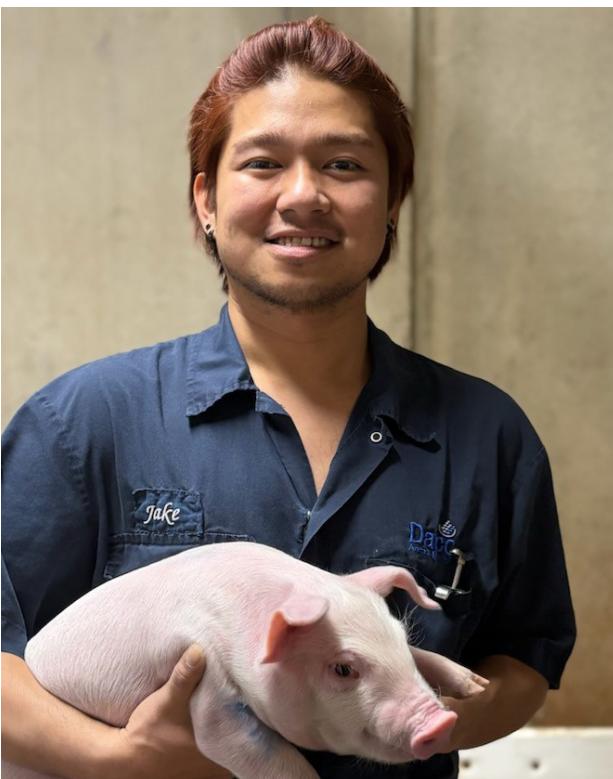


Immigration in Huron County

An introduction



County of Huron | Immigration Partnership

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Contents



02	About this guide
03	Introduction
04	Why immigration matters
08	Infographic
10	Immigration pathways to Canada / Economic immigrants
11	Family members
12	Refugees
13	International students
14	Temporary workers
15	Migrants without permits
16	Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency
17	Supporting newcomers in Huron
18	Learning about your community
19	References

About this guide

This guide was created by the Huron County Immigration Partnership, with support from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, to help interested community members better understand the complexities of immigration and why it remains relevant for Huron County's growth.

The Huron County Immigration Partnership aims to build a welcoming community where newcomers to Canada feel supported, have a sense of belonging and are integrated through participation in all areas of life. Huron County's Immigration Partnership collaborates with immigrants, service providers, community members, organizations and businesses to strengthen collaboration, build capacity of the newcomer serving ecosystem, organize welcoming community events, develop information and conduct research.

The information included within this guide is accurate as of January 2026. Please note that due to the evolving nature of immigration policy, it's important to seek updated information on government websites.

Introduction

Canada is a country of Indigenous Peoples and immigrants

In Huron County, every family's story begins either with deep Indigenous roots or with a journey from another place. While Indigenous families have lived here for many thousands of years,¹ immigrant families have been here a few hundred years or less. Fortunately, Indigenous families taught the immigrant families what they needed to survive here including growing corn, beans and squash, identifying medicinal plants, how to use snowshoes, and much more.

Canada's immigration story has never been a straightforward path; it has always been shaped by economic needs and changing social attitudes.

Canada is multicultural

In 1982, multiculturalism was recognized by section 27 of the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).³ The Charter protects people from the moment they arrive in Canada and ensures that human rights are respected.

Later, in 1988, the [Canadian Multiculturalism Act](#) was enacted and serves as a legislative framework for promoting diversity, equality and inclusion in Canada, recognizing multiculturalism as a defining characteristic of Canadian identity.⁴

Immigration has often taken an economic approach, but it is important to consider the social and cultural benefits as well. Efforts to balance the needs and rights of all people in Canada and those who wish to settle here are ongoing, yet there is no question that Canada needs immigration for a secure and prosperous future.

Over the last century, Canada has welcomed immigrants from around the world. Immigrants prior to World War II (WW2) arrived largely from the UK, and from continental Europe after WW2. Currently, most immigrants come from Asia and Africa, a trend that is expected to continue.

The result is that Canada became and remains a vibrant, multicultural society. In fact, until 2024, Canada was in the midst of the largest intake of immigrants in its history as the government looked to rebuild the economy and labour force following the Covid-19 pandemic.² This history underscores immigration's enduring role in building a resilient economy and a diverse, inclusive society.



Cricket is a growing sport in Huron County and enjoyed by people at events like Newcomer Day at Camp, held each summer near Goderich.

