepted them, but embraced them. Their



restaurant is a favourite amongst the local population and even attracts people from smaller communities in the area. They have ensured that the restaurant continues the traditions of the community, supporting families with the passing of loved ones, wedding celebrations and other milestones in the community.

His greatest challenge is finding employees. He'd like to do more in the community, but being unable to find employees means he must spend more of his time in the business and cannot take on other pursuits. He would be happy to hire other newcomers, but the community doesn't attract many new people.

Vicrum believes big city people aren't aware of the benefits of living in a smaller community. He believes that the government could be better at building awareness of the opportunities for a rich quality of life in smaller communities. Providing support to interested newcomers that want to pursue business opportunities in smaller communities would go a long way. He believes that assistance in business planning, small business loans, and programs to assist in writing resumes and speaking English would help attract more newcomers to rural areas.

*Name changed to protect the privacy of the respondent.

Part II – Service Providers and Supporting Organizations

Overview of Available Services

Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the services available to newcomers in Perth and Huron Counties. This is reflected in the fact that all focus group participants were aware of and utilized at least some of the resources available to them.

There are a number of service providers working within Perth and Huron Counties to assist newcomers in adjusting to their new home and community. These organizations can be divided into two categories: direct service providers and support organizations. Direct service providers offer frontline support and work with newcomers on an ongoing basis to ensure that their needs are met and that they are integrated within society. Support organizations offer assistance and a referral system to both direct service providers and other agencies that seek to enrich the lives of newcomers. Examples of support organizations are the United Way, municipalities, school boards, libraries and local immigration partnerships.

The following tables highlight the key services and supports that are offered to newcomers by direct service providers (Table 4) and support organizations (Table 5).

Table 4 Key services that direct service providers offer

Direct Service Provider	Location	Settlement & Integration Services	Education & Training Programs	Employment Services	Access to Needed Resources	Transportation Services (i.e. bus passes)	Mental Health Services	Parenting & Family Services	Children's Services
Conestoga Career Centre	Perth		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Perth District Health Unit	Perth	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Stratford Welcomes Refugees Program	Perth	✓							
The Centre for Employment & Learning - Avon Maitland District School Board	Both	✓	✓	✓					
Rural Response for Healthy Children	Huron	✓					✓	✓	✓
Huron County Health Unit	Huron							✓	✓
Partners in Employment	Both			✓					
Huron-Perth Centre for Children and Youth	Both				✓		✓	✓	✓

Table 5 Key services that support organizations offer

Direct Service Provider	Location	Business Counselling, Mentorship, Loan Provision	Settlement & Integration Services	Education & Training Programs	Employment Services	Housing Services	Children's Services
Perth County Information Network (Library system)	Perth		✓	✓			
Huron Business Development Corporation	Huron	✓					
Huron County Library	Huron		✓	✓			
Four County Labour Market	Both			✓	✓		
Newcomer Settlement Huron Perth	Both		✓	✓	✓		
Huron County Social and Property Services	Huron				✓	✓	✓
City of Stratford – Social Services Department	Perth				✓	✓	✓

Innovation in Service Integration

While there are many direct service providers that are accessible to assist newcomers with their social, cultural and economic needs, more still needs to be done to better integrate newcomers and reduce feelings of social isolation. Perth and Huron Counties are continuing to offer more programs and services that are geared toward newcomers. The innovations outlined below help to build on the existing language classes, employment agencies and social assistance programs offered by the direct newcomer service providers in the area.

English as a Second Language Programs

As previously mentioned, Perth and Huron Counties have many services that are beneficial to newcomers. Deciding how to integrate these services seamlessly together presents an opportunity for innovation. For example, upon arrival in Perth, many access the English as a Second Language (ESL) program held at The Centre for Employment and Learning. In recent years, in a proactive effort to attract newcomers, new initiatives have been designed. Given this, the impact of these ESL classes extends beyond the learners’ improved English into acting as a platform for social integration. The ESL program effectively introduces newcomers to each other and involves them with other community organizations and events.²⁹

²⁹ Khan, B., and Labute, B. (2015) “Immigrant Attraction and Retention in Perth County”. <http://waynecaldwell.ca/Projects/workingwithimmigrants/Perth%20County%20Report.pdf>

Rural Employment Initiative

Through a collaboration between the Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporation (OACFDC), Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC), Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP) and Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Rural Employment Initiative was launched in Huron County. This program matches job seeking newcomers who land in the Region of Peel and Halton with employment opportunities in rural Ontario, provides settlement support and tools to help immigrants start the resettlement process and provides diversity training to OACFDC members in rural Ontario to prepare communities for newcomer arrivals.³⁰

The initiative seeks Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) who meet the below criteria:

- Permanent Residents or Convention Refugees with a Canadian Language Benchmark of level 6 (CLB6) or above. The Canadian Language Benchmark is a tool to measure the language ability of adult newcomers and prospective newcomers living and working in Canada.
- Job ready and actively seeking a job or to establish a business
- Willing to relocate to a rural community in Ontario to work or start a business
- Newcomers who have a great desire to re-enter their professions, but have been forced to do unskilled jobs for several years

Multicultural Association Perth-Huron (MAPH)

Newcomers arrive in Perth and Huron Counties from all parts of the world and help to create a strong and diverse community. This diversity is best highlighted in the 13 different languages spoken by just 22 focus group participants. Therefore, it is clear why the goal of the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron (MAPH) is to provide supports to the growing diversity in these communities. In 2013, the MAPH formed to support newcomers and continues to provide information and referral services for immigrants in and outside of Perth and Huron Counties.

The MAPH's Events Committee plans a variety of multicultural events that are well attended by diverse groups of people from the newcomer and non-newcomer communities.^{31,32} Their events embrace diversity, raise funds for MAPH, and create an inclusive environment for newcomers to interact with the community. As of 2015 it has helped to serve over 700 individuals from

³⁰ Rural Employment Initiative, Newcomer Centre of Peel

³¹ (2015). The Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Project.

³² Khan, B., and Labute, B. (2015) "Immigrant Attraction and Retention in Perth County".
<http://waynecaldwell.ca/Projects/workingwithimmigrants/Perth%20County%20Report.pdf>

approximately 55 countries.³³ For his efforts, MAPH's founder, Dr. Gezahgn Wordofa received a five-year volunteer service award from the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.³⁴

Carpooling

For any community to advance and grow, a focus on transportation system development is required. Through research that was conducted by the United Way Perth-Huron and the SRPC, it was found that a new approach to the way individuals use transit in the area was needed. From this, "The Regional Ride Share Program" was created in collaboration with local municipalities. This program allows individuals to simply visit the website, register for an account and input details about where they want to go and when. The individual would then be connected with an individual going the same way. This initiative prides itself on not only providing a needed resource in the community, but also helping to bring individuals in rural communities closer together.

Challenges

Several organizations are finding it challenging to implement innovative solutions to support their communities. As a result, they are relying on tried and tested methods or external supports. For example, organizations are simply using services already provided by the health agencies, employment services and community groups that are leveraging current practices in the field.

Evaluation

With regard to evaluating their services, organizations in Perth and Huron are beginning to consider various methodologies, beyond user-experience surveys. One advantage of this is that organizations may identify and benefit from the use of standardized evaluation tools to assist in the measurement of core outcomes intended by program interventions. More rigorous evaluation practices are needed to help define more targeted improvements to the services provided in the area.

33 Multicultural Association Perth Huron. Progress Report. Rep. Perth and Huron Counties: n.p., 2015. Print.

34 Stratford Herald "Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron starts fundraiser, settles into new office space".

<http://www.stratfordbeaconherald.com/2016/03/19/multicultural-association-of-perth-huron-starts-fundraiser-settles-into-new-office-space>

Funding and Policy

There are a number of opportunities for new support services to receive funding through both local organizations and the various levels of government.

Government Funding

Both Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) encourage *Local Immigration Partnerships* to submit request for proposals to strengthen the role of regional communities in serving and integrating immigrants. The Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) strengthen a community's capacity to integrate immigrants and newcomers. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) administers three major funding programs: Settlement, Resettlement Assistance and Inter-Action (Multiculturalism). Through these programs, IRCC works with many partners to deliver services to newcomers to Canada, as well as, respond to the needs of new and established Canadians.³⁵

In March 2010, the Planning & Development Department of Huron County entered into an agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to undertake a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) project. This LIP would foster an active and meaningful connection between newcomers and their communities, while enabling them to feel a sense of belonging. The LIP project served as a collaborative agreement between IRCC and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI).

