

The logo for "The Citizen" features a large, vibrant green maple leaf on the left side. Overlaid on the leaf is the word "Citizen" in a large, flowing blue cursive font. To the right of the leaf is a single, bright red autumn maple leaf. The background is white, creating a clean and modern look.

# **Welcoming the world: Building inclusive communities**

Global citizens, global economies, international professionals, international trade, migration, immigration, out-sourced, knowledge economy - we see and hear these worlds in the media every day. What does this mean in Durham region? It means there are a lot of exciting changes taking place. We are seeing more diversity in neighbourhoods, the types of shops, restaurants and businesses. Elected officials and local business and academic leaders are actively pursuing partnerships internationally, in trade, in education and in business acquisition and retention.





This globalization is benefitting all residents of Durham as we learn more about other cultures and economies. When we expand our knowledge and build greater understanding of our differences and our similarities we jointly build stronger more welcoming communities and robust business partners throughout the region.

Ajax, Oshawa and Whitby are all gearing up to host the world for the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games in 2015. All are recruiting volunteers for their host committees and on-the-ground events, an excellent opportunity to showcase not only the world-class facilities in Durham but to showcase Durham as a global community of the future.



Words in red throughout the newsletter are defined in the glossary on page 10.

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## Increasing community capacity: Opportunities in community innovation

The mission of Community Innovation Lab (Co-iLab) is to strengthen the talent and skill sets of youth by facilitating **experiential** opportunities to increase employability and opportunities to stimulate **social entrepreneurial pathways**. Programs include:

Opportunities in Community Innovation: An open call for young social entrepreneurs with up to \$2500 in **seed funding**. Know of a university or college youth in your community with a great project idea to change the world? Durham Ideas Den (DID), one of our signature programs in collaboration with Durham College and Trent University, is calling on young changemakers to register their ideas at: [www.durhamideasden.com](http://www.durhamideasden.com).

Soft Skills, Creativity and Innovation workshop series: Youth entering the workplace for the first time can now participate in an interactive three day workshop to learn more about the essential skills, creativity and innovation that employers are looking for. For details, please contact [jason@communityilab.ca](mailto:jason@communityilab.ca).

Digital Storytelling Services: Are you looking to create an engaging digital video, brochure or infographic to showcase and tell the story of your organization's achievement to funders or stakeholders? Contact [andrea@communityilab.ca](mailto:andrea@communityilab.ca) to learn more about our digital studio services.

Partnerships: Interested in exploring a strategic partnership to build a youth (social) entrepreneurship program at your organization? Contact [andrea@communityilab.ca](mailto:andrea@communityilab.ca).

For information on these programs and more, visit [www.communityilab.ca](http://www.communityilab.ca) or [www.durhamideasden.com](http://www.durhamideasden.com).



## Building community resilience: Impact of Family Violence Conference

The primary objective of the Family Violence Conference is to bring together the diverse South Asian population with all the key sectors involved in violence prevention and responses. The conference will identify the kinds of programs, sector-specific training and public education campaigns needed in order to develop and deliver an effective community development strategy for addressing the various **manifestations** of violence that are occurring in South Asian families.



The initiative brings together key stakeholders representing a variety of relevant sectors including justice, violence against women services, immigrant settlement and advocacy groups, education, health and South Asian-specific organizations, and faith communities.

This is the fourth conference of its kind, and this one in Durham region will be building on the recommendations from the previous three. More than 500 participants attended the conference in York in 2013, including front-line police officers, shelter workers, child protection workers, and teachers.

The Family Violence Conference will be held May 14 to 15 at Durham College / UOIT. Registration is required. For tickets and more information, please contact [fvc@socialservicesnetwork.org](mailto:fvc@socialservicesnetwork.org) or visit [www.socialservicesnetwork.org](http://www.socialservicesnetwork.org).

## **Creating a culture of inclusion: Municipal councils, committees and advisory groups**

Monday, Oct. 27 is a big day in the Province of Ontario. Municipal elections will take place in all municipalities across the Province. In Durham, mayors, regional councillors, municipal councillors and school board trustees will be elected in all eight municipalities across the region, and for the first time, the Regional Chair will also be elected by all eligible voters in the region. The newly elected Council takes office Dec. 1, 2014.