¹ David Yates, "County History," Ontario Genealogical Society, Huron County Branch. <https://huron.ogs.on.ca/pre-settlement/>

² Leah Hamilton et al., "As Canada welcomes historic numbers of immigrants, how can communities be more welcoming?" The Conversation, June 29, 2023. <https://theconversation.com/as-canada-welcomes-historic-numbers-of-immigrants-how-can-communities-be-more-welcoming-206054>

³ Government of Canada, "The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." Last modified April 16, 2025. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/index.html>

⁴ Government of Canada, "About the Canadian Multiculturalism Act." Last modified June 3, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/about-multiculturalism-anti-racism/about-act.html>

Why immigration matters

Newcomers start businesses and employ Canadians

Immigrants account for 32% of all business owners with paid staff.

Immigrants create important local jobs in all sectors of Canadian economy, such as construction, professional services, health care and retail trade.⁵

In Huron County, immigrants own farms, bakeries, motels, gas stations and many other businesses.

Friends Gurpreet and Harpreet own three Circle K stores, two with gas stations – businesses that employ 11 people. Growing up in rural India, the two men arrived in Canada as international post-secondary students in 2015 and studied in Kitchener. They moved to Huron County in 2019 after working in the retail sector and saving enough money to purchase a store with Circle K in Lucknow.

In 2020, they became the owners of the Wingham store and in 2024 the Clinton branch. In 2025, they acquired the Goderich store and closed the Lucknow branch. Recognizing their drive and initiative, the business partners won a Business of the Year award from the Huron Chamber of Commerce in 2023.

They also invested in creating a sense of community, joining Wingham community groups and organizing community dinners and events.

They also started a cricket team in Wingham. In 2024, more than 100 cricket players from across southern Ontario descended upon Wingham to play in cricket tournaments organized by Harpreet, Gurpreet and their teammates. Those cricket tournaments drew visiting teams and families who dined at

restaurants and shopped in the community, generating sports tourism and boosting overall economic spending.

"Since we came to this town, it feels like home. The people in this town - Wingham - are really helpful. They're really good," Gurpreet says.



Gurpreet and Harpreet Singh, of Wingham, own three Circle K stores and employ 11 people

⁵ Government of Canada, "Economic impact of immigration," Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Last modified October 28, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/immigration-matters/growing-canada-future.html>

Immigrants lead and support community volunteer initiatives

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants volunteer their time and make financial donations to charitable causes across the country each year. In fact, nearly 40% of immigrants aged 15 and older are volunteers.

On average, immigrants volunteer 162 hours each year.⁶

Newcomers are also giving back. On average, immigrants donate more to charity than Canadian-born citizens. When asked why they make financial donations, immigrants said the top three reasons were: compassion towards people in need; personally believing in the cause of the charity; and to make a contribution to the community.

In Huron County, immigrants lead volunteer organizations and dedicate their time contributing to community projects.

Halina's Story

"My immigrant story begins with the Second World War. My parents escaped Poland and ended up in England, my father in the Polish Army and my maternal grandfather in the

Polish government in exile. My parents met in medical school in Edinburgh.

"In 1958, they decided to move to Canada. In England, my father was the Polish doctor; in Canada, he was simply the doctor. I remember that we were welcomed with a Canadian meal that included corn, which I had never seen before and refused to try. (Forgive me, I was only eight.)

"After a lifetime that included pig farming in Saskatchewan, accounting and tax preparation, and a professorship at the University of Hawai'i, my husband, Chris Mewhort, and I moved to Sheppardton, just north of Goderich, to be closer to our grandson. And in spite of Covid we were welcomed; this time with gifts of homegrown vegetables and beef.

"Now it is our turn to welcome new arrivals. We have hosted four Ukrainian families and enjoy meeting many other newcomers as members of the Steering Group of the Huron Welcome Hub for Newcomers. The Hub helps newcomers by offering transportation, sharing housing information, connecting them with the community, and ensuring access to essential local services. And, while Chris grows hay and calculates taxes, I volunteer on the Huron County Library Board, on the Huron County Immigration Partnership and at the Blyth Festival."



Halina (right) and her partner Chris, with fellow volunteer Sheila, regularly help to support newcomers at community events.

⁶ Statistics Canada, "Society and community," Canada Year Book 11-402-X. Last modified January 17, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/sc/c-g/c-g1-eng.gif>

Newcomers are essential workers in our health care system

1 in 4 workers in the health care sector are immigrants.