The Huron Immigration Partnership is another organization that has benefited from the funding available through IRCC and the MCI. It is comprised of two phases. Phase 1 took place between 2010 and 2011 with the goal of optimizing and promoting the successful attraction and integration of newcomers and immigrants into Huron County. The Huron Immigration Partnership Council was formed and created a detailed work plan that included all major tasks, activities and phases. Further, the work plan included the development, delivery and reporting phases necessary to implement the strategy. Finally, the Local Settlement Strategy was developed and outlines key tasks, milestones, roles and responsibilities. In Phase 2, which took place between 2011 and 2012, a strategic plan was developed and initiatives were raised to bring awareness to immigration in the area.³⁶

³⁵ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2015). "Funding Guidelines"

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/grants-contributions-funding/documents/pdf/funding-guidelines-2015-eng.pdf>

³⁶ *Huron Immigration Partnership Brief* (2010). Terms of Reference Human Immigration Partnership Council.

Local Organization Funding

The United Way of Perth-Huron is the most well-known local organization that has funded service providers. The Centre for Employment & Learning (CEL) received funding in 2016 for



their newcomer initiative through the United Way's Community Impact and Allocation Contingency Funds. With CEL's proximity to high school and daycare services and their ability to draw newcomers into its' ESL program it serves as an opportunity for them to become a lead agency in the push toward referring newcomer services and promoting integration. As was reported in the 2015 NONA Report, CEL has several different geographic locations that allow its reach to extend further than most organizations in the area.³⁷ With CEL's ever-increasing role, newcomer support and integration in the region is strengthened.

Funding agencies have made it possible for organizations within Perth and Huron Counties to create initiatives to foster a more inclusive and supportive society for newcomers. However, more still needs to be done. Many newcomers are leaving the area due to feelings of social isolation or lack of job opportunities, among other things. To retain these newcomers there needs to be a consistent effort to support agencies and initiatives through funding. The shift toward a comprehensive strategic plan needs to be realized to fund large scale initiatives that seek to integrate newcomers within the society and to have a lasting impact.

³⁷ (2015). The Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Project.

The Need for Better Access to Transportation: Mark's Story

Mark* moved to Perth County 15 years ago. His son, who had already been living and working in Perth County for three years, sponsored the rest of his family. Mark, a retired professional, moved to be close to his son and growing family. He believed he could get a good job and make enough to survive—nothing extravagant. He knew nothing of Canada, but quickly discovered that unless you are living in a larger city like Toronto, you need a car.

Because he was sponsored, Mark did not receive any support from the government. With no employment office in the community, he had to travel back and forth to access these services in Stratford, which required a car. Even getting work locally with the US Company that he worked for in his country of origin, or taking English classes, required a car. Without Canadian experience, he was unable to find a job. In the end, he took a job as a janitor despite being over qualified for the position. He was fortunate to get into cooperative housing and after some time, he was able to buy a house with his family's earnings.

His philosophy is one of quality of life, and so he feels that despite some of the difficulties he has endured, his experience within Perth has been good. He came to Perth County from a country with a high quality of life and rich traditions of living and interacting in streets and city squares. Here, winter and its indoor life make integrating socially and culturally with the community difficult; nobody is outside or in the



streets during a significant part of the year and meeting people is reduced to visits to the mall and Tim Horton's. Without a car and a good GPS unit it's difficult to explore the area, which left Mark feeling trapped. While this is less of a problem for him in his current stage of life, he believes it would be worse for young people.

His greatest challenge has been language. The rural community provides residents with less opportunities to interact with other cultures. He finds that people for the most part don't pay attention, are less patient and don't try to help when he speaks. Getting a job and taking college courses are equally challenging due to the transportation requirement to get to and from the classes and the high level of English needed to be hired. Programs at the local library are great, and some of the community facilities are beautiful, but being a senior newcomer is not easy when it comes time to integrate into a population that is prone to being set in their ways. That said, Mark finds the city is safe and beautiful and he has his family and his dog to keep him active in his new life full of new experiences.

*Name changed to protect the privacy of the respondent.

Interviews with Key Stakeholder Groups

A concerted effort by multiple organizations is needed to ensure that Perth and Huron Counties can attract and retain newcomers. Eleven different stakeholder organizations were interviewed as part of this study to gain a deeper understanding of the scope of the challenges they face in supporting newcomer efforts and possible solutions from their experience in the field. The group interviews were conducted using an online webinar format combined with a survey. This method allowed for in-depth group discussion and anonymous individual responses to be gathered simultaneously. Stakeholders were divided into three unique groups: community organizations, service providers, and employers. Below is a summary of the key findings and insights gathered from each group interview.

Community Organizations

Four municipality-based community organizations participated in a group interview for this research study representing public health, economic development, and cultural services. The participants, who were in management or senior staff positions, each brought their unique perspective and input to the interview process.

When asked about their vision for creating a support system for newcomers in Perth and Huron Counties, participants unanimously agreed that coordinated service delivery was required and that one central organization or hub—with a clear mandate to coordinate and deliver newcomer services and supports—could help to manage the delivery of services from different providers. One organization saw itself as potentially fulfilling the lead role, or perhaps coordinating an effort to lobby for a central service provider or officer, but others saw their organizations playing supporting roles and assisting volunteer sponsor groups or providing referrals for newcomer services.

While these supports and services are benefiting newcomers, respondents identified a significant number of service gaps that are not being filled and/or newcomer needs that are not being met. Assistance with healthcare issues, providing educational supports, navigating government systems and helping to find suitable housing were a few of the needs identified. However, providing language supports and services, such as translation and working to ensure that social/spiritual interaction and integration takes place are gaps that all respondents identified.

“I think there are many opportunities here and many service providers do their best to link clients to services. I feel it is important for this to be streamlined and consistent so that all newcomers—those that look for services or not—can be welcomed and awareness [is] made around community supports.”

Community Organizer

To assist with addressing these gaps, the community organizations pointed out several community assets that could be leveraged to better support newcomers, including the United Way and YMCA, faith groups and multicultural groups, public and separate school boards and employment centres. Again, it was suggested that a community hub concept may be required to link newcomers to these assets.

An informal network exists between organizations working to ensure that newcomers are integrating successfully, including employers, service providers, and community partners. However, participants agreed that the combined efforts of these partnerships are not yet satisfactory, if satisfactory at all. As such, the municipality-based community organizations that participated in the group interview process see opportunities to increase collaboration and are interested in working together to ensure newcomer needs are met.

Service Providers

Three service providers participated in this group interview. Service providers work directly with newcomers providing frontline services, such as ESL classes and help finding employment, among other services. The participants were made up of management, senior staff, and volunteer board members and while everyone brought their own unique perspective, their feedback and insights overlapped significantly.

All three service providers expressed interest in having one central community-based organization (or hub) lead newcomer integration and support efforts in the area. One service provider suggested their organization be the lead and secure a dedicated staff person to meet the needs of newcomers. The two remaining service providers suggested their role be more supportive, including providing referrals, educating others, and sharing information.

“How do we create a one-stop shop for newcomers to the area?”

Service Provider

Two of the service providers interviewed are currently assisting newcomers to integrate into their communities, which would include: providing ESL classes, helping newcomers to understand Canadian culture and providing one-on-one assistance with accessing social services and/or providing referrals. However, if they had additional capacity, interviewees identified several other roles they could play. These included building relationships between sponsoring groups and service providers as well as providing immigration supports and training, such as language assessments and employer education and coaching.

When asked about what type of community they envisioned, one service provider said:

“A warm and welcoming community that is sensitive to the various cultures of newcomers.”

Service Provider

The service providers identified various impacts related to the services and supports they provide to newcomers, including: finding employment, integration into the workforce, income stability, improved language skills, and cultivating love for the community. They also noted increasing their organizational understanding of culture and customs. This said, one service provider explained that they tend to be reactive when it comes to the needs of newcomers and they would prefer to be proactive.

Several health needs were identified by the service providers as not being met, including counselling for mental health, providing specialized care for physical needs (e.g. prosthetics), and responding to dental and dietary needs. Importantly, participants emphasized the need for these supports and services to be language-appropriate and provided by individuals who would respect unique cultural needs. Educational needs were also identified as being key for newcomers, including: educational assessments that take into consideration education received abroad, ESL for specific age groups (i.e. youth and teens) and cultural sensitivity training for front-line service providers, such as teachers.

