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IMMIGRANTS, AGRICULTURE, AND SETTLEMENT OUTSIDE THE GTA

NOVEMBER 2012

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Citation: Janz, K., Dietrich-O'Connor, F., & Stewin, E. (2012). *Immigrants, agriculture, and settlement outside the GTA*. Guelph, ON: Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship. <https://dspace.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/8902>



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INTRODUCTION

Support systems (official programs and services as well as more informal social networks) for immigrants to Canada tend to be highly concentrated in the Greater Toronto Area, and weak or lacking altogether in Ontario's more rural municipalities. This creates a barrier for newcomers to the country who might wish to engage in farming, as they are unlikely to settle in the rural communities where farmland might be available. The issue is of special concern to FarmStart – an organization that aims to help people enter the farming sector.

This report was prepared by interns at The Research Shop, working in collaboration with FarmStart. It focuses on settlement services for new Canadians in four municipalities in Ontario where there is significant potential for agricultural production: Durham Region, London and Middlesex County, Guelph and Wellington County, and Hamilton-Wentworth Region. The report begins by presenting some background information on immigration patterns in Canada, paying particular attention to the context in the four target regions. It then outlines the results of literature and interview research. These results include discussion of: the level of perceived interest in agriculture within immigrant communities; constraints faced by newcomers who wish to engage in farming or settle in rural areas; and, the availability (or lack thereof) of settlement services for people interested in pursuing agriculture.

BACKGROUND

Every year “Canada accepts over 200,000 new immigrants to fulfill the demographic, economic, social and political objectives of its immigration program” (Wang & Truelove, 2003, p. 578.). Over half of these newcomers settle in Ontario, and most settle in urban centres (Wang & Truelove, 2003). In 2001, 39% of Canada's immigrants were living in Toronto, 14% in Vancouver, and 12% in Montreal (Houle, 2007). Concentration of new immigrants in metropolitan areas, often referred to in the literature as the urban bias, is a trend across the country, though its impacts are particularly noticeable in Ontario's Greater Toronto Area (or GTA) (see, Houle, 2007; Reimer, 2007; Reimer, et al., 2007; Rose & Desmarais, 2007; Wang & Truelove, 2003), where support systems (official programs and services as well as more informal social networks) for immigrants tend to be highly concentrated.

Research on settlement location choices has identified a number of important factors that encourage people to settle in particular communities. The most important are: 1) the preexistence of immigrant communities; 2) employment/economic opportunities; and 3) quality of life factors. Each of these factors will be explored in depth in the following sections.



PREEXISTENCE OF IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

One factor identified as a key determinant of immigration location decisions is the size of the preexisting immigrant community in a location. According to McDonald (2004, p. 98) for example, “even after controlling for a wide range of observable and unobservable determinants of location choice, many new immigrants choose to locate in particular regions because relatively high concentrations of immigrants from the same ethnic group already reside there.” This finding is also supported by Piil Damm (2009) who finds that a main factor that pushes new immigrants to leave second and third tier communities (i.e. those with populations less than one million or 500 000, respectively), is a “lack of co-nationals and immigrants” (p.1). According to McDonald (2004, p. 87) an important reason for this trend is that larger immigrant populations “can provide a sense of belonging and security to immigrants moving to a new and unfamiliar country and large communities of immigrants may imply greater availability of services directly tailored to new immigrants.”

Other studies have emphasized the importance of family ties in location decisions. For example, according to a 2003 Statistics Canada study 41% of immigrants reported that the most important reason for their location choice was that they had a spouse, partner or other family member in that location (Chui, 2003). Similarly, in a study of refugee retention in second and third tier cities, Krahan, Derwing, & Abu-Laban (2005, p. 887) found that, when asked “why did you leave”, 12% of the study’s respondents “commented on a desire to be closer to family and friends or to live in a community where others from the same ethnic/racial group were living.”

Table 1 depicts the number and percentage of immigrants living in each of the regions targeted in this report using data from the 2006 census. As the table indicates, of the four focus communities, Hamilton Division has the largest immigrant population, with 48.4 percent of the population reporting immigrant status in the 2006 census.

