



Measuring  
Rural Community  
Vitality

# Newcomer Engagement and Social Capital in Rural Communities



SPOTLIGHT ON  
**DUFFERIN COUNTY**

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RURAL ONTARIO  
INSTITUTE





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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>COUNTY OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Strengths .....	5
Barriers.....	5
<b>SOCIAL CAPITAL ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Personal Relationships The Foundation for Strong Social Capital Systems .....	6
Online Resources.....	8
Social Services .....	9
Extraordinary Efforts for Extraordinary Needs Supporting Syrian Newcomers .....	10
<b>NEWCOMER EXPERIENCES IN DUFFERIN COUNTY .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Community.....	12
Leadership .....	12
Newcomers .....	14
Service Providers .....	14
<b>NEWCOMER SOCIAL CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Diversity .....	16
Economic .....	17
Engagement and Effective Participation .....	18
Newcomer-to-Newcomer Support.....	19
<b>BEST PRACTICES &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Community.....	20
Leadership .....	21
Newcomers .....	22
Service Providers .....	23
<b>FINAL THOUGHTS.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>APPENDIX I – METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>APPENDIX II – DUFFERIN COUNTY: Additional Social Capital Resources ....</b>	<b>29</b>



This document is one of three case studies for a March 2017 Rural Ontario Institute project entitled **Newcomer Engagement and Social Capital in Rural Communities**. A summary report, case studies for Huron County and Northumberland County, and companion YouTube video links are available at [www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca).

## | COUNTY OVERVIEW

Dufferin County is located in a unique natural area known as the Headwaters region consisting of 1,442 square kilometres. It sits on the edge of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in south-central Ontario, about 100 kilometres northwest of Toronto. It is largely a rural county consisting of four towns: Grand Valley, Mono, Shelburne, and Orangeville and four rural townships: Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon, and Mulmur (Dufferin Board of Trade, 2017). Most services and amenities are located in its three urban settlement areas: Grand Valley, Orangeville, and Shelburne.

The county seat is Orangeville, a small urban centre of approximately 28,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2011). As of 2016, Dufferin County's population consisted of 61,735 residents in 2016, having increased 8.5% from 56,881 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016 Census). This number is projected to grow to 80,000 by 2031 (Dufferin Board of Trade, 2017). Originally an agriculturally-based economy, Dufferin's economy has diversified to include commercial and retail businesses, industries related to residential and commercial construction (building, supplies, aggregates, real estate), and manufacturing (Ibid).

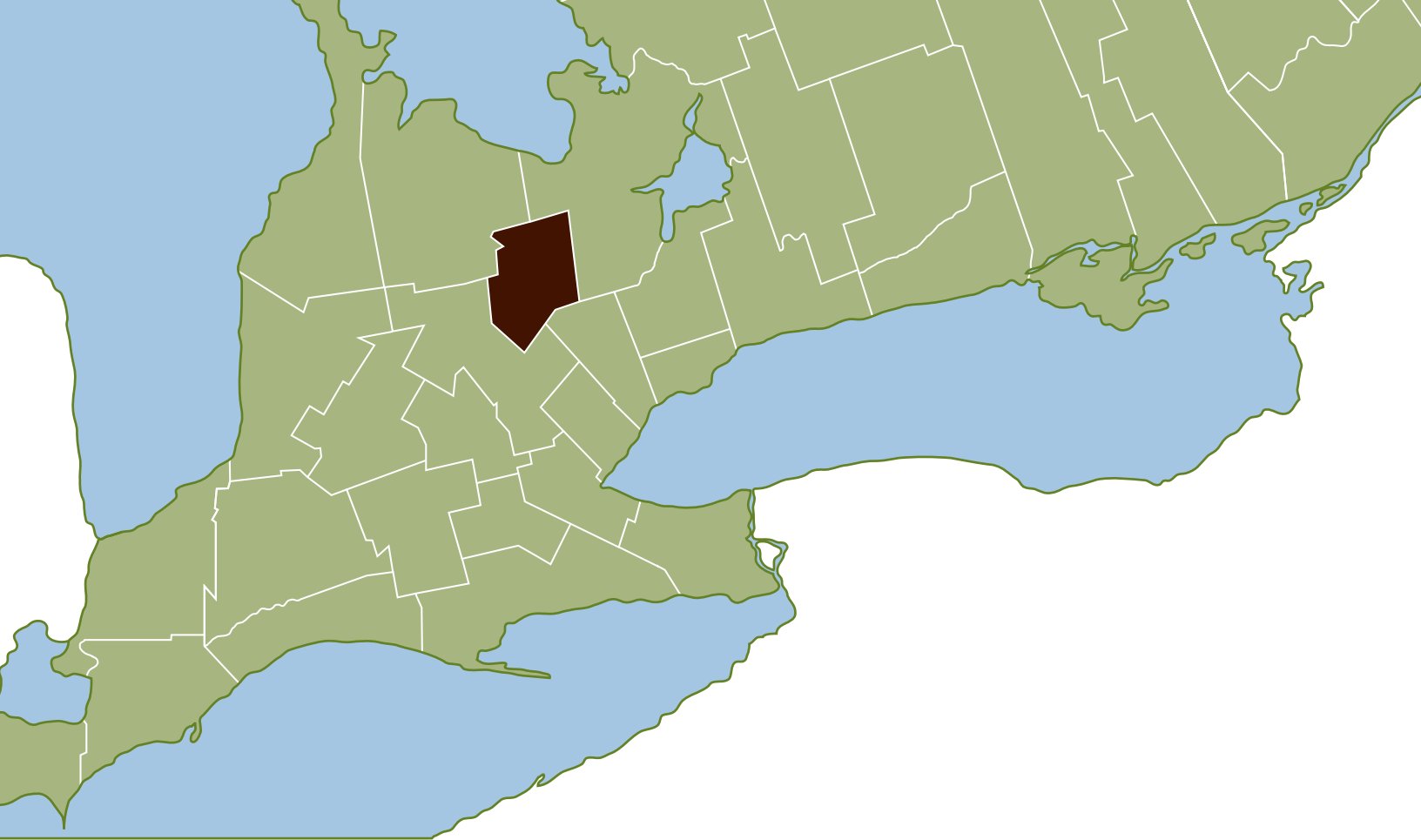
A portion of Dufferin's economy still depends on agriculture but tourism is becoming more important as the county takes on a more positive role in attracting visitors.

Newcomer participation in local communities is an important mechanism for facilitating community development, strengthening local growth, and building social capital.

This case study forms part of a study evaluating the role of newcomer engagement by conducting interviews with four main stakeholder groups in three rural communities – Dufferin County, Huron County, and Northumberland County. Using a case-study approach, community members, county leadership, service providers, and newcomers were asked questions regarding social capital resources that were available in their local communities and their perspectives about the processes by which newcomers were able to leverage and grow their social capital in the area. Ninety-three people participated in this study in Dufferin County through telephone interviews, in-person interviews at the 3rd Annual Shelbrrr Fest, as well as online community surveys.

For the purpose of this study, **newcomer** was defined as a person who has moved into the community in the last five years. It is a wide definition that includes those who have moved from abroad, from elsewhere in Canada, or moved back after a significant time away. **Social capital** was defined as the resources and associated benefits people have access to through their social networks and relationships.

