



Social Research & Planning Council

Operated by United Way Perth-Huron

# Embracing Diversity

Newcomer Experiences in Perth and Huron Counties



Community Report Summary

2017

In 2015, more than 75% of Canada’s new permanent residents landed in just seven cities: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa and Winnipeg. During the same year, only 5.8% of recent immigrants settled in rural areas while the remainder settled in other urban locales. This presents a challenging situation for rural communities that must now offer ways to not only attract newcomers to their communities, but also ensure they stay.

Both Perth and Huron Counties have had more individuals leave than have come in.

Given this context, there was a need to better understand how the challenges and opportunities associated with newcomer integration would impact the rural regions of Perth and Huron Counties. Key issues facing the region include newcomer recruitment and retention. With an aging population and a declining workforce, newcomer integration holds the key to creating sustainable, vibrant and dynamic communities.

## 2006-2011 Net Migration:

PERTH COUNTY  
**-1,008 residents**



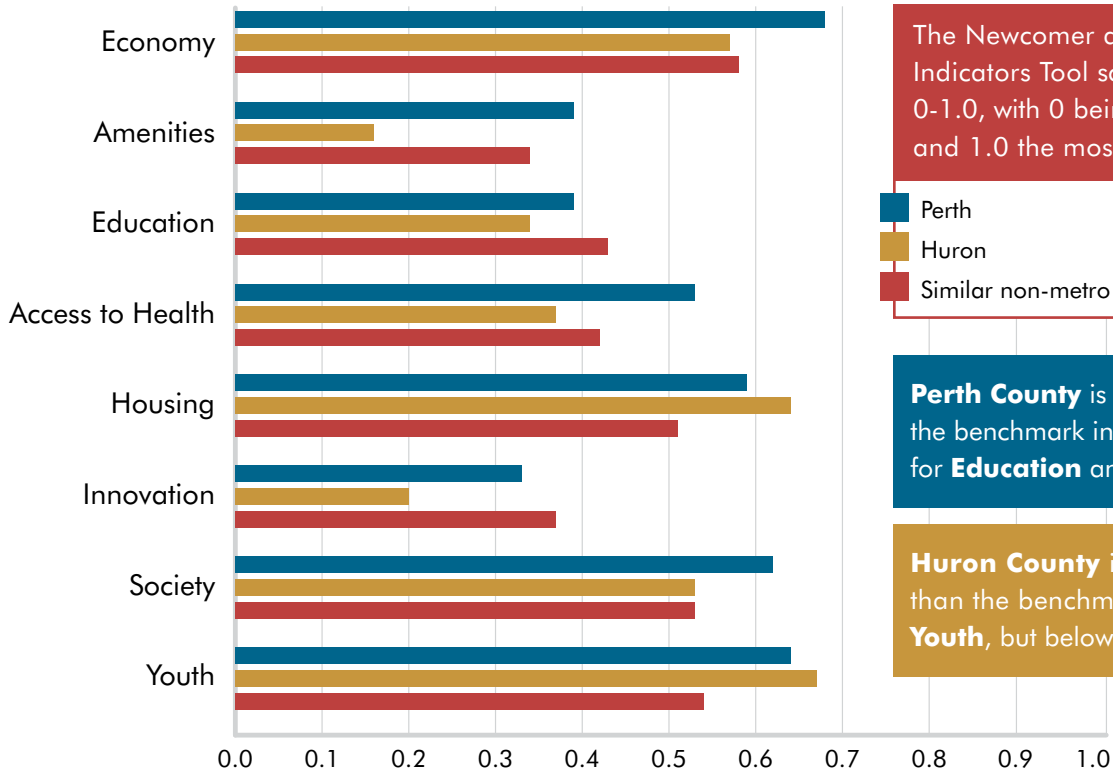
HURON COUNTY  
**-952 residents**



## County Attractiveness

In 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs developed the Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators tool to assess the qualities that make a community attractive to newcomers. The tool includes 55 different indicators based on Statistics Canada, the National Household Survey and other sources.

## Newcomer Attractiveness Performance



The Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators Tool scores range from 0-1.0, with 0 being the least attractive, and 1.0 the most attractive.