Table 1.
Number and percentage of immigrants by census division

Census Division	Number of Immigrants	%
Durham Region	113,395	20.3
Hamilton Division	126,485	25.1
Middlesex County	83,450	19.8
Wellington County	33,740	16.8

Note: Source Statistics Canada 2007





EMPLOYMENT/ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Another important factor that has been found to contribute to the overall attractiveness of a community is economic or employment opportunities. Krahan et al. (2005, p. 886) for example found that, when explaining the reasons for leaving a community, 45% of immigrants participating in their study “focused on insufficient or inadequate employment opportunities.” Studies by Chui (2005) and Piil Damm (2009) also support this finding. In the Chui (2005) study, for example, 14% of respondents cited job prospects as the main reason behind their destination choice.

As a crude measure of employment opportunities, Table 2 shows the unemployment rate in each of the four focus communities. As is indicated, most of the target communities have unemployment rates lower than, or on par with, the provincial average. The municipality of Wellington has a particularly low unemployment rate of 4.5 percent.

Table 2.
Unemployment Rate by Census Division.

Census Division	Unemployment Rate (%)
Durham Region	6.3
Hamilton Division	6.5
Middlesex County	6.1
Wellington County	4.5
Ontario Average	6.4

Note: Source (Statistics Canada, 2007)

Because this report is focused specifically on opportunities for immigrants to engage in the agricultural sector, Table 3 presents some data regarding agricultural employment in each of the four focus communities. As the table indicates, Wellington County has the highest average percentage of labour force employed in agriculture, although Durham Region has by far the highest number of people engaged in agriculture and other resource-based industries.





Table 3.

Total population and percentage of total labour force employed in agriculture by census division.

Census Division	Total population employment in agriculture and other resource-based industries	% of total labour force employed in agriculture and other resource based industries
Durham Region	10,880	3.5
Hamilton Division	5,465	2.1
Middlesex County	6,230	2.7
Wellington County	5,275	4.6

Note: Source Statistics Canada (2007)

QUALITY OF LIFE FACTORS (EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES, SERVICES, ETC.)

In addition to existing familial ties and economic factors, studies have also found that a number of quality of life factors play an important role in determining immigrants' location selection decisions. Educational opportunities were found to be particularly relevant (Chui, 2003; Krahan et al. 2005; Piil Damm, 2009). Krahan et al. (2005, p. 886), for example, found that in their study when respondents were asked about their reasons for leaving second and third tier cities for larger centres, 12% of the reasons cited for were related to "limited educational opportunities (particularly post-secondary education)." Other important quality of life factors cited by the literature include the size of the community, the climate, the cost or availability of housing and community reception/hospitality (Chui, 2003; Krahan et al. 2005; Piil Damm, 2009). A final important factor, which was identified by 9% of responses in the Krahan et al. (2005, p. 886) study, is the "inadequacy or non-availability of settlement and English language services for refugees."

RESEARCH GOALS

With that background information in mind, the primary goal of this research project was to explore the availability of services designed to support newcomers interested in rural settlement and/or agricultural careers living within the Durham Region, London and Middlesex County, Guelph and Wellington County, and Hamilton-Wentworth Region.



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The specific research objectives were to:

1. Gauge the perceived level of newcomer interest in rural settlement and the agricultural sector;
2. Collect information on service availability and accessibility for newcomers wishing to settle outside of the GTA and access farmland;
3. Identify service gaps;
4. Assess stakeholder interest in working to fill service gaps, for example through potential collaboration with FarmStart

METHODS

SOURCES

The research focused on four municipalities in Ontario: Durham Region, London and Middlesex County, Guelph and Wellington County, and Hamilton-Wentworth Region. These municipalities were chosen because all four are located within or in proximity to Ontario's "permanently protected green space and farmland" known as the Greenbelt, yet are also fairly close to the GTA region (About the Greenbelt, 2012). These areas have also been cited as having well-established agricultural employment industries (Services Near Me, 2009).