This case study showcases what we heard about newcomer experiences in Dufferin County, including social capital resources available, newcomer contributions, as well as best practices and recommendations given by participants. This study recognizes that effective newcomer participation often depends on the maximization of newcomer involvement and the establishment of vibrant social networks. It also acknowledges that each county and community is unique and has different assets that facilitate newcomer integration into a community.



Some of the strengths and barriers found in Dufferin County include:

### Strengths

- Comprehensive online resources with relevant online sites and tools gathered together in one accessible place
- Strong collaboration among county leaders and community organizations to support refugee newcomers
- Wide variety of recreational activities and community events throughout the year.
- Ontario Early Years Centre as a key service provider with a variety of useful services and programs in one convenient location
- Organized sponsorship groups such as CARE Dufferin (Coalition Aiding Refugees Entering Dufferin), a regular meeting and information-sharing hub for private sponsor groups created by Dufferin County Community Services. Other groups include the Headwaters Refugee Support Committee, New Neighbours in Orangeville, and Project Safe Haven

### Barriers

- Limited advertisement of services and activities
- Few newcomer-targeted services that specialize in addressing newcomer need
- Lack of programs and services dedicated to maximizing newcomer professional skills and expertise in employment

# SOCIAL CAPITAL ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY

Social inclusion through social support is essential for newcomers in rural communities. A person rich in social capital has a high level of connection to their community, networks, and supports. They are able to leverage these resources for their own benefit and that of the community. As such, measuring the ways by which newcomers are supported and engaged will help us better understand how communities can create inclusive environments. See **Appendix II – Dufferin County: Additional Social Capital Resources** for a comprehensive literature review of other social capital resources.

Discussions with current community members in Dufferin County revealed the various ways by which individuals access support in their locale, providing further insight into the locally available social capital within the community. Existing sources of support included personal contacts, present members of the community, community organizations, service providers, online tools, as well as self-reliance.

## Personal Relationships: The Foundation for Strong Social Capital Systems

For the most part, newcomer participants did not have connections to people or information to the community prior to their arrival. This increased the difficulty and the amount of time needed to find support in the community. They typically had to take steps on their own to find resources.

For those who did have connections, family members and friends who already lived in the area were the only source of contact they had before moving into the community. Newcomers with previous connections were better able to use their social networks to meet other people, find resources, seek engagement opportunities, and feel less isolated in their transition.

Newcomers recounted their experiences where those who did not have any established contacts or connections to the area before their arrival discovered that they had to rely on themselves to acquire everything that they needed. The rural environment offered limited opportunities to access close-by support and newcomers had to take the initiative to engage themselves in opportunities that would allow them to expand their social networks. Relationship-building in this sense was very much dependent on their own motivation and desire to be connected to the community. Steps taken often involved volunteering in various clubs, organizations, and committees. Newcomers had the impression that there was a lack of social or recreational opportunities available in the community, and that better advertisement of available services was needed in the area.

## Neighbours and Friends

Newcomers revealed that neighbours and existing community members were crucial gatekeepers to knowledge about the community. Respondents spoke of how neighbours had been particularly helpful in sharing information about the town, events, and activities. For the most part, community members were reported to be open to chatting, answering questions, and offering advice. Everyday individuals in the community, such as shopkeepers or bank tellers, provided newcomers with opportunities to build support networks by offering referrals and information regarding where to go for services.

## Community Groups, Churches, and Recreational Activities

Community members explained that community groups were particularly helpful. Community clubs, organizations, and churches were noted to be available and open to any newcomers who would be interested in joining. They also offered newcomers opportunities to participate in recreational activities. These included the Kinsmen Club, the Lions Club, and Legions.

For refugees, sponsorship groups provided stable support before and after moving into the area. Churches played a fundamental role in offering needed services, as well as more physical aspects of support, such as assisting individuals with childcare, finding work, places to live, and furthering education. Various organizations and groups involved with the sponsorship of the Syrian refugees collaborated and organized efforts to respond to their needs upon their arrival in the community. This collaboration and coordination of efforts allowed community groups to maximize the use of their own social capital in order to provide for the needs of refugees.

Recreational activities such as soccer, baseball, and hockey were also discussed by community members as one of the most effective ways of getting involved and being engaged in the community. This was confirmed by many newcomers who explained that one of the fastest ways for them to make new social networks was by getting involved in sports clubs.

Service providers were mindful of the various barriers faced by newcomers, including costs and other financial concerns. They emphasized community groups and recreational activities as a support, noting that they frequently encouraged newcomers to become involved with non-profits and volunteering.

County leadership believed that effective participation of newcomers in the community was dependent on both the broader community and the newcomers themselves. As such, county leaders have been making conscious efforts to provide a wide variety of recreational and social opportunities in the community to foster newcomer engagement. They acknowledged that it is important that newcomers take initiative to engage on their own to participate in the activities available. Regular recreational activities were deemed essential to facilitate development of relationships in the community.

**“If they come out, they will find that there are various opportunities to volunteer in committees in the town, participate in recreational activities. Through such events, newcomers can meet local families and feel involved in the community.”**

- County leadership

**“We offer a lot of recreational events – learning how to hike, ski... We offer these interactions because they are key in helping people feel happy in the community – creates relationships, promotes social inclusions.”**

- County leadership

Newcomers were in agreement with other stakeholders regarding the importance of participation in recreational and social activities for the development of social connections. Newcomers gave examples of volunteering on committees and boards, joining clubs, and participating in sports as successful means of being engaged and feeling socially supported in the community. Other effective ways of fostering engagement and participation were activities sponsored by clubs and organizations, as well as community events. Newcomers with children were main beneficiaries of these activities in addition to other opportunities such as school-related events, parent council, and programming at libraries.

Nevertheless, although newcomers agreed on the importance of recreational and social activities for building social capital, many found that access to recreation was difficult in some areas. This suggests a difference in perception between community members, county leadership, and newcomers about what is recreationally available in the area. Newcomers explained that certain townships lacked opportunities for such activities and, in some cases, felt that they were not varied enough for all different age groups.

**“Not a lot for Shelburne, not a lot to do for my kids and people in my age group. When you move it’s hard to know on the social side, I don’t know where to look for — infrastructure might not be there and might lack promotion.”**

**- Newcomer**

Newcomers stressed that opportunities to connect were very dependent on self-initiative. This was discussed as challenging depending on people’s personalities and comfort levels. Placing the onus for engagement on support on newcomers was discussed as particularly difficult for introverted individuals due to lack of mechanisms that could help them come out to meet people. “Everyone is different” was a common response by newcomers when asked about their experience of becoming socially connected to their community. Adjustment to a rural area and a smaller town also made connecting more difficult for introverted newcomers. One participant discussed this challenge:

**“Different community feel and different style of houses makes it very different from what we’re used to, harder to connect, feels more disconnected. Houses are far apart and people are divided by properties”.**

**- Newcomer**

### Business Networks

Professional contacts gained through work, such as colleagues, offered guidance within the work domain. People who moved into the community for the purpose of work found that these professional connections served as natural supports as they had already established relationships before their arrival. Support from service providers offered to newcomers in the community was mainly useful for individuals engaged in business activities. The Greater Dufferin Area Chamber of Commerce, the **Dufferin Board of Trade** (DBoT) and the **Small Business Enterprise Centre in Orangeville** were highlighted as sources of information and assistance.

