

# Town works for immigrant couple

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Imagine moving to a new country with a strange, new culture and a different way of life.

Well, that's precisely the situation one Stouffville couple is in after moving here from Dungarvan, Ireland.

Suzie Whelan, 32, and her husband Michael, 35, arrived in Stouffville last month, after Michael — an accountant with Sterling Drugs — was transferred from Dungarvan to Aurora.

"I just love it here," Suzie said in an interview from their new Rupert Ave. home last week. "Stouffville really works well for us."

Suzie, a native of Washington, D.C., said she's getting used to life in Canada.

"Canada is similar to the States," she said. "Our cultures are almost the same."

But Suzie said Michael, a native of Great Britain, might take a bit longer to fully adjust to Canadian living.

"It's a different culture for him," she said.

Suzie said many similarities exist between Stouffville and Dungarvan, making it easier for them to adjust to their new surroundings.

"There are a lot of farms around Dungarvan just like here," she said. "And Dungarvan has government offices as well."

"But things aren't as spread out here, which is nice."

Suzie also said the populations of each centre are about the same.

"There are about 10,000 people in Dungarvan," she said. "And most people are young. Ireland has a lot of young people."

But while some physical elements of Stouffville and Dungarvan are similar, many things are different.

One significant change is the climate.

"Ireland is so different climate-wise," Michael said when asked what the greatest difference is. "They never have a hot summer or a really cold winter like they do in Canada."

And this has forced Michael to make a few wardrobe adjustments, Suzie said.

"He's already had to buy a summer suit because he never had one before," she said smiling.



Photo/MATT NICHOLLS

Welcome Wagon's Dianne Darling (left) welcomes new Stouffville resident Suzie Whelan at her new home in town. The Whelan family hails from Ireland, but is quickly settling into a new routine here. The Welcome Wagon eases people into new communities with complimentary welcome baskets.

Another significant difference is the over-all pace of Canadian life.

The Whelans lived in Rosedale for two months prior to moving to Stouffville and it was a big shock.

"The pace of life here is much faster," she said. "That was a real culture shock. In Dungarvan it was really relaxed."

And people are very friendly in Ireland, she said.

"Although people have been very nice here, the people in Ireland are unbelievably friendly. People are very friendly here, but in Ireland they are exuberantly so."

A final significant cultural difference, Suzie said, is the role of the local pub.

In Dungarvan, the pub was the hub of the city — the main entertainment centre and meeting place for both young and old.

"But in Canada, pubs are much different. They don't play the same role here as they do there. We miss it."

But despite the many differences between Canada and Ireland, Suzie said she was "very

happy" to be in Canada and particularly in Stouffville.

"We didn't ask to be transferred to Canada," she said. "But when we heard there was an

opening, we jumped at it.

"Stouffville really works well for us and every place I've gone, the people have been very nice. It's a nice place to live."

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