Research was conducted using two methods: literature review and informational interviews. The literature review focused on settlement location decisions. Informational interviews were conducted with settlement service providers and agricultural organizations within the four municipalities. The interview guide for this project was created by Research Shop interns, in collaboration with FarmStart (see Appendix A). It consisted of questions designed to collect information on: immigrant interest in rural settlement and agricultural work; service availability and accessibility; barriers to service provision; service provider networks; and, stakeholder interest in collaborating with FarmStart on work to facilitate entry to the farming sector for new Canadians.

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection phase of this project took place during May and June of 2012, and was comprised of informational phone interviews with 11 respondents as well as email interviews with four respondents, for a total of 15 interviews. A total of 35 individuals working as facilitators, directors, coordinators and project managers from settlement, community, and farm organizations were initially contacted via email to participate in this research project. Of the 35 initially contacted, 24 responded to the request for an interview; however, 15 individuals actually participated in a complete interview. The remaining nine individuals that responded chose not to participate, primarily because they did not feel they would be able to provide relevant information. (See Appendix B for a complete list of organizations contacted and organizations that participated in the research.) Although it was anticipated that initial contacts would provide



referrals to more potential interviewees, most participants were unable to provide information on relevant contacts, as they tended to be unaware of actors working to connect new immigrants to farmland, or providing related services.

Table 4: Interview Participants

Region	Organization
Durham	Durham College
	Durham Farm Connections
	Durham Federation of Agriculture
	OMAFRA Durham
	Durham Region Economic Development & Tourism Branch
London-Middlesex	OMAFRA London
	South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre
	YMCA of Western Ontario
	French-Canadian Association of London-Sarnia
Hamilton-Wentworth	YMCA of Hamilton
Guelph-Wellington	Ontario Federation of Agriculture
	Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership
	Immigrant Services of Guelph-Wellington
	Wellington County Social Services – Settlement Services Program

RESULTS/FINDINGS

NEWCOMERS’ LEVEL OF INTEREST IN FARMING AND RURAL SETTLEMENT

As previously mentioned, all four municipalities targeted in this research are located within or in proximity to Ontario’s Greenbelt. Durham Region, Guelph and Wellington County, and Hamilton-Wentworth Region are located within an hour’s drive of the GTA, while London and Middlesex County is located 2.5 hours southwest. London and the surrounding area of Middlesex County has been cited as containing “some of the most productive farmland in Ontario”, although extensive agricultural industries have also been established within Hamilton-Wentworth, Guelph-Wellington, and Durham Regions (Services Near Me, 2009). Thus there is at least the potential for immigrants to be drawn to agricultural opportunities in each of these communities.

Interest in Farming and Rural Settlement

When asked whether newcomers in the area demonstrate interest in farming careers and rural settlement, eight out of fifteen participants responded with “yes”. While some participants discussed this interest in reference to the local immigrant population as a whole, others illustrated this interest by making reference to particular clients and their stories.



Participants from London-Middlesex and Durham reported that many newcomers are interested in growing their own food, especially fruits and vegetables from their home countries that are not widely available in Canada. The office of one Durham participant has been receiving letters from individuals abroad requesting information on how to start a farm in Ontario, as well as inquires regarding grant opportunities for new farmers. Another participant also noted that two to three individuals have come to her office within the past six months seeking similar information. A London participant also referred to two clients – one a recent Agronomics Graduate, and the other a skilled worker with a Master’s degree in Science and Technology – who both expressed interest in agricultural employment and/or starting up their own agriculture businesses. Although these particular individuals were unable to pursue their interests in agriculture (for reasons that will be discussed in the section on barriers later in this report), the settlement coordinator did provide them with the opportunity to join a community garden. Participants from both London-Middlesex County and Durham Region indicated that newcomers with a background in agriculture tend to express a desire to keep it in their lives, and pursue that goal through maintaining personal or community garden plots if no other options are available.