Explorations into the existing local social capital reveal that one of the key factors facilitating newcomer engagement is the establishment of connections before the physical arrival to a new area. The rural environment creates limitations as to who newcomers can reach out to, and figuring out how exactly to form connections can be very difficult in midst of adjusting to a new environment. Lack of opportunities for social engagement persist and although much support can be found through personal support networks, increased outreach from existing community members can ease the transitioning process by providing opportunities for newcomer engagement in the community.

### Online Resources

As was evident with our own research of local supports available, online resources were among the top supports discussed by community members. All stakeholders discussed Facebook Q&A pages that displayed information and provided a platform for inquiries to be answered. However, despite the availability of these resources, newcomers explained that it was still difficult to find information on particular services, such as schools for their children and appropriate health services that would service their needs.

In addition to providing in-person supports at the municipal office, county officials have provided intentional leadership in developing strong online resources for newcomers. The development of online tools has been a major initiative taken on by Dufferin County leaders in helping newcomers locate and access the services that they need in order to successfully transition into the community. On the Dufferin County webpage, sections of the website are devoted solely to newcomer resources. The County website



provides lists of services available to newcomers as well as linkages to various ministries and government websites that newcomers might need. These online initiatives started off in response to incoming Syrian refugees, but these online tools have now expanded to help all newcomers. Social media also played an important role in the facilitation of information. Township Facebook pages allowed newcomers to post questions, which then could be answered by community members. Not only were newcomers able to acquire the information they required, but they were also able to interact with existing community members and establish rapport.

Newcomers spoke of online tools as the most important resource for acquiring information and support. Social media — including **Facebook Buy & Sell** groups as well as Facebook Q&A groups were commended to be extremely useful. These online spaces were where newcomers found the most information and assistance. A newcomer explained that social media was especially helpful for those who did not see people every day. Another newcomer emphasized the utility of online resources:

**“Social media has been a support — Shelburne Facebook group — if it weren’t for that, I wouldn’t know anything.”**

**- Newcomer**

Aside from social media platforms, others explained that they would do their own research on the Internet to find information about local organizations, existing programs, and ongoing activities. Overall, those who acquired information online either researched online or used Facebook groups such as **Shelburne Q&A** and **Orangeville Q&A**.

## Social Services

Community members discussed various community services that supported newcomers. Some of the services mentioned were schools and childcare, employment, and medical services, which included dental as well as mental health services (counselling). However, a major resource highlighted for its effectiveness in supporting newcomer families was the Ontario Early Years Centre.

### Ontario Early Years Centre

**The Ontario Early Years Centres** (OEYCs) in Shelburne, Grand Valley and Orangeville were commended by many community members for playing a crucial role in the community as a one-stop location with a variety of services that were useful to newcomers. OEYCs are an initiative of the provincial government in offering free information, programs, and services to families. Community members discussed that the OEYCs frequently promoted community events as well as offered a wide range of services such as programming for families, health services, childcare, and workshops centred on well-being. Many people discussed how it was a great hub for parents to make acquaintances with others in their community, providing opportunities to develop networks of support.

It is interesting to note that other service providers also highlighted the OEYC as main go-to sources for newcomers. Service providers were intentional in referring newcomer clients to programs that would be most helpful to their well-being. As such, programs offered by the OEYC were popular choices because they were also free of charge. Financial cost was known to be a barrier that impeded access to services and programs. Service providers did their best to refer newcomers to services that were low cost or free.

## Extraordinary Efforts for Extraordinary Needs: Supporting Syrian Newcomers

Collaboration among community groups and various stakeholders in Dufferin County was evident, especially in response to incoming Syrian refugee families. **Dufferin County Community Services** created a committee and invited sponsors to meetings once a month to determine needs and provide assistance. The County was also involved and organized events to connect sponsored families to churches. Sponsored refugee families received a lot of one-on-one support from professional and social services as well.

The community has been very open and especially welcoming to this particular newcomer group.

**“When our sponsored family first arrived, I took them to the grocery store. The wife wore a hijab... how would people react? I was surprised, we had 3 different people come and welcome them to Canada and the town. The cashier showed them how the cash transaction and card would work.”**

- Community member

Refugee families Syrian are highly connected — one respondent commented that they had sponsorship team members ‘wrapped around them’.

**“Sponsoring groups have included them [Syrian refugees] under their wing. The refugee sponsorship model we have in Canada should be replicated around the world.”**

- Community member

Newspaper articles even featured Syrian refugees and spotlighted their progress. Amongst all newcomer groups, sponsored refugees were noted to be provided with the most support and offered the most opportunities to integrate into the community. Although Syrian refugees were warmly received and highly supported by members of the community, other newcomers who faced similar challenges of social connectivity were often overlooked. A community member explains:

**“In contrast, there was a government-sponsored family who came to Dufferin who didn’t have a sponsoring group around them ... it was much harder for them.”**

- Community member

The large focus on refugee newcomers may leave other newcomers in the community unnoticed, negatively impacting their ability to find social support and pathways to integration.

### Reducing System Barriers:

Community members highlighted ways by which the community were able to address the barriers that discouraged the full access of resources by newcomers. Efforts to assist newcomers with language difficulties prompted provision of translation services, including translators who could speak Arabic. The library offered to add more Syrian and Arabic books, including Arabic-English dictionaries. For newcomers who faced transportation issues, driving assistance was available for individuals who attended ESL classes. These various initiatives demonstrated community willingness to help newcomers acquire the services they need while transitioning to a new environment.

Despite these concentrated efforts, community members acknowledged that barriers still existed. Although ESL classes were provided, language difficulties persisted because classes did not allow for practice in more natural settings. A community member noted that if newcomers are not able to communicate, they cannot access services and community groups. Furthermore, the enthusiastic response and overwhelming support to Syrian refugees may have impeded opportunities for their contribution and engagement.

**“We help too much sometimes, i.e. we provided lunch and we tried to make it culturally sensitive, but still, we did all the cooking and there were 4 or 5 women being served every week who might have been very happy to help us cook.”**

**- Community member**

Community members also acknowledged that it did take a lot of effort to meet people — and it was not always obvious which groups or events are available. Different personalities also contributed to the different experiences that newcomers might face in finding opportunities to engage and foster relationships with community members.





# NEWCOMER EXPERIENCES IN DUFFERIN COUNTY

Having discussed the supports and social capital available to newcomers in Dufferin County, we sought to understand its impacts on the experiences of newcomers in Dufferin County. We were interested in learning if they had strong supports and how they have been able to leverage their networks to get settled in the community. Our study was premised on the assumption that social supports and engagement play a key role in creating a positive experience for newcomers in rural communities. As such, we consulted with community members, service providers, and county leaders to gain a sense of how they perceived newcomers were supported and engaged in their county. Similarly, we asked newcomers about their experience of moving to Dufferin County. The following section outlines the responses given by each stakeholder group.

## Community

Community members in Dufferin County had the overall impression that newcomers were fairly well-connected, although many were not aware of any existing supports available to newcomers in the area. Others mentioned many services that were available to the general public, but very few mentioned or could think of any supports that were directly targeted at newcomers. Community members were also aware of the active efforts by municipalities to encourage people to relocate to rural areas. The obvious outreach efforts of county leadership helped spread the awareness among community members that newcomers were needed and welcomed in rural communities.

