



APPENDIX C

ONTARIO COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **CHARLIE CARTER AND VICTORIA ESSES**

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**PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY**
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada

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BROCKVILLE

Brockville is located in Eastern Ontario in the Thousand Islands region. It is the biggest city in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and is regarded as the economic and cultural hub of the region. Major employers include educational institutions, health services, government, manufacturing, retail, food services, and tourism.

In 2015/16, Brockville welcomed 60 Syrian refugees through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative and private sponsorship groups. In 2018, approximately 60-70 international students arrived after being recruited by a consultant for St. Lawrence College, which created a housing shortage due to a lack of coordination between the college and municipality. There were few services in place when the Syrian refugees arrived. However, the infrastructure has expanded in the past four years and there is now support through the St. Lawrence Rideau Local Immigration Partnership and refugee organizations.

Community Priorities

The following community priorities were identified:

- **Local Immigration Partnership (LIP):** While the St Lawrence Rideau LIP does not work directly with newcomers, it is the primary driving force behind awareness of newcomers in Brockville. The LIP is planning a workforce attraction strategy.
- **Labour Market and Workforce:** Brockville is struggling to grow its population. In addition to staffing challenges, its population of baby boomers will soon retire. Sustaining the workforce is Brockville's primary concern as there is need for skilled labour, primarily in the healthcare sector.
- **International Students:** St Lawrence College is looking to double the number of its international students by next year. The college is also looking to retain international students in Brockville once they have completed their studies.

Community Strengths

The following community strengths were identified:

- **General:** Brockville has been described as a pretty place with beautiful scenery. Although it is a small city, it is in a prime location, along highway 401, providing easy access to larger cities. The quality of life and safety are attraction factors for newcomers.
- **Programs and Services:** Brockville has various programs and services in the community that newcomers can access, including financial assistance, housing support, entrepreneur support, childcare, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. There are also some conversation groups, fee-for-service tutoring options, and translation / interpretation services. Faith-based sponsorship groups and churches have become community hubs in the city.

- Brockville has a web portal that includes a section dedicated to Francophone attraction as well as a job board and calendar of events for all newcomers.
- Cultural / Religious Amenities: There is diversity in the types of foods that are available at local grocery stores. Community members and newcomer leaders are looking to build a mosque.
- Education: Brockville is one of the largest cities in the Upper Canada District School Board. Being a small city means that parents personally know their children's teachers and can stay connected with them. There are French schools, which may be helpful to newcomers who speak French, although Brockville is largely an English community.
- Employment: Brockville has many job opportunities in the tourism and service industry. Many international students work at Burnbrae Farms, filling gaps left by local youth who do not want to work on a chicken farm.
- Diversity and Inclusion: Brockville is a warm and friendly city that welcomes all people, regardless of ethnic, cultural, or religious background. Local events include a multicultural festival and multi-faith gatherings that celebrate different cultures, foods, and music. The city is developing a mentoring program to support newcomers and foster a welcoming community.

Barriers to Attraction and Retention

The following barriers to attraction and retention of newcomers were identified:

- General: Brockville lacks economic vitality, which makes it an uninteresting place for youth and young adults. The rural areas of Brockville are also quite isolated, which impacts many residents including newcomers.
- Programs and Services: Brockville lacks a focused and formalized approach to attraction, retention, and integration. Finding information about services is a challenge for newcomers, who are forced to rely on word of mouth. Some ESL classes are held when newcomers are scheduled to work. There is limited capacity for service provision and coordination.
- Housing and Transportation: It is a challenge for newcomers to find affordable and appropriate housing in the community. Newcomers may also experience challenges when buying a house because they do not have a credit history. Public transportation is a challenge for newcomers, especially in winter and for those located in rural areas. It may be difficult for newcomers without a car or driver's licence to get to/from work.
- Education: Newcomers with young children are concerned that the level of education in Brockville may not be on par with larger cities. While Upper Canada District School Board is attracting international students, teachers and school programs are being cut, impacting the number of newcomers willing to move to Brockville. There is also some concern about the information and advice being provided to international students arriving to the community.

- **Employment:** Brockville has a large tourism sector with seasonal businesses. The off-season runs from November to April. Wages and income are lower than in larger cities. Brockville has been described as a good place to start a career but not a good place to advance it. There is the perception amongst employers that overqualified newcomers may not be satisfied with low-wage jobs or that they are using these jobs as stepping stones. Foreign credential recognition can be a challenge, and newcomers may have to choose between starting a new career or moving to a larger city. Spouses also have difficulty finding employment.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Biases affect public attitudes toward newcomers. It can make the city unwelcoming.

