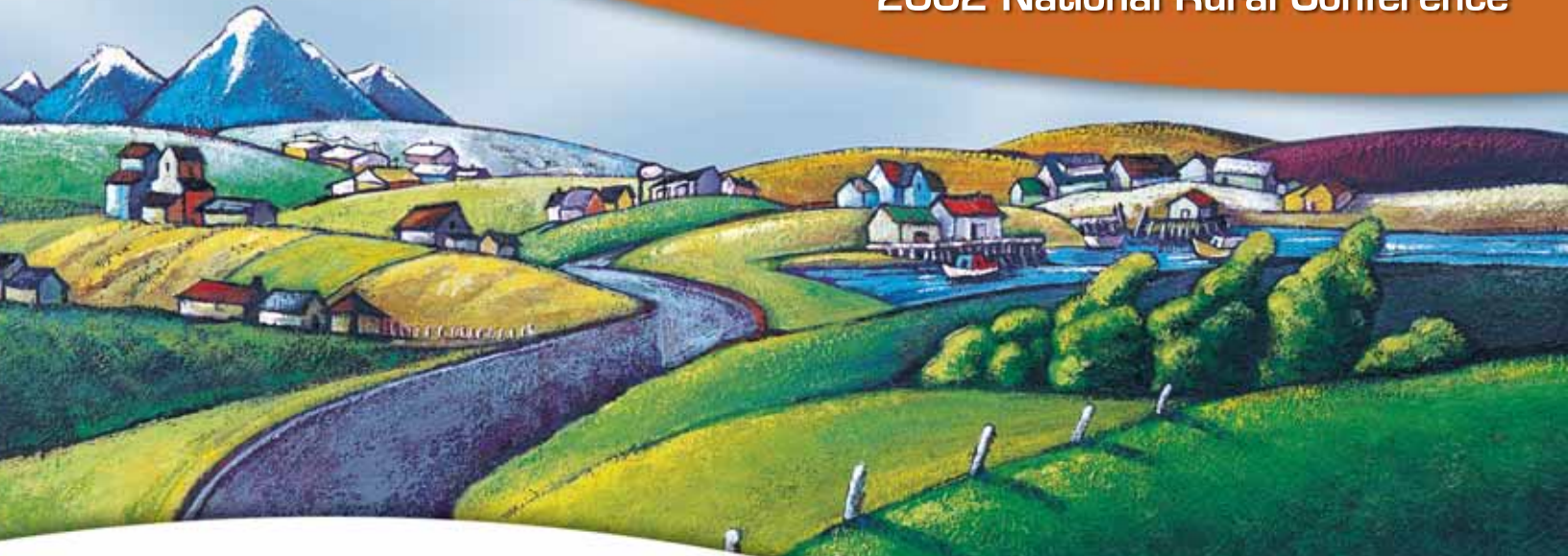


Progress since Charlottetown:

Key Achievements since the 2002 National Rural Conference



Introduction

Following the second National Rural Conference held in Charlottetown, PEI in April 2002, the Government of Canada published the *Charlottetown Action Plan* in which it outlined the next steps it would take to meet the issues raised by participants during the conference.

This report documents some key achievements the government has made in addressing these issues, as well as specific actions taken by the Rural Secretariat.

ISSUE 1: Government programs for community capacity building should be made more accessible

- At their first meeting in April 2003, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for rural development agreed to three strategic objectives for a national framework on rural policies. One of these strategic objectives is to support community capacity building.
- In 2003–2004, close to one million Rural Team newsletters containing information on government programs and services were distributed to rural Canadians via Canada Post or community newspapers.
- Communication Canada developed region-specific *Services for You* guides and distributed them to every household in Canada.
- The *Rural and Remote Canada Online* Web site portal has been offering single-window access to services and resources available to rural and remote Canadians.