In order to vote in a municipal or school board election in Ontario, you must be aged 18 or older and a Canadian citizen. You must also qualify to vote in your municipality. This is determined by where you live and/or own a business. If your municipality has wards, you must vote in the ward where you live.

There is a special rule for students who may be living away from home while they attend school. If you are a student and consider your "home" to be the place where you live when you are not attending school (i.e. you plan on returning there), then you are eligible to vote in both your "home" municipality and in the municipality where you currently live while attending school.

If you are considering running for election, you have until Sept. 12 to be nominated. You must be eligible to vote in a municipality in order to run for a position on council. On the day you file your nomination, you must be a Canadian citizen aged 18 or older, and qualify as a resident or non-resident elector. There are similar rules for running as a school board trustee.

For more information on the rules and guidelines around who can vote, who can run for election (and other details!), visit [www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page219.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page219.aspx).



Taking on an elected position is a very big step and it's not one that everyone feels they can do. There are other ways to get involved in your local municipality without pursuing public office. All municipal councils have Committees of Council, and many of these have members of the public as sitting appointed members. All municipalities also have appointed Library Board Trustees. Being appointed to these committees and boards is a competitive process with calls for these positions typically sent out in early November. Some municipalities have information sessions to share what committee positions are available. For more information on the process, visit your municipal website.



Even if you can't vote in an election yet, you can still attend all-candidates meetings and ask questions of those running for office. Municipal and Regional government have control over many of the day-to-day services that directly affect your quality of life, for example, parks and recreation centres, police services, libraries, fire services, water, sewage, garbage collection, recycling, and so much more! Have a say in who makes decisions on these important services directly affecting you. **On Oct. 27, get out and vote - and encourage your friends and family to do the same!**



## Community service clubs: Rotary Club of Ajax

The objective of a Rotary Club is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise. During its 63 year history the Rotary Club of Ajax has validated its commitment to service through its many activities.

The Club has worked hard to raise money that has allowed the Club to fund local and international projects that have helped to build individual, and **community capacity**.

Local donations include: more than \$500,000 to the Rouge Valley Health System, \$100,000 for the construction of the Ajax Public Library, \$25,000 for the construction of the Rotary Park Pavilion and \$60,000 for the development of the accessible playground at the Audley Recreation Centre. In addition, support provided to local charities such as the United Way, Easter Seals, the Salvation Army, the Canadian Liver Foundation and the Ajax Safety Council, among others, has allowed those organizations to facilitate important community services.

The Club also undertakes fun **sweat equity**, or work, projects to provide service. A 2013 commitment was the 'adoption' of Audley Road



between Rossland and Taunton. Recently the Club (pictured above) along with many community volunteers packaged more than 40,000 meals. Some of these meals remained in the community, and the rest were sent to Haiti.

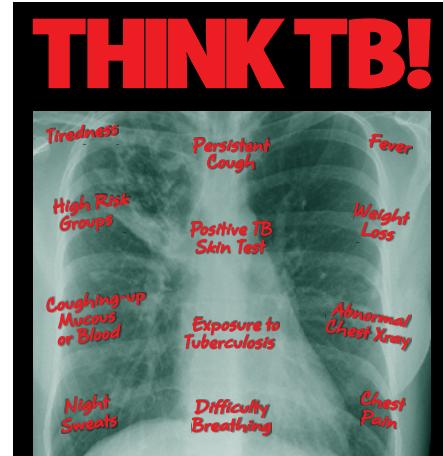
**The Rotary Club of Ajax is always looking for new members who share its vision of service above self.** For more information, email [info@ajaxrotary.org](mailto:info@ajaxrotary.org) or visit <http://portal.clubrunner.ca/1122>.