Reflecting on the importance of collaboration in response to such needs, all of the service providers agreed that working together is extremely important. At the same time, they acknowledged that the combined efforts of service providers, employers, and community organizations needs to be strengthened. It was again suggested that one organization take the lead while leveraging the knowledge and capacity of community-based organizations working directly with newcomers. Furthermore, they felt that this should be coupled with targeted action and supports for more vulnerable groups, such as temporary foreign workers.

Employers

Four employers participated in a group interview as part of this research study. The employers included a public service organization as well as businesses from two sectors, manufacturing and construction. The stakeholders interviewed included owners and upper management and senior human resource staff. The issue of helping newcomers in Perth and Huron find employment is one that is critical for the area’s future success. As discovered in the focus groups with newcomers, half were unemployed whereas only 16% of NONA survey participants were unemployed in 2015. Therefore, the insights shared by regional employers have been valuable sources for understanding this issue and coming up with possible solutions.

When asked about their current employee mixture and whether newcomers make up a significant portion of their workforce, half of the employer participants did not have any newcomers working for them, and the other employers only had a small percentage. Homogeneity, inertia, and inherent bias in the workforce are a few of the reasons provided by one employer for the limited number of newcomers represented. With limited experience orienting newcomers into their businesses, the employers expressed a genuine interest in helping to grow their workforce in an inclusive way. They also voiced a commitment to learning how to both attract and hire newcomers.

At present, the methods being used by employers to attract newcomers have been unsuccessful and include channels, such as local newspapers, online platforms (i.e. Kijiji and ESL websites), professional job boards, and the Kraft-Heinz Job Action Centre. Additionally, some employers do not specifically target newcomers as part of their recruitment strategy, but rather focus on specific skills and abilities. For employers that have attracted newcomers, the challenges they face in hiring them include evaluating their work history and checking references. At the same time, employers expressed the need to change their organizational culture to be more accepting of newcomers.

The 2017 EmployerOne survey revealed the three key competencies employers in the region look for when hiring for hard-to-fill positions. These are 1) work ethic, dedication and dependability, 2) self-motivation and an ability to work with little to no supervision, and 3) teamwork

“We have to have employees who are able to communicate, understand health and safety and work instructions, and complete paperwork etc.”

Employer

and interpersonal ability.³⁸ A respondent from the Four County Labour Market Planning Board explained that employers feel training can be provided to develop many industry-specific skills as long as those soft skills are already present in a candidate.

However, interviewed employers listed several barriers that are not necessarily skill-based and are compounding the issue of newcomer employment. Though lack of English-language skills is the biggest issue, this is closely followed by access to transportation and affordable housing. Importantly, resistance to social and cultural changes on the part of local community members was also identified as a barrier that newcomers face.

³⁸ Four County Labour Market Planning Board (FCLMPB) (2017) <http://www.planningboard.ca/userfiles/file/EmployerOne2017FINAL.pdf>

Not surprisingly, the specific services and/or supports that were identified by employers to assist newcomers in becoming more employable, include transportation supports, such as car share programs, and affordable housing. ESL services were identified as being extremely important.

“...We would need to network with agencies in the community to identify (possible) barriers and work toward solutions to provide support for newcomers to encourage employment.”

Employer

An outside stakeholder from Partners in Employment provided some additional insight into employer experience with newcomers in Perth and Huron Counties. From this stakeholder’s perspective, some newcomers are not attracted to the area because wages are not high enough. The living wage in Perth and Huron County have been calculated as being \$16.47 by SRPC. This stakeholder recommends that employers provide training incentives and recruitment supports to newcomers.

While some employers have implemented measures and/or internal policies to ensure that newcomers who join their workforce feel comfortable and confident, such as a Respect in the Workplace Policy and familiarizing themselves with the Ontario Human Rights Code, other employers acknowledged that they need to modify their hiring requirements, review and revise educational requirements, and be more flexible. Increasing the probation period to account for longer training and on-boarding processes that enable newcomers to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to succeed within the organization was one example mentioned by an interviewed employer of how to be more flexible. One participant mentioned potentially setting up a mentorship program.

Most of the respondents have yet to encounter issues with retaining newcomers because they have no newcomer employees. One employer, however, acknowledged that isolation and feelings of being singled-out have caused them difficulty in retaining their newcomer employees, who may feel that they stand out as a visible minority in a workplace that is not diverse.

“Often they [current employees] are subtle, not obviously discrimination or harassment, but enough that newcomers can feel uncomfortable and look for a new position.”

Employer

A few of the employers who participated in the group interview are partnered with professional bridging programs, including Partners in Employment, Conestoga Career Centre Career Centre, and The Technical Training Group, to name a few. Others work closely with community organizations who attract newcomers and help them to settle, such as Opportunity Lives Here. However, the key insight expressed by all employers is the need to have a single point of contact or lead agency that connects newcomers, employers, community organizations, and service providers.



Employers felt that their combined efforts, along with those of service providers and community partners, are not meeting the needs of newcomers to the area. This said, they are interested in and supportive of hiring and retaining newcomer employees.

“We believe that there is a lot of opportunity to increase our workforce if we could connect with newcomers better. However, our community needs a strong infrastructure of supports to compete with larger urban centres where systems already exist.”

Employer

The Job Market: Ahmad's Story

Ahmad* came to Canada from Saudi Arabia in 2013. He joined his family in Huron County, but after two and a half years he has recently resettled in Perth County. In Perth, finding work was easier and there were more opportunities to meet friends and have a social life. While Huron County remains a beautiful place, Ahmad felt it was better suited for retired people. To be young with hopes of full-time work above minimum wage and a social circle that included more than going to the local bar and playing video games, he had to move a larger centre with more young people.

Upon arriving in Huron County, Ahmad needed to pursue language studies. Unfortunately, he was the only person requesting language training in that area at the time and he ended up having to drive to Stratford to take classes. Eventually, he got to know a few other students who were travelling to Stratford to learn English and together they were able to arrange to have classes offered in Huron County.

He worked at a couple of different jobs while living in Huron—at a restaurant and at a locally owned transportation company. However, both of these jobs were part-time and minimum wage and were good while he was studying, but there was no future in them for him. A friend of his from Columbia found him a better job in Stratford. And while the Employment Ontario programs in Stratford are very supportive, Ahmad didn't



expect that it would be so hard to find a good job that you could stay with for a long time. When he did find one, he had only two weeks of holidays so getting back to Saudi Arabia to visit family was challenging. He explains that the rules here are different. And while it is lonelier in Stratford without family, it is easier to live there. The weather is cold, but the people in the community are very kind, polite and appreciate him. It is still hard to make friends—it takes much longer in Canada than in Saudi Arabia. Still, Ahmad has made friends with his "Canadian family" who treat him like a son and he feels very fortunate for it. He loves to cook, and although food is not cheap he can find everything he needs and saves money by eating at home.

The biggest barrier he faces is being Muslim. People get scared when they find out he is Muslim and is part of the reason making friends is so difficult. Islamophobia paints everyone with the same brush, "I am a good person and just want to have a good life here."

*Name changed to protect the privacy of the respondent.

Organizational Profiles

The following are the individual profiles of the seven service providers, five support organizations and one organization that provides both service directly to newcomers and support to other direct service providers.

Direct Service Providers

Partners in Employment

Partners in Employment is a not-for-profit organization that assists people in Huron and Perth Counties to find and keep employment.

Specific Services:

- ▼ All aspects of finding employment and finding employees

Specific Integration:

- ▼ There are three Employment Resource Centres: Stratford, Listowel and St. Marys that offer a one on one job search service throughout Huron and Perth counties.
- ▼ In St. Marys, co-located with the Adult Learning Centre of Perth

Goals and Objectives:

- ▼ The Employment Resource Centres offer help with all aspects of a job search
- ▼ Development of Return to Work Action Plans for people that are unemployed or under employed
- ▼ To match job skills to employer needs

Direct Service Provider



Target population:

All people



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

5%



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

7

Conestoga Career Centre

Direct Service Provider

The Conestoga Career Centre is an Employment Ontario Employment Service provider assisting residents of Perth and Huron counties in finding, securing, and maintaining employment.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Offers assistance with all aspects of finding, securing, and keeping employment
- ▼ Training/employment supports (i.e. equipment, steel toed boots)
- ▼ Transportation (including bus passes)

Service Integration:

- ▼ Services are linked with Conestoga College
- ▼ Organization is connected to bridging programs provided by Conestoga College at Doon or Waterloo Campus
- ▼ Coordinate services with other community providers to meet needs of client accessing Career Centre services i.e. Academic Upgrading, Literacy and Basic Skills, Ontario Works

Goals and Objectives for serving newcomers:

- ▼ Developing a team of employers who will work together to create a system to integrate newcomers who do not have language skills sufficient to secure work
- ▼ Creating a list of 20 employers who have a diverse workforce to facilitate movement of newcomers into Stratford workplaces
- ▼ Transitioning new Syrian refugees into the workplace by working with the Imam from the mosque as well as identifying 5 Stratford employers who will agree to employ and work with the Career Centre on approaches to maintain employment



Target population:

Unemployed/underemployed, out of school residents in Perth and Huron counties of all ages



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

In 2016-17, 3% of clients self-identifying as Visible Minority and 5% as Newcomers



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

2-3

Evaluation:

The effectiveness of the services provided by Conestoga Career Centre in achieving their objectives has not yet been measured.