More than 40% of newcomers to Canada between 2016 and 2021 who were working in the health care sector were employed in the

important areas of nursing and residential care facilities, as well as home health care services.⁷

In Huron County, newcomers are employed in all areas of health care including hospitals, family health teams, pharmacies and long-term care.

Newcomers maintain our agricultural industry

Nearly one-quarter of Canada's agricultural sector workforce are international temporary workers.⁸ In Huron County, temporary workers care for animals, grow and harvest crops, and support industries that process agricultural products.

People like 27-year-old Jake bring a wealth of knowledge from growing up and working on farms overseas. Born and raised in a rural part of the Philippines, Jake spent his childhood helping at the pig farm his parents worked at. Later, Jake studied at university where he completed a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. Before moving to Canada, Jake worked in veterinary medicine sales and as a swine technician. Jake arrived in Canada in 2022 on a temporary work permit, employed by a Blyth-area pig farm that has 1,000 sows and is a farrow to finish farm.

"Farming is my passion. I love taking care of pigs. Piglets are amazingly cute when they are born. It makes me love the work I do," Jake says.

In November 2024, he became a permanent resident and continues to work with the same farm family.

"My first year here was so wonderful. I love the place I lived, the people I am with, and the weather was so different from the country I was from," he says. "My life here has been amazing. I met a lot of new people who became like family."

“My favourite thing about living here is that everything is accessible and nature is wonderful. I love visiting the beach,” Jake says.



⁷ Government of Canada, "Immigrants' contribution to the health care sector." Last modified October 29, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/immigration-matters/growing-canada-future/health.html>

⁸ Statistics Canada, "Agriculture and agri-food labour statistics," The Daily. Last modified June 13, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220613/dq220613d-eng.htm>

Newcomers are key to economic growth

Most immigrants and newcomers are between ages 25 and 54, predominantly of prime working age. They bring a fresh and skilled workforce to the country.⁹

In Huron County, 24-year-old Vraj and his 27-year-old brother Shrey are putting lessons from their childhood into practice and are running thriving businesses.

"I am the fourth generation who is doing business. My dad had business, my grandfather had business, my great grandfather also had a business back home," shared Vraj, who grew up in western India.

Vraj and Shrey's father is a pharmacist, while his grandfather and great-grandfather were general store owners.

After completing his education, Vraj moved to Canada in 2021, where Shrey had already settled. He landed in Regina, Saskatchewan, and worked as a pizza store manager for two years.

After gaining permanent residency, Vraj moved to Brampton to be closer to his brother. Quickly, the brothers decided to look for business opportunities.

When the brothers heard the Wingham Mini Mart was for sale, they knew they had to take a look. Vraj was drawn to the community right

away, appreciating its welcoming atmosphere and the sense of stability he found here.

"Everyone in the community was cooperative and peaceful," Vraj says.

Their first taste of business spurred a desire to take on more. Entering a partnership with two others, Vraj and Shrey purchased a local pizza franchise and two other variety stores in the region.

"We like quiet towns," Vraj said. "To immigrants or young people who live in cities, I would personally suggest that they move to small towns and communities where they can get better opportunities and proper jobs."



Vraj and his brother are part of a business partnership that own four stores.

Newcomers and immigrants keep our communities vibrant

Canadians are living longer and having fewer children. More people are retiring and there are fewer students in schools. By 2046, the population aged 85 and older could triple to nearly 2.5 million people.¹⁰

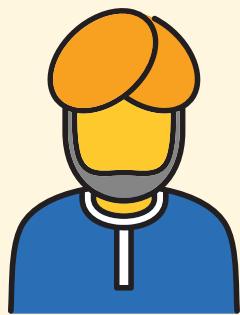
As such, the pool of existing and potential Canadian-born workers and entrepreneurs is limited. This is why welcoming immigrants and newcomers is important. Immigration can help keep our economy growing and maintain

Canada's commitment to care for our aging population. Immigration strengthens health care, public pensions and other social programs.

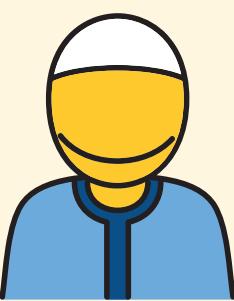
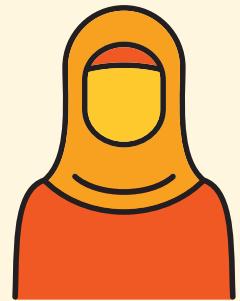
For rural and small communities, immigration is a key strategy to address labour shortages (including those in long term care homes), keep businesses in downtowns, engage new volunteers and strengthen the cultural fabric of our communities.