## Global health issues: Local protection

World TB Day falls on March 24! The goal of highlighting this day is to increase awareness of tuberculosis (TB) worldwide. TB is the second leading cause of death and it affects about nine million people in the world, mostly in developing countries. Each year, there are about 1600 new cases of TB reported in Canada. TB is an infectious disease caused by bacteria which can affect the lungs and other parts of the body. TB is spread when someone who has active TB disease in their lungs or throat cough, sneeze or speak, and send the TB germ into the air. With early diagnosis and treatment, TB is preventable, treatable and curable.

Asia, Africa, India, the Middle East, Central and South America, and the Caribbean are places with high rates of TB. If you have recently arrived from one of these countries, welcome! Remember if you develop symptoms of TB including fever, night sweats, weight loss and/or coughing see your doctor right away. If you are planning to travel to a country known to have high rates of TB, it is important to have a TB skin test by a health care provider before and after your trip.

For more information, please visit [www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca), or contact the Durham Health Connection Line at 905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729.



Recognize the signs & symptoms of **tuberculosis (TB)**.  
**TB is preventable, treatable & curable!**

**Together we can stop TB!**



Durham Health Connection Line  
905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729  
[durham.ca](http://durham.ca)  
If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729



## Building community: 100 women at a time



What a wonderful idea and opportunity! One hundred women in Uxbridge who care about local community causes and who are committed to community service are helping to change the world. They gather for just one hour every three months where, at each meeting, they jointly select a local charity or not-for-profit organization and write a \$100 cheque (per person) to the selected organization.

The first recipient of 100 Women Who Care Uxbridge was Sunrise Pregnancy & Family Support Services. They assist and equip pregnant women and families who need support. The Uxbridge Youth Centre was the recipient of the second meeting. They provide high quality information access with innovative and relevant programming for all

youth between ages 11 and 21 in a positive environment

100 Women Who Care inspire others- and so it keeps going! This wonderful concept will perpetuate with a new chapter in Brock Township. Barb Smith and Eileen Dalton have started the process to bring together 100 Women Who Care from the farthest reaches in Durham region to start a chapter supporting local groups in the Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland areas.

These women believe that 100 Women Who Care is a wonderful opportunity to organizations offering tremendous services, education, support to the community. A combined contribution of \$100 from 100 women could mean a sustainable future for many groups. "It's all about joining forces – COLLABORATION – which is such an important word to us all!" If you know 10 women who know 10 women, contact [barb.smith@sympatico.ca](mailto:barb.smith@sympatico.ca).

## Building health communities: Track your child's growth and development

As children grow older, they continue to learn new things. For example, by 18 months, a child is able to say twenty or more words clearly. This is called a "developmental milestone".

One simple way to check that your child is meeting their developmental milestones is to use a series of age-specific checklists called Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS).

These easy-to-use checklists are available online and free of charge to all Ontario residents. If you register your child with [endds.ca](http://endds.ca) you will be provided with the NDDS for your child's current age, activities to encourage their development and email reminders of when to complete the next NDDS.

The NDDS asks questions that can be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. "Yes" responses show your child is meeting that developmental milestone. "No" responses help to determine areas that may require extra help and discussion with your child's primary health care provider.

### How is your child developing?

Register your child with [endds.ca](http://endds.ca) and we'll provide you with:

- A screening tool to create a snapshot of your child's development
- Email reminders to screen your child as he/she grows
- Tips and activities to encourage your child's development

**endds.ca**  
nipissing district developmental screen



**The NDDS is available in five languages (Chinese, English, French, Spanish, and Vietnamese) and cover ages one month to six years.**

For more information on healthy child development, call Durham Health Connection Line 905-666-6241, or 1-800-841-2729, or visit [www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca)



## Durham College: Building international connections

It's an exciting time at Durham College from an international perspective with the college's global engagement reaching new levels every single day. This includes the close to 400 international students from more than 32 countries that are currently pursuing their post-secondary education with us.

Their presence brings new perspectives and ways of working that enhance the classroom experience and provide an important global viewpoint to the benefit of all learners. We also recently welcomed a group of students from Brazil through the Science without Borders program who have come to Canada to improve their English, study and gain practical experience through internships with industry in Durham region.