## Leadership

The county leadership in Dufferin noted newcomers were rather well-connected and that the community offered a lot for newcomers. However, it was acknowledged that Dufferin County did not have a settlement office or centralized newcomer services. As they expect to receive more newcomers in the next few years, they emphasized that reconsiderations were needed to address this issue.

The county leadership has also been actively involved in funding initiatives, often in support of community organizations. In one instance, the county created grants for privately sponsored groups who needed to show they had acquired funding in order to receive refugees. Additional support was also provided where staff members decided to meet intermittently to coordinate local services with and for sponsoring groups in response to incoming Syrian refugees. The availability of social support is critical for social inclusion, especially under conditions of change and stress. For incoming refugees, having sponsorship groups regularly aware of the services that were available in the community allowed them to better leverage their social capital to meet their goals.

Grants were also provided to newcomer business owners. Newcomers could seek out these opportunities through the Chamber of Commerce or at the Small Business Enterprise Centre. Limitations for these grants were noted where services would mainly need to be accessed through Orangeville as there were not enough resources to have satellite offices.

County leadership members also discussed increasing outreach efforts which might entail providing each newcomer with a personal contact with whom they would be able to communicate one-on-one.

**“In all aspects of life, we attain things from referrals. Same holds for new immigrants – they would benefit from a middle person being there for them”**

**- County leadership**

**“If newcomers are ‘chaperoned’, they connect much faster because person providing the care can facilitate newcomer’s access to service and knowledge — also reduce the burden of searching alone.”**

**- County leadership**

## Newcomers

Overall, newcomers in Dufferin County described their experience in the community as warm and welcoming. However, since most newcomer participants did not have previous connections to the community, they found it particularly hard to navigate information and resources on their own, at least, until they were able to develop more social connections in the community. They found it difficult to locate services, such as finding a doctor or locating places to buy certain items. For the most part, newcomers were unsure of which services were available in the community and did not find the information to be easily accessible. Two newcomers mentioned that the only reason they found out about available services was because they went to the library and saw that they had different postings with information. Another newcomer mentioned the services that were available were not useful.

Discussions with stakeholder groups in Dufferin County revealed the various ways by which newcomers are afforded social supports in the community. Targeted efforts have been made to address newcomer challenges in accessing services and resources which provide newcomers with much needed support. However, it is evident that there are still areas which are lacking in development. Further strategies need to be developed in order to ensure that all newcomer needs are met, including providing resources that facilitate the building of social capital. The lessons learned from Dufferin County’s successes and shortcomings will be examined in summation of this report, where recommendations and evidence of best practices will also be presented to help address the remaining issues revealed in the findings.



## Service Providers

Service providers in Dufferin County were mainly concerned about their ability to meet newcomers' needs. There was a consensus that it was quite evident that great efforts were being made in regards to attraction and retention in rural communities. However, there was the question of whether or not communities had enough to satisfy incoming needs. Service providers emphasized the need to predict future growth in order to anticipate the services that will be required to support newcomers. They mentioned that newcomers from abroad are generally referred through the Ministry of Citizenship settlement officer which might offer prospects for tracking trends. However, service providers explained that there were presently people in need because the current structure had not been built to meet all their needs. For example, government services were generally located elsewhere and transportation was an issue for many. Furthermore, there were not too many services that targeted newcomers and catered to their specific needs.

Newcomers needed help in a lot of different areas. The key issue was being able to identify what services were required and how to offer appropriate resources. Assistance for housing and employment were crucial in these respects. Immigration and citizenship was also another area of need — many newcomers have questions regarding how to apply or renew permanent resident cards, how to sponsor relatives, or other related immigration issues. Transportation was raised as the most significant barrier for newcomers. One respondent mentioned that newcomers had to go outside of Dufferin County for ESL services.

**“Have had to go outside of our county for ESL services — driving to Brampton has been a big part of supporting newcomers (45-50-minute drive, twice a day) — a pool of drivers for driving each day, and others who provided daycare.”**

**- Service provider**

Service providers were aware that newcomers brought many professional skills and experiences with them into the area. Many improved the local economy in numerous ways. Newcomers were eager to contribute and work — some opened their own businesses. However, there seemed to be a lack of programs or services that could help newcomers transfer and actualize their skills in the community. The ability of newcomers being able to share their skills in the community was discussed to be a significant influence on their inclusion, engagement, and sense of belonging.

Service providers were mindful of the different needs among the various types of newcomers. They particularly discussed the unique needs of immigrant newcomers. Language was determined to play a key role in facilitating engagement; individuals who had English skills would feel more comfortable interacting with local people, thus finding more avenues to become socially connected. Most noticeably, those who arrived sponsored versus those who arrived independently did not benefit from the same range of resources. Service providers explained that the most connected individuals were the ones who required service supports because they would meet service providers who would then provide them with referrals and connections to other sources of support. Those who did not need to use any services would not be reaching anyone or making any connections, relying on their own to find all supports, social and otherwise.

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# NEWCOMER SOCIAL CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS

While communities have the capacity to increase social capital, newcomers themselves also have networks, resources, and assets that can contribute to the community. The majority of community members in Dufferin County observed newcomers as engaged citizens who had a lot to offer. A less prominent perception was that newcomers kept to themselves and did not contribute much to the community. In determining the social capital contributions of newcomers in the community, we first asked community members, service providers, and county leaders their perspectives on newcomer contributions. We then asked newcomers to share their thoughts on how they believe they have contributed to the community. Discussions with these various stakeholder groups revealed the immense benefit of newcomer engagement and the numerous ways by which newcomers add value to their community.

## Diversity

### Culture

County leaders described Dufferin County as quite conservative, where the majority of people who lived in the area were white Anglo-Saxon. Where previously there might not have been as much cultural sensitivity, residents now had the opportunity to be more conscious of cultural diversity.

**“E.g. One of the churches in Shelburne is welcoming people of any faith to worship. Immigrants are often religious or faith-filled, and it makes a difference if we give opportunity for them to practice their own faith.”**

- County leadership

**“They bring education on the religious and/or spiritual pieces of their lives. Their differences and nuances of life prompt other residences to learn more. If you never see difference, you’ll never be prompted to learn about what is different. As people learn how to engage, it enriches all. This bolsters the community to be well-grounded and rounded.”**

- County leadership

Various community members echoed this sentiment by commending newcomers for bringing diversity into their community. Respondents mentioned that they enjoyed the learning opportunities fostered through exposure to different cultures and some even emphasized the need to continue bringing more diversity into the area. People loved the addition of different cuisines in the area. Many noticed that grocery stores had more ethnic foods and that there were more restaurant options for dining-out. Contributions in diversity also included increased variety to the local art and music scene.

Service providers were appreciative of the increased learning opportunities afforded by newcomer differences and noted that these learning opportunities enriched the community. Sponsorship team members in particular embraced the multicultural value of newcomers as they learned about different cultures, religions, traditions, and food. County leaders saw the positive benefit of Syrian refugee families in the county as they shared with neighbours their experiences of being in war-torn countries. All stakeholder groups made reference to the benefit of learning empathy. In general, newcomers regardless of where they came from were attributed for providing learning opportunities to everyone they came across.

## Ideas

Newcomers were recognized by community members and county leaders as innovative, bringing in new ideas and much needed perspectives that helped the community grow.