⁹ Bank of Canada, "How newcomers impact the Canadian economy," Monetary Policy Report – July 2024. <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/publications/mpr/mpr-2024-07/in-focus-2/>

¹⁰ Canadian Institute of Aging, "Strategic Plan 2023-2028: Reframing aging, empowering older adults." <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/53415.html>



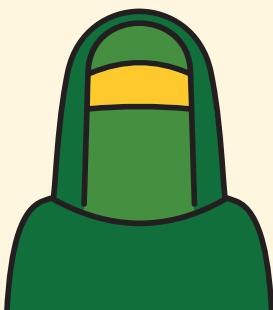
Economic immigrants



Family members



Refugees



Temporary workers



International students

Immigration pathways to Canada

People enter Canada and remain in the country through many different legal pathways. Welcoming newcomers is important. Immigrants address labour shortages, build businesses in small towns, become volunteers and strengthen the cultural fabric of our communities.

A refugee is different from an immigrant. An immigrant is a person who *chooses* to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are *forced to flee* and many have spent a significant amount of time in second countries where they have temporarily sought safety (i.e. in a refugee camp).

People can apply to come to Canada through a points system that determines their eligibility. People can apply either after working in Canada or from out of country. Economic immigrants can apply through several pathways: the Express Entry programs managed by the federal government, or the Provincial Nominee Program, administered by the provinces. In our province, this is called the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program.

Canadian citizens and permanent residents can apply to bring family members who live in another country to become permanent residents of Canada. Often called family reunification, people can apply to bring their spouse or common-law partner, their children, an orphaned sibling/nephew/niece/grandchild (particularly if the person is below 22 years old) or grandparents. In some special circumstances, they may be able to sponsor another family member.

Refugees are people who have fled their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution. They are not able to return home. Refugees resettled to Canada are selected abroad and become permanent residents as soon as they arrive in Canada.

Temporary international workers provide critical labour to make Canadian businesses a success. There are two types of temporary work permits: open and closed work permits. Programs include:

Refugee claimants

People arriving at Canada's borders can claim that they require refugee protection because it's not safe for them to go back to their own country. People are not eligible to make a claim if they have been convicted of serious criminal offences or had previous refugee claims denied by Canada.

Open Work Permits

- Post-Graduation Work Permit
- Spouse Open Work Permit
- Bridging Open Work Permit
- International Experience Canada

Closed Work Permits

- Temporary Foreign Worker Program
- International Mobility Program

Study permits are only issued by the government when people can prove they have enough money to pay for their tuition fees, living expenses and return flights; have no criminal record; and are in good health. International students who have completed their studies may be eligible to apply for a Post Graduate Work Permit, enabling them to stay within Canada and gain Canadian work experience.



Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel

The Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET) permit enabled 298,000 people to move to Canada from March 2022 to April 2024, when the program closed. People on CUAET have the opportunity to renew their temporary three-year open work permit.



Migrants without permits

An estimated 20,000 to 50,000 people live in Canada without official status. Many migrants without permits continue to work in agriculture, construction, home care or cleaning. Many entered Canada as international students, temporary workers or refugee claimants but lost their status because of "system delays, denials or administrative barriers."

Immigration pathways to Canada

Economic immigrants

People can apply to come to Canada through a points system that determines their eligibility. People can apply either after working in Canada or from out of country. Economic immigrants can apply through

several pathways: the Express Entry programs managed by the federal government or the Provincial Nominee Program, administered by the provinces. In our province, this is called the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program.¹¹

Meet someone in Huron County who came through this pathway.

Sheetal and her husband Rakesh arrived in Canada as permanent residents from India. Sheetal's 10 years of nursing experience and Rakesh's work history of leading sales and customer service with a multinational company, guiding more than 450 employees, were key components of their application.

“We wanted to provide better opportunities and a brighter future for children and ourselves. We were attracted by Canada’s quality of life, education system, and safe environment,” Rakesh explains.

Initially landing in Brampton, the couple moved to Huron County with their two children when Sheetal found work at a Wingham-area retirement home. Since their arrival, Sheetal has advanced her career, working as a Registered Practical Nurse, while Rakesh has found work as an Administrative Assistant with a local non-profit.

“People were welcoming. We joined a church community that was supportive. We love the beautiful beaches and the surrounding area,” Sheetal says.