Durham College is collaborating with the Association of Community Colleges Canada (ACCC) on several projects including an initiative that is seeing us work with a partner school in Guyana to help it develop its capacity in the field of automotive maintenance.



In addition, a team of Durham College students and faculty were recently in the Caribbean to film part of the CARICOM Education for Employment (C-EFE) program, part of ACCC's overall Education for Employment initiative.

For more information on international activities happening at Durham College, please visit [www.durhamcollege.ca/international](http://www.durhamcollege.ca/international).

## Enhanced Language Training: Reconnecting internationally trained professionals through internships

The Enhanced Language Training Program (ELT) assists internationally trained professionals to develop language skills and experience in their field with in-class language instruction and bridge-to-work internships or mentoring.

The ELT program provides eight weeks of advanced English classes for internationally trained workers plus an additional eight weeks for the participants to gain Canadian work experience through an unpaid internship/mentorship component.

The ELT program helps participants upgrade their English language and employability skills as well as competitiveness in the labour market. Participants focus on general business communication skills, networking and professionalism in the Canadian workforce. Classes help participants with their job search, interview skills, cultural and workplace issues.

*Like all new immigrants, when I came to Canada I did not know many people here, I did not know how to go about looking for a job. I enrolled myself in the ELT program and there began a journey which would ultimately lead to getting the kind of job I was looking for. The ELT teachers are enthusiastic, committed and positive teachers .They were always patient with us when we asked question or interrupted them. A big thank you to them for preparing me to face interviews and getting me ready for the workplace. Vashali - ELT Student/April-July 2014*

ELT classes are available in Oshawa, Pickering and Ajax locations. For more information, please contact Alana Magsombol at 905-440-4488, or [alana\\_magsombol@durham.edu.on.ca](mailto:alana_magsombol@durham.edu.on.ca).

## Celebrating diversity: World Pride 2014

Toronto Pride is always a huge celebration with more than 1.2 million people participating last year. This year, the celebration will be even bigger as Toronto Pride welcomes the world. World Pride 2014 (WP14TO) will be a 10-day international celebration incorporating activism, education, and the history and culture of global LGBTTIQQ2SA\* communities.

Toronto will be the first WorldPride celebration ever held in North America, and the fourth such festival in the world. WorldPride brings people together from around the world to honour our past, celebrate the present, and inspire a better future for LGBTTIQQ2SA\* communities everywhere.

Durham PFLAG will be out in force under PFLAG Canada for the whole weekend participating in all three parades on Fri/Sat/Sun and will be hosting a booth for the weekend at the StreetFair. The Durham Regional Police Service will have a community float in the WorldPride Parade on Sunday, June 29, and they welcome community



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**June 20-29, 2014**

member participation. For more information on how to get involved with Durham PFLAG, email [DurhamON@pflagcanada.ca](mailto:DurhamON@pflagcanada.ca). And for more information on what's going on for the 10 days of WP14TO, visit [www.worldpridetoronto.com](http://www.worldpridetoronto.com).

\*LGBTTIQQ2SA is an abbreviation used to represent a broad array of identities such as, but not limited to, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, two-spirited, and allies.

## Welcoming the world: Pan Am and Parapan Am Games 2015

The Pan American Games are the world's third largest international multi-sport Games; they are only surpassed in size and scope by the Olympic Summer Games and the Asian Games. Both the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games are held every four years for the athletes of the 41 Pan American Sports Organization (PASO) member nations, in the year preceding the Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games.

In 2015, Toronto will be the proud Host City of the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games. The TORONTO 2015 Games will involve municipalities stretching from Oshawa to Welland. Games of this magnitude cannot happen without the help of volunteers, some 20,000 of whom will help deliver the best Pan Am / Parapan Am Games ever. The Pan Am Games take place from July 10 to 26, and the Parapan Am Games from August 7 to 15.

Durham is well represented among host communities for the 2015 Games. The Abilities Centre in Whitby will use the courts located on the infield of the 200-metre running track to host judo and boccia during the Parapan Am Games. The President's Choice Ajax Ballpark hosts all baseball and softball games, including women's baseball — a first in a multi-sport Games — as well as the return of men's softball to the Pan Am sport program. The Oshawa Sports Centre will host the weightlifting and boxing competitions with up to 3,000 spectators per session.