Stratford Welcome Refugees Program

Direct Service Provider

The Stratford Welcomes Refugees Program (SWRP) is a community-based group that conducts refugee sponsorship.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Fundraising and the collection of community support for sponsorships
- ▼ Fundraising efforts for the Blended Visa Office – Referred Program (BVOR) which matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada³⁹
- ▼ Identifies sponsor groups
- ▼ Produces the SWRP resource binder to support all aspects of sponsorship and settlement

Service Integration:

Their services are linked with other services in the area, including collaborations with several other service providers. These are listed in their SWRP resource binder, which is available for review.⁴⁰



Target population:
Refugee families



Percent of Newcomers in client base:
100%



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:
5 refugee families

Goals and Objectives for serving Newcomers:

They are currently working toward the successful settlement of 5 Syrian families in Stratford.

Evaluation:

The effectiveness of services provided by the SWRP has not been measured; however, some measures that are available include the number of Steering Committee meetings. The central aim of this committee is to assess programs focused on Syrian refugees and their sponsors and to develop recommendations to improve the process while sustaining the successes and maximizing impact. Moving forward, the SWRP will be measuring how effective their services are by determining how many families have been settled for approximately 2 years, and how many of these families have accessed the following services:

- ▼ Housing
- ▼ Social Programs
- ▼ Education
- ▼ Career Training and Employment
- ▼ Health Services

³⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2016) <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/vor.asp>

⁴⁰ Stratford Welcomes Refugees – A Community Project. "Stratford Welcomes Refugees". <http://www.stratfordwelcomesrefugees.ca>

Perth District Health Unit

Direct Service Provider

Perth District Health Unit (PDHU) targets any newcomers needing Public Health program support in Perth county. PDHU can provide services directly to clients or link clients to needed community services. Services and linkages are also provided to the Anabaptist community and Low German Speaking Mennonites from Mexico (LGSMM) in particular.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Immunization clinics
- ▼ Oral health clinics
- ▼ Stop Smoking clinics
- ▼ Healthline (info and links to various services)
- ▼ Mother and Young Child Clinic (for Anabaptist community women and children to 6 years only, translation for LGSMM available)
- ▼ Healthy Babies Healthy Children program
- ▼ School-based Public Health Nurse services
- ▼ Sexual health

For a complete list of services offered please refer to www.pdhu.on.ca

Service Integration:

Perth District Health Unit strives to make linkages for clients to any needed services. Health Unit staff are represented on various committees across Perth County that promote service integration for newcomers (Ex. Newcomers Settlement Huron Perth Committee). Below are some examples of local service integration practices for newcomers:

- ▼ Support local English as a Second Language classes by running “Health Tips” sessions in Perth East
- ▼ Distribute “Health News for Everyone” newsletters in Anabaptist community
- ▼ Promote “Stratford Welcomes Refugees” website and handbook to clients <http://www.stratfordwelcomesrefugees.ca/>



Target population:

Newcomers needing Public Health program support



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

Unknown



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

Unknown

Goals and Objectives for serving Newcomers:

- The Perth District Health Unit works in partnership with our community to foster conditions in which people can be healthy.
- We promote health, protect health, prevent disease and provide community health services for the people of Perth County.

The Centre for Employment and Learning (CEL)

Direct Service Provider

Avon Maitland District School Board is the support organization that runs the Centre for Employment and Learning. The Centre itself is working toward providing opportunities for individuals to develop their potential and enable them to participate fully in the workplace and community.

Specific Services:

- ▼ English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- ▼ Courses and supports to secure a high school diploma
- ▼ Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs in Huron County
- ▼ Employment Ontario services in Huron County

Service Integration:

CEL works with other community agencies to provide appropriate referrals when required.



Target population:

Adults requiring access to employment services or education



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

10%



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

35 newcomers,
2 services each

Goals and Objectives for serving newcomers:

- ▼ To provide training (ESL and other) to meet the needs of individual adults and employers
- ▼ To provide secondary school credit-based programs for adults
- ▼ To provide labour market development programs for adults

Evaluation:

The Centre is measuring the effectiveness of their services by using the following methods and evaluation tools:

- ▼ Verbal feedback in English and a Second Language
- ▼ Statistics regarding meeting of specific program goals for Employment Ontario and Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs
- ▼ Testimonials
- ▼ Client satisfaction surveys
- ▼ Feedback from community partners
- ▼ Tracking data about the newcomers who access services

Huron-Perth Centre for Children & Youth

Direct Service Provider

Huron-Perth Centre for Children and Youth is the lead Agency for Child & Youth Mental Health in Huron and Perth Counties.

Specific Services:

Access to service is a simple call to any office; youth over 12 may access services on their own although parental involvement is always considered. Services include:

- ▼ Assessment and treatment services for children and youth and their families for a broad range of child and youth mental health concerns
- ▼ School-based Outreach for designated schools through purchase of service agreements with both school boards
- ▼ A range of services for youth in the justice system
- ▼ Violence Against Women–Supportive Counselling (Huron only)
- ▼ Partner Assault Response–Group Counselling for individuals charged with domestic violence

Service Integration:

All services provided in collaboration with other relevant service providers, with client consent. This includes but is not limited to: schools, family doctors/family health teams, children's aid society, other community partners.

Goals and Objectives for serving newcomers:

- ▼ To provide timely access to assessment and treatment for a range of mental health concerns
- ▼



Target population:

Children and youth (birth-18 yrs) with mental health concerns



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

2.1 % (645) of the child pop. are visible minorities; of this number a % would be newcomers



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

Unknown

Evaluation:

Client satisfaction surveys and regular community consultation with referral sources are the primary evaluation tools. Outcome measurement is on a case by case basis, based on treatment/service goals and a standardized outcome measurement is used for a number of services.

Rural Response for Healthy Children

The Rural Response for Healthy Children (RRHC) is a direct service provider to newcomers.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Establishing parent groups that create a community for discussion, receiving parenting tips and enhancing nutrition and physical activity
- ▼ Individual parent support for families in transition, either related to moving, marital status, addictions, mental health, living in poverty or living in rural communities
- ▼ Group and individual child support—currently in schools—related to mental well-being, social skills, self-regulation, personal safety (child abuse prevention) and disability awareness

Service Integration:

Through strategic partnerships the RRHC's services are coupled with other services in the area. Partners include:

- ▼ Public and Separate School boards (AMDSB and HPCDSB)
- ▼ Ontario Early Years
- ▼ Ontario Works
- ▼ Huron County Health Unit
- ▼ Huron Women's Shelter & Second Stage Housing
- ▼ Children's Aid Society
- ▼ OPP
- ▼ Choices for Change
- ▼ CAMH
- ▼ Family Services Perth-Huron

Goals and Objectives:

- ▼ Improving healthy development of children living in conditions of risk
- ▼ Strengthening parental and family capacity, skills and social supports
- ▼ Strengthening public health capacity at the community-level to meet the needs of children and their families facing conditions of risk

Direct Service Provider



Target population:

Parents and their children, up to 10 years old



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

Unknown



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

10 newcomers,
1 service each

Evaluation:

- Children have access to programming and services to enable and support their health and development
- Parents and caregivers build their skills and knowledge in positive parenting practices and healthy child development
- Mental health supports are accessible for parents and caregivers to develop coping skills
- Partnerships, linkages, and collaboration to support and enhance access to programs and services for children and their families

Huron County Health Unit

Direct Service Provider

Like the Rural Response for Healthy Children (RRHC), the Huron County Health Unit (HCHU) is a direct service provider to newcomers.