Lack of Interest in Farming and Rural Settlement

While over half of the research participants indicated knowing of at least some individuals with an interest in pursuing agriculture, a settlement advisor from London stated that it is more common for newcomers to feel more comfortable settling in urban areas, often living near family and friends. By contrast, many would view a farmhouse as a “place of isolation”. One Durham Region participant acknowledged that there is a clear interest in agricultural employment among the Canadian newcomer population, but emphasized that more newcomers are interested in establishing food processing businesses, rather than participating in the production of raw foods. Similarly, in Guelph-Wellington the focus is on the shifting skill sets within agriculture and beyond: bioscience, biotechnology, business management, technical knowledge and interpersonal skills. Employment within technical fields of agriculture is encouraged through specific visas to Guelph. Participants from Guelph-Wellington unanimously indicated that they have not observed an interest in farming from newcomers. One participant noted that, on average, approximately 0-5 people with a background in agriculture and 0-5 people with a background in horticulture and forestry were coming to Guelph per year. However, it should be noted that Guelph receives secondary immigration from Toronto and there is no data for these newcomers. Another interviewee noted that, throughout her ten-year career, she had only met five individuals interested in agricultural employment and settlement within a rural area. This participant explained that, in her experience working as a settlement advisor, if newcomers do have interest in the agricultural sector, they generally seek out information informally (i.e. from friends and the greater immigrant community) rather than turning to employment agencies and community organizations for information and advice. This comment suggests that the level of immigrant interest in pursuing agriculture may potentially be underestimated as a result of communication gaps between newcomers and settlement agencies. The lack of information



on secondary immigration could, similarly, contribute to under-estimation of immigrant interest in farming opportunities.

BARRIERS PROHIBITING FARMING AND RURAL SETTLEMENT FOR NEWCOMERS

The initial goal of this research was to establish a list of available services for newcomers interested in agricultural careers and rural settlement within the four previously mentioned municipalities. However, research demonstrated that relevant services appear to be rare or absent within these communities, highlighting a significant service gap. As a result, the focus of this project was modified somewhat to focus on service provision barriers and to highlight the challenges faced by new immigrants interested in starting a farm operation.

Lack of Transportation

The majority of interviewees cited transportation as the most difficult challenge faced by newcomers to Canada interested in working and training on farms. Respondents emphasized that farm owners cannot afford to provide transportation to people living in urban areas and, as a result, newcomers must rely on costly and/or inconvenient methods of public transportation or coordinate carpools if they are interested in on-farm opportunities. Interviewees explained that new immigrants often lack access to a vehicle, prompting them to pursue employment in urban areas where public transportation is available. When newcomers do purchase a vehicle, some with backgrounds in agriculture will then attempt to pursue employment opportunities located within rural areas. However, interviewees noted that this often takes several years due to the high costs associated with living in urban Ontario. Interviewees stressed that further research on the issue is needed in order to understand in greater detail how immigrants are affected by transportation barriers. Interviewees also suggested that addressing transportation barriers be made a priority among farmer training programs across Ontario.

Lack of Access to Land and Capital

Several interviewees mentioned the important role that OMAFRA workshops play in providing advice and technical information to those starting a farm business within Ontario. However, they also stressed that despite these workshops and information sessions often being offered at no cost, eligibility criteria (i.e. owning an established farm) can prohibit participation for new immigrants. Two interview respondents noted that they had received inquiries from immigrants requesting information on government grants for new farmers in Ontario, but had to tell their clients that no such grants are currently available. Interviewees cited financial institutions' reluctance to provide loans to those interested in starting a farm business within Ontario as a barrier, as many lenders do not associate independent farms as being profitable enough to warrant the risk. The lack of existing farmland ownership and access to financial capital, paired with the challenges new farmers face in securing external funds, makes entering the agricultural business sector particularly difficult for newcomers to Canada.



Social Isolation

While a lack of transportation and resources were the most frequently cited barriers keeping newcomers from pursuing agricultural careers, various other complications were also mentioned. For example, one interviewee suggested that immigrants' plans to pursue agriculture and rural settlement often fail to materialize due to "rural logistics". In part, this was a reference to the lack of transportation services available in rural areas, but also to a lack of social and cultural opportunities, a lack of overall ethnic diversity, and limited entertainment options that tend to characterize rural areas. Similar concerns were also expressed by another research participant, who explained that new immigrants may view farmhouses as isolating places. This participant suggested that, in order to encourage newcomers to pursue agricultural careers, land must be made available within close proximity to urban areas.

