



# Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario (CIRRO)

Helping rural communities to attract  
and retain skilled newcomers

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Affairs



## Addressing community concerns

Stakeholders and community members may express concerns or negative feedback regarding newcomer attraction and retention. Every concern is legitimate and can help flag issues in a community. They are often based on perception, but it is important to address all concerns using clear and factual information. The ability to address concerns and resistance to change is important to the success of your plan because it increases community buy-in and support.

Above all, it's important to listen to community concerns and respond as quickly as circumstances allow.



### Expert Tip: Communities respond to negative perceptions about newcomers

Attracting newcomers to a small community can sometimes cause negative perceptions about immigrants to rise to the surface. There are a number of tools available that can help respond to these issues.

In North Bay, the Mayor has an online blog which allows for a direct response to opinions and comments and provides a forum to discuss the rationale behind newcomer initiatives. There is also an online multicultural radio show ([www.northbayradio.ca/multicultural](http://www.northbayradio.ca/multicultural)) that the North Bay and District Multicultural Centre uses to create public awareness.

In Brockville, the local newspaper publishes business immigrants' success stories and the opportunities these newcomers have brought to the community.

## Addressing newcomer concerns

Newcomer attraction and retention is a two-way process that also involves responding to the needs, concerns and negative perceptions of potential immigrants.

Competition for skilled, well-educated people is increasing and this includes both potential newcomers, as well as people who are already in the talent pool. For immigrants, choosing which community to settle in is a big decision that will have a lasting impact on their career and the future of their family. Understandably, they want to make the right choice. The more effectively you can address their concerns, the more likely it is that the 'best and brightest' immigrants will choose your community.

Perception	Opportunities
Lack of job opportunities	<p>Convey the opportunities that exist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the job opportunities that exist in the community.</li> <li>Address language concerns and provide information about the recognition of foreign credentials.</li> <li>Identify workplace integration programs that address the issues.</li> </ul>
Isolation	<p>Communicate reasons to live in rural settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate your community's strengths.</li> <li>Rural places are often distinguished by their amenities – usually in the form of natural resources such as, lakes, rivers, parks, beaches.</li> <li>List the available local facilities and highlight the public access to them.</li> <li>Additional amenities include the availability of land and low cost of living.</li> <li>Encourage visits to your communities by prospective immigrants to allow for first-hand knowledge and a personal response to that area.</li> </ul>
Lack of services	<p>Communicate the range of organizations and services your community offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify regional organizations that provide settlement services and ESL training and serve your community.</li> <li>Identify organizations and/or individuals in your community that provide settlement services and ESL training.</li> <li>This is also an opportunity to utilize volunteer services to meet settlement needs.</li> </ul>