

# Environmental Scan: Rural Newcomer Integration

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**Contact**

Patricia Mitton – Principal Consultant  
NeXus Consulting Group  
105 St. George Street, Suite 3089  
Toronto, ON  
e: [patricia.mitton19@rotman.utoronto.ca](mailto:patricia.mitton19@rotman.utoronto.ca)  
w: <http://inside.rotman.utoronto.ca/nexus>  
t: (647) 920-8306

Prepared for: Jacinda Rudolph



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The environmental scan conducted for this project consisted of an overview of Grey, Bruce, Huron, Perth and Wellington Counties for the purpose of exploring the current state for newcomer integration and barriers that exist. NeXus Consulting Group, under the direction of Jacinda Rudolph, Outreach Coordinator for the County of Grey, looked at three case studies covering four municipal regions. These case studies provided insights that allowed us to generate four recommendations that will provide a platform for both Grey and surrounding rural municipalities to incorporate new tools and strategies toward better attracting and retaining newcomers. The project focused on three important issues:

- Public perception
- Workplace integration
- Housing availability

We evaluated the following case studies using the 17 Characteristics of a Welcoming Community as a guideline and rated each characteristic on a five-point scale that ranged from 0, indicating no relation to that characteristic, to a 5, indicating that the initiative has made this characteristic a key priority:

Case Study	Region	Characteristics Demonstrating Priority
Project Innovate	Bruce County	Employment opportunities, Political participation, Educational opportunities
Embracing Diversity	Huron & Perth Counties	Features for newcomers, Political participation, positive attitudes
Rural Employment Initiative	Peel & Grey County	Employment opportunities, Engagement opportunities, Political participation

Based on the insights gained through our stakeholder interviews and key learnings from the case studies outlined above, we have made the following four recommendations:

**1. Connect students and immigrants directly to co-op programs within their regions in order to improve skill building prior to entering the workforce.**

- Implement more co-op and apprenticeship programs leveraging existing models
- Partner with organizations such as the NCP's REI initiative for building these types of programs

**2. Expand on current offerings for bus tours that showcase the benefits of living and working in rural communities.**

- Continue to collect feedback from bus tours currently run to improve the experience and gain traction
- Engage employers in the process by targeting individuals with specific skillsets for tours

**3. Implement a campaign via the Four County Planning and Labour Board to promote improved external hiring practices.**

- The Four County Labour Market Planning Board should leverage relationship with municipal government to initiate a campaign for employers to hire 20-30% of employees externally per year
- External hiring practices could be promoted using existing job posting infrastructure and social media

**4. Continue efforts toward creation of affordable housing that will accommodate newcomers and their ability to live and work where job opportunities are prevalent.**

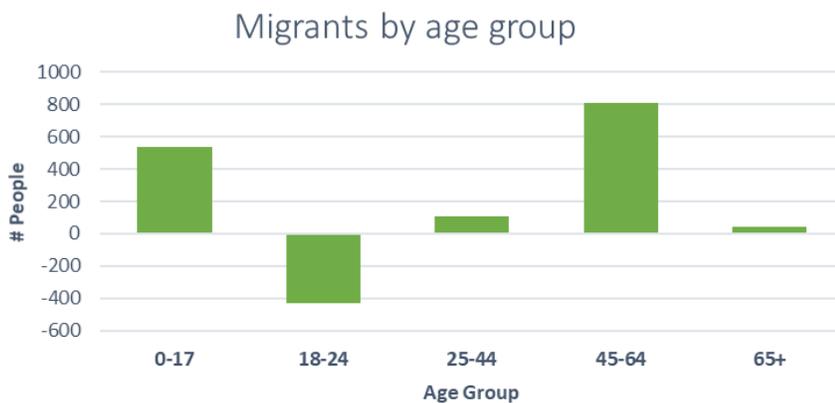
- Outside of government funding, engage co-operatives and non-profits interested in affordable housing projects
- Target Entry-Level, Dorm-Style and Purpose-Built Rental Housing as outlined in the 2018 South Georgian Bay Housing study

## 1.1 OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM

### Overview of Rural Communities in Ontario:

The counties of Grey, Huron, Bruce, Perth and Wellington are located in the northeastern regions of Ontario and span from the southeastern corner of Lake Huron, up to the South Bruce Peninsula and back down to the region of Milton near the GTA. Referencing the 2016 Canadian census data from Statistics Canada, these five counties have a total population of 520,796 individuals, representing 3.87% the population of Ontario. Over the past five years spanning 2011-2016, the population in these rural communities has increased by only 0.04% [1] and of this increase, the in-migrant population is comprised of individuals aged 0-17 and 25-64, indicative of families either locating to a new town or purchasing a family cottage, and those aged 65+, likely choosing a retirement destination. As seen in **Figure 1**, within Huron, Perth, Grey, Bruce and Wellington counties which we will refer to hereon out as “the Four Counties” plus Wellington, we can see that the younger populations between the ages of 18-24 are the predominate population migrating out of these counties, likely the result of students re-locating post-graduation. As demonstrated in **Figure 2**, the in-migration of individuals aged 25-44 and 65+ has reversed in direction over the past two years. With economic development a key focus for these rural communities, in order to continue the positive trend of in-migration, rural communities need to focus on understanding the most successful tools for attraction and retention of newcomers within their communities. As more job positions and a greater spectrum of opportunities exist in large city centers, retention of the young population in these communities remains a concern, as urban city centers, especially the GTA, hold greater opportunities for post-graduate employment. The fact that we now see an in-migration of individuals aged 65+ is likely the result of efforts toward greater access to long-term care and community health services by rural municipalities [1].

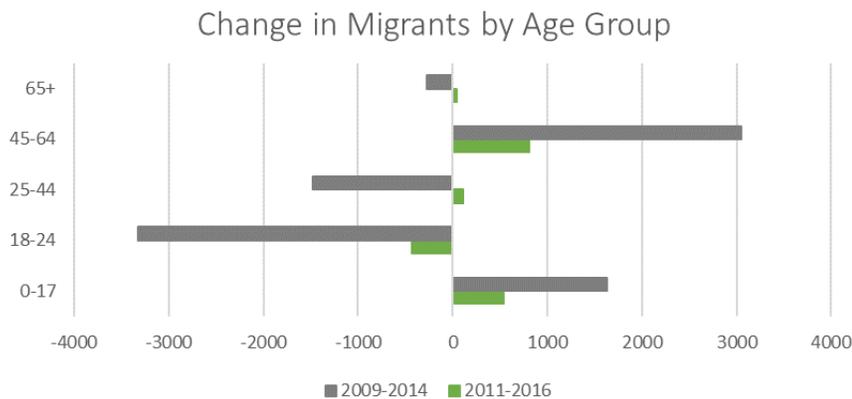
**Figure 1:** Migration trends of the four counties from 2009-2014



The issues surrounding attracting and retaining newcomers is directly tied to workforce integration of these newcomers which is in turn closely linked to both housing availability and diversity and inclusion efforts, both within the workplace and the community. In order to successfully attract newcomers to these rural communities and see these regions as attractive places to live and work, efforts towards retention of those who have already made these communities their home and highlighting these individuals or groups is key in order to demonstrate to those outside of these communities, the benefits and opportunities of choosing to live and work in rural areas. While it's easier to measure attraction of newcomers in rural areas from a quantitative perspective through migration and hiring trends, it is equally as important to measure and track the retention efforts made by employers, the municipal government and the community. As

employers struggle to attract and retain talent within the workplace, it is leaving them no choice but to downsize, sell or close their businesses, diminishing county efforts with respect to economic development [1].

**Figure 2:** Migration trends of the four counties from 2009-2014



### The Problem:

The County of Grey has placed considerable effort in recent years on building strategies for newcomer integration and measuring the effects that these tools and programs have had on the attraction and retention of newcomers. NeXus Consulting Group has been hired under the direction of Jacinda Rudolph, Outreach Coordinator for the County of Grey, to conduct an environmental scan on the Four Counties plus Wellington, to explore the barriers that newcomers experience in rural communities and to provide an overview of what these communities are currently doing with regards to newcomer integration. NeXus has outlined case studies, both internally and externally to these counties, that provide context as to what has been both successful and unsuccessful with recent programs in various regions and used these insights to put forth recommendations that provide a platform for both Grey and surrounding rural municipalities to incorporate new tools and strategies toward better attracting and retaining newcomers.

Based on the details specified in the Rural Economic Development (RED) grant through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, NeXus has approached this challenge from the lens of the three important focus areas:

- Public perception
- Workplace integration
- Housing availability

As outlined in the project proposal to the County of Grey, NeXus has approached this problem by first performing market research to understand the immigration trends, workforce, diversity and inclusion efforts and housing availability, and second, by conducting 4 interviews with key stakeholders across various counties in order to answer specific questions surrounding these three focus areas.

## 1.2 NEXUS CONSULTING GROUP

The NeXus Consulting Group (NeXus) provides strategic and operational consulting services to social-sector organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. Established in 2005, NeXus' work focuses on helping organizations prioritize economic, social, and environmental sustainability to support long-term success. At NeXus, we believe in providing practical solutions that will create sustainable impact for our clients. By fostering a relationship of trust and collaboration, we ensure each project meets and exceeds our client's needs.

