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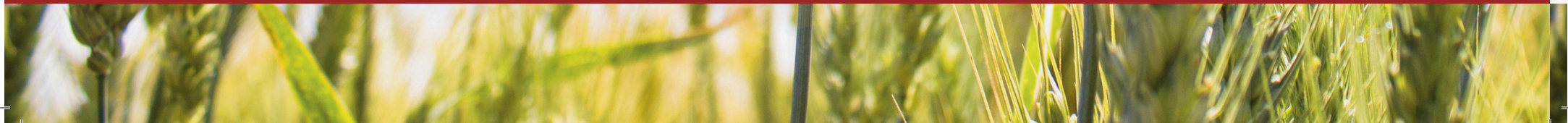
Attracting and Retaining Newcomers

IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND SMALL TOWNS





THIS PRIMER HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE PRINCIPLES OF ATTRACTING NEWCOMERS TO YOUR RURAL COMMUNITY AND TO HELP YOU ENSURE THEIR SUCCESS FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY. SO LET'S JUMP RIGHT IN!



Why Immigration?

Research shows that many small and rural communities in Canada are struggling to maintain their population numbers due to a variety of reasons like youth out-migration, declining birth rates, and an ageing population. In response to these challenges, attracting new residents to settle in smaller centres can be used as a strategy to revitalise rural areas. All levels of government in Canada are currently working with communities to encourage the attraction and retention of primary and secondary immigrants. Primary immigrants are those who arrive in a community as their first choice whereas secondary immigrants are those who might arrive elsewhere and then subsequently migrate to another community. There are important opportunities to encourage secondary migration once immigrants become familiar with Canadian society and culture.

Currently, various municipal governments of rural areas and small centres are holding consultations and creating strategies to attract new residents in order to meet their labour market needs, sustain population growth, and enhance diversity. If you think your municipality could benefit from this conversation, then we hope that this primer will give you the tools to initiate it!



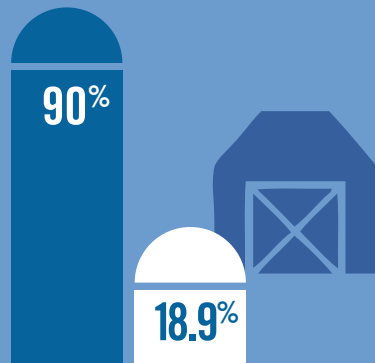
“When things are in place, this work takes on a life of its own.”

Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator

DID YOU KNOW?



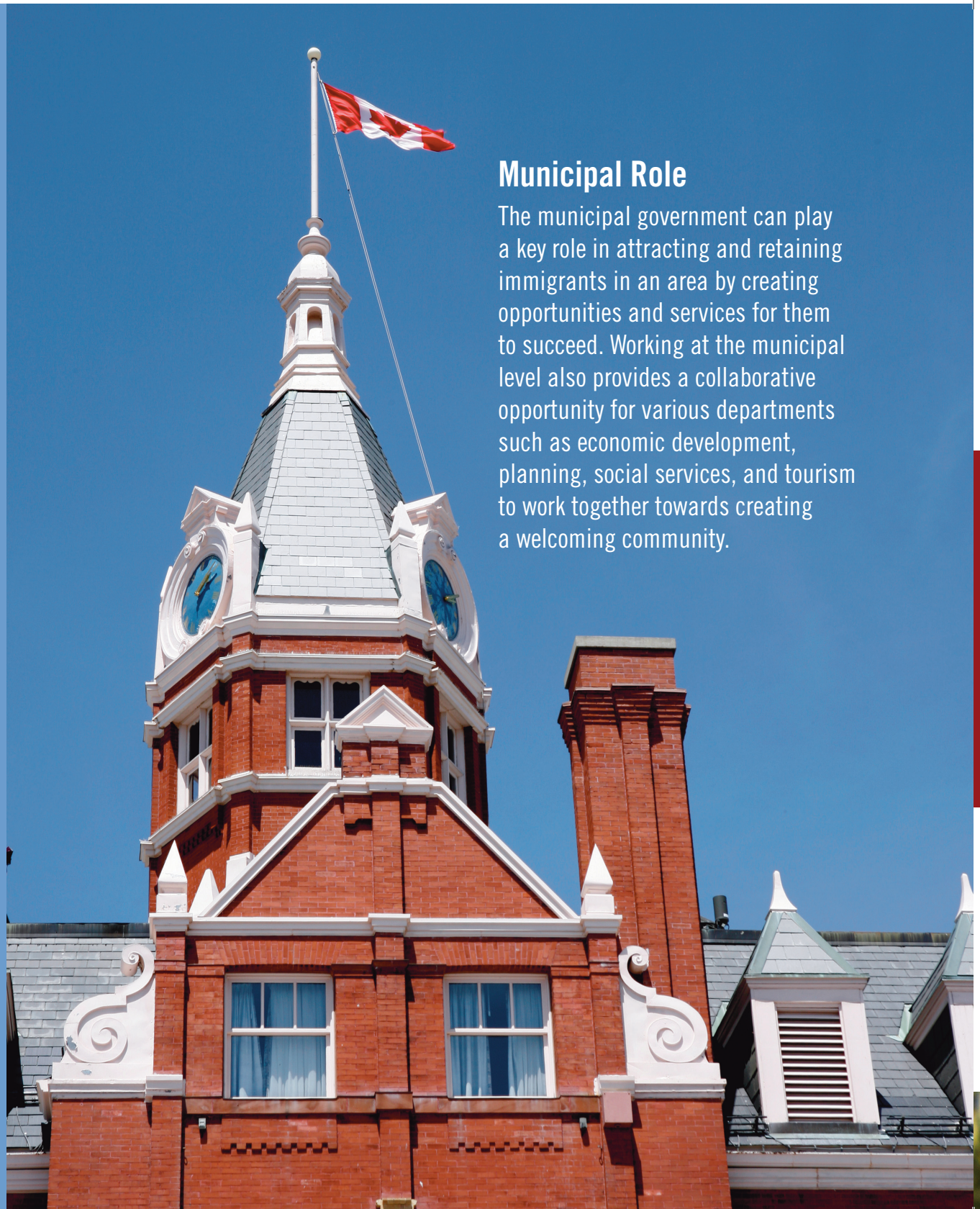
Only 1 in 4 rural youth who leave their communities will return to the same community within 10 years.