For more information on the Games, visit [www.toronto2015.org](http://www.toronto2015.org) or contact your local municipality to enquire about volunteer opportunities. Plan to enjoy them!



## Creating community: The Durham Community Roundtable wants to hear from you



The Durham Community Roundtable has been created to give the community in Durham a place to consider and share the community's dreams, aspirations, and challenges, as we think collectively about how we can contribute to build our collective dream. This is a conversation with the community, about the community.

Sectors represented on the Roundtable by key connected individuals at a senior level include

health, religious, ethnocultural, business/trade, education, community safety, environment, recreation, social services and culture. These individuals will reach out to their respective communities to gather input for the Roundtable on a few key questions related to the vision of our community. A discussion paper will then be created for the community to let everyone know what the community said.

Most consultations will be held in March and April. For more information about planned consultations, how to run your own focus group, and/or to provide your own input, visit the Roundtable website at

[www.durhamcommunityroundtable.ca](http://www.durhamcommunityroundtable.ca).

## Spring cleaning? Recycle your batteries and electronic equipment

The spring season presents the opportunity for many of us to clean out basements, garages, and other corners of our homes, clearing out clutter and unwanted items.

When you're **spring cleaning** this year, don't forget that many of your unwanted items are not garbage. Old electronics and batteries should be recycled. This helps the environment by keeping these items out of landfills.

There are so many ways you can help keep Durham green. The Region of Durham hosts electronic waste (e-waste) collection events throughout the year, where you can drop off old electronics for free recycling. This includes items such as cellphones, audio and video players, VCRs and DVD players, stereos and receivers, **computer peripherals**, printing devices, televisions, personal digital assistants and pagers, cameras and radios, telephones, desktop computers, monitors, camcorders and portable computers.



If you can't make it to a special collection event, you can also drop off your unwanted electronics at one of Durham Region's waste management facilities. Loads containing only e-waste will be accepted for free. For more information and to find upcoming collection events near you, visit [www.durham.ca/ewaste](http://www.durham.ca/ewaste).

The Region of Durham offers residents the convenience of curbside collection for used or unwanted household batteries.

This curbside battery collection is provided twice a year and the next one will be the week of April 21. If you miss this collection, or live in an apartment building or condominium without curbside collection service, visit [www.makethedrop.ca](http://www.makethedrop.ca) to find a local battery recycling drop-off location.

For more information on battery recycling, please visit [www.durham.ca/battery](http://www.durham.ca/battery).



## Engaging seniors: Pickering Public Library

A sense of 'community' is key when adapting to a new environment, especially when one is settling into a new country, city, or even neighbourhood. Having friendly and familiar faces within your local surroundings helps people of all ages feel welcomed. Opportunities to meet new people and to have meaningful dialogue, is highly beneficial to everyone's well-being. Through new relationships, everyone can learn and share pieces of their **lived experiences**, building knowledge and carrying forward history.

The Pickering Public Library invites all seniors to the Central branch every Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. for a Seniors' Social.

Here is a chance for you to enjoy a coffee and meet your neighbours. Current participants take pleasure in the weekly social with their new friends, having a chance to connect and discuss books, hobbies and current events. Some also try their hand at games, such as dominoes, if they are so inclined.



There is no registration for this program- just drop in anytime between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. For more information, please contact Valerie Crease at 905-831-6265 ext. 6248 or visit [www.picnet.org](http://www.picnet.org).

## Community hubs: Durham's public libraries

Did you know that as a resident of Durham region, you can use any of the eight library systems in the region? So, if you live in Clarington and the book or DVD you want is at the Ajax Public Library, then you can get an Ajax Public Library card and take the item out there. Alternatively, you can also ask for materials to be ordered through Inter-library Loan from many other library systems in Ontario. When in doubt, just ask the staff at your local library!