Integrated into the Rotman School of Management’s academic and professional community, NeXus leverages Canada's leading intellectual capital and methodologies to address organizations’ challenges and maximize value. Working with our Board of Advisors, NeXus Consultants work to develop a deep understanding of our clients’ goals and perspectives. Efficient in our processes, we leverage the multitude of resources available to execute for our clients.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 APPROACH

In order to conduct an environmental scan of rural areas in Ontario to both provide rural municipalities in Ontario a clear understanding for current programs and initiatives in place for newcomer integration and put forth recommendations to help improve or inspire further efforts, NeXus has divided the undertaking into 4 phases. In the first phase, we conducted both external market research as well as background research via collection of documentation from both the County of Grey and project partners including the Four County Labour Market Planning Board and the Advanced Agriculture Leadership Program. In the second phase, we conducted 1 internal and 3 external interviews with key stakeholders from Wellington, Grey, Bruce and Huron Counties. The 4 interviewees were as follows:

1. Tom Lusic- Talent Attraction- **Wellington County**
2. Jill Roote & Kara Van Myall- Manager of Economic Development- **Bruce County**
3. Jacinda Rudolph- Outreach Coordinator- **Grey County**
4. Kristin Crane- Immigration Liaison- **Huron County**

In the third phase of the project, we looked at three case studies within four municipal regions, Bruce County, Huron and Perth Counties as well as the Peel region. In order to measure how well each of these programs approach newcomer integration, we used the 17 Characteristics of a Welcoming Community from the study “Building Welcoming Communities” completed in Huron County in order to rate each of these 17 characteristics as they relate to various facets of newcomer integration on a five-point scale. The scale ranged from 0, indicating no relation to that characteristic, up to a 5, indicating that the initiative has made this characteristic a key priority (**Appendix 2**). In phase four of the project, we combined our overview of key labour trends and efforts toward attraction and retention of newcomers for each of the 5 counties as well as our insights gained through the case studies to establish recommendations for how rural municipalities can better alter their current offerings to improve their ability for attracting and retaining newcomers.

## 3.0 BACKGROUND & MARKET RESEARCH

### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF GREY COUNTY

Grey County, located two hours from the city of Toronto, is a family oriented, peaceful, rural community with an abundance of natural beauty. With over 77 km of CP Rail Trail, residents can enjoy many recreational activities including cycling, hiking, cross-county skiing, snowshoeing and more. The County of Grey is dedicated to managed, sustainable growth and offers agricultural and rural simplicity as well as an assortment of big city activities [2]. The County of Grey has undertaken various initiatives in order to promote attraction and retention of residents to their community. These initiatives range in focus from job creation to accessible transportation to building and shaping the long-term care landscape [3]. With respect to its labour force, Grey prides itself on its efforts towards innovation and supporting entrepreneurship [2]. With their Business Enterprise Centre located in Owen Sound, they offer guidance and incentives for new entrepreneurial businesses through a range of services including free business consultations, guidance on the government landscape, seminars and workshops [4]. Grey was named one of the Top 7 Intelligent Communities of 2017 for these efforts [5].

### 3.1.1 DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Grey County is a family of distinct communities and the fourth largest county in Ontario. Grey County is made up of 9 municipalities including Owen Sound, Grey Highlands, Meaford, West Grey, Hanover, The Blue Mountains, Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs and Southgate [2]. With a population of 93,830 residents, 61% of whom are working age, defined here as 15-64, Grey County has over 10,000 businesses, 12% of which are self-run [1]. The average income of Grey County residents is \$42,819 with an average income of \$95,668 for a 2-or-more person household [1].

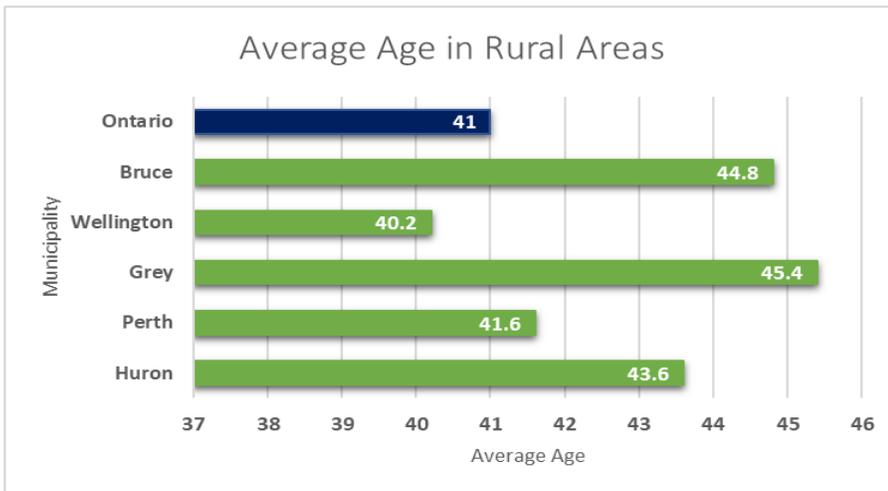
**Table 1:** Income for Grey County Residents as of 2016

Income Bracket	%
Under \$10,000 (including loss)	13%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	20%
\$20,000 to \$49,999	40%
\$50,000 to \$79,999	17%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	5%
\$100,000 and over	6%

Source: Statistics Canada Census [1]

While the average income per household in Grey County is above the Canadian average of \$70,336 as of 2015, 33% of individuals in Grey County are making an income below the poverty line. Compared to its partner counties, residents of Grey County have an average income per person of \$42,170, below the average of the five counties considered for this project of \$43,078. With 39,560 private dwellings, 77.6% of those dwellings are single-detached homes and on average, there are 2.3 persons per household. The average age of residents living in Grey County is 45.4. As seen in **Figure 3**, this is the highest average age of all counties considered within this project and 4.4 years above the provincial

**Figure 3:** 2016 Census Data for Average Age in Rural Areas



Source: Statistics Canada Census [1]

average. With an ageing population, especially with the recent in-migration of individuals aged 65+ to these rural communities, the average age will likely continue to increase. On average within Canada, the age group of 60 to 64 is the population growing most rapidly, at 29.1% over the past five years, indicating as well that Canada’s ageing population will continue to accelerate in the coming years [1].

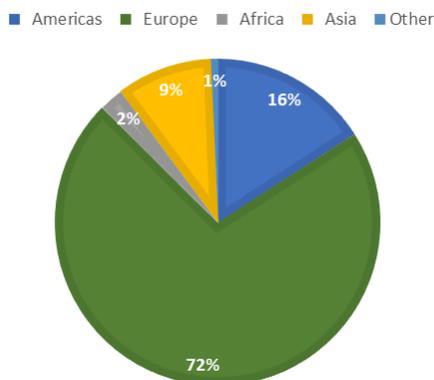
**Table 2: Non-Metro census subdivisions by income per person 15 years and over for the four counties plus Wellington**

Area	Income per person (15 years and older)
Wellington	\$49,075
Grey	\$42,170
Bruce	\$40,789
Perth	\$43,510
Huron	\$39,844
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$43,078</b>

Source: Royal Ontario Institute Census Data: 2017 Series [6]

Grey County is home to a diverse group of individuals, with 7,350 immigrants coming from 45 different countries. As seen in **Figure 4**, 72% of immigrants living in Grey County come from European countries. There are 1,900 individuals who identify as a visible minority and 550 people who do not speak English as the preferred language within their home [1].

**Figure 4: Immigrant Population, Grey County as of 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada Census [1]

### 3.1.2 KEY WORKFORCE INDUSTRY DRIVERS

The top three industries that comprise the largest number of employers in Grey County are:

- Wholesale and retail trade,
- Accommodation and food services, and
- Healthcare and social assistance

Home to Grey Bruce Health Services, healthcare is a growing employment sector for the county with 6,489 positions currently filled across the six institutions located in Lion’s Head, Markdale, Meaford, Southampton and Wiarton [7]. Although these institutions have a large number of job positions available, hiring becomes a challenge as the biggest need for these employers is healthcare professionals with a specific educational background and skillset [8].

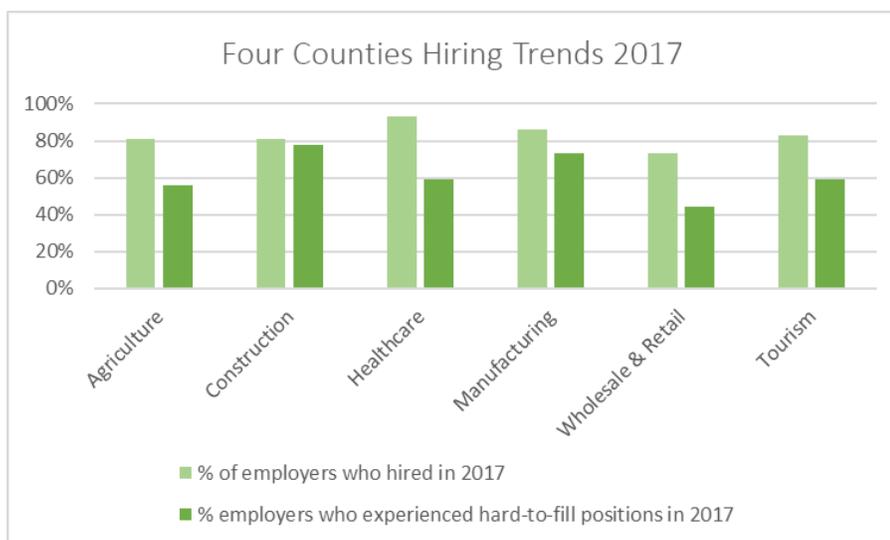
The main challenges identified for hiring newcomers into these positions include very strict licenses or credentials, travel to the job location and irregular hours which can deter people looking for steady work hours [9]. Even with these available jobs, Grey County has the lowest number of both full-time and part-time job positions compared to its partner counties. As demonstrated by the Employer One Report for 2018, 93% of employers in 2018 in this industry were able to offer training to their employees, one of the most important variables in attracting employees, especially newcomers to these positions [8]. However, it is evident that this training is not the solution, as 59% of employers in this industry reported hard-to-fill positions in 2017, 22% of which lasted over a year [8].

### 3.1.2 KEY RURAL COMMUNITY INDUSTRY TRENDS

The labour force is a crucial component to attracting and retaining newcomers in rural communities. The ability to find a suitable job, that pays well and fits one's skills and interests is already difficult to do, let alone when new to a city that's located in a rural setting. With 73-93% of employers throughout the Four Counties hiring over the six industries reviewed by the Four County Labour Market Planning Board in their Local Lens reports, including agriculture, construction, healthcare, manufacturing, retail and tourism, a problem definitely exists surrounding the retention of employees, as there is currently an average of 51% of employees quitting their jobs across all sectors in 2017 alone [8].

Although the greatest number of available full-time job positions exists within the manufacturing and agriculture industries, these industries represent the largest number of employers reporting the availability of qualified workers as either fair or poor with 64% of employers on average reporting hard-to-fill positions in 2017. Further, while the majority of other industries have switched over to new methods of recruitment such as social media for hiring, employers in agriculture and manufacturing are still using newspaper ads to advertise their job positions. This may be contributing to their inability to attract employees as 19% of individuals applying for these jobs on average are under 25 years old.