Lack of Available Information

The research highlighted the fact that a lack of available information regarding existing agricultural opportunities can be a barrier against newcomers to Canada entering the farming sector. Specifically, a number of interviewees noted that they knew of medical education programs and construction-training opportunities offered to immigrants; however, they were generally unaware of available opportunities specific to agricultural careers. Some participants suspected that relevant programs or services might exist but, because they may be very "grassroots", "small", and/or "underfunded", they may be poorly advertised. As a result, those providing services to newcomers to Canada may be unaware of their existence and thus unable to pass along potentially useful information.

POTENTIAL FOR SERVICE EXPANSION

When participants were asked whether their organization had plans to address the barriers described above and fill the identified service gaps, the most common response was either "no" or "not right now". The main reason for this was a feeling that the potential client base was too small to warrant devoting very limited funding to services focused on immigrants interested in agriculture. This was especially the case in rural areas, where even the most basic of services for immigrants are often unavailable. Another reason that was cited was concern that it might be difficult to spread the word about potential new agriculture-focused programs among immigrant communities. This highlights an interesting issue: although many of those involved in providing services to newcomers to Canada were aware of communication channels such as immigration portals, newsletters, and websites, some were fairly unfamiliar with the details of these communication options, pointing again to the potential problem of a disconnect between services that might be available and awareness about these services. Finally, many organizations that provide services to immigrants have funding limitations that prevent a broadening of their current mandate.

**POTENTIAL COLLABORATION WITH FARMSTART**

The final objective of this project was to explore how participating organizations might already be working in collaboration, and assess their level interest in possible collaboration or cooperation with FarmStart. Prior to conducting phone interviews, participants were provided with a link to FarmStart's website via email, and a description of FarmStart's work was provided during interviews. When asked whether or not they would be interested in collaborating with FarmStart in the future, the majority of participants felt that it was difficult to predict. This was primarily because they were unsure whether or not there would be sufficient interest amongst their client base, and also because some participants did not feel able to make any commitment on behalf of their organization without consultation.

One participant from Durham, who had made prior contact with FarmStart, was directly interested in cultivating a collaborative relationship. This enthusiastic participant suggested that she would be interested in speaking with FarmStart about setting up a potential incubator-training farm in Pickering, which she noted is a community with a high population of immigrants with agricultural backgrounds. All participants in Guelph-Wellington were interested in learning more about any potential work FarmStart might be doing to connect immigrants with the agricultural sector, and asked to be kept informed of FarmStart's progress. While only one Guelph-Wellington organization had FarmStart brochures already, all indicated interest in having information about FarmStart's programs that could be passed along to clients.

**EXISTING SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS:
DURHAM REGION****Community Gardens**

Type of Service: Agricultural

Relation to Research: Referred to by Interview Participants

Services Offered:

Although community gardens were mentioned by a number of participants, these gardens do not provide newcomers with any formalized training, rather they provide newcomers, with a background in agriculture or gardening an inexpensive opportunity to continue to cultivate these interests.

Contact Information:

Whitby Ajax Community Garden: www.durhamdigs.ca/wacg

Durham Organic Gardeners: www.durhamorganicgardeners.com

Garden of Eatin': www.seedsnc.org/gardenofeatin.html

**Durham College-School of Science and Engineering Technology****Type of Service:** Agricultural**Relation to Research:** Interview Participant**Services Offered:**

Food and Farming Course (to be offered for the first time in fall, 2012):

This course provides a holistic education that strives to prepare future farmers with the training needed to produce local, organic and fresh products. This course provides students with training in the following: local food production, urban agriculture, commercial gardening, fruit and vegetable production in field and greenhouse conditions, disease and pest management, food processing, food quality skills, plant propagation, soil and plant nutrition. The course also offers education on niche marketing, agri-business, sanitation and safety, food regulations and provides information on potential career paths to students.

Admission Requirements: Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent, grade 12 English and math Recommended: A background in biology, chemistry, or environmental sciences.