Specific Services:

Parenting supports to newcomers with children under 6 years old



Target population:
Parents of young children



Percent of Newcomers in client base:
1%



Number of newcomers receiving services per month: 1 newcomer, 1 service each

Support Organizations

Huron County Social and Property Services

Support Organization

Huron County Social and Property Services (HCSPS) is a provider of direct services to newcomers.

Specific Services (based on eligibility):

- ▼ Ontario Works
- ▼ Housing and Children's Services

Service Integration:

Offered services are not integrated with those of other organizations. HCSPS is connected to bridging services such as the Local Immigration Partnership within Huron and the Newcomer Committee within Huron/Perth.

Evaluation:

HCSPS aligns its goals with the programs it provides rather than the populations it serves.



Target population:
Unknown



Percent of Newcomers in client base:
Unknown



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:
Unknown

Huron Business Development Corporation

Support Organization

The Huron Business Development Corporation is a community organization that indirectly provides support to newcomers by connecting with direct service providers.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Business counselling
- ▼ Mentorship
- ▼ Loan provision

Service Integration:

Services are linked with:

- ▼ The Centre for Employment & Learning
- ▼ Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre
- ▼ Newcomer Centre of Peel

Goals and Objectives:

The Huron Business Development Corporation is working toward assisting entrepreneurs to create positive outcomes in Huron County.

- ▼ To assist 50 entrepreneurs with business counselling, leading to the creation and maintenance of 40 jobs throughout Huron County;
- ▼ To provide financing to 12 businesses, leading to the creation and maintenance of 50 jobs throughout Huron County; and
- ▼ To support 20 community economic development initiatives, leading to \$120,000 in new investment throughout Huron County



Target population:
Entrepreneurs



Percent of Newcomers in client base:
10%



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:
5 newcomers,
1 service each

The Huron County Library serves residents at 12 branches located across the county. Branches are located in: Bayfield, Blyth, Brussels, Clinton, Exeter, Goderich, Hensall, Howick, Kirkton, Seaforth, Wingham and Zurich.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Newcomer Settlement Collection
- ▼ Materials in alternate languages and formats
- ▼ Free access to computers, Wifi
- ▼ Knowledge of local community and services offered/available
- ▼ Meeting room space
- ▼ Social groups

Service Integration:

Huron County Library provides outreach services at various programs and events throughout the county as well as to several Early Years playgroups and homes for the aged. The library works extensively with other groups and organizations in our communities.

Goals and Objectives:

The Library is committed to building strong communities by ensuring universal access to information for cultural, economic, educational and recreational development.



Target population:
All



Percent of Newcomers in client base:
Unknown



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:
Unknown

Evaluation:

Success of our services is measured primarily through statistics such as circulation and program attendance as well as verbal, anecdotal feedback.

Four County Labour Market

The mission of the Four County Labour Market Planning Board is to plan and promote local labour market strategies to meet the challenges of a changing economy.

Specific Services:

We provide labour market information so people and businesses can make informed decision about business ventures, training and careers.

Service Integration:

- ▼ Employment Services
- ▼ Literacy & Basic Skills
- ▼ Economic Development
- ▼ Ontario Works
- ▼ School Boards

Goals and Objectives:

The FCLMPB sponsors events and programs with community partners to enhance the local labour market. These include apprenticeship opportunities, hands-on workshops, skills development, virtual learning, lifelong learning and youth employment. The board also provides valuable research, identifies and creates solutions for labour market challenges, targets workforce opportunities, promotes skills development and raises public awareness of workforce issues.

Support Organization



Target population:

Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

No direct clients



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

No direct clients

City of Stratford Social Services Department is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for the delivery of provincial programs such as:

- ▼ Ontario Works
- ▼ Housing & Homelessness
- ▼ Early Learning and Child Care Services

These programs provide a range of direct services and financial assistance for people living anywhere in Perth County.

Specific Services (based on eligibility):

- ▼ Ontario Works Division – Provides income and employment assistance. **Financial assistance** to cover the costs of basic needs and shelter, and for a variety of health and dental benefits. **Employment assistance** to prepare and help people to find a job.
- ▼ Housing Division – Offers geared-to-income and subsidized rental housing (apartments, townhouses, houses) for singles and families. Provides after-hours emergency homelessness support services. Assists in the development of long-term affordable housing strategies.
- ▼ Early Learning & Child Care Division – Offers subsidy for child care and for recreational programs for eligible families. Provides Child Care Resource Consultant services for children with special needs who attend licensed child care programs anywhere in Perth County. Early Years Child and Family Support Programs.
- ▼ Anne Hathaway Daycare – For children 18 months to 5 years of age and before and after school program. The Daycare Centre offers an inclusive setting based on the Emergent Curriculum. Fee subsidy, flexible and emergency care is available.



Target population:

Individuals and Families residing within Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County – particularly those of low to moderate income and who are in need of financial assistance



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

Currently unknown



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

Currently unknown

Goals and Objectives for serving newcomers:

Social Services employees are dedicated to providing a client-centred approach to service delivery and are committed to respecting the unique needs of individuals and families as per respective program mandates.

Continued on next page

Service Integration:

Social Services staff are working with other local human service providers, including those with specific expertise in serving newcomers, to provide client-centred services.

Evaluation:

Programs and services are evaluated, both on process and outcome. To date, collection of information on newcomer status have not been collected, other than to ensure that clients and service users meet eligibility criteria around legal status in Canada for receipt of public funds.

Newcomer Settlement Huron Perth

Community Support Collaboration

The Newcomer Settlement Huron Perth (NSHP) is a newcomer-focused community-based initiative that aims to improve newcomer services through coordination with direct service providers.

Specific Services:

Host community conversations for service providers.

Goals and Objectives:

NSHP is working toward a community vision for newcomer/immigrant services in Perth and Huron Counties. They coordinate and enhance the frontline services provided by Huron-Perth member agencies to more effectively assist newcomers in both settling and fully integrating into their communities.

Evaluation:

The effectiveness in achieving this vision is not being formally measured; however, the following outcomes are being pursued:

- ▼ Structured and maintained referral network for newcomer settlement and integration services
- ▼ Newcomers attracted to the region and retained long-term with participation in the local workforce and economy



Target population:

Newcomers to Canada, newcomers to Perth and Huron from other areas of Canada, and immigrants to Perth and Huron who have been there long term, but remain isolated from the larger community



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

Unknown



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

Unknown

Both Direct Service Provider and Support Organization

Stratford Public Library

Support Organization and
Direct Service Provider

The Stratford Public Library is a community organization that works both directly and indirectly with newcomers by providing supports and supporting other direct service providers.

Specific Services:

- ▼ Print and digital materials, including leisure and research (mostly in English, but with access to other library language collections)
- ▼ Computer stations, tablets, internet and user support
- ▼ Group and individual spaces for meetings, study and/or family
- ▼ Events for all ages, including those geared toward print literacy, digital literacy, and community connectedness
- ▼ Trained information/research/reading advisor staff
- ▼ Perth County Information Network (PCIN) library system: borrow from all County libraries with 1 card

Service Integration:

The library is not integrated into any other organizations but it does make referrals to bridging programs within the community.

Similar services are provided by the other libraries in the PCIN which include North Perth Public Library, Perth East Public Library, St. Marys Public Library, and West Perth Public Library.

Goals and Objectives:

The Stratford Public Library is working toward its Strategic Plan for 2013-2018, which identifies the following leadership objectives:

- ▼ establishing a community technology commons
- ▼ creating a culture of continuous improvement and community collaboration



Target population:

Library materials are ordered in a number of languages based on requests from patrons and data on the local foreign-language-speaking populations from Statistics Canada



Percent of Newcomers in client base:

Unknown. Not recorded for privacy reasons.



Number of newcomers receiving services per month:

Unknown

Part III – Other Rural Communities

Profiles and Promising Practices

The subject of newcomer retention and recruitment is not unique to Perth and Huron Counties. In fact, it occupies the attention of many other rural communities in Ontario and beyond. Below are profiles of seven rural municipalities that are actively seeking to attract and retain newcomers. The data collected and compiled for these profiles come from primary and secondary sources, including insights and information shared by local service providers and key informants in each area. These information sources are identified at the beginning of each profile. Six of these communities are within Ontario, and include the following: Peterborough, Simcoe County, Windsor-Essex, Oxford County, Renfrew-Lanark, and the Town of Smiths Falls. The seventh community, Morden, is in Manitoba. Each municipality was selected based on their similarity in geographic area or population size to Perth and Huron Counties as well as for their unique approaches to attracting and retaining newcomers. It is evident that each of these municipalities is working to ensure that newcomers are effectively being integrated within their communities.