Rakesh, Sheetal and their two children.

¹¹ Ontario, “Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program,” Last modified August 20, 2025. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-immigrant-nominee-program-oinp>

Family members

Canadian citizens and permanent residents can apply to bring family members who live in another country to become permanent residents of Canada. Often called family reunification, people can apply to bring their spouse or common-law partner, their children, an orphaned sibling/nephew/niece/grandchild (particularly if the person is below

22 years old) or grandparents. In some special circumstances, when someone has no other family in Canada, they may be able to sponsor another family member. To sponsor a family member, people must agree to financially support the new arrival for a minimum of three years (for an adult) or 10 years for a child or until the individual becomes age 22.¹²

Meet someone in Huron County who came through this pathway.

Karen laughs remembering. "Growing up, I told my parents that I would marry someone who has blonde hair and blue eyes. They thought I was crazy."

Some 20 years ago Karen met Robert, a Huron County farmer, on an online dating site. "After some on and off chatting, he decided to go visit me in the Philippines. He said, if nothing came out of his visit relationship-wise, then at least he could say that he was able to see the Philippines. But God was great! My husband sponsored me after we got married. That was back in 2011. I came as a permanent resident. Now, I am already a Canadian citizen."

Since she arrived, Karen and Rob have worked alongside one another. "My husband taught me how to cut and stack wood, make a fire, cut grass with a lawnmower, breed sows, raise goats, mud walls, etc. I am thankful that

my husband belongs to a great family. They accepted me for who I was and loved me. He also had many friends from the different churches that he used to attend and they all welcomed me."

As time passed, Karen began to work off the farm and the couple started a family. They have four children: Anaya, Jesiah, Teliah and Jediah. While Rob runs a pig farm, Karen juggles working as an educational assistant, serving at a local restaurant and launching a real estate business.

"I love my jobs because I like to be around people. I like living here because of the small town feel. Yes, there is growth and development but the people are still so nice and welcoming," Karen says.



Rob, Karen and their four children enjoy summer evenings at Lake Huron's beach.

¹² Government of Canada, "Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations SOR/2002-227," Department of Justice. Last modified October 30, 2025. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-2002-227/page-1.html>

Refugees

Refugees are people who have fled their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution. They are not able to return home. A refugee is different from an immigrant. An immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are forced to flee and many have spent a significant amount of time in second countries where they have temporarily sought safety (i.e. in a refugee camp).

Refugees resettled to Canada are selected abroad and become permanent residents as soon as they arrive in Canada. Resettled refugees are determined to be refugees by the Canadian government and the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees before

they arrive in Canada. All refugees selected to be resettled in Canada have gone through an extensive screening process to make sure there are no issues related to security, criminality, or health.¹³

Refugees are brought to Canada through a number of ways. These include Government Assisted refugees, the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program and Sponsorship Agreement Holder-supported refugees. Local Huron County groups have often worked with affiliated organizations to support refugees through this model which gives Canadians and permanent residents a chance to play a key role in helping refugees in need of resettlement.¹⁴



Refugee claimants

When people arrive at Canada's borders (by land, water or air), they can claim that they require refugee protection because it's not safe for them to go back to their own country. Asking for refugee protection must be accompanied with an explanation to an officer from the Canada Border Services Agency or Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that details why they are not safe to return to

their country. It is important to note that people are not eligible to make a claim if they have been convicted of serious criminal offences or had previous refugee claims denied by Canada. Other people, who have already arrived in Canada, can also apply for refugee protection if they have a legitimate concern for their safety if they return to their country.¹⁵

¹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Refugee resettlement to Canada." <https://help.unhcr.org/canada/refugee-resettlement-to-canada>

¹⁴ Government of Canada, "How to be resettled in Canada as a refugee," Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Last modified June 26, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/resettle-refugee/eligibility.html>

¹⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "The refugee protection claim process." Last modified September 26, 2025. <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/applying-refugee-protection/Pages/index.aspx>

International students

Canada is a popular choice for international post-secondary students. Study permits are only issued by the government when people can prove they have enough money to pay for their tuition fees, living expenses and return flights; have no criminal record and are in good health.²⁰ After international students complete their studies, they may be eligible to apply for a Post Graduate Work Permit, enabling them to stay within Canada and gain work experience. It is important to note that international students pay at least four times the tuition of Canadian-born students and have been considered a source of revenue for post-secondary institutions in the face of government funding cuts. Offering Canadian-educated international students the opportunity to work after graduation and apply for permanent residency ensures Canada's workforce is skilled and knowledgeable.