A century ago, 90% of Canadian population lived in rural areas. Now it is 18.9%

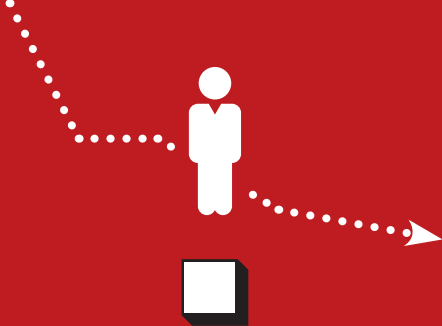
Municipal Role

The municipal government can play a key role in attracting and retaining immigrants in an area by creating opportunities and services for them to succeed. Working at the municipal level also provides a collaborative opportunity for various departments such as economic development, planning, social services, and tourism to work together towards creating a welcoming community.



Determining the Need for Immigration

The first step in this process is to discuss these issues with your community, municipality, or service providers to determine your next steps.



Is your population declining?



Is your tax base shrinking?



Are you experiencing labour shortages?

If you said yes to any of these, then you are not alone. There are many others who are grappling with the same worries. In response to these questions, communities across the country are working towards attracting new residents and new Canadians.

Attracting Immigrants

If you would like to explore attracting immigrants to your community as an option, then we have put together some key things to keep in mind:

1. Work with what you have

Don't forget that every community already contains some services that can serve as starting points.

2. Build and Maintain Relationships

Building relationships requires getting to know people, keeping in touch, and working together towards common objectives.

3. Gain Political Will

Gaining political will means that the people of influence in communities, whether they be the politicians or people in other leadership positions, are informed about causes and issues that impact their community, and educate others about their importance.

4. Involve Newcomers as Key Players

Invite newcomers to join decision-making discussions, ask for their input, show them that their presence matters, and their perspectives will be taken into consideration.

5. Ensure Research-Based Decision Making

Research can help communities uncover truths and discover patterns that might otherwise get missed. Work with researchers to better inform decision making.

6. Emphasise Process and Build Capacity

In order to achieve the best result possible, emphasize the process of working together towards the desired results and building on the strengths of all those involved.

7. Plan with a Long Term Horizon in Mind

It might take years to see the results of your efforts, be patient!

DID YOU KNOW?

Immigration has always been a backbone of rural communities in Canada. This topic resurfaced in 2005, when the Canadian Rural Revitalisation Foundation and The Rural Development Institute hosted 50 delegates from across Canada to form a national think tank on immigration in small communities. This was a beginning of a discussion that continues today.

For details, search the article titled "National Rural Think Tank 2005 Immigration and Rural Canada: Research and Practice"



Retaining Immigrants

The work doesn't end once newcomers have chosen to settle in your community. It has just begun. Retaining immigrants is the key to long-term success of the community. It is important that you prepare for their success by creating a welcoming community. Here are a few tips to encourage retention:



Adopt No-Wrong Door Policy

The most important thing to consider is how existing services can be modified to address the unique challenges faced by newcomers. Adopt a no-wrong door policy. This requires that community agencies coordinate to ensure that no matter which agencies people contact for assistance; they are helped. This open approach requires that service providers are willing to assist in accessing services, filling forms and helping with other procedures that can sometimes be confusing for a newcomer. Therefore, communities are encouraged to train their service providers to have the knowledge about all supports available to immigrants and newcomers.