Tuition Fees: \$2,533 Domestic Students (does not include costs associated with textbooks and other supplies)

Contact Information: <http://www.durhamcollege.ca/programs/food-and-farming>

Durham Farm Connections**Type of Service:** Agricultural**Relation to Research:** Interview Participant**Services Offered:**

Enhanced Communication Programs:

These programs, although not designed specifically for newcomers interested in agriculture, provide new immigrants with job placement and training opportunities within their field of interest. Although the majority of newcomers receive training and job experience in other employment sectors, there are a limited number of farm job placements, designed to familiarize newcomers with Ontario agriculture, available for those that come to Canada with an existing background in agriculture. In order to make these opportunities more accessible to newcomers, a free bus pass is provided to all enrolled in the program.

Small Business Services:

Offered to those interested in starting any type of small business within the Durham Region. Support is primarily offered in the form of business planning. Those interested in starting a farm business are often encouraged to attend workshops provided by Durham



Farm Connections in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), and are also encouraged to review a number of OMAFRA information bundles and publications. These resources are available on the OMAFRA website, though the publication, *Starting a Farm in Ontario*, must be ordered at a cost of \$15.00. Durham Farm Connections provides printed and bound copies of this publication to interested individuals at no cost.

Farm Tours:

Free educational farm tours are primarily given to school children, politicians, and policy makers, but anyone is welcome to attend.

Contact Information: www.durhamfarmconnections.ca

Durham Immigration Portal

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Referred to by Interview Participants.

Services Offered:

This portal provides newcomers with information on housing and local schools, as well as links to social and cultural services. There are several employment related links providing newcomers with information on resume layouts, local labour market facts, and job search resources and workshops. It should be noted that resources specific to agricultural employment were not found.

*Note: Research interviewees were unaware whether their organizations' services were advertised on the immigration portal. A scan of the portal indicated that this service information was not accessible on the portal.

Contact Information: www.durhamimmigration.ca

**EXISTING SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS:
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX COUNTY****Community Gardens**

Type of Service: Agricultural

Relation to Research: Referred to by Interview Participants

Services Offered:

Middlesex County Master Gardener/Environmental and Community Stewardship Program: Master Gardeners are community volunteers trained in gardening and environmental principles. In order to obtain Master Gardener certification, 60 hours of



classroom/field trip time are required while in training. After achieving certification, 25 hours of volunteer service are required each year.

Contact Information: Middlesex County Ag Extension: (732) 398-5262
www.co.middlesex.nj.us/extensionservices/agriculture-master.asp

London Community Resource Centre: Provides a list of community garden plots, as well as gardening tips and fact sheets.

Contact Information: Community Gardens: (519) 432-1801 or lcrc@lcrc.on.ca
www.lcrc.on.ca/garden_locations.html

French Canadian Association of Ontario (AFCO)

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Interview Participant

Services Offered:

AFCO provides basic settlement services to newcomers within the London and Sarnia area. The only service available to those interested in starting a farm are small business services which provide newcomers with business planning advice, and financial management information.

Contact Information: www.acfo-hamilton.on.ca

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Contacted for Interview.

Services Offered:

Provides numerous services for newcomers, including translation services, settlement counseling, and job search workshops.

Contact Information: (519)-858-4266 or cclc@lcclc.org
www.lcclc.org

London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council

Type of Service: Immigrant Employment

Relation to Research: Contacted for Interview.



Services Offered:

Engages London-Middlesex employers in the delivery of strategies that facilitate the recruitment and retention of internationally trained individuals in regional employment opportunities commensurate with international training and experience.

Contact Information: (519) 663-0774 ext. 228 or info@lmiec.ca
www.lmiec.ca

**EXISTING SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS:
GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY**

Future Watch

Type of Service: Agricultural

Relation to Research: Referred to by Interview Participant

Services Offered:

A few interview participants mentioned the work that Future Watch has been doing in Guelph. The peri-urban farm project is a partnership between Future Watch, Backyard Bounty and the Salvation Army. Each partner has a target demographic, which in the case of Future Watch are newcomers to Canada. The organization also educates Settlement Agencies on issues of the environment and sustainability within the workplace. Many interview participants mentioned that Future Watch has come to their workplace to do a presentation.

