Influence of a Global Pandemic for Ontario Newcomers: Challenges and Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

BRIEF SUMMARY

This research examines the experiences and challenges newcomers to Ontario experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic in two communities: Guelph and Toronto. Key findings include:

❑ Socialization was the biggest challenge for newcomers during the COVID-19 due to the lockdowns, remote jobs, and online classes at the university.

❑ International students were concerned about finding a job after graduation and concerned the pandemic did not allow them to make enough employment connections through their studies.

❑ Newcomers in Toronto noted housing prices dropped in Toronto during the COVID-19, whereas in Guelph newcomers noted finding an affordable housing was a challenge for since the prices were skyrocketed due to the pandemic.

❑ Newcomers to Guelph had less feelings of isolation during the COVID-19, while newcomers to Toronto viewed their accommodations felt significantly isolated as a result of different urban structures in these two cities.

❑ Existing immigration support programs need to be promoted more to increase the newcomers' awareness of the potential benefits they can get from their new community.

❑ Newcomers' settlement services in Ontario need future developments to provide more support for those who do not have family members in their destination community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

❑ Establish more local organizations to use volunteers and provide more accessible services for newcomers with language barriers.

❑ Provide details about Canadian financial institutions and banking options for newcomers by the government and financial institutions.

❑ Encourage newcomers to connect with former immigrants from the same background to facilitate settlement and building networks through local events held by the local organizations, charities, or educational associations.

❑ Provide easier online platforms to book medical (e.g., COVID-19 vaccination) appointments, SIN request appointments, or to find information.

❑ Promote awareness anti-racism and anti-immigrants resources and programs to support newcomers and host communities.

❑ Allocate funds for colleges and universities in smaller communities to improve their international student support since they may may not have access to the same community supports and networks as those in larger cities, and that they are more reliant on their colleges and universities for assistance.

Further Information

This research was led by Behnaz Bahrefar and is part of the her thesis. You can access the thesis here:
https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/27255