While adopting the 'no wrong door' policy, it is quite helpful to see things from an immigrant lens. What does that mean?

Try to think about the challenges that new immigrants might face in your community. With this perspective you will be better prepared to help newcomers feel that they are at home. Put yourself in their shoes and ensure that you go beyond the "Hello, how are you?" to "Hi, we are excited that you moved here! We are having a community BBQ next Saturday, and we would love if you and your family came!"



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2013, more than 100,000 immigrants moved to Ontario. Out of those only 1342 people chose to settle outside the urban core in a small city or a rural area.

Become a Welcoming Community

Being a welcoming community means focusing on creating connections between newcomers and established community members. This can help in eliminating barriers to social and economic integration, and addressing racism and discrimination.



YOU CAN DO THIS BY:

1

**OFFERING
SUPPORT
TO NEWCOMERS**

2

**BEING OPEN
TO NEW IDEAS
AND CUSTOMS**

3

**ACCEPTING & APPRECIATING
THE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT
NEWCOMERS MAKE**

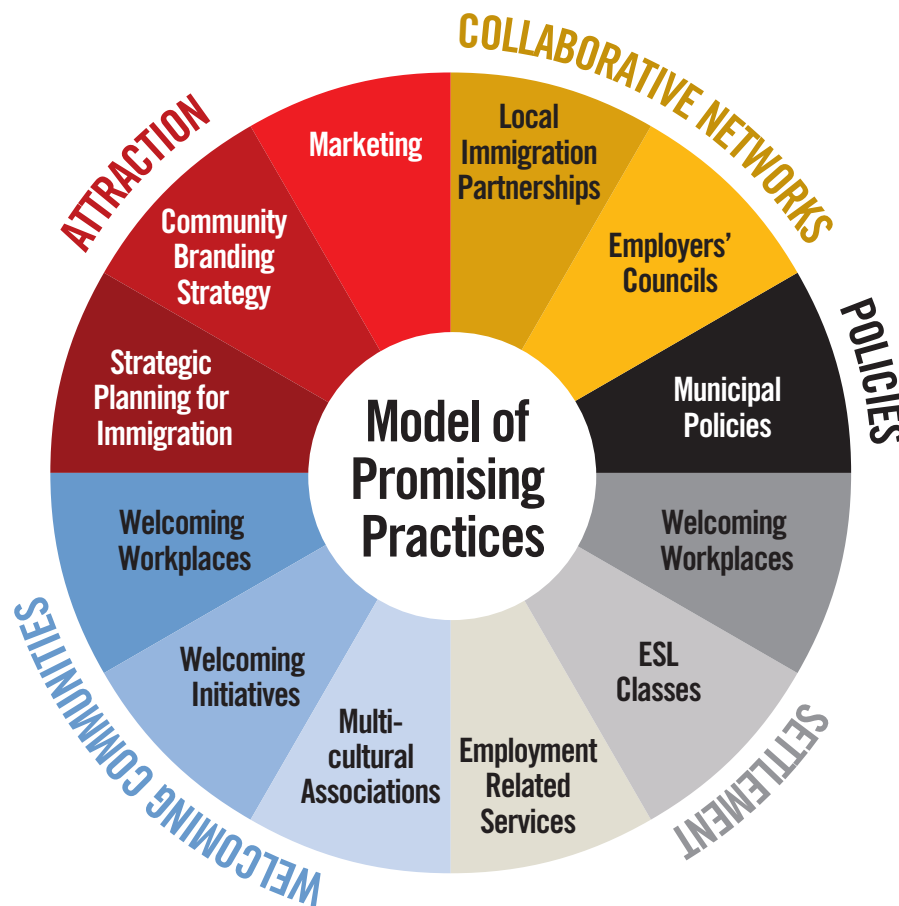
Together these guidelines will help you and your community in eliminating barriers to social and economic integration.

From a newcomer in Stratford:

“Many people think you have a job and you follow the job to the city. Really it is one of the important things but when you have two things at the same time: the character of the city and a job, it is more magnetizing for newcomers. You find the longer time you stay, the more you love it. When I go overseas, I think of Stratford as home.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to present a snapshot of a model of promising practices that we created to help you successfully attract and retain immigrants in rural communities.



The key components of this model are listed below:

■ Attraction

Under this theme, communities are encouraged to build a community-wide branding strategy to market themselves to potential newcomers and create interest in moving into the community.

■ Collaborative Networks

Under the second theme, collaborative networks are encouraged between various stakeholders to help address the needs of immigrants.

■ Policies

This theme brings focus to some of the specific initiatives that municipalities can pursue in support of overall community development. It highlights that municipal interest and involvement can help frame policy that moves the community in the right direction.