CHATHAM-KENT

Chatham-Kent is the largest municipality in Southwestern Ontario. It lies near London, Windsor, and Detroit, offering residents the benefits of small-centre life with easy access to large, urban regions. The community has many jobs available and a significant demand for workers, but like other regions, struggles to attract and retain workers. Participants in the consultation indicated that newcomers' skillsets at times do not match the employment opportunities available in the community, which are low-paying and do not justify the cost of moving one's family to the community.

The Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership (CK LIP) is a formal network of stakeholders committed to strengthening the municipality's capacity to welcome newcomers and improve their economic, social, and civic engagement. The CK LIP has established a Chatham-Kent Welcome Network, which is an expanding network of businesses and organizations committed to welcoming newcomers and helping them access settlement services.

In 2016, Chatham-Kent was designated Canada's first "Welcoming Community" by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in response to the community's effort to welcome Syrian refugees.

Community Priorities

The Chatham-Kent Community Strategic Plan: CK Plan 2035 includes four areas of strategic focus: economic prosperity, a healthy and safe community, people and culture, and environmental sustainability.

The CK LIP has four main objectives:

- Improve the integration of newcomers by increasing awareness of and access to available resources and services.
- Improve awareness of the social and economic benefits of newcomers to the Chatham-Kent community.

- Pursue sustainability options for the CK LIP by identifying collaborative partnerships and funding opportunities.
- Increase awareness of CK LIP initiatives.

Community Strengths

The following community strengths were identified:

- **General:** Chatham-Kent is a safe community with little crime and traffic congestion compared to larger centres. Residents enjoy a low cost and high standard of living, and a small-town lifestyle and culture.
- **Programs and Services:** The Municipality of Chatham-Kent has established and is funding a resident attraction program. There is a strong history of connection / collaboration between local service providers. The city has a web portal with interactive pathways to make the portal more accessible for newcomers who aren't native English speakers and more appealing to international students. The city is also working on strengthening the municipality's relationship with its francophone community and service providers by enhancing existing materials for francophone newcomers.
- **Education:** Students have access to quality education and smaller schools and class sizes than in larger urban areas.
- **Employment:** There are many available jobs and a significant demand for workers.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Chatham-Kent is a welcoming / friendly community.

Barriers to Attraction and Retention

The following barriers to attraction and retention of newcomers were identified:

- **General:** There is a lack of awareness / knowledge about Chatham-Kent by newcomers who do not reside in the community.
- **Programs and Services:** There are a limited number of settlement services available in the community, and the community is in need of the following services: interpretation, federal government services, legal services, settlement services, and employment services. Support for students who are immigrants is also insufficient in Chatham-Kent schools.
- **Housing, Transportation, and Child Care:** Chatham-Kent has low housing vacancy rates, making it difficult for newcomers to find affordable housing. The lack of public transportation options can impede access to employment opportunities outside of Chatham city limits. There are waitlists for affordable child care in the community.
- **Education:** There are limited options for post-secondary and post-graduate education in the community.

- **Employment:** Newcomers face challenges in getting their foreign credentials recognized, which limits their employment and career potential. The small community size also means that there are limited opportunities for career advancement and long-term career growth. Spouses of economic class immigrants face challenges in gaining employment.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Chatham-Kent has few immigrants and little cultural diversity.
- **Other:** Some residents have negative attitudes about the community's future and question why newcomers would choose to live in Chatham-Kent.

GREY-BRUCE COUNTIES (OWEN SOUND)

The region of Grey-Bruce Counties is located northwest of Toronto, along Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Owen Sound is the largest urban community in the region. With the changing demographics, low unemployment rate, youth out-migration, and labour shortage, the community has realized the important role that newcomers can play in diversifying and enriching the social, economic, and cultural vitality of the region.

Since 2015 the number of new immigrants coming to the region has increased through private sponsorship groups. It became apparent that the community was not prepared or equipped to deal with the unique needs of refugees, and a number of grassroots and faith-based organizations were established. The community's capacity to welcome and support newcomers has since increased.

Community Priorities

Some of the key priorities for the region include skills attraction and retention, people attraction and retention, and business attraction and retention. The community's goal is to showcase and celebrate the diversity that exists in the region, support the retention of newcomers, and develop opportunities where newcomers can be actively involved in the community.

Grey County currently sits on the Municipal Immigration Committee (MIC) of the Association of Municipalities Ontario, which provides an opportunity to meet with provincial and federal representatives on the topic of immigration. The focus of the MIC's work is on attraction and retention of rural, northern, and francophone communities, and settlement and integration, especially in municipalities that receive large numbers of immigrants.