Community 1 – Peterborough

Population	78,698 (2011)
Population density	1,234 persons per square kilometer
Location	Eastern Ontario
Mother tongue neither English nor French	5.9% (2011)
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	German (0.7%), Dutch (0.5%), Polish (0.5%), Spanish (0.4%), Chinese (0.4%) ⁴¹

Information Sources: New Canadians Centre, Peterborough along with supplementary information from secondary sources

Newcomer website: the city has invested in the development of a website that markets the city to newcomers and provides comprehensive information on the services and supports available to optimize integration. Key website offerings include:⁴²

- Video testimonials provided by recent newcomers from a wide variety of nations
- ‘Mayor’s Greeting’ provided by the Mayor of Peterborough, encouraging website visitors to make Peterborough their home
- Information for navigating the first few days in Peterborough, including local weather information and transportation information
- Information about core services offered to newcomers, including information on the following topics: employment, housing, health, transportation, childcare / education, English learning, etc.

Public Marketing Campaign: As one component of a new 5-year Immigrant Integration Plan, the city has recently aired commercials on local TV stations aimed at promoting themes of diversity, inclusion, and acceptance. The ‘Peterborough is Welcoming’ videos feature citizens of Peterborough from multiple backgrounds expressing the perspective that ‘their Peterborough’ is inclusive of individuals from all backgrounds, and that together the city prospers.⁴³

41 Data: Statscan, Focus on Geography Series: Peterborough <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3515014>

42 Newcomer Website <http://www.welcomepeterborough.ca/welcome.htm>

43 New Canadian Centre Peterborough, Annual Plan (2016). https://issuu.com/ncc_ptbo/docs/agm_2016_report1

Other Services and Supports: The region has also found success through the provision of the following programs and supports:

- **Offering settlement workers in schools:** The Settlement Workers in Schools program (SWIS) helps families and students with settlement needs in Peterborough and the surrounding area. The team supports student achievement and encourages family involvement and integration in schools and community.
- **Employment Services:** The Newcomer Centre provides a variety of employment services, including resume and interview preparation. The Centre also maintains a database of employers, and works to connect newcomers with jobs within the community.
- **Social Groups:** The Newcomer Centre is active in the provision of social events to welcome newcomers into the community. In 2016, the Centre hosted 241 activities, which were attended by 1933 newcomers. Events included youth groups, conversation clubs, cooking clubs, public speaking, storytelling, and more.⁴⁴

Community 2 – Simcoe County

Population	446,063 (2011)
Population density	92 persons per square kilometer
Location	Southern Ontario
Mother tongue neither English nor French	21% (2011)
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	Punjabi (1.3%), Chinese (1.3%), Spanish (1.2%), German (1.2%), Italian (1.2%) ⁴⁵

Information Source: Local Immigration Partnership Simcoe County

Motivated by the County’s proximity to Toronto and moderate housing prices, newcomers are settling in the region of Simcoe at an increasingly rapid pace. In an effort to recruit newcomers, the County, local social service agencies and local businesses have instituted a number of recruitment and retention strategies. They include:

Libraries as Community Hubs: Within Simcoe County, local libraries often serve as the first point of contact for many newcomers. Libraries provide newcomer-focused signs in multiple languages, and offer multiple supports for newcomers, including language learning classes, technology access, children’s services, and adult-focused programs, such as book clubs. More recently, libraries have invested in cultural competency training for staff, to support improved service quality for newcomers.

⁴⁴ My Peterborough is Welcoming Videos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykUfd_2Z0IY

⁴⁵ Census Data (2011). Simcoe County: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3543&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1>

Immigration Portal: The County of Simcoe has also invested in the development of an Immigration Portal, which focuses on supporting newcomers via employment and education pathways. In particular, the County has focused on establishing partnerships with local post-secondary institutions, and is working to build wrap around supports for newcomers that enter the County via educational routes.

Recognizing Excellence: A variety of public awards and celebratory events are used to highlight current practices in newcomer recruitment and retention. In recent years the County has highlighted employers that prioritize diversity, has celebrated newcomer entrepreneurs, artists, and other community members, and provided an award to the organization that best shares the story of recent immigrants to the County.⁴⁶⁴⁷

Community 3 – Windsor-Essex	
Population	319,246
Population density	312 persons per square kilometer
Location	Southwestern Ontario
Mother tongue neither English nor French	21.5%
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	Arabic (3.7%), Italian (3.3%), Chinese (1.1%), Polish (1.1%) ⁴⁷

Information Sources: Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership Promising Practices and Innovations

The region of Windsor-Essex has the largest newcomer population of the seven profiled municipalities, with 21%⁴⁸ of the total population being identified as newcomers. With such a large group of newcomers and welcoming thousands yearly, the city has developed a lot of initiatives and a strong support system to benefit their newcomers.

Immigrant Health Clinic: In 2016, with an influx of Syrian newcomers, Windsor established an Immigrant Health Clinic, a primary care program that offers care in English, Arabic, and French, and includes a nurse practitioner, registered nurse (RN), registered practical nurse (RPN), and administrative support. The team provides care for immediate health issues, comprehensive medical screening, interim primary care supports, and provides a facilitated introduction to local physicians and clinics accepting new patients.⁴⁹

46 Immigration Simcoe Portal <http://immigration.simcoe.ca/>

47 Census Data (2011). Windsor-Essex: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=559>

48 Windsor-Essex immigration Statistics <http://www.welcometowindsor-essex.ca/en/why-windsor-essex/immigration-statistics.asp>

49 "Immigrant Health Clinic," Erie St. Clair LHIN. <http://www.eriesclairlhin.on.ca/NewsRoom/PressReleases/2016%20-%2005%20-%2011%20-%20New%20VON%20Immigrant%20Health%20Clinic.aspx>

My New City App: Windsor has launched the MyNewCity App, a newcomer services app that supports newcomers in accessing information about available services. Launched in 2016, the app enables users to search for supports by agency or service address, agency name, type, street name, city or town, or keyword. Notably, the app uses internationally recognizable symbols, making it easier for users to access services, regardless of the user’s primary language.⁵⁰

Cultural Diversity Training: The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership has delivered cultural diversity training to over 1,000 nurses, social workers and university students in the Windsor-Essex region. Cultural diversity training has supported the delivery of healthcare services that limit bias and discrimination.

Cultural Access Pass: Windsor encourages newcomer Canadians to engage in cultural and community learning by promoting the Cultural Access Pass. The Pass, an initiative of the Institute of Canadian Citizenship, provides new Canadians with free access to 1,200 of Canada’s premier cultural attractions and discounts on travel for up to one year. To promote local attractions, Windsor has listed over five local sites with the pass.⁵¹

Community 4 – Smith Falls	
Population	8,978
Population density	935 persons per square kilometer
Location	Eastern Ontario
Mother tongue neither English nor French	3%
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	German (0.5%), Polish (0.3%), Dutch (0.2%), Mandarin (0.2%), Tagalog (0.2%)

Information Sources: Local Immigration Partnership and the Town of Smith Falls

As a small rural Ontario community, Smith Falls’ approach to newcomer integration leverages community-driven approaches. These include hosting events with local community organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion or the local United Way, and relying on the services offered by the local library. As with most small rural areas, the low cost of housing is one of the benefits that newcomers have when they move to Smith Falls. This also includes developing partnerships between businesses to offer a local community pass, allowing newcomers to take advantage of the available cultural services.

50 “MyNewCity,” Welcome to Windsor-Essex (2016). <http://www.welcometowindsoresex.ca/en/resources/WE-LIP-Success-Story-Aug-2016---MyNewCity-SPICE-PLC.pdf>
 51 Cultural Access Pass, Institute for Canadian Citizenship. <https://www.icc-icc.ca/site/program/cultural-access-pass/>

Employment Smith Falls' LIP has developed an Employer's Guide to Integrating Newcomers, a tool that the LIP has provided to local employers containing information related to the benefits of hiring newcomers, foreign credentials and work experience, language barriers, and working with cultural differences.