Libraries are not just about books, as anyone who's been in a public library recently knows. Visit your local library for books, DVDs, newcomer programs, electronic databases, eBooks, language learning resources, computers, children's storytime programs, English conversation circles, seniors programs, book clubs, and there's so much more for you to explore! Visit the Library page on the Durham Immigration Portal for links and more information at [www.durhamimmigration.ca](http://www.durhamimmigration.ca) > Learning > Library Programs.

**Everyone is welcome at the library!**

**DURHAM**  
Immigration Portal

**WELCOME  
TO A NEW  
BEGINNING.  
WELCOME  
TO DURHAM.**

Learn more about:

- Living
  - Working
  - Learning
  - Settling
  - Doing business
  - Building community
- by visiting

[WWW.DURHAMIMMIGRATION.CA](http://WWW.DURHAMIMMIGRATION.CA)

You can also visit your local library for programs and services that bring newcomers and the whole community together.



## Durham Region Celebrates 40 Years : Get involved!



"Only the **provisional endures**"  
French Proverb

Where were you in 1974? If you lived in what is now known as Durham region, chances are your address was in the County of Ontario. Many of the things that ground us, like where we call home, are indeed provisional. Whether we celebrate a wedding anniversary, the day we came to Canada or the anniversary of the community we live in, they are times that make us stop and think. A lot has changed in 40 years. In 1974, the population was 228 000. In 2014, Durham is comprised of

eight local municipalities with a total population of 650,000. Social housing, transit and ambulance service became Regional services one piece at a time. Rapid population growth has resulted in the building of roads, water supply and sewage treatment plants. It has been a busy 40 years, and you are invited to celebrate and learn more. Visit [www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca) - click on the 40th Anniversary Logo to learn about the history of your community, browse historic photos and learn about celebrations that will be taking place throughout the year.



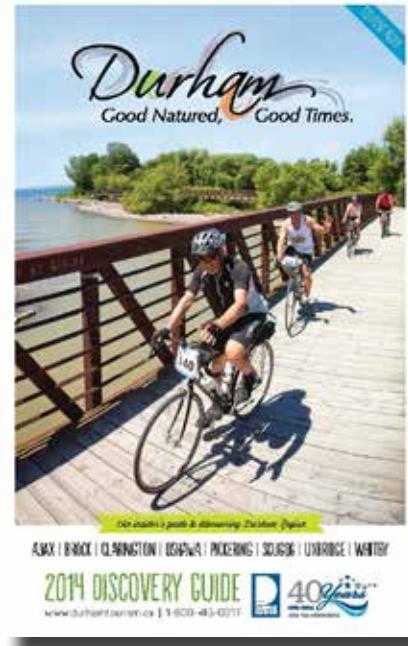
## Durham Discovery Guide: Durham Tourism offers an insider's guide to discovering Durham Region

Designed for both residents and visitors alike, Durham Tourism's new 2014 Discovery Guide offers an insider glimpse into exploring the unique tourism destinations and attractions in Durham Region.

Now available to order, the free Discovery Guide features a calendar of events; value-saving coupons for local attractions and restaurants; as well as information on Durham dining, farm-fresh flavour, family fun, outdoor adventures, sporting life, creative culture, signature experiences, hotels and accommodations, and bed and breakfast establishments.

New this year to the annually produced Discovery Guide is information on how you can explore Durham Region—a four-season destination—year round. From winter wonders to summer fun, and springtime sensations to autumn adventures, Durham Region truly has something for everyone to enjoy.

To order a copy of the Discovery Guide (in either English or Chinese text), contact Durham Tourism at 1-800-413-0017 or [tourism@durham.ca](mailto:tourism@durham.ca). You can also view and order the guide online at [www.durhamtourism.ca](http://www.durhamtourism.ca).



## Durham diversity: best practices

The Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council invited institutional leaders from more than 80 organizations to a Celebrating Best Practices: Durham and Diversity event on January 21. According to those in attendance, it was a great success! In addition to an inspiring keynote address, participants learned about nine different innovative practices being employed in Durham to promote diversity and create cultures of inclusion for all populations in Durham. From innovations in reducing barriers in hiring practices to building accessible infrastructure, participants found the day well-organized, well-timed and extremely informative. The day was identified as a positive experience by everyone who attended.