Contact: Guelph Office at 10 Carden: 1-519-265-5710 or info@futurewatch.net

Guelph Wellington Local Immigrant Partnership

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Interview Participant

Services Offered:

A coalition of over 60 individuals representing various groups in the community, including newcomers, ethno-cultural organizations, service providers, businesses and the public. The coalition works towards creating a more welcoming community where everyone thrives.

Contact: (519) 822-1260 or <http://guelphwellingtonlip.ca/contact.php>

Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Interview Participant



Services Offered:

Language assessments, translation and interpretation, workshops and programs such as tax clinics, computer clubs, senior groups and tutoring.

Wellington County Social Services, Settlement Services Program

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Interview Participant

Services Offered:

Needs assessments, assistance with acquiring government documentation, referral to economic, social, health, cultural, educational and recreational services. Other services include resume and pre-employment programming along with other employment related services.

**EXISTING SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS:
HAMILTON-WENTWORTH REGION**

Circle of Friends

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Contacted for Interview

Services Offered:

Offers a range of ESL/LINC classes from literacy to LINC level 4 with accompanying childcare services for eligible students.

Contact information: (905) 529-1840 or circleof_friends@bellnet.ca
www.circleoffriends.ca

City of Hamilton

Type of Service: Agricultural

Relation to Research: Resource

Services Offered:

The City of Hamilton's official website does contain a publication, *Farming Training Programs in Ontario – Independent Page*, which provides a detailed list of farmer training programs available in Ontario. The report can be found at: <http://goo.gl/53ouS>

Contact Information: General Inquiries (905)-546-2489

**Saint Joseph's Immigrant Women's Centre**

Type of Service: Settlement Services

Relation to Research: Interview Participant

Services Offered:

Supports immigrant women by providing information in 20 different languages, as well as orienting women to the community. Information is provided on immigration and community resources and services. The organization also provides referrals to such services as well as assistance with form completion and interpretation.

Contact Information: (905) 529-5209
www.stjosephwomen.on.ca

YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington and Brantford

Type of Service: Agricultural

Relation to Research: Interview Participant

Services Offered:

Although the YMCA does not have any permanent programs in place offering support to newcomers interested in agriculture, it does occasionally implement programs on a needs basis. For example, a few years back the Hamilton community received a large influx of Burmese refugees with agricultural backgrounds. These refugees expressed to the YMCA settlement workers that they wanted to stay connected to the land through the pursuit of agriculture. As a result, the YMCA decided to rent land from the city and started a small-scale garden project for them.

Contact Information: Community Outreach Program (905) 317-4901
www.ymcahbb.ca

CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

→ **Interest in farming and rural settlement.** The research results were somewhat inconclusive regarding the question of perceived immigrant interest in farming and rural settlement. Approximately half of the interview participants who work with immigrant communities felt that there was at least some interest, while the other half generally felt that interest levels were low or non-existent. There was some suggestions that, because little information is available regarding formal services for immigrants with an interest in farming, people may turn to informal networks to pursue opportunities. If that is the case, it is possible



that people working with more formal immigrant service providers may underestimate actual levels of interest.

→ **Barriers preventing farming and rural settlement.** According to both the literature and interview research done for this report, the primary barriers that constrain the ability of newcomers to Canada to engage in agriculture are: 1) a lack of transportation options (particularly public transportation) to and within rural areas; 2) a lack of access to land, capital, and credit; and, 3) the social isolation of rural life, which can compound the already isolating experience of moving to a new country. The striking lack of programs and services that target immigrants interested in pursuing agricultural opportunities can make it challenging to overcome these barriers. Even where programs or services may exist, the availability of information appears to be limited.