**Figure 5:** Four Counties Hiring Trends in 2017



Source: Local Lens, Four County Labour Market and Planning Board 2018 [8]

As seen in **Figure 5**, the smallest gap currently exists between those hiring and hard-to-fill positions within the construction and manufacturing industries. Interestingly, these two industries represent the greatest number of employers offering ongoing training and education opportunities which means that the ability to attract talent for these positions is low. This is further illustrated by the fact that work ethic, dedication and dependability of workers was listed as one of the top reasons for why positions were hard-to-fill in these industries [8].

With regards to attracting talent for hard-to-fill positions across all industries, word-of-mouth as the primary method of recruitment presents a major problem for newcomers entering new communities and looking for open job positions. In both Wellington and Grey Counties, favoritism and cherry picking among applicants has been a trend with more employees hiring internally or through family and friend connections than reported [10]. While this recruitment method saves companies time and resources, it contributes to the problem of newcomers finding adequate job positions that fit their skills and qualifications and limits diversity and innovation within local businesses.

Currently, the healthcare industry represents the industry with the greatest number of open job positions with 93% of employers hiring in 2017 and 20% of workers retiring [8]. With rural communities recognizing that an ageing population brings new challenges for residents choosing to remain within their communities as they grow older and the importance

of establishing greater access to healthcare, an even greater number of job positions within this industry will likely become available in the future. While many available jobs exist, retention of current employees will be extremely important to this field as 62% of employers reported people quitting their positions, with the highest number of dismissals from these positions at 17%. The top reasons employers in the healthcare space reported positions were hard-to-fill were not enough applicants available and a lack of qualifications [8]. Recruitment directly through schools in an attempt to retain international and local students for these positions will be highly important across all municipal regions moving forwards.

One of the biggest challenges highlighted over almost all employers and municipal representatives interviewed on reasons why job positions were hard-to-fill was a lack of affordable housing and access to transportation in order to make it to and from resident's jobs. There is a large need for smaller, semi-detached or townhomes in these regions that would more adequately support those in lower wage brackets and immigrants who have high settlement costs associated with moving to a new country or region. While affordable housing does exist, equal access for all residents continues to limit available options as well as the resistance locals show in renting their vacation or permanent homes to newcomers [10].

### **3.1.3 STEPS TAKEN TOWARDS ATTRACTION & RETENTION OF NEWCOMERS**

#### **Grey County**

The County of Grey has actively worked toward generating programs for newcomer integration to support a flourishing and welcoming community. The most recent program that Grey County has implemented is New to Grey. New to Grey is a 15-month pilot project funded by the Ontario Provincial Government, New to Grey will support newcomers to the county either from outside the country or from other areas of Canada in order to bring new culture, skills and knowledge to the community and workforce. As part of this program, Grey County has formed partnerships with both the newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP) in Mississauga to work with their Rural Employment Initiative (REI) as well as United Way Bruce Grey under which they have launched the Making Grey Bruce Home pilot project which aims to develop a model of support services for refugees and vulnerable newcomers [3].

As part of New to Grey, the County has engaged each member municipality to deliver Building Cultural Awareness Workshops that provide diversity training in order for employers to better understand the challenges that newcomers face when settling in a new environment of a rural community and to build the fundamentals of basic intercultural competency. These workshops are delivered in partnership with the City of Owen Sound and meant for employers, service providers and local community members [11].

Grey County has also seen success showcasing the benefits of rural living with their creative mixers, events which they hold 3 to 4 times per year in different regions throughout Grey County. These community outings appeal to the younger population and serve the purpose of introducing people through an informal setting to the opportunities available within their own community. With a growing international student base at Owen Sound's Georgian college, these events will continue to provide employers a place to connect with talent prior to these individuals leaving the community to pursue external opportunities.

Diversity and inclusion is a primary objective of all Grey County's regional programs to support newcomers since newcomers experience unique challenges especially when immigrating from another country. The main challenge identified with respect to diversity and inclusion is limited company resources and difficult surrounding incorporating new programs and policies for a limited number of individuals [10]. In a recent survey completed by Grey County of 218 local employers, 37% of respondents said that they would not be open to diversity training within their workplace [8]. Especially for businesses where few newcomers are employed, it can be difficult to encourage employers to incorporate these types of programs, especially without the guarantee that these individuals will remain a part of their workforce.

## **Bruce County**

Bruce County has three core programs surrounding economic development including Business to Bruce, Explore the Bruce and Spruce the Bruce [12], however, they are beginning to see a larger need for attraction and retention efforts with the recent refurbishment project that Bruce Power is undertaking. Bruce County formed a partnership with Bruce Power in 2016 called the Welcoming Communities Action Team to serve the regions of Huron, Bruce and Grey counties with regards to programs for residents and newcomers entering the area in anticipation of the thousands of new jobs this initiative will create. This program provides a toolkit for these rural areas on how to create a welcoming community that is more socially integrated and that brings people together to promote workforce opportunities and inclusiveness among residents. This program will be highly important in the coming years with the launch of the Nuclear Economic Development and Innovation Initiative which we have outlined as a case study in this project [13]. With Skilled trades the largest gap in terms of those that acquire jobs in this field and those that are able to perform well and remain in those positions, retention strategies for current employees as well as attraction techniques for newcomers will be crucial [8].

With the highest number of businesses relating to tourism with respect to all of its partner counties, Bruce is seeing the tourism sector and the highest in agriculture, the second highest with respect to areas where newcomers will be able to more easily find employment opportunities [10]. As more and more jobs become available with the nuclear power market driving expansion in this area for the next 40 years, immigration to Bruce County will bring the need for programs that promote diversity, inclusiveness and a welcoming community for newcomers in order to retain workers in these new jobs.

## **Huron & Perth County**

The main challenges surrounding retention of newcomers to Huron and Perth counties include language barriers, unaffordable housing, transportation and social isolation or alienation with attempting to integrate. Huron and Perth offer 13 organizations that specifically support newcomers and their transition into their communities. They have also established the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron (MAPH), the Newcomer Settlement Huron-Perth Network and launched a Settlement Counsellor Services Pilot Project in affiliation with the United Way [9]. These programs help connect newcomers including immigrants and refugees with information and referrals for government services including healthcare, legal, education and translation within their communities to facilitate a smooth transition [14].

Huron County is another region that has dedicated resources towards retaining youth. Through their workforce attraction and retention programs, they target high school students and educate them regarding career opportunities that exist within their own communities. Through their REACH program in affiliation with the University of Guelph and Fanshawe College, Huron has created new post-secondary education and job opportunities within the equine and agricultural industries [15]. Innovation is also becoming a growing initiative within Huron County with programs established to introduce newcomers to entrepreneurial roles in their community [10].

## **Wellington County**

Wellington has identified two major challenges with respect to diversity and inclusion surrounding newcomer integration in their municipality. First, awareness of their immigration projects is low. Low awareness in combination with a lack of understanding for the importance of these types of programs by residents and employers' results in unsuccessful outcomes. Second, employers are hesitant to adopt diversity and inclusion programs in their workplaces. This problem is not unique to Wellington County but is seen across several rural districts [10].

Within Wellington County, through a partnership with the University of Guelph, efforts are currently being made at the international student level to retain talent before these students leave school and potentially move out of the community. In order to scale this initiative, investment toward infrastructure of these programs will be key. Retaining international students will require generational training within workplaces. One of the major challenges for retaining young talent is the generational gap that exists in terms of employers understanding how to engage young employees and have flexibility around new ways of working [10].

Wellington County has also begun a Municipal Immigration Pilot Project by targeting areas where a large immigrant population exists. In Minto, this project works to promote the flourishing Filipino community, highlighting individuals working in various industries including manufacturing, healthcare and agriculture in order to encourage the growth of this community. These success stories are promoted through Filipino-Canadian newspapers based in Toronto. Wellington County will be expanding its reach of the program through promotional videos and newspaper articles [10].