In some cases, newcomers were acknowledged for tapping into their own networks to enhance the social capital systems of their community. For example, it was mentioned during one of the interviews that the first network support group in the area was started by newcomers. Newcomers often have distinct insights about the community that go unnoticed by other individuals, often prompting newcomers to find innovative ways to address these issues and improve the places in which they live.

## Economic

### Economic Growth

Community members acknowledged the economic contributions made by newcomers in Dufferin County. New businesses, such as stores and restaurants, increased development and economic growth in the area. Community members understood that the growth in population was positive and noted that newcomers who did not own businesses still contributed financially by buying houses, paying taxes, shopping, or paying for services locally.

County leadership members stated that the increase in economic activity had been evident. For example, new home owners purchased properties in new subdivision areas. However, they argued that it was important not to relentlessly focus on these economic contributions, but rather to emphasize a more holistic understanding of what newcomers can bring to rural communities. Economic impact should be considered secondary to overall community benefits.

**“Having the intention of acceptance is important, rather than supporting newcomers because it grows our tax base or increases demand for our businesses... We need to open our arms to newcomers because they provide greater opportunities for us to learn and grow. Urban sprawl in of itself doesn’t create social inclusion... we need to focus on true intent of acceptance.”**

- County leadership

### Skills

Newcomers were recognized by community members as people with many professional skills and experiences that could benefit employers in the area.

**“Generally, they have contributed a lot. They bring expertise, connection, business, law, and helped fight battles...e.g. to stop a gravel pit or that kind of environmental / development problem. They were going to remove a huge amount of water. It was the expertise of newcomers that helped stop that. They bring in money, new ventures.”**

- Community member

Service providers and county leaders also discussed the positive economic and social impacts from newcomer engagement in the community. One of the ways in which newcomers had done this was through the unique skillsets they bring to the area.



**“In some cases, anecdotally, they bring different skill sets given their line of work. E.g. talented construction workers who have different architectural standards and viewpoints.”**

**- County leadership**

Newcomers felt that this was one the areas in which they contributed to the county. They discussed having a wide variety of expertise and skills, which offer a lot to the development and growth to the area. One newcomer remarked:

**“From a business stand point, [newcomers] add vibrancy and economic support to the area. Ex. Manufacturing industry opening, you would hire a big part of the community.”**

**- Newcomer**

### **Businesses**

Newcomers became involved in the community through many different ways including employment, volunteering, or starting businesses. However, service providers also mentioned that efforts to hire newcomers might create additional burdens on employers, particularly if newcomers have language difficulties. There could be additional stress to take on employees with particular needs, so employers may be hesitant to hire newcomers.

### **Engagement and Effective Participation**

County leaders praised newcomers’ involvement in town hall meetings and gatherings with the mayor. They participated in these opportunities in order to learn, engage, and promote social inclusion. Many newcomers were said to volunteer on municipality committees as well as participate in Neighbourhood Watch. In many instances, newcomers get involved as soon as they arrive.

Newcomers increased community vitality. The rise in diversity created major positive progress in all aspects of the community.

**“Really important for people to understand that new people coming to a community helps us breathe new life into the community. You need new energy to keep municipality going forward.”**

**- County leadership**

Being involved in the community was important to all newcomers. Newcomers discussed being eager to participate and contribute as much as possible. Some of the ways in which newcomers have contributed through engagement have been through: volunteering, attending community events, joining clubs, and serving on various boards and committees.

To better understand effective newcomer participation, we asked county leadership and service providers if any methods were being used to track newcomer participation and contributions. County leaders mentioned that they track when they can for distinct newcomer groups. For example, the Syrian refugee employment committee monitors how successful Syrian newcomers are in the community. From a census standpoint, they explained that they observe the number of immigrants moving into communities, including immigrant retention rates and migration statistics that are produced on an annual basis. However, in terms of social integration of newcomers in the community, the local government does not track this at all.

Service providers also did not explicitly track newcomer participation. However, organizations do track the number of people they interact with as well as the services they provide. Sponsoring organizations are able to measure and report on the number of donors, as well as the amount of people involved in supporting newcomer families. However, newcomer participation and contributions were generally not measured or monitored.

## Newcomer-to-Newcomer Support

Newcomers suggested that their most important contribution was that they themselves acted as support for other newcomers. This was not an area noted by any of the other stakeholders, potentially due to the lack of shared experiences. Newcomers were particularly invested in helping out fellow newcomers. They actively sought out opportunities to bring new individuals to events. Through their various involvements in committees, groups, and clubs, they participated in outreach activities and made connections with other newcomers, often inviting them to local events and activities. Various newcomers explain these efforts:

**“In some of the events we hold, I also sit on those committees — I have connections I use to support for our events. I know this girl who I met at a parent council meeting, we talked and hit it off, so she became a contact for Indian dancing. I have made that connection to bring her in for our Canada Day event.”**

- Newcomer

**“I have people come to me and I also support newcomers in joining programs and boards. I advertise opportunities.”**

- Newcomer

**“If I know someone that has something I offer it to the community. I always ask people if they know somebody.”**

- Newcomer

Promoting inclusion and extending support to other new members of the community was recognized as an important endeavour and the efforts taken to participate in this task were able to increase and strengthen newcomer engagement.

It is evident that newcomers are highly engaged and active members of their community. The presence of newcomers in Dufferin County has enriched the community through the sharing of different cultures, the implementation of innovative ideas, and the production of economic activity. Most importantly, they act as enablers for newcomer engagement. They serve as strong supports for fellow newcomers, facilitating effective newcomer participation through active outreach efforts. Newcomers contribute immensely to community growth and development in Dufferin County, benefiting all those who live in the area.

# BEST PRACTICES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The experiences in Dufferin County have illustrated the importance of newcomer engagement in rural communities and the value of social capital in creating positive experiences for newcomers. When newcomers are able to build social capital, they are able to build increased connections to their community, networks, and supports. Developing and providing opportunities to develop social capital through supports and services is crucial to foster social inclusion among newcomers. Dufferin County has been able to provide newcomers with strong supports, evidenced in the following best practices. Recommendations are offered in this section to address the remaining challenges experienced by newcomers in Dufferin County. We attempt to reflect on how best to move forward, highlighting effective strategies and useful considerations for the future. Recommendations and best practices have been presented by each stakeholder group to offer suggestions as to how each group can best respond to the difficulties still faced by newcomers in their community.

## Community

### Best Practices

- Current members in the community have been vital sources of information for newcomers. When newcomers have questions, they often approached community members for help. Many current residents in the community have been open to chat, answer questions, as well as offer advice. Newcomers mentioned that their neighbours were friendly people — some even helped them shovel the snow.

### Recommendations

- Get to know your neighbours. Taking time to meet the people who live in your area can foster community unity and cultivate stronger relationships among community members. Sustaining these relationships is equally important.
- Community members should be informed of available supports and services for newcomers. As community members are often the first point of contact, they play a key role in sharing information that helps newcomers navigate their new environment.
- Community members are cognizant of the current dynamics in their community. Where they sense tension or negative attitudes from particular individuals towards newcomers, they can play an active role in educating and helping others understand the contributions of newcomers. Regularly engaging in conversations and discussions on the ground can cultivate attitudes of openness and acceptance.
- Be active and engaged in the community by participating in events and activities. It is important for clubs, organizations, and committees to continue hosting events that are open to the public. Where possible, promote activities and invite newcomers to participate in order to foster community cohesiveness.



