

A police services volunteer and agricultural leader who is fulfilling a family legacy and giving back to Huron County

By Maja Romano

Huron County Immigration Partnership volunteer

When Maksym first arrived in Huron County in May 2017, he was stepping into a new country, a new community, and a new way of life. Nearly a decade later, Huron County is home for Maksym, his wife, and their two young children.

Originally from Ukraine, Maksym grew up in a small village before studying microbiology and biotechnology at university in Kyiv. He later worked as a production manager in a pharmaceutical company, producing antibiotics and other medications.

His path to Canada took several interesting twists and turns. After spending time working in Denmark and Norway, an opportunity to work in Canada came along. There was also a personal connection to the country: Maksym's great-grandfather had once planned to immigrate to Canada.

"My great-grandfather, he was preparing to go to Canada years ago, but because the Soviet Union came, he was sent to Siberia where he died, and the family just stayed in Ukraine. So I don't know, maybe [it's a] kind of continued family legacy," Maksym recounts.

After arriving in Huron County, Maksym began working on a farm near Belgrave while living in Wingham. His wife joined him about six months later, and together they spent two and a half years in Wingham before moving to Seaforth.

Six years ago, they bought a home in Clinton. For Maksym, the welcoming nature of the community was one of the first things that stood out.

"My English was broken and still is kind of," he says with a laugh. "But everyone who I met, they tried to help me, tried to understand what I needed. And that's amazing."

The support he and his wife received helped them find their footing. The family he worked for helped them navigate some of the practical challenges of settling in Canada, from finding a vehicle to figuring out paperwork. A job centre in Wingham also helped his wife find her first job.

Today, Maksym works in the agricultural sector in Dublin, where he has been employed for approximately eight years. He began working in a sow barn before moving into a finishing barn management role. Over time, he took on greater responsibility, eventually becoming a production manager and more recently moving into a maintenance manager role, a position that better fits his family schedule.

Yet, Maksym's contribution to Huron County extends well beyond his work. About two years ago, he became involved with a local police auxiliary program after hearing about the opportunity from his wife, and it felt like a natural calling: his father had been in law enforcement for 27 years in Ukraine.

According to his police colleague, who nominated Maksym for the *I Am Huron* campaign, "His fluency in multiple languages has been invaluable during calls for service and interactions with residents and visitors alike. He is known among officers as a dependable, dedicated, and highly engaged member of the auxiliary team."

To date, Maksym has contributed approximately 400 volunteer hours to the program. For him, volunteering with the auxiliary has been an opportunity to connect with the community in a different way.

"They say that first time you sit in a cruiser, you will love it. And that's what happened with me," he recalls.

He especially enjoys community events involving children, including the popular Touch-a-Truck events and bike rodeos. Seeing children excited about police vehicles, stickers and sirens is a highlight. He adds his young son is proud to see him in the role.

The experience has also given Maksym a better understanding of policing and the challenges faced by the community. As an auxiliary member, he sees an important role in building positive relationships between police and residents.

"A big part of us as an auxiliary unit is communicating with community, showing up and showing a positive image" he notes.

Maksym has also supported others interested in joining the auxiliary program and has helped newcomers navigate some of the steps involved in settling into Huron County.

As his police colleague notes, "Maksym is a humble and hardworking individual who may not fully realize the positive impact he has made throughout Huron County. His service, his generosity and his unwavering commitment to his community are deeply respected and appreciated by the members of the Huron County OPP Detachment."

As a farm maintenance manager, Maksym relies on his colleagues, a group of international workers.

While Maksym says he initially needed people to work alongside him to ensure the farm operations went smoothly, the relationships have grown into something more meaningful. Through work and everyday life, Maksym has developed friendships with people from a variety of backgrounds, including Cuba and the Philippines.

"I really enjoy learning from them," he reflects. "You can learn about our world from people who live here because they're from everywhere."

Looking back on his journey, Maksym is struck by how unexpected it all seems. He and his wife were married 10 years ago. Today they are raising two children in Clinton, building a life in a community that was once completely unfamiliar. He is grateful for the opportunities that brought him here and for the people who helped him along the way.

"I'm glad that I'm here," he says. "I'm glad that I have all my documents done, I can be in this community, meet new people and hopefully give back a little bit."

The I Am Huron awards celebrate the contributions immigrants and newcomers to Canada make in Huron County's communities. Nominations are received from the community, reviewed by a committee with lived experience of immigration, and awarded at a ceremony.

The project is funded with support from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

For more about this campaign, visit: <https://www.huroncounty.ca/i-am-huron/>