## 4.0 CASE STUDY REVIEW & ANALYSIS

### 4.1 BRUCE COUNTY – PROJECT INNOVATE

#### 4.1.1 SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY

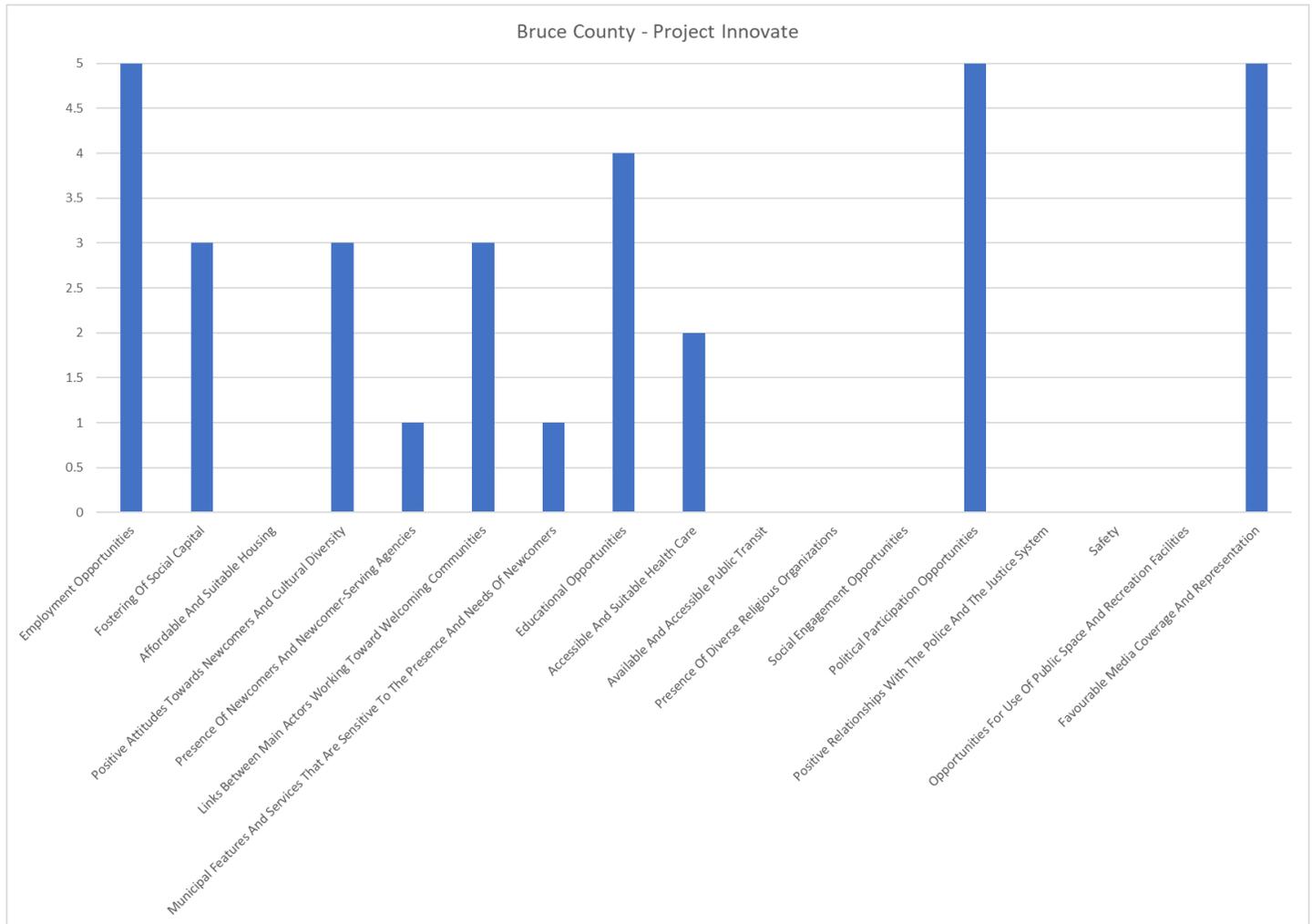
Bruce County houses the largest nuclear facility in Canada, owned and operated by electricity giant, Bruce Power. As of 2012, following a multibillion-dollar refurbishment undertaking to bring two of the site's reactors back online, up to a total of eight reactors, the Bruce Power nuclear facility became the largest operation in the world. At peak power generation, Bruce Power supplies 6,300 megawatts of electricity and accounts for approximately 30% of Ontario's provincial electricity grid needs. In order to maintain the massive ongoing production at the facility, a large quantity of labor is required. This provides a stable income for approximately 4200 employees, with roles ranging from management, engineering, physicist, to general labor and janitorial services.

In 2015, the CEO of Bruce Power, Duncan Hawthorne, announced a plan to refurbish the remaining six reactors at the Lake Huron location. Construction would begin as of 2020, and continue until the estimated completion date in 2064. The reason for the extended duration is Ontario's reliance on electricity sourced from Bruce Power, and therefore reactors would have to be shut down, worked on, and reopened one at a time. In addition to the current 4,200 positions that exist at the facility, the refurbishment would effectively create approximately 23,000 jobs over the lifespan of the project, with 3,000-4,000 fluctuating annually. Bruce itself would be unable to supply the required labor needs to meet this inclining demand for talent, and this creates a reliance on the ability to attract people from outside the county, and where needed, outside of the province.

To build on the demand of labor further, this new multibillion-dollar project has attracted 35 suppliers that have relocated to the area in order to fill the gap in materials for the reactor refurbishment. While it is difficult to estimate the number workers these suppliers will need to recruit, the project begins in under two years, meaning high likelihood of further businesses finding opportunity in Bruce as a result of the plant reconstruction. To support this additional influx of temporary and permanent residents, in conjunction with those locating to Bruce for employment in the Bruce Power project, a multi-county partnership is currently underway to support housing and educational needs. Counties in this partnership with Bruce include Perth, Huron, and Grey.

#### 4.1.2 MEASUREMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS USING 17 CHARACTERISTICS METRIC

**Figure 6:** Bruce County – Project Innovate: Rating Chart for 17 Characteristics



#### 1. Employment Opportunities

A key component of making the Bruce project successful will be to attract both quantity and quality of labor to its facility refurbishment. With a 40-year-plus timeline (2020 to 2064), the job creation will undeniably be a core focus, and also the major strength of the project compared to others undertaken in rural communities.

#### 2. Fostering of Social Capital

While the project itself is commercial in nature, it presents Bruce as a place that invites outside help and is inclusive of those who would be the right skill-fit for the given positions. It further rallies the community to get ready for the upcoming influx of workers, bringing everyone together, and creating a space where newcomers can thrive.

#### 3. Affordable and Suitable Housing

It is undeniable that the influx of newcomers hired for facility refurbishment will need a place to live for the duration of their (potentially indefinite) residence in Bruce County. As a result of many current Bruce Power workers living within 25 kilometers of the plant, housing prices in that radius are inflated. The tourism industry also presents a challenge, as many

residents from outside the county treat these houses as seasonal residences (cottages) and they remain vacant during times they are not being used.

#### 4. Positive Attitudes Towards Newcomers and Cultural Diversity

With a large tourism industry featured in Bruce County through seasonal visitors and the vast selection of natural attractions, the area already presents a positive viewpoint towards newcomers. With Bruce Power being a major economic driver for the region, this will present further embracing of help from those residing in other parts of the country and beyond, which includes newcomers.

#### 5. Presence of Newcomers and Newcomer-Serving Agencies

In order to support the integration of thousands of new employees in the Bruce region, services catered to those who have never lived in rural areas, including those new to Canada, will be necessary. Efforts have been made recently to drive newcomer attraction including the newly created New Resident's Toolkit through the Welcoming Communities Action Team, but minimal explicit focus has been placed upon creation of inclusion-oriented agencies for those new to Canada.

#### 6. Links Between Main Actors Working Toward Welcoming Communities

With the influence of Bruce Power on the regional economy, this motivates Ontario officials to take steps towards supporting the new project. With many of these officials responsible for inclusion efforts, this creates a direct line of impact for those who are working to create an inclusive community to build upon their efforts.

#### 7. Municipal Features and Services that are Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers

Similar to characteristic #5, efforts have been made historically in Bruce to aid the integration of newcomers to the community, however these have not continued. Municipal features and services will be needed in advance of 2020.

#### 8. Educational Opportunities

From a professional development and educational standpoint, the project will likely attract those who are fully certified in their profession, and others who are looking to gain further skills. The long-term project presented by Bruce Power will cater to both, along with requiring ongoing education on project management, construction, and operations of the facility.

#### 9. Accessible and Suitable Healthcare

In partnership with Bruce Power, the supply of medical professionals in the county has grown substantially over the past 10 years. While it is uncertain if this will be sufficient to support the needs of thousands of newcomers in the county, the demand will be present to justify further efforts to bring more medical care professionals to the region.

#### 10. Available and Accessible Public Transport

Public transport does exist in Bruce County, however there does not seem to be any plans for improvements or expansions as part of the preparation plans for 2020.

#### 11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations

Bruce County offers spaces of worship for many different religions and ethnicities, but this is not a current focus for the case relating to the nuclear power facility.

#### 12. Social Engagement Opportunities

Beyond the scope of attracting people with the correct skillsets for refurbishment of the nuclear facility, social opportunities are not part of the core agenda.

#### 13. Political Participation Opportunities

Bruce Power is a key economic driver for the region, and as such has close ties to the municipal governing bodies in the area. While the power corporation will assume all the financial risks associated with the reactor refurbishment, the municipality has the ability to support through project approvals, program subsidies, and services to aid immigration to the county.

#### 14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System

It is uncertain what efforts have been made to forward this characteristic, and it does not seem to be a priority in relation to the immediate needs of the Bruce Power facility.

#### 15. Safety

As a nuclear facility, Bruce Power's Lake Huron facility puts the utmost efforts towards physical safety of those who work at the plant, anyone living in the surrounding environment, and the ecological landscape. This was demonstrated during the refurbishment of reactors 1 and 2, which set new industry standards for safety among similar engineering undertakings. This being said, community safety from an inclusivity standpoint does not seem to be addressed by the upcoming project.

#### 16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreational Facilities

With a core focus being placed upon the employment opportunities, and attraction of individuals to the refurbishment project through the work-related mediums, public space and recreation does not have emphasis placed upon it. For this reason, it's uncertain how this will change as newcomers enter the community.

#### 17. Favorable Media Coverage and Representation

With the initial two reactor refurbishment presenting one of Ontario's most complex projects, the upcoming initiative involving six additional reactors will take this to a new level. Already, media coverage has begun, following the CEO's announcement in 2015, and will continue to be present throughout the project as each milestone is reached. With massive economic implications, this will invite opportunities to partner with the media to promote the community.

### **4.1.3 ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION TO RURAL COMMUNITY AGENDAS**

When considering Project Innovate, it presents a viable long-term opportunity for the County of Bruce to attract outside talent. In addition, it has brought about an excess supply of jobs through supply requirements, and numerous major suppliers migrating to the region. Over 40 years, it will be able to sustain the influx of thousands of laborers and their families, many of which may be newcomers searching for stable employment. In the event that this occurs, it will be necessary to create an environment where they can integrate effectively into the community and remain for the long term.

As identified through qualitative measurements using the 17 Characteristics, while Project Innovate will create a core component of attraction for newcomers – employment – it does not place importance on creating an integrated community with sufficient specialized resources. Further, it presents the challenge of offering affordable housing in large enough quantity to accommodate the respective newcomers. In an effort to prepare for the prospective population growth, Bruce County has partnered with the surrounding counties of Perth, Huron, and Grey to allow for a greater network of housing, and to ensure this rural Ontario region can share in the benefits that Project Innovate will surely bring. In creating a large-scale project that will have influence on the Ontario energy supply, it will inevitably bring attention from the government and require long-term support of the initiatives being undertaken. As such, government involvement will be necessary from the capacity of facilitating community integration, ensuring that life in rural Ontario appeals to and inspires newcomers to reside in the region permanently. Public Partnerships such as the one between Perth, Huron, and Grey to support the Bruce initiative is a prime example of how this support can fill gaps that can't be met by the private sectors.