Community Strengths

The following community strengths were identified:

- **General:** Newcomers are increasingly looking to the Grey-Bruce region as an area in which to settle. Newcomers report feeling more at home in the region because of the lifestyle and pace of life. They are also attracted to the rural / small-town nature and natural beauty.
- **Programs and Services:** Despite the lack of formal, centralized settlement services, some newcomers report finding it easier to access services than in Toronto. The Arden Language Centre, which provides English language training, is an important contributor to the successful settlement of newcomers in the region. Local community agencies have taken steps to increase their capacity to serve newcomers more effectively.
- **Grey County** has created "New to Grey" initiative to engage and welcome newcomers and to increase their visibility by promoting their participation in local issues and activities.
- **Cultural / Religious Amenities:** There is a mosque and Muslim association located in Owen Sound.
- **Housing, Transportation and Child Care:** Though in short supply, the cost of housing is affordable in Grey-Bruce Counties. The region has also received funding to implement an inter-community transportation project to address some of the transportation challenges in underserved areas.
- **Employment:** There are many employment opportunities available in the region, across all sectors of the economy. Employers are eager to recruit and hire newcomers to fill positions.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** As a result of numerous refugee sponsorships, Grey-Bruce Counties have become more accepting of newcomers. The majority of refugees who arrived in the last three years have chosen to remain in the community.

Barriers to Attraction and Retention

The following barriers to attraction and retention of newcomers were identified:

- **Programs and Services:** Grey-Bruce Counties lack a one-stop shop for settlement services. Newcomers must travel to a larger centre for some needed services.
- **Cultural / Religious Amenities:** Although some stores have expanded their "international" food sections, there continue to be only a limited number of options available in the community.
- **Housing, Transportation and Child Care:** There is a lack of affordable and suitable housing options in the region, which impacts those with low or middle incomes and large families. There are limited public transportation options and ride-share services available in the region. A driver's licence and vehicle are required to get around. There is also a lack of child care options available, due in part to a lack of qualified Early Childhood Education workers.
- **Employment:** Barriers reported by employers included the challenge of checking credentials from overseas and the time and expense required for newcomers to meet Canadian accreditation criteria for many professions and trades. They also reported experiencing challenges with onboarding newcomer employees because of language and cultural barriers.

- Diversity and Inclusion: While Grey-Bruce Counties as a whole is welcoming of newcomers, the feeling is not universal. Some newcomers have experienced racism and discrimination.
- Isolation: Stay-at-home mothers with no access to transportation are isolated, as they are unable to access services, attend English language training, or establish social connections.

SAULT STE. MARIE

Located close to the US-Canada border, Sault Ste. Marie is the third largest city in Northern Ontario. The city is currently facing major demographic challenges, as the population is aging and declining. A quarter of the workforce is over 55 years old, and local employers will be looking to replace 9,000 workers in the coming years. Major employers include manufacturing, health care, hospitality, and tourism. Despite the need for thousands of workers, there is an issue of out-migration of young adults aged 20 to 29 years old. Attracting and retaining newcomers in the community is important for the local economy.

Community Priorities

The following community priorities were identified:

- Improved services / supports for immigrants and international students
- Access to translation / interpretation for “rare” languages
- Cultural competency training for service providers
- Recruitment of workers to fill the following positions: plow drivers, aircraft repair mechanics, bus drivers, welders, carpenters, technology, hospitality, and tourism
- More diversity in programming at local post-secondary institutions
- Breaking down barriers to foreign credential recognition

Community Strengths

The following community strengths were identified:

- General: Sault Ste. Marie is beautiful, friendly, and family oriented. It has an affordable cost of living and is easy to get around. It is easy to meet people and the community organizes many events.
- Programs and Services: Sault Ste. Marie offers a variety of programs and services, including settlement, employment, housing, and mental health services, as well as a web portal that provides newcomers with information on services and resources in the city.
- Cultural / Religious Amenities: Sault Ste. Marie celebrates World Religion Day in January. The Interfaith Volunteer Group facilitates community connections amongst different faith groups.

- Housing, Transportation, and Child Care: Sault Ste. Marie has Geared to Income (GTI) housing options available. Newcomer families are prioritized on the child care waitlist if their child is in school.
- Education: Sault Ste. Marie has two post-secondary institutions. The school district offers ESL programs in schools.
- Employment: There are many job opportunities available in Sault Ste. Marie. It is very easy to find a minimum wage job.
- Diversity and Inclusion: Sault Ste. Marie is part of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism (CCMARD). The municipal government has also created a new position: Social and Equity Diversity Coordinator. The community is working together to develop strategies for a more welcoming and inclusive community.

Barriers to Attraction and Retention

The following barriers to attraction and retention were identified:

- General: The weather in Sault Ste. Marie is a barrier to attraction and retention of newcomers. The city also lacks certified immigration consultants and lawyers.
- Programs and Services: There is a lack of collaboration and communication between different organizations / institutions—everyone works in silos. This can make it a challenge for newcomers to navigate the services / supports available in the community. More youth-friendly spaces are needed for youth and young adults in the community.
- Housing, Transportation and Child Care: Sault Ste. Marie needs to improve its public transportation options—buses need to run more frequently. There is also a shortage of child care spaces available in the community.
- Employment: While it is easy to find a minimum wage job, it is difficult for skilled newcomers to access jobs that are commensurate with their level of education and experience.
- Diversity and Inclusion: Some newcomers have left Sault Ste. Marie because of discrimination.