*"This was a fantastic workshop. High calibre speakers who put their message across in coherent and interesting ways. I was riveted for the entire day."*

*"The presentations were timed just right....not too long and absorbable amount of info. Folks did not 'sell' their organization, but rather shared effective solutions and resources."*

Unfortunately, we couldn't invite all of you, but we can invite you to watch the taped presentations on the Diversity and Immigration YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/DurhamImmigration](https://www.youtube.com/user/DurhamImmigration). Take a look and let us know what topics you'd like to see at next year's event, by emailing us at [ldipc@durham.ca](mailto:ldipc@durham.ca).

### GLOSSARY

**community capacity** - the skills and talents of a community that allow it to respond positively to change and challenge

**computer peripherals** - things like printers, keyboards, a mouse, a flash drive, etc.

**endures** - lasts

**experiential** - real life, not school- or book-based but more hands-on and practical

**lived experiences** - term used to describe events in a person's life

**manifestations** - type or kind

**provisional** - temporary

**seed funding** - a small amount of money to help an individual or organization start a new project

**social entrepreneurial pathways** - ways to spark imaginative, innovative solutions to social issues

**spring cleaning** - common activity in Canada to refer to a major clean-up of your house, garage and maybe even your shed at the end of winter

**sweat equity** - an investment in something that is achieved through physical labour



## Success story: Newcomer leader

I came to Durham in 2001 following a family transition which marked a new beginning and hope for my family. I left behind the province of Quebec, and my struggle to learn French, to find employment as a teacher. When I got a phone call from a principal of a public school in Pickering, I did not even know where Pickering was. I looked it up on the map and ended up taking Brock Street exit from the 401 instead of Brock Road. Needless to say, I have learned a lot since then.

My settling in Durham region was not without its obstacles; I knew I needed to learn fast and face obstacles with a high level of resiliency. The first step was securing school for my children. I found the employees of the Durham District School Board (DDSB) to be very helpful with this. As my children already spoke French, the French Immersion program at Frenchman's Bay Public School was the perfect option for them. Once the basics such as housing and school were in place, I devoted myself to my career, which was not always easy. As a teacher certified to teach in Quebec, I still had to go through the obstacle of getting my Ontario College of Teachers certification. Teachers from outside of Ontario who had to go through the same process will understand what I mean when I say that this process is long and not always pleasant. Mine took eighteen months and most of it was due to documentation which was very difficult to obtain from my native country, Serbia.

While I was waiting for the certificate to arrive, I worked as a teacher in North York for two years and tutored all over Durham. My goal during this time remained to gain permanent employment with the DDSB. Two years later, this is exactly what happened. After only two years of teaching in an Oshawa school I became the head of a department within that school. Today, I work for Durham Continuing Education with the DDSB

and am the department head of Language Instruction to Newcomers in Canada and English as a Second Language. I work with newcomers in Durham and share every day with an amazing staff, work extraordinarily hard to help adults in our region get where they need to be in their lives. It is a place of inclusion, mutual acceptance, and resilience. Your place is somewhere in this region too; you just have to be patient and persist on the path to finding it.



Today, I mentor newcomer teachers from all over the world and experience first-hand that not much has changed: it is still difficult for incoming teachers to obtain their certificate in Ontario. My last mentee, Gcinile from Swaziland, whom I met through the Mentorship program offered by the Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre, is currently working with me on her resume and sending it to as many teaching vacancies as she and I can find. This road is not easy, but with the help of community agencies which devote their time to helping newcomers settle in Durham, anything is possible.

What's my advice to newcomers in Durham? Visit your local library, go to the Welcome Centre, read the local paper, volunteer in the community, and connect with people. Changing a life or starting a new one takes courage, time, and a lot of work, but in the end it is the most rewarding thing a person can do. Durham region recognizes that, as a newcomer, you bring new and valuable assets to the community, and they are here to help you realize your own fullest potential. - by Dika Gajic

We look forward to hearing your stories and feedback. If you would like to subscribe or contribute to The Citizen, please contact us:

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