## **4.2 PERTH/HURON COUNTY – EMBRACING DIVERSITY**

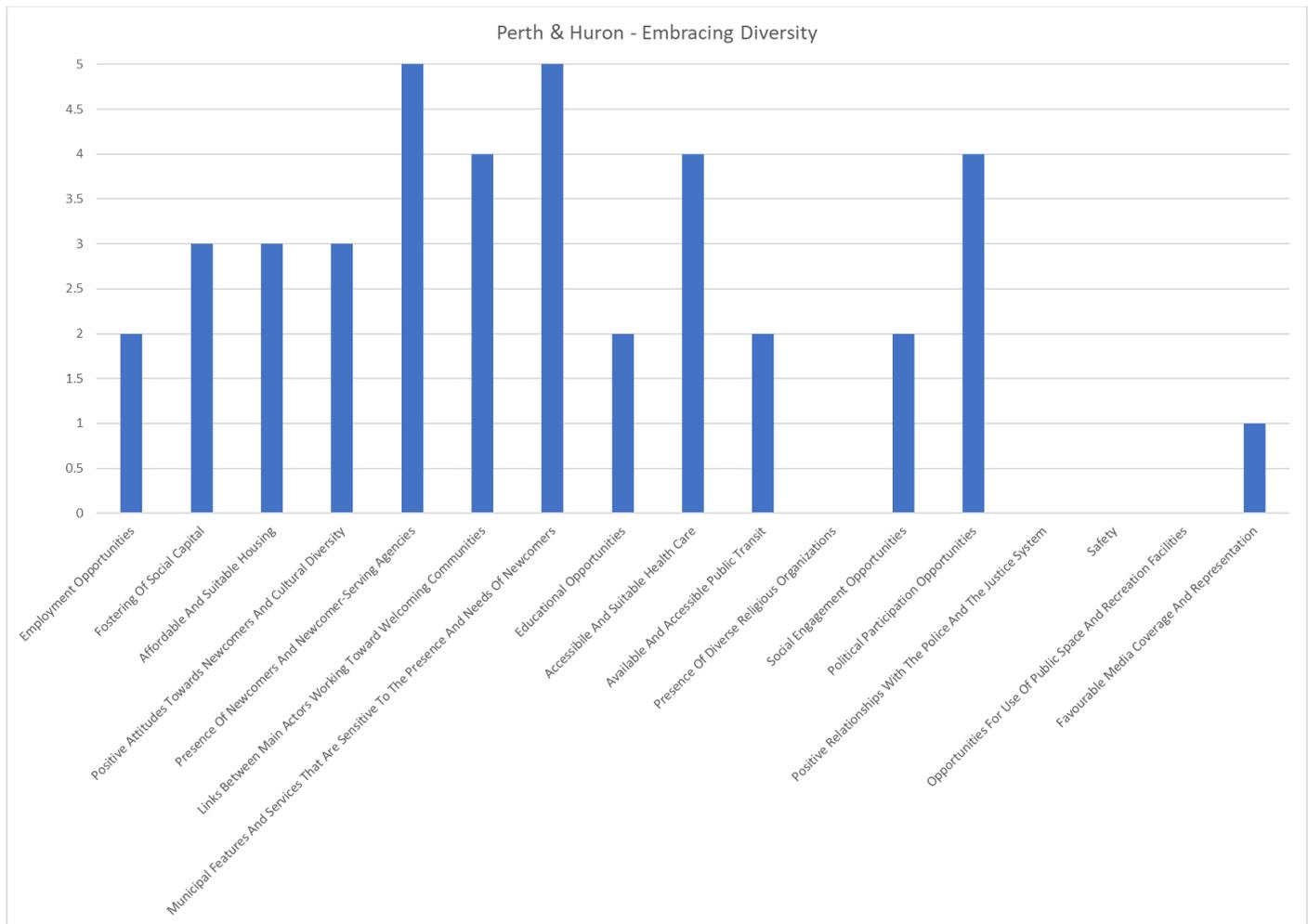
### **4.2.1 SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY & KEY GOALS**

Over the next two decades, regions in rural Ontario are expected to face declining populations, and as such will need to focus on attracting newcomers to the region to supplement those who leave the area. In addition, these efforts must also be directed to supporting the retention of those who remain through continued intentional investments to the community. The counties of Perth and Huron make up two distinct adjacent regions within rural Ontario, and offer similar services for newcomers. In many cases, the initiatives that currently exist are partnerships between Perth and Huron, with both regions having made it a priority to address population needs via newcomer growth strategies. If integration into these rural Ontario regions can be achieved, it will serve to make them areas where newcomers feel welcome in the long-term, and improve the retention outlook for current residents.

The Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC), operated by the United Way of Perth-Huron, undertook a recent environmental scan (2017) to gain insight into how newcomers were experiencing integration in the region. They focused on the various needs faced by newcomers to rural regions, and how this was being addressed by the Perth and Huron counties through government and privately-funded service. These services spanned a wide range of offerings by the counties, and included education, wellness, and opportunities for employment. In addition to looking at the current-state of the counties, the study took steps towards the future by suggesting methods by which Perth and Huron could employ to increase engagement and attract newcomers to the region. These recommendations pushed for centralization of service delivery, deepening resident-newcomer contact through welcoming and integration programming, and generating awareness for celebrating differences and needs of newcomers.

## 4.2.2 MEASUREMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS USING 17 CHARACTERISTICS METRIC

**Figure 7: Huron & Perth Counties – Embracing Diversity: Rating Chart for 17 Characteristics**



### 1. Employment Opportunities

In Perth and Huron counties, the study uncovered that while needs existed among employers, six out of the nine newcomers expressed that they were currently unemployed. As for the reason why, it was found that despite jobs existing, the educational barriers could not be overcome, and many newcomers would need to return to school in order to find an equivalent opportunity to what they had in their home countries.

### 2. Fostering of Social Capital

The study points towards a mixed experience from newcomers with regards to feeling welcomed by community members of either Perth or Huron. It was seen that those who immigrate to the communities themselves typically had a harder time navigating the diverse services available to them, while those who are privately sponsored, such as refugees who have joined the community, are pointed in the right direction more readily.

### 3. Affordable and Suitable Housing

Both Huron and Perth counties are seen to provide superior housing options to the benchmark of rural communities including property location support and subsidies for housing. While this is something to note, it's important to recognize that newcomers continue to find affordability a consistent challenge in the regions, despite effort on the part of Perth and Huron to accommodate the needs of those immigrating to the area.

#### 4. Positive Attitudes Towards Newcomers and Cultural Diversity

Similar to the spreading of social capital in Perth and Huron communities, attitudes towards newcomer integration remains highly positive. The major challenge is reaching out to all newcomers in the way they require, as many have reported social isolation being a common challenge living in the region.

#### 5. Presence of Newcomers and Newcomer-Serving Agencies

Perth and Huron have made significant efforts to building social programs catered toward newcomers, and made these initiatives a priority. While they are diverse in offerings, accessibility to these services and knowledge of their existence among newcomers remains uncertain, and this study exposed that the saturation of the newcomer community for these services is likely low.

#### 6. Links Between Main Actors Working Toward Welcoming Communities

Local public agencies within Perth and Huron have a stake in the success of the region, and have acted to improve the welcoming experience newcomers receive upon entering Perth and Huron.

#### 7. Municipal Features and Services that are Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers

Services that are newcomer-specific have been integrated into the communities of Perth and Huron, including the establishment of associations to continue the efforts moving forward. This consist of the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron (MAPH), and the Newcomer Settlement Huron-Perth Network that includes a Settlement Counsellor to support newcomer integration.

#### 8. Educational Opportunities

Opportunities for education of youth remains significant among newcomers, however this does not apply as greatly to the adults immigrating to the area. Limited English language skills remain a difficult feature for integrating, and while there are services to support this, it does not seem that there are educational offerings catered to newcomers beyond this.

#### 9. Accessible and Suitable Healthcare

In the study, it was determined that while navigating healthcare is a common challenge for newcomers, doing so in Perth and Huron is easier relative to other options. Further, many participants in a focus group on the topic of health and wellness expressed being holistically well (physical, emotional), despite feeling the common sense of social isolation.

#### 10. Available and Accessible Public Transport

In a previous report from 2012, public transport in Perth and Huron counties was an area that had been identified for needing improvement. For newcomers in the regions, it was found that lack of access to this type of transportation was a limiting factor to participating in many of the existing services offered in the community, such as employment or language lessons. Suggestions were made to support transformation of the space by the SRPC.

#### 11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations

While there have been numerous efforts to increase social engagement, it's unclear of the level of religious diversity that currently exists in the counties of Perth and Huron.

#### 12. Social Engagement Opportunities

While there have been efforts made by the community and sponsoring religious organizations to create social engagement for newcomers, about 30% have relocated to urban areas. The primary reasons are twofold – employment opportunities, and social engagement opportunities. For many families, social isolation remains high, and socializing is one way to feel more integrated into the region.

### 13. Political Participation Opportunities

Major interventions for newcomers in Perth and Huron have been largely driven by government involvement. As many gaps still remain, it's evident that continued opportunities for municipal engagement with the community, particularly in enacting recommendations that come out of studies such as the one carried out by the United Way of Perth-Huron.

### 14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System

While there is no evidence to suggest this is currently a negative experience for newcomers, the study did not focus on this subject.

### 15. Safety

The study did not focus explicitly on Safety, however aside from the feeling of social isolation, safety while living in these two counties was never something that was an apparent challenge for newcomers.

### 16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreational Facilities

The primary challenges focused on by the study, driven by the expressed needs of newcomers in the Perth and Huron area, excluded use of public spaces and focused more on general community integration.

### 17. Favorable Media Coverage and Representation

Although not explicitly expressed, ongoing efforts by Perth and Huron to create an inclusive environment for newcomers could benefit from media representation.

## **4.2.3 ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION TO RURAL COMMUNITY AGENDAS**

The counties of Perth and Huron have devoted resources towards the creation of services for newcomers that address the spectrum of needs those new to the area may require. The report suggests that on average the outlook for newcomers to Perth and Huron exceeds what they may find elsewhere across rural Ontario, as demonstrated through the Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators (NYCI) with education and innovation falling short. Strong areas for the two counties include economic promise, housing, and opportunities for youth, which does present an optimistic scenario for families to fully integrate. With many positive indicators towards Perth and Huron being on the right track, the challenge still remains that actual newcomer experience is varied. Some of the newcomers interviewed in the Embracing Diversity study were highly optimistic about the offerings, while others were unaware or unable to gain access to these resources.