■ Settlement

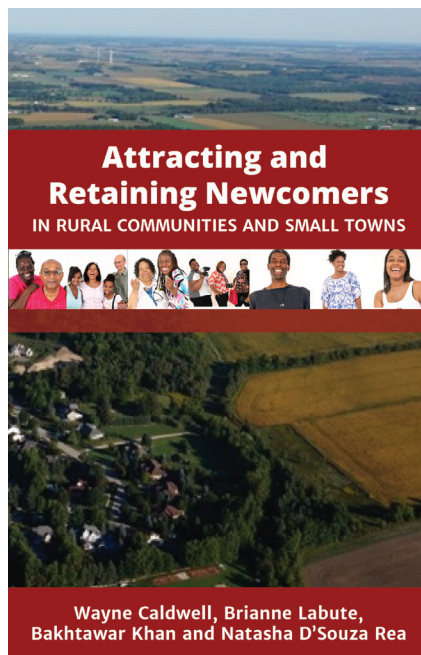
This theme refers to the range of services that can help newcomers adjust to community life, feel settled, and call a community home. It is an essential range of services that will help to ensure that once someone moves to a community that they will stay for the long term.

■ Welcoming Communities

This final theme details specific actions that communities can take to ensure the full participation of all residents in the social, cultural, and economic life of the community. These actions are aimed at creating an attitude shift wherein all residents embrace the diversity within their community.

Want to know more?

If you enjoyed reading this primer and are interested in finding out more about attracting and retaining newcomers to your communities, then you can refer to the following resources:

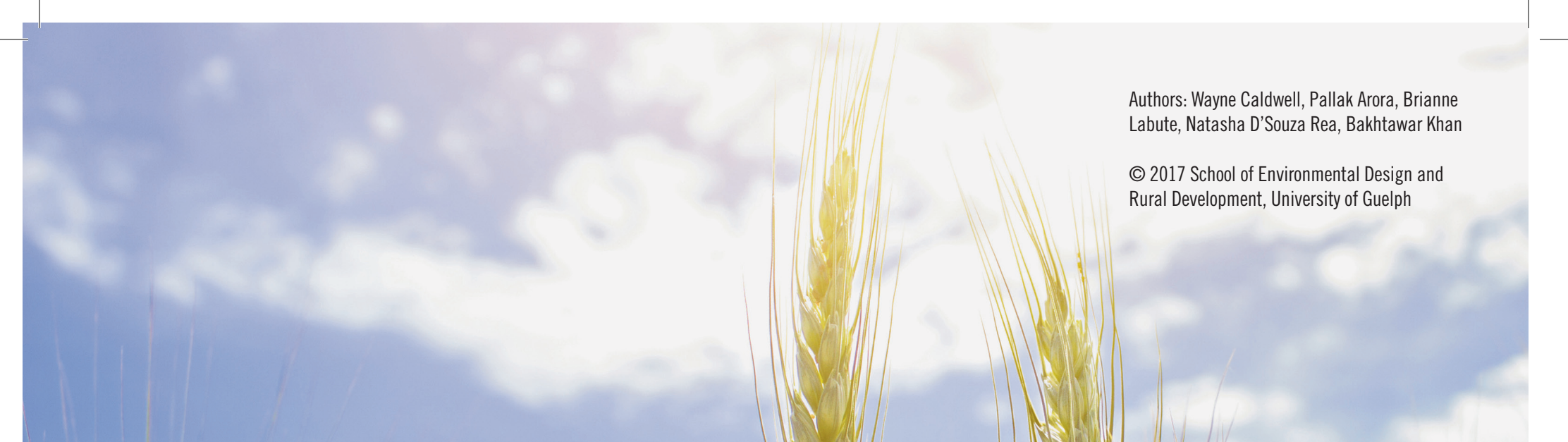


1. Multiple project reports, literature reviews, and resources related to immigration, rural economic development, and healthy rural communities are available on this website: <http://waynecaldwell.ca>
2. Read more about immigration in rural communities in the book titled, “Attracting and Retaining Newcomers in Rural and Small Town Canada” written by Wayne Caldwell, Brianne Labute, Bakhtawar Khan and Natasha D’Souza Rea. The material in this handout was adapted from this book, which has been published by Municipal World.
3. You can also refer to the ‘State of Rural Canada’ report that came out in 2015 on the website: <http://sorc.crrf.ca> It provides great insights on challenges and opportunities faced by rural areas in each Canadian province.
4. Another report funded by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) highlights the role of immigration, the concept of welcoming communities, and practical case studies that communities can follow. It can be found by searching for the title: ‘Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario (CIRRO)’

A Note of Gratitude:

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An elected official celebrating their rural community:

“We are an untold good story. We want to grow, we have everything, but (newcomers) don’t know we are here.”