## Leadership

### Best Practices

- Dufferin County leaders have invested a lot of time and effort in creating comprehensive online resources. They recognized that it was particularly hard for newcomers to navigate the system. Gathering online resources, especially government sites, all in one accessible place is a huge asset for newcomers.
- County leadership members got involved in organizing and creating a structure for sponsoring groups in the community. They determined that this was necessary in order to coordinate all the efforts involved in the process of bringing refugees into the community. Providing sponsor groups with support is important because they need to know how to access and find services for the families for which they will be responsible. A robust engagement strategy has been key in these efforts.

**“If you break it down to a kid walking into kindergarten for the first time, they are going to want to be by themselves for a little while, but they’ll soon be intrigued by what others do or say. The teacher needs to have a strong engagement strategy. If not, they have horrible experience and learn how to not engage. It’s better for community and the individual.”**

- County leadership

### Recommendations

- Encourage an awareness of the different types of newcomers that exist in the community and be actively engaged in providing supports that target all newcomers. The recent large focus on Syrian refugees may have left other newcomers lacking in support.
- Take action to educate community members about inclusivity and diversity. Finding opportunities for education can help disseminate knowledge about tolerance and acceptance. Integrate educational messages at events, social activities, or wherever possible. An important part of this process includes county leadership members engaging in outreach efforts to explain why they are invested in attracting newcomers to the area.

**“Think of ways to integrate different cultures — there’s still a lot of racism in the country — a lot of work that needs to be done in integrating community.”**

- Newcomer

- Coordinate active outreach efforts. Engagement with newcomers immediately upon arrival is important. When families arrive, get to know what their needs are and ask them how they can be supported.

**“Go out and meet these people, rather than expecting them to find the Town Hall themselves. Be proactive, welcome them, ask, “What do we need to learn and know to make your stay better? I don’t think ‘build it and they will come’ is the strategy, more ‘let’s build something together.’”**

**- County leadership**

- Advocate for public transportation. Examine the cost and benefits of investing in transportation systems in rural communities. Investigate alternative transportation systems or increase coordination of ride-sharing programs. Taking efforts to overcome transportation barriers would be a huge step in providing newcomers with more access to resources in the area, as well as increase opportunities for integration into the community.
- Continue promotion efforts of information sharing through online tools. Newcomers have suggested to expand online sites to include links to social media for newcomers who are not aware of these other online avenues for support. Newcomers have also proposed that formation of online groups would be a great opportunity for people looking to get together with others to socialize.
- More community events — increase the number of public gatherings and festivals in order to offer the community more opportunities to come together and meet people.
- Include resources and information on how to access daily needed services. Newcomers expressed that they did not know how to find regular services like a family doctor or how to perform banking transactions.

## Newcomers

### Best Practices

- When newcomers arrived in the community, they searched actively for opportunities to become involved. They joined clubs, organizations, as well as committees in order to facilitate integration into the community. Participating in community events and activities allowed newcomers to make all types of connections, as well as develop a sense of belonging in the community.
- Newcomers played an active role in serving as support for other newcomers, as well as helping them find more support. Newcomers also encouraged other newcomers to participate and join in community events. Intentional efforts were made to seek out newcomers to involve them in social events because they understood the importance of being active and engaged in the community.
- Newcomers from different backgrounds welcomed opportunities to educate community members about their different cultures. Syrian families shared their experiences and stories which allowed newcomers and community members alike to develop greater mutual understanding.

### Recommendations:

- Newcomers know best what newcomers need to thrive and succeed in the community. County leadership, service providers, and community members can learn from newcomers about what worked for them and what strategies were useful in facilitating social engagement in the community.
- Newcomers can play a vital role in helping other newcomers feel socially connected and engaged. Newcomers who are involved in the community can participate in active efforts to reach out to others who may not be aware of available opportunities to become involved. County leadership and service providers can play a role in this process by offering newcomers resources to help them connect with other newcomers.

The best practices and recommendations offered here provide insight into the lessons learned from the approaches employed in Dufferin County. It is evident that community members, county leadership, service providers, and newcomers have all been diligent in developing resources to support newcomers in their new environment. However, outstanding challenges remain and it is important that all stakeholder groups continue to work on providing opportunities that help newcomers develop social connections and increase engagement in rural communities. Further considerations are needed to ensure that all newcomer needs are properly addressed.

## Service Providers

### Best Practices

- Newcomers regularly had difficulties obtaining transportation to access services in the area. It became even more difficult when the services that they needed were outside the county. Service providers created driving assistance initiatives to help newcomers attend ESL classes. These driving assistance initiatives have been an enormous support for newcomers.
- Service providers tried their best to provide translation services for newcomers with language difficulties. This has been especially helpful for newcomers who needed access to health services or had specific medical needs. Newcomers were able to receive help with their medications through the help of translators.

### Recommendations:

- Improve advertisement strategies of available services in order to inform newcomers, as well as community members, of what resources are available. Increased advertising can be done through schools, stores, radio stations, newspapers, and flyers. The more that people know about existing services, the more that they will share that information. Referrals play an important role in publicizing what is offered in the community.
- Pay attention to the logistics involved in accessing services, acknowledging the limitations of rural areas. Although helpful services and programs are offered to newcomers, many do not have the means of transportation to physically go and make use of these resources. Develop service provision with these limitations in mind.
- Offer low-cost or free services wherever possible. Acknowledge that finances might be an issue for many newcomer families.
- Coordinate with other service providers in the county. Service providers need a common “landing-place” that provides information, necessary resources, and access to best practices so that time is not wasted by searching around to get information. Collaboration in this way allows different people from different backgrounds to learn and work together, so that when issues are raised, there will be people who have the answers.
- Finding employment can be difficult for newcomers as rural communities do not have as many opportunities for employment as big cities. Service providers can play a role in this process by informing local employers about the skills and experiences that newcomers have to offer. More services dedicated to offer further training and credit translation is needed.
- Offer translation services where possible. Accessing necessary services such as medical visits can be problematic for newcomers with language difficulties.



## I FINAL THOUGHTS

The aim of this project was to investigate the existing social supports that were available in rural communities, as well as the strategies that have been used to encourage newcomer engagement. Through this study, we were able to gather stakeholder experiences on how community efforts in newcomer participation and engagement have been developed and operationalized within the context of the local environment. Findings revealed important insights regarding the various processes by which newcomers were able to leverage and expand their social capital to access supports in Dufferin County.

Strong supports that cultivate newcomer engagement were important to create positive experiences for newcomers in rural communities. Discussions with stakeholders in Dufferin County revealed that the wide variety of recreational activities and community events throughout the year offered newcomers opportunities to further build and expand their social capital. These types of gatherings also allowed residents to come together, fostering a sense of community unity. The Ontario Early Years program was able to serve as a vital support for newcomers, providing a variety of services that promoted family development and well-being. Collaboration efforts were also seen between sponsorship groups and community groups which resulted in the creation of strong support networks for refugee newcomers. The coordination between these various groups was also able to help refugee newcomers better access available supports within the community.

Remaining challenges included the need for better promotion and advertising of services and activities in the community. Although the community had a lot to offer, newcomers were often unaware of the available opportunities, limiting their access to valuable resources that could help them better develop social connections in the community. In addition, the predominant services offered in the community were targeted to the general population. Further consideration needs to be given as to how the services offered in the community can be enhanced or expanded to address the unique needs of newcomers. Concerns were also raised regarding the community's ability continue serving the needs of newcomers in the future. As Dufferin County expects to receive more newcomers in the coming years, assessments need to be made in order to adequately understand the specific needs of newcomers and how services in the area can continue to be developed to best address those needs.