→ **Stakeholders' interest in collaborating with FarmStart.** There was general consensus amongst interview participants that, due primarily to funding constraints, any expansion of services to specifically target immigrants interested in farming and rural settlement would be difficult, if not impossible. Many participants further suggested that such expansion could not be justified because the potential pool of interested people was perceived to be too small. Having said that, most participants did express at least some interest in FarmStart's work. This interest ranged from a willingness to provide clients with FarmStart brochures to, in one case, a desire to work with FarmStart on the development of an incubator farm targeting immigrant communities in the Pickering area. All research participants in the Guelph-Wellington area – where FarmStart's main office is located – indicated interest in being kept informed about any potential project development aiming to create opportunities for immigrant engagement in the farming sector.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

A number of implications are suggested by the results of this research:

1. Further work to more accurately assess the level of interest within immigrant communities to engage in the agricultural sector would be valuable. Depending on results, such work could be used to encourage settlement service agencies to increase programming targeted at that group.
2. Opportunities exist to increase the availability of information regarding entering the agricultural sector for immigrant communities. Existing service providers appear willing to provide clients with such information, but often do not have it themselves.



Organizations such as FarmStart could potentially help bridge this communication/information gap.

3. Making land for agricultural production available in or near urban centres would address many of the major barriers that make it difficult for immigrants to engage in farming. Such efforts could be made on a variety of scales – from community garden plots to larger-scale urban farms. It would be important for any such project to address the aforementioned information gap, by maintaining close communication with existing immigrant service providers.

LIMITATIONS

The primary limitation of this research was that it proved challenging to find participants with relevant information and/or experience in the four target communities. In particular, it was difficult to connect to either agricultural or immigrant service organizations in Hamilton-Wentworth. As such, the results reflect the views of a relatively small sample of people, especially in the case of the Hamilton area. It should also be noted that the research did not include direct work with immigrant communities; rather, it focused only on service providers to those communities.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

RURAL SETTLEMENT FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you tell me a little bit about what programs or services (if any) your organization offers for immigrants who are interested in rural settlement?
 - a. Are any programs or services specifically targeted to immigrants interested in becoming farmers? Please explain.
 - i. In your experience, have immigrants expressed an interest in farming?
 - b. Are immigrants interested in settling in more rural areas of Ontario a population that your organization would like to serve?
 - i. In your experience, have immigrants expressed an interest in settling in rural areas of Ontario?
 - c. Are immigrants interested in farming a population that your organization would like to serve?
2. If you have programs or services targeted at rural settlement and/or entry into farming, how are they promoted/advertised?
 - a. How do interested parties gain access?
 - b. Are there eligibility requirements? If so, what are they?
3. Do you see the programs or services you offer for immigrants interested in rural settlement and/or farming as lacking in any way?
 - a. What gaps in services do you see?
 - b. What barriers are there to addressing these gaps?
 - c. Does your organization have a plan to address these gaps in the future? If so, how?
4. Do you know of any other organizations that offer programs or services for immigrants interested in settling in rural areas and/or starting a farm business?
 - a. Are you currently collaborating with any of these organizations? Which ones? How so?
 - b. Do you see any opportunities for future collaboration? Please explain.
5. Would you be interested in collaborating with FarmStart to develop a possible pilot project geared towards facilitating immigrants' settlement in more rural municipalities and their ability to start farm businesses?



APPENDIX B: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS CONTACTED AND INTERVIEWED

	Participated in Research Study (✓)
Durham Region	Community Development Council Durham Durham College ✓ Durham Farm Connections ✓ Durham Federation of Agriculture ✓ Durham Master Gardeners ✓ Durham Region Economic Development and Tourism Branch ✓ Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre OMAFRA Durham ✓
London and Middlesex County	AFCO London-Sarnia ✓ London Cross Cultural Learner Centre London Federation of Agriculture London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council London Training Centre OMAFRA London ✓ Skills International – London South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre ✓ The London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership YMCA of Western Ontario ✓
Guelph and Wellington County	Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario (CIRRO) – Wellington Guelph-Wellington Local Immigrant Partnership ✓ Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington ✓ Ontario Federation of Agriculture ✓ Wellington County Social Services – Settlement Services Program ✓ Wellington Federation of Agriculture
Hamilton-Wentworth Region	ACFO Hamilton Circle of Friends for Newcomers Green Venture Hamilton Chinese Community Services Centre Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council Hamilton Micah House Hamilton Wentworth Federation of Agriculture St. Josephs Women Centre YMCA Employment Services YMCA of Hamilton ✓
Ontario	OMAFRA Head Office Ontario Federation of Agriculture Head Office