Meet someone in Huron County who came through this pathway.

"I grew up in a very small town, about two hours by high speed train from Hong Kong," recalls Lini, one of the owners of the Great China House in Wingham. "My mother ran a restaurant there. I helped her in the summers as a teenager."

After finishing high school in China, Lini attended a Canadian Chinese school and moved to Vancouver, where she studied at a post-secondary institution. From Vancouver, she moved to Toronto, enrolling in human resources at Seneca College. It was there, through an old high school friend, that she met her future husband Alex, who had also immigrated from the same region of China. The two married and started to build their life together.

While Lini was working in a financial company, Alex dreamed of opening a restaurant. A family connection led them to Wingham, where a restaurant was for sale. The couple partnered in the venture, eventually taking over Great China House themselves. In Wingham, they had two children, a boy and girl.

"Because of the kids—through babysitters, daycare and school—we started to build friendships and connections," Lini says.

The restaurant started to thrive, and so did the family's place in the community. Over time, Great China House became part of local

traditions. Lini says many families now include their food in holiday celebrations. With the restaurant open on Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day, and other special occasions, Lini and Alex's cooking has found a place at countless tables across Wingham and the surrounding area.

"When the customers are happy, I'm very happy. Those connections are so important. This to me makes me feel like I belong to this town," Lini says.



²⁰ Government of Canada, "Study permit: Who can apply," Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Last modified August 26, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit/eligibility.html>

Temporary workers

Temporary international workers help fuel Canada's economy - providing critical labour to make Canadian businesses a success. There are two types of temporary work permits: open and closed work permits. Open work permits mean that people can work for nearly any employer in any community. Closed work permits mean that people can only work for a designated Canadian employer for a specific period at a specific location in a specific industry.

There are different types of open work permits.¹⁶ These include:

Post-Graduation Work Permit

For international students who have graduated from a designated Canadian post-secondary learning institution. These permits can be issued for a period of eight months to three years.

Spouse Open Work Permit

For spouses and common-law partners who have a partner working or studying in Canada; or have a partner who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. These permits tend to be valid for the duration of the spouse's or partner's permit.

Bridging Open Work Permit

For people with a valid work permit expiring soon who have submitted a permanent residency application. These permits can be issued for 24 months, with extensions available.

International Experience Canada

For young people under the age of 35 from partner countries with similar youth mobility programs. These permits can be issued for up to 24 months (or as short as six months).

It is possible for people who hold these work permits to eventually apply for permanent residency under the economic immigration pathways or family pathways, if they meet eligibility criteria.

There are also different types of closed work permits. These include:

Temporary Foreign Worker Program

For skilled international workers who have an offer of employment from a Canadian employer who has successfully completed a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) with Employment and Social Development Canada. A LMIA is issued when it is determined that hiring an international worker will not negatively impact the Canadian labour market and there is an authentic need for the employer to hire from abroad. The permits vary in length. Employers who succeed in their application to hire through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program are responsible for ensuring that workers know about their rights, have a signed employment agreement, have a safe workplace, ensure each worker has medical coverage, follow all provincial and federal employment laws and offer housing and transportation support.¹⁷

International Mobility Program

For international workers in positions that offer economic, cultural or other benefits for Canada and reciprocal advantages for Canadians and permanent residents. Applicants must have a registered job offer with IRCC with a Canadian employer. The permits vary from six months to three years.

Closed work permit holders can apply for permanent residency if they meet eligibility requirements.

¹⁶ Government of Canada, "Who can apply for an open work permit?" Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Help Centre. Last modified November 19, 2025. <https://ircc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=177>

¹⁷ For a full list of employer responsibilities under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, please see: Agricultural Adaptation Council, "Food and beverage processor employer guide – Understanding the Temporary Foreign Worker Program". p.4-6. <https://adaptcouncil.org/uploads/publications/y8IU-Food-and-beverage-processor-employer-guide-understanding-the-temporary-foreign-worker-program-final.pdf>

Meet someone in Huron County who came through this pathway.