It has been evident through this investigation that newcomers play an integral role in enhancing the vitality and success of rural communities. Dedicated efforts need to be taken to help them develop stronger connections to the community through enhanced social supports. Providing newcomers with greater opportunities to build social capital will allow them to leverage their own resources for their own benefit, as well as for the benefit of the communities in which they reside.







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## APPENDIX I – METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Focus Groups	0
Interviews conducted in-person in the community or by telephone	95
Online survey available upon request	2
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>97</b>

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	METHODOLOGY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Newcomers	Focus Group	0
	Interviews (phone & in-person)	22
	Online Surveys	1
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>23</b>
Community Members	Focus Group	0
	Interviews (phone & in-person)	62
	Online Surveys	1
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>63</b>
County Leadership	Focus Group	0
	Interviews (phone & in-person)	4
	Online Surveys	0
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>4</b>
Service Providers	Focus Group	0
	Interviews (phone & in-person)	7
	Online Surveys	0
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>7</b>

## APPENDIX II – DUFFERIN COUNTY: ADDITIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL RESOURCES

This section details the operational processes evident in Dufferin County through an examination of various documents, including meeting minutes, project planning records, Municipal Council minutes, media releases, and news articles. It highlights details of existing community initiatives and evaluates impacts on newcomer social capital.

### Community

#### Who?

- Locally organized community groups, consisting of: Church congregations, and members; community members and volunteers; citizen groups; and, local service providers.
  - o The Headwaters Community Well-being Report
  - o Project Safe Haven
  - o Out of a War Zone and into the Hills
  - o Compass Community Church

#### What Are They Doing?

- **The Headwaters Community Well-being Report** addresses the challenges involved in community well-being. As a grass-roots citizen group, it helps to actualize a long-term goal of well-being for Dufferin County through fostering community leadership and action.
  - o This is established through 5 pillars of healthy community (healthy people, dynamic economy, sustainable environment, vibrant culture, and engaged citizens).
  - o There is a need to assess weaknesses in the community in order to create positive and working solutions for everyone (farmers who want to retire but have no one to farm the land; newcomers who wish to farm but have no land to do so).
  - o Dufferin received 5 new doctors as part of a successful initiative where the province increased the number of physicians in the region by 44%.
- **Project Safe Haven** is a community group designed to help newcomers (specifically refugees) find a safety in the opportunity to move to Dufferin County.
  - o The project presents a collective commitment to family from the perspective that ties between people are what makes them closer to their own humanity.
    - Most recently, they helped in connecting two brothers from Syria (one brother and his family had already settled in Dufferin. The other brother and his family were still stranded after the Canadian government pulled out staff from Jordan).
- **Out of a War Zone and Into the Hills** is a community group that helps refugee families start a life in Dufferin County.
  - o The group started with three women from the community who sought to sponsor a Syrian refugee (who now safely resides in Germany).
  - o Since then, the group has continued to sponsor families through building a network of sponsors and volunteers in surrounding communities.



- **Compass Community Church** sponsors refugees affiliated with the church community.
  - o In this case, the family members of congregants from Eritrea, for both the travel from their previous location to Canada, as well as sponsorship for their first 12 months in Canada.

### How Are They Doing It?

- **The Headwaters Community Well-being Report** is promoting community well-being for Dufferin County.
  - o By receiving outside funding from foundations around Ontario, this initiative is able to continue to develop.
  - o Citizens are engaged in meaningful conversations about how to improve the quality of their lives.
  - o E-Learning center has helped with the pursuit of post-secondary education, providing access to over 10,000 online colleges and universities. This allows citizens to improve their academics, skills, and literacy without having to leave the community.
- **Project Safe Haven** is helping newcomers get to the community from their previous locations.
  - o The project has written government officials (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister, and the Prime Minister) imploring them to maintain previously established commitments.
  - o The community group raises funds through events such as benefit concerts.
- **Out of a War Zone and Into the Hills** has helped refugees enter the community through local funding for sponsorship.
  - o Creemore, Mulmur, Mono, Dufferin, and Simcoe are all communities and counties that have supported the group.
  - o After bringing their sponsored family to Dufferin, they offered help in settling them into life in Canada.
- **Compass Community Church** sponsors refugees through community funding as well as possibly some government funding in the future.
  - o They are looking to connect with more people in Dufferin County for financial support from those who share their passion of helping others attain safety from persecution.
  - o To continue their efforts, they are seeking aid from the federal government, but they need to first have a plan on how they will provide initial funds.

### Impacts on Social Capital:

- Within these community groups, there is a large focus on the first, second, and third types of Social Capital.
  - o By utilizing the local community involvement of these groups, there is a great emphasis on bonding, bonding and bridging, and bridging and linking.
  - o These are important aspects to have concurrently occur within local communities, as newcomers will have more extensive access to resources when there are active community members helping them through each unique stage of their journey.
    - The Social Capital of these new comers will increase as they are supported not only in attaining the funds and sponsorship necessary to come to Canada, but also the critical resources and supports of the community made available by these local groups (this is especially critical in smaller communities where social networking and new relationships can be difficult to develop).

## Leadership

### Who?

- Initiatives sponsored and created by Dufferin County and the municipal leadership of the county. Some are more broadly sponsored by larger government initiatives (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), Toronto Employment and Social Services).
  - o Dufferin County Corporate Strategic Plan
  - o Dufferin County DC Moves – Headwaters Communities in Action
  - o Dufferin County Community Services
  - o Municipal Councillor Profile
  - o Newcomer Settlement Supports
  - o Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership
  - o Wellington County Settlement Services
  - o St. George’s Adult ESL Centre
  - o Career Coach: Overview Centre for Education and Training
  - o Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board Newcomer Reception and Assessment Centres
  - o Connecting the Dots to Employment

### What Are They Doing?

- **Dufferin County DC Moves – Headwaters Communities in Action** is a “made in Dufferin” agency that focuses on being a local association to identify innovative and collaborative solutions to shared concerns in the county. It is an initiative of the Dufferin County Community Services Department, Dufferin County, and the Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA).
  - o They provide a formal setting to participate and discuss local planning (this allows for interconnectedness between varying local agencies), as well as pool resources and training strategies. Local service providers are given the opportunity to collaborate and discuss gaps in service, as well as how to better professionally develop.
    - This ultimately enhances access to services in the community (it keeps clients at the center of service).
    - This will be of advantage to newcomers, as this integration creates a platform for emerging issues (i.e. Syrian refugee crisis). This is important because most people in the county are not newcomers (95% of residents are classified as non-immigrants, with 91% identifying their primary language as English).
- **Dufferin County Community Services** is seeking to reduce poverty goals
  - o Implementation of Ontario Works Computer System, Food for Thought grant, participation in Provincial Social Assistance Reform Table have all been successful.
- **Municipal Councillor Profile** looks to identify how many self-identifying visible minorities are involved in local councils.
  - o Typically Ontario’s municipal councillors are on average, older, predominantly male, with education and high incomes than typical rural community demographics.