Smith Falls LIP has also worked with the Chamber of Commerce to establish an annual Immigrant Entrepreneur Award, and to offer free membership for one year to newcomer entrepreneurs. In tandem, these strategies have helped to promote entrepreneurship among newcomers to Smith Falls.⁵²

Community 5 – Renfrew and Lanark

Population	13,346
Population density	Unknown
Location	Eastern Ontario
Mother tongue neither English nor French	2.7%
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	German (1%), Dutch (0.5), Polish (0.5%), Spanish (0.2%) ⁵³

Information Source: Local Immigration Partnership, Renfrew and Lanark

Like many other rural communities, the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) of Renfrew and Lanark plays a crucial role in the development of programs that foster an inclusive environment for newcomers. In addition, the small communities of Renfrew and Lanark benefit from the supports of their Local Immigration Partnership provider. The LIP has generated and implemented the following innovations:

Online Resource Hub: The LIP in Renfrew and Lanark have partnered with local community agencies, businesses, and organizations to develop an online resource hub which showcases useful support services available to newcomers. The community's online resource hub uses easy-to-navigate icons and is accessible in multiple languages. The resources available include: finding food, accessing healthcare, finding banking services, accessing English learning, and more.

Micro-grants: The LIP of Renfrew and Lanark has offered micro-grants to community organizations and businesses for the purpose of making their organizations more accessible to

⁵² Smith Falls: A Strategy to Welcome Newcomers

https://www.smithsfalls.ca/public_docs/documents/Smiths%20Falls%20Strategy%20for%20welcoming%20newcomers11.pdf

⁵³ Census Data (2011). Renfrew

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3547048>

newcomers. One example of how grants have been utilized is to pay for translation services to make programs and policies more accessible.

Cultural Awareness Trainings: The LIP has offered a variety of cultural diversity promotion sessions with local organizations, businesses and healthcare service organizations. These sessions have helped to increase awareness within the community about ways to promote welcoming and accessible service.

ESL Training: Retired teachers in Renfrew and Lanark volunteer their time to provide ESL training to newcomers in the community. Utilizing such capacity has enabled the community to provide much-needed supports to young and older newcomers.

Anchor businesses: While the LIP does not directly offer employment-related supports to newcomers in Lanark and Renfrew, many newcomers have found employment opportunities through local, anchor businesses. Anchor businesses include the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the Canadian military, which has a base near Renfrew and Lanark.⁵⁴

Community 6 – Oxford County

Population	105,719
Population density	52 persons per square kilometer
Location	Southwestern Ontario
Mother tongue neither English nor French	11.4%
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	German (2%), Dutch (2%) ⁵⁵

Information Source: Local Immigration Partnership, Oxford County

Oxford County offers newcomers a user-centered approach to services and supports. Current practices include the following:

Partnership-based approach to service provision: Oxford County's local employment council is comprised of executive directors from several of the region's influential organizations, including the local Children's Aid Society, the superintendent of schools, the local warden, the head of employment integration services, and more. This collaboration enables Oxford County to provide high-quality, integrated services to newcomers in the region.

⁵⁴ Renfrew Welcomes You. <http://www.renfrewcountywelcomesyou.com/renfrew-county/project-milestones/>

⁵⁵ Statistics Canada (2011) <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3532&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=oxford&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=>

Use of Social Media: The region utilizes social media effectively to provide high-quality services to newcomers. In particular, the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) utilizes social media to promote employment opportunities available within the community as well as solicit donations for newcomers from community members.⁵⁶

Integration-Focused Events: The LIP has utilized events with great effectiveness to promote understanding and acceptance between newcomers and community groups. For example, recognizing that newcomers felt nervous with local police and with the Children’s Aid Society, the LIP hosted events between newcomer groups and the two community agencies. These events helped to build trust between the groups, promoting community cohesion.

Job Portal: The Oxford County LIP has partnered with other community agencies to provide a comprehensive approach to employment integration for newcomers. In particular, the community provides a user-centered job board that features open positions within the community.

Airport Welcome: The LIP has arranged to have bilingual staff or volunteers meet newcomer Canadians at the airport, and provide them with service in their own language. This has helped to promote a feeling of inclusion from day one.⁵⁷

Community 7 – The unique case of the Town of Morden

Population	7,812
Population density	477 persons per square kilometer
Location	Southern Manitoba
Mother tongue neither English nor French	24.2%
Most common non-official languages spoken by percentage of population	German (20.2%), Russian (2.4%), Ukrainian (0.5%) ⁵⁸

Information Source: Town of Morden

The small town of Morden, Manitoba as a part of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program offers the Morden Community Driven Immigration Initiative (MCDII), which is an initiative that allows a select number of new Canadians the opportunity to immigrate to Morden, outside of the traditional immigration channels. This initiative so far has been a great success, with immigrants arriving to the community for two main reasons: quality of life and jobs. They have experienced

⁵⁶ Community Employment Services, Woodstock http://www.ceswoodstock.org/job_board/search_jobs_temp.shtml

⁵⁷ Oxford County, Local Immigration Partnership <http://lip.welcometooxford.ca/>

⁵⁸ Census Data (2011). Town of Morden. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=4603053>

success in terms of attracting highly skilled newcomers through this program. In 2011, Morden's population was just 7,800. Since that time, the population of the area has increased by 3,000, in part because of immigration initiatives like the MCDII.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the initiative, which selects approximately 5% of applicants annually, chooses applicants based on their ability to offer skills needed in Morden and screens for a 'genuine intention to live and work in Morden' and for folks who have 'experience living in a rural area.'⁶⁰ Presently, occupations in demand include: cabinet makers, machinists, sewing machine operators and mechanics. As a result of the program, many Morden newcomers have better opportunities in accessing employment.

The next steps and challenges facing the communities

These seven communities realize that even though they have taken steps to attract and integrate newcomers within their area, a lot still needs to be done. Of the seven communities that have been profiled, all of them have future goals such as improving transportation, increasing access to social services, creating additional ESL programs, and leveraging existing programming to make a greater impact. There is also a focus on ensuring future priorities are considered such as improving newcomer access to the healthcare system, especially when it comes to mental health services. There is also a need to have a life-long approach to service provision so that newcomers at all ages can have equitable access.



⁵⁹ Canada Immigration News Letter (2016).

<http://www.cicnews.com/2016/10/rural-areas-and-small-cities-across-canada-eager-to-attract-more-newcomers-108558.html>

⁶⁰ Town of Morden. "In Demand Jobs" <https://www.mordenimmigration.com/in-demand-jobs>

Conclusion

The key challenges facing Perth and Huron Counties are two-fold. Counties must both attract newcomers to the region and retain them over time. This has been an issue of great concern given the low numbers of newcomers settling in the area, the net negative migration trends, and an underdeveloped workforce.

The Quality of Life report released by SRPC in 2014 found that a large percentage of residents who moved out were youth adults (18 to 24 years), while both Counties had a net gain of residents between 45 to 64 years. Newcomers not only bring diversity but also youth, improving conditions for newcomers has the potential to impact both the population and age demographic trends.

Newcomer experiences and challenges were highlighted in three focus groups with 22 participants, interviews with key stakeholder groups, and responses from the NONA survey. Of the many reasons newcomers decided to settle in a rural area over an urban area, the reason stated most often is that newcomers have relationships with sponsors, partners and/or family members who live in Perth and Huron Counties already. Furthermore, many of the participants found that rural areas provided more opportunities for affordable housing and good jobs with decent wages, with the cost of living being generally lower than that of a larger urban centres. In addition, the congestion and bustling nature of urban centres made some participants yearn for a calmer atmosphere of the countryside.

Aside from the many motivators, there were also many challenges associated with newcomer settlement in a rural location. The findings for why newcomers chose to move to Canada and settle in Perth and Huron Counties and the resulting challenges newcomers face living in these Counties were similar to those found in the 2015 NONA Report. The main challenges faced by newcomers in this research include their limited English language proficiency and their difficulty in finding employment. Another challenge was found to be the difficulty in navigating through the complex social services sector. There were also mixed views on the state of community support. While some expressed much gratitude for the overwhelming support they had received since immigrating, others felt completely abandoned in their new home. However, all agree that living in Canada affords them more opportunities than their home countries do.



Despite settling in the area due to personal relationships, one of the most striking issues was found to be newcomer feelings of social isolation and loneliness. These findings are similar to what was cited in the NONA Report where 16% of respondents felt socially isolated and an additional 28% of respondents felt somewhat isolated (n=70).⁶¹ Many newcomers felt that their family, partners or sponsors didn't understand their struggles, that the weather was difficult to adjust to and that interacting with the greater community was a great challenge due to lack of social functions and transit options to move around. In general, those who had lived in Canada longer felt greater struggle than those who moved to Canada more recently. For instance, more recent refugees were happier, more connected and more positive about their future in Canada. In that same focus group, newcomers who had been in Canada many years longer felt frustrated and disappointed from being unemployed or underemployed. However, the newcomer responses from Syria may be biased considering that these individuals came from a war-torn country and have been trying to resettle in another country for many years. They have also received considerably more support from their sponsors than other newcomers who were sponsored by family or work. Moving to the safety of Canada, regardless of locale, is a considerable improvement for these newcomers.