Looking further at the 17 Characteristics, the driving force behind current initiatives appears to be local government entities. Investment into language training centers, access to healthcare, and the wide range of specialized services rank highly among all characteristics, which demonstrates that the opportunity for newcomers to find avenues for integration is present. However, the majority of participants in the study were unemployed, and attributed this to an inability to access specific services that may facilitate or resolve issues with employment. Taking a centralized approach, as suggested by the study, could be effective to remedy the lack of information on these programs for newcomers. A further opportunity appears to be in the category of employment, and creating engagement with employers to get the local private sector more involved in newcomer integration.

## **4.3 THE REGION OF PEEL – RURAL EMPLOYEMENT INITIATIVE**

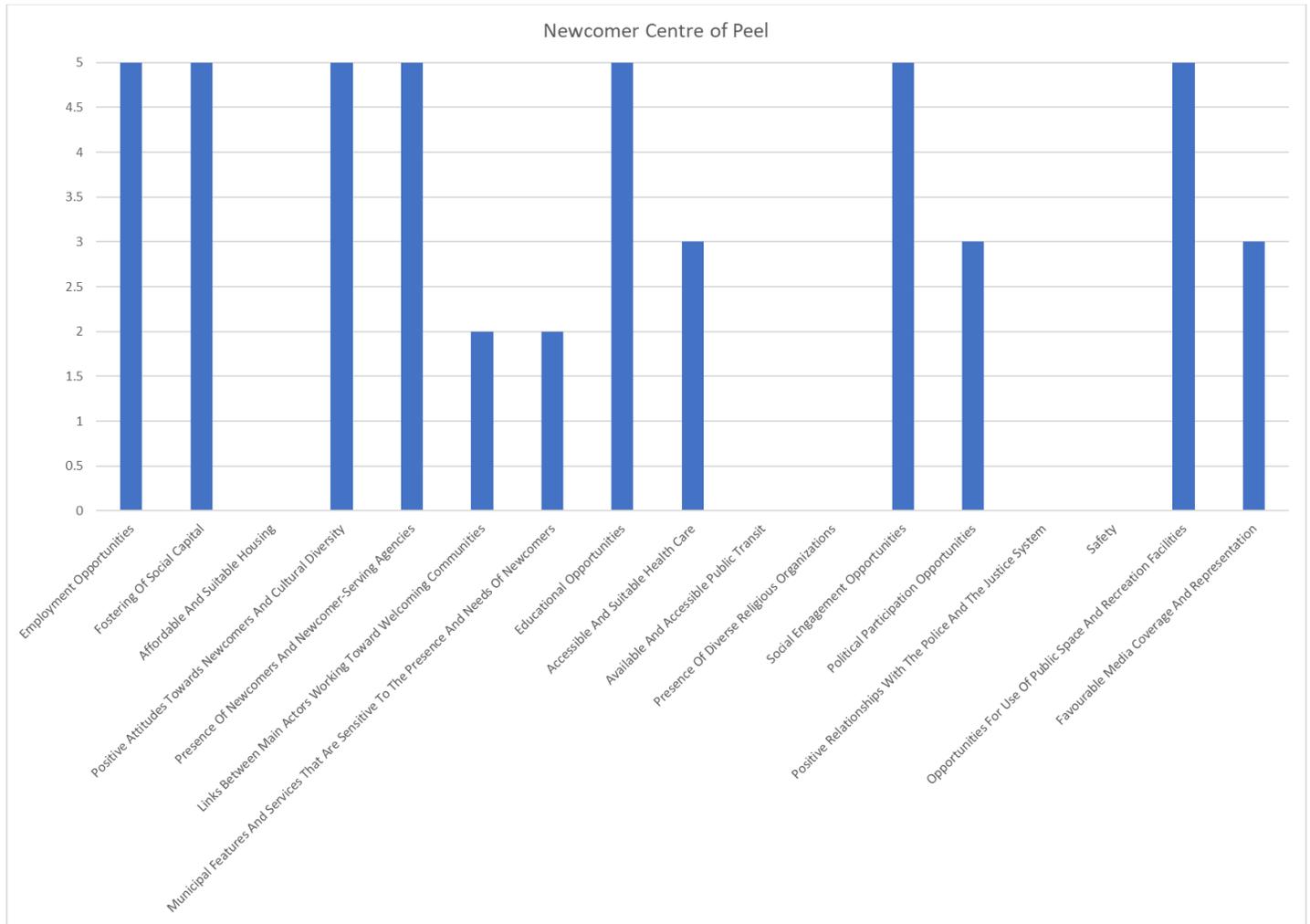
### **4.3.1 SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY & KEY GOALS**

The Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP) operates as a not-for-profit organization, and focuses on integration within the region of Peel. They offer a wide range of services that cater to all ages, ensuring the entire newcomer family is able to settle into the area. These offerings are most in depth in the space of supporting the job hunt for adults, and includes comprehensive programs for developing workplace readiness and co-op placements within local businesses or local volunteer initiatives. Opportunities for employment through the NCP stretch beyond just Peel, as the Rural Employment Initiative (REI) connect skilled newcomers with employers in rural Ontario to help bridge the gap of job needs in a seamless manner. Should newcomers wish to start their own business, the NCP has numerous resources to support these efforts as well. The NCP received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to administer the REI project in partnership with Community Features Ontario with a mission to provide a streamlined transition between metropolitan GTA areas to rural Ontario.

On a community engagement front, the NCP offers activities to appeal to both adults and youth and help increase socialization with current residents of Peel. By utilizing public spaces in the area, events organized by the NCP bring together the community, and expose newcomers to mentorship programs, sports and recreational activities. In addition, the NCP encourages newcomers to be a part of building this network for those who arrive after them, keeping the involvement constant.

### 4.3.2 MEASUREMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS USING 17 CHARACTERISTICS METRIC

**Figure 8:** Peel – Rural Employment Initiative: Rating Chart for 17 Characteristics



#### 1. Employment Opportunities

In addition to expanding the skillset of newcomers to increase their attractiveness to potential employers, NCP assists in making full-time or co-op connections for businesses in the area. It goes further by offering access to rural opportunities, and helping with start-up initiatives, driving local innovation and entrepreneurship.

#### 2. Fostering of Social Capital

By bringing together the community for engaging with newcomers, and keeping newcomers involved to support with future initiatives, NCP is leveraging the social capital that exists to the greatest possible extent.

#### 3. Affordable and Suitable Housing

While the NCP does offer many services, housing does not appear to be one of them. Further, with Peel being a region within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the likelihood of finding low-cost housing is not optimistic.

#### 4. Positive Attitudes Towards Newcomers and Cultural Diversity

Through the numerous social engagement opportunities, co-op opportunities for employment, and willingness of the community to engage in inviting newcomers to the region, it's clear that the community embraces diversity.

## 5. Presence of Newcomers and Newcomer-Serving Agencies

The NCP offers a diverse range of services to augment and connect those that are valuable to newcomers in the region. Many opportunities exist, but may be siloed if not otherwise engaged by bridge organizations such as NCP.

## 6. Links Between Main Actors Working Toward Welcoming Communities

As a not-for-profit, the NCP gets funding support from the governing bodies, however its uncertain what involvement exists beyond this. In this case, the main actors are the community, and NCP brings them together.

## 7. Municipal Features and Services that are Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers

While public spaces and funding for not-for-profits such as NCP exist in Peel, it's uncertain beyond this what municipal involvement there is.

## 8. Educational Opportunities

Education for both adults and youth is a key focus of NCP, and possibly its main goal. From job and language training, to sourcing schools for the children of families, it provides a holistic source of education-related services for newcomers.

## 9. Accessible and Suitable Healthcare

With a location based in the Greater Toronto Area, suitability of healthcare in the regional locale is something that is present. While the NCP does have services to support with finding these clinics, it's uncertain how accessible they are for newcomers.

## 10. Available and Accessible Public Transport

The NCP does not have any support for transportation, public transport subsidies, or anything along these subjects.

## 11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations

As a diverse region, although not mentioned as an explicit part of the NCP mission statement, the presence of numerous religious organizations is high.

## 12. Social Engagement Opportunities

The NCP provides a vast number of social engagement opportunities throughout the Peel region, catering to all ages and addressing many different needs.

## 13. Political Participation Opportunities

This is not a focus of the NCP, however the ability to welcome newcomers and show representation in-person could be beneficial.

## 14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System

As a diverse region, it can be inferred that the relationship with police and the justice system is positive.

## 15. Safety

Safety is not explicitly mentioned as part of the NCP's mission for newcomers, however it can be implied that this is a region-wide concern.

## 16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreational Facilities

The NCP operates social events for newcomers through public spaces catered toward all different age groups.

## 17. Favorable Media Coverage and Representation

It's uncertain how much media coverage the NCP receives, however it does broadcast events and updates via social media.

### 4.3.3 ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION TO RURAL COMMUNITY AGENDAS

The NCP and not-for-profit born out of an urban setting, features a diverse range of services that are able to address the integration needs for newcomers and their families within rural settings. By focusing on the core demographic, families, it's possible to design programs catering to integration, and involving newcomers in supporting with the next batch of newcomers can help them feel included. Creating diverse programs that communities can get behind is crucial to positive attitudes and leveraging existing social capital to make newcomer and their families feel welcome. While the programs are driven through the NCP, a strength it presents is in shifting onus of the main actors onto both the current community and recent newcomers, naturally creating engagement, buy-in, and an opportunity for newcomers to learn what other supports they can take advantage of to thrive in their new community.

An important program that exists to help newcomers find sustainable long-term residence is the Rural Employment Initiative (REI). This program gives newcomers the ability to gain access to employers outside of urban settings, and helps with relocation to rural regions in Ontario. With a need for population growth in rural Ontario, these regions offer a promising outlook for newcomers.