- **Newcomer Settlement Supports** focuses on providing information about supports and resources for newcomers to Dufferin.
  - This information includes how to access services such as childcare, health care, recreation, and transportation for both local and out of town use.
- **Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership** offers assistance to newcomers in gaining ready access to healthcare, among other services. It is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of newcomers.
  - This initiative does not exclude those who may have a temporary or precarious status in the county (some service providers cannot provide aid to these newcomers).
- **Wellington County Settlement Services** helps newcomers gain access to community services, meeting their immediate needs.
  - Immediate needs qualify as knowledge for everyday life in the community, coping with transitional issues (housing, employment, language barriers).
- **St. George's Adult ESL Centre** is a school for newcomers to Guelph.
  - Here, they can help newcomers who want to learn English or improve on their skills, as well as learn about living in Guelph.
- **Career Coach: Overview Centre for Education and Training** is a mobile unit coordinated by the Center for Education and Training.
  - The coach bus ensures refugees and other newcomers in remote areas have access to information (i.e. settlement and employment).
- **Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board Newcomer Reception and Assessment Centres** provides families and students with a welcoming and supportive introduction to the Ontario School system.
  - Settlement support available through the Multicultural Settlement and Education Partnership (MSEP).
- **Connecting the Dots to Employment** is funded by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and is hosted at the YMCA Newcomer Information Centre (NIC).
  - It is a 4-week pre-employment workshop to expose newcomers to important considerations during their job search.

### How Are They Doing It?

- **Dufferin County DC Moves** – Headwaters Communities in Action has created inter-agency connectedness in an effort to better serve Dufferin County.
  - All agencies and their staff must be equipped with local service provider information, and knowledge transfer opportunities. This allows them to properly assess the human services within the county.
  - Through a collective mindset and approach, organizations can better investigate strategies through enhanced services, and agency cohesiveness.
- **Dufferin County Community Services** is reducing poverty through The Poverty Reduction Task Force, the construction of 24 new social housing units by 2018/2019, addressing local homelessness through a campaign for 20,000 houses.



- **Municipal Councillor Profile** has found that in order to successfully attract and maintain newcomers to the community, there needs to be a focus on understanding the correlation between racial and ethnic representation on municipal councils.
- **Newcomer Settlement Supports** are made available to newcomers with services provided in English, French, Arabic, Armenian, and Kurdish.
  - o They offer information specifically for Syrian Refugee resettlement, and host meetings with private refugee sponsor groups in Dufferin.
  - As an initiative, Dufferin can provide time limited financial support for sponsors of eligible refugee families.
- **St. George's Adult ESL Centre** helps newcomers where they can take ESL classes for up to 6 months or less as a visitor without a study permit (must be over 18 years old).
  - o Newcomers can meet new people, and share experiences about settling in Canada.
  - o ESL classes are held in Orangeville at the Dufferin Centre for Continuing Education.
- **Career Coach: Overview Centre for Education and Training** helps newcomers from remote areas with accessing information through a mobile platform.
  - o The coach bus (equipped with laptops, wi-fi access, printers, a small library of books and handouts, and a notice board for job fairs or opportunities) parks at public places (malls, entertainment and recreation centres, libraries, community agencies and events) to provide settlement information, career counselling, and job search platforms for newcomers.
- **Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board Newcomer Reception and Assessment Centres** helps newcomers, both students and families,
  - o There is an initial assessment process in which a student's abilities (English language and mathematical knowledge), talents, and interests are recognized and shared. This enables a smoother transition into the school community.
  - o Placements at schools are determined through transcripts, assessment results, and age. Secondary school students are counselled for choice of courses and post-secondary destinations.
- **Connecting the Dots to Employment's** 4-week pre-job program is run at the YMCA, and is open to landed immigrants or convention refugees.
  - o Newcomers explore their assets and understand their own tolerance for change – they are made to realize how their uniqueness can make online platforms work for them.
  - o They are given the skills to learn about functions in the workplace, as well as how to communicate with others.

### Impacts on Social Capital:

- Newcomers are given the opportunities to become successful, contributing members of their community by attaining the skills to seek employment opportunities.
- Large focus on the second aspect of Social Capital (social networking and support). Bonding and bridging allows newcomers to feel settled and comfortable.
- Newcomers are more likely to stay in the county when organizations reach out to them to understand their unique needs and concerns.
  - o This also means that they are more likely to recommend Dufferin County to other newcomers as a successful and happy place to live.

- There are opportunities for newcomers to access different support systems in varying stages of their settlements.
- As newcomers social networks and relationships grow, they will have easier access to more resources.

## Services

### Who?

- LINC Care for Newcomer Children Program
- Upper Grand Welcomes Syrian Newcomers
- Aura: Working Together to Help Refugees

### What Are They Doing?

- **LINC Care for Newcomer Children Program** fosters childhood development in an atmosphere that promotes learning in a congruent system where ESL classes are accessible.
  - o Early childhood educators prepare newcomer children with English language skills as well as other skills to prepare them for mainstream schools
- **Upper Grand Welcomes Syrian Newcomers** provides a safe and inclusive place for children to learn and grow through a series of transitional programs.
  - o They foster a commitment to assessing and meeting the unique needs of newcomers and their families.
    - Resources are available in Arabic for family members to learn more about starting school, parent-teacher interviews, and Full Day Kindergarten.
  - o Free to Achieve Fund helps in-need students' access necessities and opportunities to benefit their well-being.
- **AURA: Working Together to Help Refugees** is a charity organization with the Anglican Diocese of Toronto that assists in the sponsorship of resettling refugees.
  - o AURA works within the community to educate community groups and the public on refugees and their struggles.
    - They hold speaking engagements that can be for large groups or personal encounters in order to provide information on their outreach initiatives.

### How Are They Doing It?

- **LINC Care for Newcomer Children Program** is helping in making education more locally accessible for newcomers.
  - o Parents are welcomed to also attend LINC classes at the YMCA centre, so that a more holistic approach can be taken to the newcomer child's education.
  - o The program has crafts, equipment, climbers, puzzles, songs, and games that help the children transition to the Canadian education system.

- **Upper Grand Welcomes Syrian Newcomers** specifically helps Syrian refugees in settling into the community's school board.
  - o All schools have ESL classes, Special Education, and counselling/social work supports.
  - o These supports can be further accessed through fundraising initiatives by the board to support local settlement agencies that support Syrian refugees.
- **AURA: Working Together to Help Refugees** are helping with the resettlement of refugees in the community by engaging citizens to eliminate stigmas, and become educated on the struggles of refugees.
  - o They believe that it is important to practice an anti-oppressive approach through acknowledging and working against oppression in societies, economies, cultures, and social groups.
  - o Recognizing the skills and contributions that refugees can bring to Canada is important for successful settlement.
    - Presentations, workshops, and seminars are made available in order to provide this information to the public.

### Impacts on Social Capital:

- These services access all 4 levels of Social Capital within the community.
- Perhaps there is a need for increased services that are more generally open to all newcomers in the community, and not specifically refugees, or specifically Syrian refugees.
  - o This could help to further increase Social Capital for newcomers who may not be from Syria, or who may not be refugees at all.
    - Some newcomers who do not fit into these categories may feel a sense of decreased Social Capital if they feel there are not enough resources tailored towards being new to the community in general. There may be some newcomers to the community who do not require language assistance but require help in other areas. Are there adequate resources for them?





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