GREATER SUDBURY

Greater Sudbury is one of the most bilingual cities in Canada outside of Quebec, occupying a specific place in the French-Canadian cultural landscape thanks to its well-established cultural organizations and vibrant creative cultural scene. It is also designated an Official Language Minority Community, with the largest proportion of Franco-Ontarians to the general population at 29%.

Greater Sudbury is a world-renowned mining city, as well as a health hub for northern Ontario with a regional research hospital and a regional cancer centre. It has three post-secondary institutions and 19 large employers (500+ employees each). However, the population is ageing, and labour shortages are going to hit

Greater Sudbury economically. The city is seeking to attract Francophone newcomers to fill labour shortages, particularly in the health sector.

Community Priorities

The following community priorities were identified:

- Ageing workforce and population: Important to attract Francophone newcomers to fill the labour shortages. This issue is, and will increasingly be, acute in the health sector. It is important to attract Francophone newcomer families to ensure the vitality of one of the most important official-language minority communities in Canada (maintain Francophone population ratio, avoid school closures).
- Retaining Francophone international students recruited by Laurentian University and Collège Boreal.
- Fostering the cultural scene of Greater Sudbury by enhancing immigrant participation in cultural activities and the ongoing creation of Franco-Ontarian culture.
- Retaining immigrants by deepening ties with the receiving community, developing internship and mentoring opportunities, and offering tailored linguistic training in the workplace.
- To have efficient, visible and accessible settlement and integration services offered by and for Francophones.
- Correct the misperception that it is possible to find a job if one speaks only French (those cases are extremely rare); thus, make sure Francophone immigrants also develop English-speaking skills to ensure their success integrating into the job market.
- Support newcomers over the long term: settlement services are important, but integration services are paramount to maximize retention rates.

Community Strengths

The following community strengths were identified:

- General: Greater Sudbury is a mid-sized city with a good quality of life. It offers competitive salaries for a relatively low cost of living compared to other larger centres in Ontario. It is a safe city and great for raising a family. The Francophone community is well organized and strong.
- Programs and Services: Greater Sudbury offers a wide range of services that are easy to access. There are several projects and many collaborations between organizations to improve Francophone immigrant attraction, retention and inclusion, for instance a 2-year project to enhance immigrant integration into the Sudbury community coordinated by the Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury. Similarly, the two French schools' boards, Carrefour francophone de Sudbury and Centre de santé Communautaire are working together to offer services for newcomers. Sudbury also has a newly announced Francophone Welcoming Community initiative.

- The city provides a web portal with content related to immigrant entrepreneurs, investors, and skilled Francophone talent that includes a newsletter and videos to attract prospective immigrants. The City also hosts a dedicated Francophone portal with 21 municipal partners which lists French language programs and services in different Ontario communities, and highlights these municipalities as potential destinations for French-speaking immigrants.
- Education: Laurentian University and Collège Boréal are very pro-active in recruiting international students from French-speaking countries. Laurentian University and College Boreal have delivered Ontario Bridge Training Programs to help internationally trained professionals integrate in the workforce.
- Employment: Greater Sudbury has a dynamic and diversified job market, including trades (construction, mining, mechanical), health, education, and tourism. It has an ageing population and there is already a labour shortage. It also offers a good environment for entrepreneurs.

Barriers to Attraction and Retention

The following barriers to attraction and retention were identified:

- General: Greater Sudbury has not been promoting the city or its assets; it is often viewed as a point of passage rather than a place to settle.
- Programs and Services: There is a lack of services / supports, including supports for Francophone international students by post-secondary institutions; linguistic training for Francophone immigrants; and support services for economic integration. There is also concern that service providers are more focused on numbers and reaching targets than on providing needed services and supports to clients.
- Housing, Transportation and Child Care: The public transportation system is sometimes a problem.
- Education: There is a lack of internships to connect post-secondary international students and employers.
- Employment: There is a lack of jobs for people who do not master English (while immigrants are told they will be able to find a job if they speak French), and the business community is reluctant to see French as an asset. There are challenges with foreign credential recognition, especially in the health, engineering, trades, and teaching sectors. Employers are sometimes hesitant to hire newcomers because of their foreign credentials and work experience. The precariousness associated with temporary jobs may push newcomers to go find permanent jobs elsewhere.
- Diversity and Inclusion: There are cases of racism and discrimination due to skin colour and/or accent. Immigrant work experience, expertise, and leadership are not well recognized.