When comparing cases such as the NCP to those offered in rural communities, it's important to note that only select programs, such as REI, may be effectively integrated. This is because what work in urban settings will not necessarily show promise in rural regions. One other such program that could be promising are engagement pieces centered around involving the community, including recent newcomers in welcoming the newest batch of newcomers. By creating an opportunity to get buy-in from community members, it can lead to a positive environment and greater integration for those who recently arrived.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONABLE STEPS

Upon reviewing the current state of rural communities in Ontario with respect to their population, hiring trends, migration trends and diversity and inclusion initiatives through the lens of public perception, workforce integration and housing availability, NeXus has established four distinct recommendations that both introduce new ideas for programs that could assist counties grow their current offerings with respect to supporting newcomers, and to build on programs that currently exist, shedding light on possible tools for improvement or ways to better focus their efforts:

### 5.0.1 Recommendation 1

***“Connect students and immigrants directly to co-op programs within their region in order to improve skill building prior to entering the workforce.”***

Throughout rural Ontario, the majority of employers from all industries experience hard-to-fill positions (**Figure 5**). With an increasing population of migrants moving into the Four Counties plus Wellington, especially within the age group of 18- 44, an opportunity exists to source talent through new avenues in order to leverage the intellectual capital that exists within this group. Counties such as Grey and Wellington have recognized the growing international student base and have begun implementing programs to support the retention of these students and to showcase the opportunities available to them if they were to stay within their community to work and live. These offerings include an ambassador program for students at Georgian College in Owen Sound to receive one-on-one guidance on careers available to them [10].

Beyond international students, a similar problem exists with migrants who make up the adult working population. A report completed in the Stratford-Bruce area by the Four County Labour Market Planning Board looked at unemployment rates for different occupations and found the largest unemployed group are the low-skilled labour cohort [16]. Within the

industries that involve low-skilled labour such as manufacturing and construction, employers reported the challenges of filling hard-to-fill positions as a lack of required skills, motivation and interpersonal abilities. While greater than 75% of employers in both of these industries and 72% of employers across all industries offer training and education opportunities, it's evident that the training necessary for these employees to be effective needs to happen prior to the hiring process as lack of qualifications was listed as a top reason for hard-to-fill positions in 2017 [8].

The NCP has focused on implementing co-op programs rather than direct full-time positions, and paired this with professional development trainings. Through the training, newcomers were able to improve language skills, understand expectations of the Canadian job market, and build basic project management capabilities and this led to a 97% acceptance into co-op program. Additionally, full-time roles were more readily given by employers following this co-op period, as it allowed them to test newcomer abilities in advance of hiring for full-time positions and gain confidence that they could perform to expectations.

In conjunction with offering job training programs, the NCP offers a placement program for adults and young students through REI, which caters to growing the population of rural Ontario. This is typically for those with specific skillsets, and functions by matching rural employer needs to newcomer profiles and capabilities, connecting the newcomer directly to the employer for next steps. This program has seen success in placing newcomers in rural Ontario for the long-term, and partnerships with the county of Grey already exists for such placements [17].

#### **Actionable Steps:**

We recommend the implementation of more co-op and apprenticeship programs and for counties to partner with outside sources, such as the NCP's REI program that already facilitate these types of programs. We believe this is important to help fill positions for both high and low-skilled labour roles where specific qualifications or skillsets are needed to provide the technical training necessary for both graduating students and adult immigrants to be more successful once entering jobs in rural communities. Further, these newcomers entering new (or existing) areas of the workforce would serve to benefit employers greatly by reducing the number of quits and permanent lay-offs, particularly within the low-skilled labour positions as this has been recognized as a problem [8].

#### **5.0.2 Recommendation 2**

***“ Expand on current offerings for bus tours that showcase the benefits of living and working in rural communities. ”***

Several rural counties reviewed within this project offer bus tours that provide a social opportunity for individuals either looking to move to a rural community or those who are new to the area to learn about the opportunities that exist in terms of employment, local food and agriculture as well as the recreational activities and social landscape that exists. Some of the bus tours offered currently include:

##### **1. Rural Romp – Wellington**

The Rural Romp is a self-guided tour of local farms, markets and local food locations in Centre Wellington, Erin, Puslinch, Guelph Eramosa and Guelph. This event, in affiliation with Taste-Real, an initiative of Guelph Wellington Local Food to support local businesses, farms and producers, currently happens twice a year on two weekends in the spring and fall seasons. Wellington County works specifically with Guelph to fill 2 busses. The idea of this tour is to simultaneously appeal to consumers and tap into the potential of individuals entering the local producer space [10].

## 2. Saugeen Connects- Hanover, Minto, Brockton, Wellington North and Grey

Saugeen Connects, a RED funded initiative aimed at positively impacting economic growth and supporting the retention of youth and businesses regionally offers eight-week soft skills training programs for youth across these regions. Transportation is scheduled for participants with the objective of matching entrepreneurial youth with mentors. The project goals and benefits are to increase productivity and employee satisfaction overall for local businesses, increase local business profitability and growth, increase the age diversity in the community, increase quality of life for youth residents, attract higher education services and to retain youth within their home towns.

Saugeen Connects also has dedicated efforts towards succession planning to bridge the gap between the businesses and farm owners who plan to transition their businesses as they retire but have little or no planning for that transition in the works. In combination with its immigrant attraction initiatives, this opens up new opportunities for newcomers looking to enter the entrepreneurial space and own their own business [18].

## 3. New to Grey Job Fair Bus Tour- Grey and Peel

In an attempt to expand past the 7 urban centers that immigrants arriving in the GTA are exposed to, Grey County has partnered with the Newcomer Centre of Peel to provide a bus tour through Grey County to provide new immigrants from Brampton, Mississauga and Toronto the opportunity to visit a rural community in Ontario. The bus tour includes a workshop at Blue Mountain as well as a trip to the region's annual job fair in Owen Sound. An event of this nature allows newcomers to ask questions that they may have to employers in the area, discover the beauty of rural Ontario and its appeal as a place to live and work outside of the large urban centers. It also provides a platform for employers to receive information and feedback from potential newcomers to the area.

### Actionable Steps:

We recognize that many of these bus tours are in early stages of development but we believe these bus tours to be an important initiative to provide a welcoming, inviting environment that counties should focus on scaling. These initiatives not only support newcomers and their interest in rural communities, but expose employers to newcomers, giving them the chance to speak with these individuals, to learn their stories, understand their skillsets and for newcomers to be able to demonstrate their qualifications in a transparent fashion. Those counties conducting these bus tours and those looking to implement one should continue to collect feedback from both participants as well as employers to better understand what could be introduced or changed to create an even greater experience for both parties. Employers could also become involved in the selection of candidates for the bus tours if enough demand exists in order to specifically source talent for open job positions. This will not only assist newcomers with employment opportunities but help break down the barriers to newcomers through biases experienced with the job recruitment process. Employers will have had the opportunity to network directly with potential candidates coming from different places and recognize the positive work attributes that may not directly come across on paper or through an online job application.

### 5.0.3 Recommendation 3

***“Implementation of a campaign via the Four County Planning and Labour Board to promote improved external hiring practices.”***

A common theme found throughout our research on rural communities has been that hiring practices for job positions does not occur equally for newcomers and other residents. Although employers may intend on fair hiring practices that consider all candidates who apply, the reality is that pulling the resumes and names of candidates who have been recommended by someone or known within the community as a potential candidate for the position saves company time and resources that would otherwise be spent on extensive recruiting practices. Unfortunately, this creates a disparity between the types of jobs available to newcomers versus others. The more attractive job positions, often those involving

high-skilled labour, end up going to local residents or select individuals recommended for these positions, while the less favourable job positions, those that often involve mainly low-skilled labour, go to immigrants and newcomers in these same regions. It was found that 80-90% of jobs across all industries are never actually posted publicly which is a huge disadvantage for immigrants and newcomers who may possess the qualifications and skillset that fit these roles but are unable to apply.

**Actionable Steps:**

To help close the gap between the top reasons provided for why employers reported hard-to-fill positions and the skillsets that are readily available within rural counties but not discovered due to a lack of transparent, open hiring practices, we recommend the Four County Planning and Labour Board leverage their relationship with the municipal government to initiate a campaign that encourages employers to hire at least 20-30% employees externally per year. This could be implemented using the current online job posting and job boards as well as the emerging online platforms including EdgeFactor and Magnet [8].

**5.0.4 Recommendation 4**

***“Continue efforts toward creation of affordable housing that will accommodate newcomers and their ability to live and work where job opportunities are prevalent.”***

An overarching theme throughout our research on residents and newcomers in rural communities is the lack of attainable and affordable housing to adequately support individuals to live and work within their communities. As outlined in the Employer One Report 2018, employers continue to report a lack of housing and transportation a barrier to finding ideal candidates to fill job positions [8]. In a recent study conducted within the South Georgian Bay area, it was estimated that the average price for a single-family home has increased by 34% since 2011, with an average price of \$433,000 as of 2016. In a study involving 25 interviews with more than 500 employers, the majority of employers interviewed confirmed that the shortage of adequate and affordable housing for employees has had and will continue to have a detrimental impact on the ability to attract employees to live and work in rural communities.

The housing pricing spectrum varies across municipal regions with the highest housing prices seen in Collingwood and Blue Mountain and the lowest seen in Meaford and Wasaga Beach. Regardless, the availability of attainable housing within all regions is declining. While many counties including Grey and Wellington are supported through government funded initiatives to undertake efforts in obtaining affordable housing, many communities look to cooperatives or other non-profit organizations to assist in attaining affordable housing.

**Actionable Steps:**

Based on the recent study conducted in the South Georgian Bay area, representative of the current state for all of the rural communities highlighted in this project, we recommend that rural communities target the following types of attainable housing in an attempt to integrate both youth and newcomers in need of temporary, affordable housing that they can live in while establishing their lives in their new regions:

**1. Entry-Level, Dorm- Style Housing**

As rural counties continue to focus their efforts on retaining youth and the international student base within their regions, creating this type of dorm-style, single or double occupancy units that would charge tenants on a per-bed basis, similar to employee style housing seen at Blue Mountain, this housing would create a good way for students finishing school or newcomers immigrating from extra-provincial locations to live in a socially oriented setting providing them opportunities to network while trying to locate adequate job opportunities or complete co-op or apprenticeship programs post-graduation.