■ Perth  
■ Huron  
■ Similar non-metro census divisions in ON

**Perth County** is performing better than the benchmark in all categories except for **Education** and **Innovation**.

**Huron County** is performing better than the benchmark in **Housing** and **Youth**, but below in all other categories.

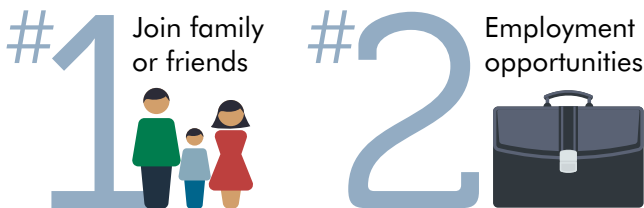
Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2014). Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators Tool. <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/edr/nyci/index.html>

These results suggest that the two Counties face very different challenges in attracting newcomers, which may influence their newcomer strategies.

## Newcomer Experiences

The findings from the focus groups with newcomers revealed that many came to a rural community in Canada instead of a city due to their established relationships with partners, family members and sponsors. In Perth, the allure of job opportunities was a central focus. These findings are very similar to the 2015 Newcomer Outreach and Needs Assessment Report findings, which stated that the two major reasons for moving to Perth and Huron Counties was for better employment opportunities and to join family or close friends.

### Main Reasons for Moving to Perth and Huron:



## Newcomer Difficulties



Limited English language skills



Few housing options



Lack of job opportunities



Social isolation



Limited transportation options



Cold weather

Specific to Huron County:



Healthcare access

## Employment

Most of the employers interviewed did not have any newcomers working for them. Though employers have limited experience in orienting newcomers into their businesses, they expressed a genuine interest in helping to grow their workforce in an inclusive way. Further, they voiced a commitment to learning how to both attract and hire newcomers and noted the importance of taking a proactive approach in addressing language barriers to better integrate newcomers into the job market.

Employers interviewed expressed an interest in developing a more inclusive workforce ✓

## Service Providers and Supporting Organizations

### Service Needs Identified:

- assistance with healthcare issues
- educational support
- navigating government systems
- help finding suitable housing

### Support Gaps Identified:

- language services (translation)
- social/spiritual interaction and integration



## 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. Frequent mention was made of the need for a centralized organization to coordinate efforts of newcomer activity. Therefore, it is recommended that:

#### 1. The NSHP implement the following recommendations into their work plan following a multi-phased approach.

- a. Investigate expansion of Local Immigration Partnership to Perth County
- b. Improve Data Collection

### Creating Community

- c. **Establishment of a community welcoming committee:** The 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:** Many newcomers lacked the knowledge of how to navigate through the different services available to them. 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.

Recommendations continued

## Increasing Awareness

- 2. Employer recruitment strategy and education:** The development of a Current Practices toolkit can provide employers with valuable resources on how to support newcomers including the importance of offering living wages, training incentives and supports.
- 3. Creation and enhancement of cultural celebrations:** Enhance cultural celebrations to include educational and diversity awareness components through local libraries, schools, public art galleries, and cultural institutions.
- 4. Cultural competency training:** To promote respect and inclusion for both newcomers and the growing diverse population, those that work with newcomers should receive training on cultural sensitivity.
- 5. Increase awareness of rural transportation initiatives**

## How can you make your community more welcoming to newcomers?

### 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

### 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 a 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, information about the community and cultural awareness
- Ask questions and listen...be willing to adopt a new culture and lifestyle

Adapted from the Saskatchewan South East Enterprise Region

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For more information about newcomers experiences, read the full report online at [www.perthhuron.unitedway.ca/srpc/newcomer-report](http://www.perthhuron.unitedway.ca/srpc/newcomer-report)



### About the SRPC

The Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC), operated by the United Way Perth-Huron, is comprised of community representatives who are dedicated to the collection, analysis, and distribution of information relating to social trends and issues in Perth and Huron Counties. The SRPC approaches its work in two ways:

- a) Commissioning research into specific social issues
- b) Developing recommendations for community improvement based on local findings, and working collaboratively with community members to implement change

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