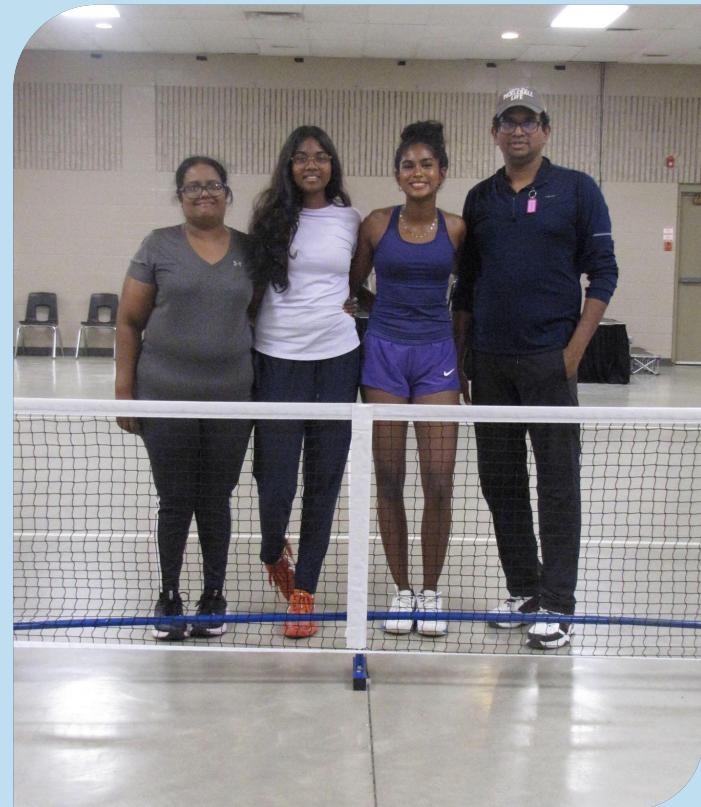
Far from the bustle of Sri Lanka where he once worked as a banker, Eran found something unexpected: a small town with a big heart. Exeter didn't just leave an impression, it changed Eran's life.

Eran first visited Canada in 2022 to reconnect with extended family. When a friend suggested he visit Exeter, he felt the warmth and openness of the community. During that visit, he learned a local car dealership had been trying for years to fill a vacancy. Wanting to contribute, Eran offered to help. The employer supported him through the LMIA process, eventually bringing him onboard as an automotive detailer through a temporary work program.

Once he settled in, Eran quickly became part of community life. He joined the local Catholic church and jumped into the growing pickleball scene - finding new friendships and a sense of belonging along the way.

In 2024, Eran was reunited with his wife and their two teenage daughters, marking the beginning of their new life together in Huron County. His wife started working at a long term care home and his daughters are enrolled in a local high school. Together, they've got involved in fundraising efforts for Jessica's House Hospice and are enjoying life in South Huron.

“I met good people from the start who helped me. Now it’s our turn to help others,” Eran says.



Eran and his family have learned to play pickleball since arriving in Canada.

Migrants without permits

Although there is not an accurate number of people who live in Canada without official status, it is estimated to be between 20,000 to 50,000. Many of migrants without permits continue to work in agriculture, construction, home care or cleaning. Most people entered Canada as international students, temporary workers or refugee claimants, but lost their status because of “system delays, denials or administrative barriers.”¹⁸

It is important to note that, people without permits are at higher risk of exploitation and human trafficking. This is a growing problem across the globe.

For more information about human trafficking locally, please contact Victim Services Huron Perth: <https://victimserviceshuronperth.ca/>

¹⁸ David Ho, “The provinces must find ways to care for undocumented patients,” The Globe and Mail, October 2, 2025. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-ontario-good-faith-billing-doctors-medical-care-undocumented-migrants/>

Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel

When the war in Ukraine broke out in 2022, the Canadian government created a temporary pathway for Ukrainians fleeing the country to seek safety in Canada and be eligible to work for three years. The Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) permit enabled 298,000 people to move to Canada from March 2022 to April 2024, when the program closed.¹⁹ People on CUAET have the opportunity to renew their temporary three-year open work permit, meaning they can work in most industries and are not restricted to a specific location. As the war in Ukraine is ongoing, people on the CUAET permit continue to contribute to Canada's economic and social well-being.



Meet someone in Huron County who came through this pathway.

After Russia invaded Ukraine, Tanya and her family fled Ukraine's capital city of Kyiv and came to Canada through a program for Ukrainians seeking refuge. They arrived in Exeter to a community that was ready and welcoming.

In Kyiv, Tanya studied English at the Master's level, trained as teacher and led English classes for teenagers. Tanya also balanced career with maternity leave for each of her three children.