There are many organizations in Perth and Huron Counties that focus on newcomer integration and service provision for newcomers. Support Organizations like the Huron Business Development Corporation and Direct Service Organizations, such as Conestoga Career Centre Career Centre are providing opportunities and initiatives for newcomers to find access to jobs and become employed. Some libraries and organizations offers programs that are critical in helping to integrate newcomers into a new town or area. They are providing resources and access to different materials that newcomers may need.

The potential for gainful employment is one of the key factors as to why newcomers choose to settle in this region. It is also one of the key reasons to stay within a region. A large number of the participants in the focus group were unemployed at the time of the study whereas about half of the NONA respondents were unemployed, roughly 40% of which were not looking or did not respond. Further, gaining employment was highlighted by many newcomers in the focus groups as the number one persistent challenge in their lives. Interviewed employers also recognized this challenge. Potential barriers to employment, from the employer perspective, ranged from newcomers lacking adequate English language proficiency to not having the relevant skills to complete the job. It can be argued, however, that most newcomers have relevant skills to gain meaningful employment, but their certifications are not currently recognized in Canada.

61 (2015). The Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment (NONA) Project.

Moving forward, to continue to make gains in newcomer recruitment and retention, several recommendations were put forth. First, both community organizers and service providers recommended that a central hub for all newcomers be developed so that they might have access to a “one stop shop” for key services or referrals to other suitable and relevant organizations. There was a strong consensus amongst the various stakeholders that more needs to be done to foster the integration of newcomers within the community whether it be more affordable housing, better transportation options or increased access to social services.

It is important to note that while newcomers have additional integration challenges, there are many reported needs and challenges that local residents are also experiencing such as feelings of isolation living in a rural area. The 2015 Living Wage report released by SRPC found that nearly 50% of local households earned below an annualized living wage amount. This need for living wages, suitable and affordable housing, transportation to access available services and supports are vital to all community members.

Overall, it is evident that to attract and retain newcomers, Perth and Huron counties need to develop a comprehensive strategy that highlights why living in a rural area is more desirable than living in an urban one. However, as evidenced by the two research studies described earlier, the prospects of newcomer recruitment show promise.

Recommendations

Coordinated Service Delivery

The Newcomer Settlement Huron Perth (NSHP) is a newcomer-focused community-based initiative that includes such community representatives as the Centre for Employment and Learning, United Way Perth-Huron, Local Immigration Partnership, Health Units, Libraries, Employment Services, and Police Services. Throughout the interviews with community organizations, service providers and employers within the area, frequent mention was made of the need for a centralized organization to coordinate efforts of newcomer activity. Therefore, it is recommended that:

1. The Newcomer Settlement Huron Perth implement the following recommendations into their work plan following a multi-phased approach.

A. Investigate expansion of Local Immigration Partnership to Perth County:

Currently there is a Local Immigration Partnership in Huron County, but not in Perth County. It is recommended that the possibility of expanding the Huron County Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) to become LIP Huron-Perth, or the creation of a LIP Perth County be investigated.

B. Improve Data Collection:

Information gathered through the NONA project was accomplished using an intake form. After the project was completed, the Centre for Employment and Learning continues to use the intake form but the length and time needed to complete it has been identified as a challenge. It is vital to gather information to verify the scope of newcomer needs in our community, it is recommended that a condensed intake form be developed to be used by local service providers. From this, a common database could be established that would validate newcomer service needs and funding applications.

Creating Community

- C. Establishment of a community welcoming committee:** Newcomers that receive a welcome into a community, such as recent refugees, reported a greater sense of happiness than those who did not. The process of newcomer integration cannot be a task done by a few but must be the goal of the entire community to work in a combined effort to integrate newcomers. The formation of a welcoming committee would develop approaches on how to ensure newcomer's needs are met within the first weeks of them arriving and help to connect them with available local translators, and possibly the development of a resource guide to services and local attractions. The welcoming committee would develop approaches on how to ensure newcomers needs are met within the first weeks of them arriving and would include community members, representatives from direct service provider organizations or faith-based organizations, municipal government and others.
- D. System navigation workshops:** While all participants stated that they had used at least one service since coming to the region, many lacked the knowledge of how to navigate through the different services available to them. This could be part of a larger welcome orientation session or day on living in Perth and Huron Counties delivered collaboratively by local service providers. These workshops should be flexible in terms of accommodating the service needs and English language abilities of the newcomers in the workshop.
- E. Accompaniment program:** In collaboration with the Welcoming Committee, individuals within a community would serve as aides to a newcomer in their first weeks or months in the area. They would accompany newcomers on things as simple as day-to-day appointments or as challenging as securing a new lease with a landlord. There are numerous frontline workers whose job allows them to interact with newcomers on a daily basis, the possibility of incorporating an accompaniment model within their existing role could be explored. Additionally, the local iVolunteer Perth Huron online volunteer matching site could be set up to create newcomer accompaniment volunteer matching opportunities.

Increasing Awareness

2. Employer recruitment strategy and education: While the prospect of finding work elicits interest in moving to the region, previous newcomer recruitment strategies have found that wages were not high enough to generate a desire for newcomers to relocate to this area. The development of a Current Practices toolkit can provide employers with valuable resources on how to support newcomers within their organizations including the importance of offering living wages, training incentives and supports. Key resources could include guidelines on cultural competency training as well as diversity and equity planning in the workplace to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment. The development and distribution of materials could be done through a collaborative community group of such organizations as the City of Stratford, Perth County, St Marys, Huron County, Huron Business Development Corporation, Centre for Employment and Learning, Partners in Employment, Conestoga Career Centre, local Chambers of Commerce, and Human Resources Associations.

3. Creation and enhancement of cultural celebrations:

While cultural celebrations have taken place in the past through the Multi-Cultural Association Perth Huron in Perth County and the Multi-Cultural Festival in Huron County (organized by the Huron Arts & Heritage Network), there could be more organized events that include educational and diversity awareness components through local libraries, schools, public art galleries, and cultural institutions. It is recommended that opportunities for event funding be investigated through such local organizations as the Stratford Tourism Alliance and local Economic Development organizations.

4. Cultural competency training:

To promote respect and inclusion for both newcomers and the growing diverse population, those that work on the frontlines with newcomers should receive training on cultural sensitivity. One way that this can be implemented is in the form of Anti- Racism/Anti-Oppression training which could be incorporated into diversity training for frontline workers along with the development and implementation of an organizational diversity human resource policy. This will deepen understanding of how oppression and racism occurs at a personal and structural level, how they are maintained, and what can be



done to ensure newcomers feel included instead of segregated. The Local Immigration Partnership in Huron County and the Centre for Employment and Learning in Perth County should investigate the possibility of purchasing training materials from the Cross Cultural Learning Centre that could be delivered to local Service Providers.

5. Increase awareness of rural transportation initiatives: It is recommended that the local Transportation Task Force (TTF) train and equip the Welcome Centre with local transportation initiative information such as the Regional Rideshare online ride-sharing portal. Additionally, it is recommended that the TTF consider the unique needs of newcomers (i.e. differing cultural perceptions of services) in their continued efforts to create transportation solutions.

How can you make your community more welcoming and inclusive to newcomers?

Tips for Employers:

- Develop a buddy system for newcomer with another staff member
- Ask newcomer about their experiences and listen to what they have to say
- Encourage newcomers and staff members to extend invitations to one another to social gatherings and community functions

Tips for Long Time Residents to Meet and Get to Know Newcomers:

- Ask questions and listen, then act on what you have heard
- Be open minded about other cultures and new ways of doing things, be willing to try something new
- Offer new programs and events based on newcomers' culture and/or experiences
- Bring a welcome gift to the home of a newcomer, introduce yourself, and offer to help if they have any questions (don't wait for them to approach you!)

Tips for Newcomers to Meet and Get to Know Long Time Residents of the Community:

- Learn about and participate in popular community events; join community groups; take part in some sport or popular recreation activity
- Volunteer to help with a community event or project
- Observe the community for a few months then decide where you can get involved/help out
- Visit the local library often. Read as much as you can to improve English skills and find information about the community and cultural awareness
- Ask questions and listen...be willing to adopt a new culture and lifestyle



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