## 2. Purpose-Built Rental Housing

This type of housing would appeal more to young singles or couples looking for affordable rental units in the form of apartments or townhouses that serve the purpose of attainable housing with an income in the \$40,000 to \$75,000 range, the income bracket that applies to 57% of the population in the Grey County area alone [1]. This type of housing would provide either a first step for newcomers who are looking for a family home that is more affordable than the typical single-dwelling that pre-dominates the housing market within these regions but is more aligned with family housing than entry-level, dorm-style housing which may not appeal to older generations or those accustomed to quiet, independent living situations in their previous living situation [19].

## 6.0 RISK AND STEPS TO MITIGATE

### 6.1 RISKS AND MITIGATORS

The recommendations suggested above come with potential risks that need to be considered prior to scaling or generating this initiative within a new rural area. We will discuss here the risks associated with each individual recommendation and provide mitigations that could help alleviate problems incurred with implementing these tools:

#### **Recommendation 1: Creation of co-op programs**

As highlighted throughout several interviews that we conducted for this project, one of the major barriers to the success of current offerings for newcomers is program awareness. Suggesting that counties continue to create co-op and apprenticeship offerings to retain the international student population is only the first step toward the success of these retention efforts. The successful continuity of these programs will be reliant on the effective marketing and partnership efforts. We suggest that these costs be built directly into the business plan for these programs to ensure a successful outcome. Facilitators of these programs should be cautious to budget the adequate time and resources necessary to promote awareness at local community events for these programs and create the partnerships that will successfully connect students or young professionals with employers directly. Connecting individuals directly with employers will allow a feedback loop to facilitate growth of these programs by keeping employers closely connected with co-op students, seeing their success stories and fostering the belief in these types of programs and what they can deliver.

#### **Recommendation 2: Bus Tours for Rural Ontario**

The continued success of these bus tours relies heavily on buy in from local employers and partners like the NCP to continue to support these programs and see the value. While many of these bus tours are in early stages, continuously collecting feedback from both participants, local businesses and employers involved will provide a better understanding for how to create a diverse schedule for the tours that showcases to newcomers the types of activities and job opportunities that they would be most attracted to. In order to create the buy in needed, strong relationships need to exist between county facilitators and these local businesses and employers. This will provide a platform for other counties to learn from what has been successful in their partner regions and successfully initiate their own bus tour or similar program that will have the greatest level of success from the start.

#### **Recommendation 3: External Hiring Campaign**

The success of an external hiring campaign put in place by the Four Planning Labour and Market Board will be contingent on the relationship that exists between this entity and the municipal government. Further, it will depend largely on how the campaign is marketed to local businesses and will need to be promoted as a way to provide employers a better chance at becoming more innovative, diverse and ultimately more successful than they would have been using typical hiring practices. In order to ensure that businesses see the benefits for this type of campaign, a clear strategy for how this will directly impact businesses needs to be effectively communicated. Further, the perspective of local businesses needs to be understood and their concerns need to be mitigated in advance to prevent push back. As external hiring practices may

not be as readily adapted in the short-term, scaling the percentage employees sourced externally, starting at a more conservative 5% and working up to between 20 and 30% would accommodate for resisters and allow businesses to scale up as they begin to directly realize the positive impacts.

#### **Recommendation 4: Affordable Housing**

Affordable housing remains one of the most pressing obstacles to the success of attracting and retaining newcomers to rural settings. Our interviews conducted across all municipal regions led to the understanding that while government subsidies are available to some extent for affordable housing projects, communities heavily rely on co-operatives and non-profit organizations to help generate funding and initiate building of land-use projects. While financial feasibility will remain a barrier to these projects, municipalities should continue to prioritize their spending to ensure that the minimum priority housing needs are met. Rural municipalities should incentivize developers by establishing public- private partnerships that provide them securities with their new builds such as rental guarantees and fee re-imbursements.

Another risk to consider is that as more affordable housing is built, the real estate market will continue to rise in response, resulting in the affordability of this affordable housing becoming more and more difficult to maintain. Municipalities should focus their efforts towards innovation in affordable housing methods by testing proven strategies outlined in other rural areas. Examples that we have come across are to target the large vacant housing landscape that exists within these rural areas. This housing is occupied mainly by cottage goers, retirees or part-time students that only stay weeks to months in these properties. Encouraging residents of these properties to rent their homes at a subsidized rate to newcomers could alleviate the capital expenditures rural municipalities must take on with building new affordable housing. Continued efforts toward social and community integration of newcomers will generate the openness needed for these innovative housing strategies to be a success.

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**Appendix 1: 17 Key Characteristics of Destinations that Welcome Newcomers**

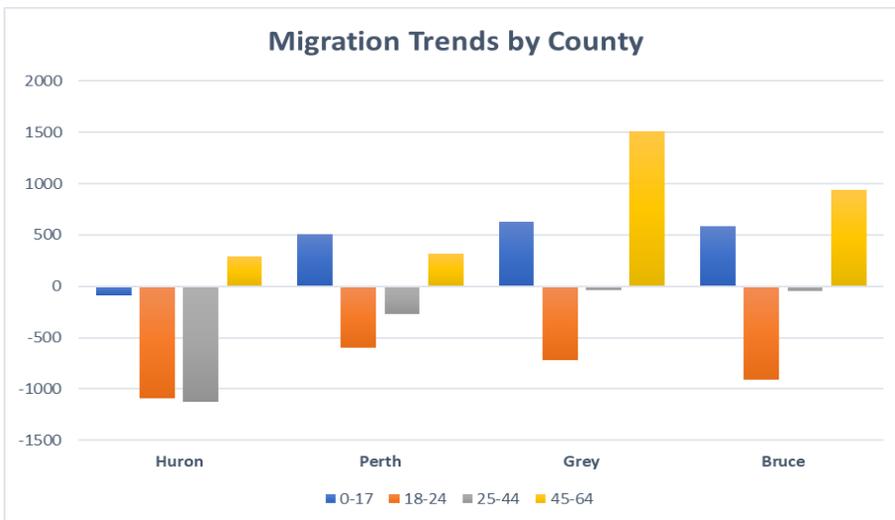
Key Characteristic	Description
Employment Opportunities	Captures an emphasis on job vacancies, job market growth, or professional development opportunities with occupational focus.
Fostering Of Social Capital	County has created, or is trying to create, a welcoming environment where newcomers can grow their reputation in the eyes of the greater community.
Affordable And Suitable Housing	Residences are available, are currently being built, or are in the planning phases, that cater to lower-income demographics relative to rural Ontario.
Positive Attitudes Towards Newcomers And Cultural Diversity	Importance is placed upon creating a diverse, progressive culture that welcomes newcomers and embraces differences.
Presence Of Newcomers And Newcomer-Serving Agencies	County has invested resources into services that support newcomers in becoming situated in the short-term, and fully-integrated in the long-term.
Links Between Main Actors Working Toward Welcoming Communities	Primarily drivers of inclusion efforts (government, businesses, community leaders), are able directly involve themselves with the planning, implementation, and long-term growth of the respective projects.
Municipal Features And Services That Are Sensitive To The Presence And Needs Of Newcomers	Local governing bodies have implemented, or plan to implement, policies or public projects that are built around the needs of newcomers.
Educational Opportunities	Education is considered in plans for newcomer integration. This includes ongoing schooling for adult demographics, such as language training, along with pre-school, elementary and high schools with ability to be inclusive of other cultures and languages.
Accessible And Suitable Health Care	Healthcare system and offerings are able to encompass needs of newcomers, including both language and medical needs, along with existing or plans to grow capacity for treatment of the population influx.
Available And Accessible Public Transit	Public transportation is well-integrated into the county, or plans are underway to improve the current state of transportation for those who either do not have access to a personal vehicle.
Presence Of Diverse Religious Organizations	Clear or explicit representation/presence of religious needs being catered to for the various newcomers. This includes both physical places of worship (Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, etc..)

	to the recognition of days of religious observation in the workplace and schooling system.
Social Engagement Opportunities	Events and activities are integrated into communities in order for newcomers and county residents to connect with each other.
Political Participation Opportunities	Municipal governing bodies are able to support the outlook of the project via direct public servant involvement, or policy directives
Positive Relationships With The Police And The Justice System	Newcomer integration is fostered by ability to connect with local law enforcement in positive meaningful ways.
Safety	Projects take the physical and/or psychological safety of newcomers into account, and make explicit reference to the methods put in place to which improves the safety of newcomers, beyond just current residents.
Opportunities For Use Of Public Space And Recreation Facilities	Public spaces are open AND inviting to newcomers, with efforts made to broadcast these opportunities and facility option to the newcomers themselves.
Favourable Media Coverage And Representation	Project is on that would be appropriate and attractive for the media to spread awareness about, and could invite coverage as part of the project itself.

**Appendix 2: Rating Scale for Measuring Characteristic Representation of 17 Key Characteristics in Case Studies**

Rating Level	Description
0	Exhibits no mention of this characteristic
1	Exhibits minimal mention of this characteristic
2	Has put some effort into how this characteristic will contribute to the overall outcome
3	Mentions characteristic as a by-product of another, or how it will be focused on indirectly
4	Has given significant weight to this characteristic as a secondary priority
5	Has made this characteristic a key priority

**Appendix 3: Migration Trends by County**



Source: Four County Labour Market Planning Board Migration Characteristics and Trends [20]

**Appendix 4: Population for Huron, Perth, Grey, Welling and Bruce Counties**

	Population					
	Huron	Perth	Grey	Wellington	Bruce	Total
Population 2016	59,297	76,796	93,830	222,726	68,147	520,796
Population 2011	59,100	75,112	92,568	208,360	66,102	501,242

Source: Stats Canada Census [1]

**Appendix 5: Age Distributions for Huron, Perth, Grey, Welling and Bruce Counties as of 2016**

Age Group	Distribution of Age (%)				
	Huron	Perth	Grey	Wellington	Bruce
0 to 14 years	17%	18%	15%	18%	16%
15 to 64 years	61%	63%	61%	66%	61%
65 years and over	23%	19%	24%	16%	24%
85 years and over	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%

Source: Stats Canada Census [1]