In Canada, Tanya's English language skills helped her family integrate and also were useful as she acted as interpreter for three

other Ukrainian families who arrived in Canada with limited English at the same time. She quickly found work as a supply teacher. On the weekends, Tanya leads a Ukrainian-language class for children of Ukrainian heritage.

Tanya also volunteers to organize children's activities at community events such as Newcomer Day at Camp, she emceed at the Huron Multicultural Festival, and she supports a program for children in local hospitals.

Tanya's journey is a reminder of the power of community to welcome, and to provide opportunities for newcomers to give back.

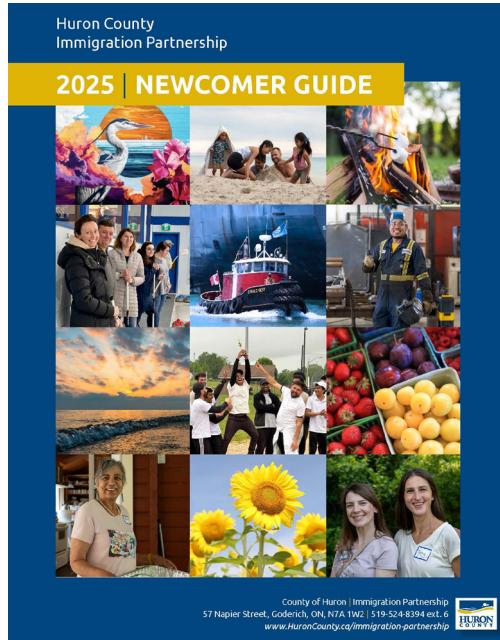
¹⁹ Government of Canada, "Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel: Key figures," Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Last modified July 26, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/ukraine-measures/key-figures.html>

Supporting newcomers in Huron

Connect to local support

No matter how people come to Canada and to Huron County, there are many ways to support newcomers. Knowing that there are services to assist newcomers and how to connect people to them is a good first step.

Make sure you get a copy of the Huron County Newcomer Guide to see a list of services available for newcomers moving to Canada. The Huron County Immigration Partnership website also has a list of support available in the area for newcomers: <https://www.huroncounty.ca/economic-development/immigration-partnership/#Resources>



Settlement services

Refer a newcomer to settlement services, a government-funded program that offers support to help people adjust to life in Canada. By meeting with a settlement worker, newcomers can get help connecting to services in the community, filling out government forms, and learning about different aspects of the community – including how to find employment and a place to live.

In Huron County, the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario offers settlement services.

Contact Firas Sefian, settlement manager, email: firas.sefian@swo.ymca.ca or phone: 519-645-7553 extension 1.

English language learning opportunities

Immigrants interested in learning or improving their English language skills can take free English language classes from the Avon Maitland District School Board. Classes in Huron are mostly online: www.amdsb.ca/esl

English language classes are also available in-person from Set7 in Dashwood. These classes are grant funded and scheduled when funds are available. To find out when the next session is scheduled for, check <https://set7.ca/huronesl/>

Conversation Circles at the Huron County Library are also an opportunity for newcomers to practice speaking English with volunteers.

Weekly Conversation Circle sessions take place in Goderich and Exeter. For more information, visit <https://www.huroncountylibrary.ca/series/english-conversation-circle-goderich/>

Employment support

People looking for work can get help from employment services. Government-funded organizations help people search for jobs, plan their careers, connect with local employers and improve their resume, cover letter and interviewing skills.

In Huron County, College Boreal and Agilec offer employment services.

To get in touch with Agilec visit their website <https://agilec.ca/contact/goderich/>, call 226-546-5311 or visit them in person at 41 West St., Goderich.

For Collège Boréal, contact Brenda West, employment consultant via Brenda.West@collegeboreal.ca, call 705-465-0636 or visit their website at <https://collegeboreal.ca/en/service/employment-services/>

Learning about your community

Huron County Libraries

Libraries are excellent sources of information for newcomers and people supporting newcomers. Each branch has information about local events and services in their community. To locate the nearest library branch, visit: <https://www.huroncountylibrary.ca/locations/>

Municipal websites

Each municipality has a website that contains vital information for residents as well as links to local government and municipal services including businesses, recreation and events. <https://www.huroncounty.ca/explore/>

Social media

Another way that people in Huron County communities connect with one another and share information is through social media such as Facebook. Many post information about events, activities and local insights. The Wingham Community Connectors is one example of a community information sharing Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WinghamCommunityConnectors>

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County of Huron | Immigration Partnership

Email: home@huroncounty.ca

www.HuronCounty.ca/immigration-partnership

Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
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