ISSUE 2: Rural development initiatives should have a sustained level of support (e.g., human and financial resources) to ensure long-term success

- In its 2004 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada committed to a new deal for Canadian cities and communities which would deliver reliable, predictable and long-term funding. In March, the Minister of Finance introduced legislation to implement a 100% rebate to municipalities, of the GST and the federal portion of the HST.
- Rural Teams in each province and territory work with a variety of federal departments and agencies, other levels of government and community groups to strengthen partnerships, networks and alliances to address local rural development priorities.
- The Rural Secretariat, on behalf of the Government of Canada, has been working closely with officials from all provinces and territories to develop a national rural policy framework aimed at community capacity building, renewing the social and economic base of communities, and increasing governmental collaboration for community planning, priority setting and designing programs.
- In 2002, the Government of Canada renewed the Canadian Rural Partnership for five years for a total of \$55 million and committed \$5 million over five years for community capacity building.

ISSUE 3: Youth should be included in the community development process

- The Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy (YES) was renewed in February 2003. YES supports the Innovation and Learning Strategy to ensure youth have the tools they need to participate fully in the knowledge economy and society.
- Rural youth were invited to Rural Dialogue sessions such as town hall meetings, roundtables and Rural Team events. Rural Teams also organized activities specifically for rural youth, including youth workshops, youth conferences and programs for community television. Including youth in these activities provided an opportunity for them to influence community development plans and strategies.
- The National Rural Youth Conference was held in May 2003, in Orillia, Ontario. Delegates identified a rural community project they would carry out with guidance and advice from a mentor. The lessons these youth learned was documented to share with other youth considering a rural community development project.
- The Rural Secretariat created opportunities and provided tools to develop youth leadership capacity within the National Rural Youth Network (NRYN) and Council. With the help of the Rural Secretariat, the NRYN is developing its own charter which recognizes the need to ensure that the youth of rural, remote and northern communities continue to voice their opinions and concerns to influence federal policies and initiatives in a meaningful way.

ISSUE 4: Emphasis should be placed on leadership development

- An enhanced version of the youth Web site youth.gc.ca was launched. It features a variety of youth-related topics, including education, employment, and science and technology.
- The 2003 National Rural Youth Conference was organized around the theme of *Young Canadians: Leaders of Today and Tomorrow* and the program was developed to enable participants to develop strategies and acquire the skills and tools to increase youth leadership involvement in their communities.
- The Rural Secretariat maintains an ongoing relationship with stakeholder organizations as a means of exploring ways of developing leadership skills. For example, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges helped promote the first annual Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards, key aspects of which are leadership, innovation and partnership.

ISSUE 5: Skills development and continuous learning are important contributors to community capacity building

- The Skills and Learning Engagement Workshop at the Canadian Community Economic Development Conference was held in Winnipeg, September 2002. The final report—*Best Practices Workshop on Learning Communities*—is available online.
- The Rural Secretariat has been working with federal departments and provincial/territorial governments to align the focus of their work with the national rural policy framework. This includes working with Industry Canada and Human Resources Skills Development Canada on learning strategies. One of the three strategic objectives of the framework is to support community capacity building.

- Approximately 25 projects funded by the Rural Development Initiative included activities that supported skills development.
- The Government of Canada continues to support broadband for rural communities, recognizing the benefits it offers, such as facilitating on-line and distance education in rural, remote and northern communities.
- HRSDC's Office of Learning Technologies supports learning and skills development in communities through the Community Learning Networks (CLN) program. CLN supports pilot projects that research and test the use of learning technologies to enhance the skills of individuals affected by the shift to a knowledge-based economy. Examples of activities funded since the Charlottetown conference include projects aimed at helping rural youth access innovative learning opportunities, providing access to lifelong learning opportunities and developing a youth network in BC.

ISSUE 6: Innovative community development approaches should be identified and shared

- In 2003, the Government of Canada introduced the five-year, \$15-million Co-operative Development Initiative which will provide funding to co-operatives to help them grow and enhance the capacity of the co-operative sector to provide technical assistance to communities to develop co-operatives.
- Thirty-four Regional Summits, including the Rural Innovation Summit, were held across the country to allow business, entrepreneurs, municipal government, colleges and universities, and the non-profit sector in communities to contribute their voice to the ten-year national innovation strategy. Feedback received formed the basis of the *Canadians Speak on Innovation and Learning* report.

- The *Rural Dialogue On-line Discussion Group* and the *Rural Youth On-line Discussion Group* are promoted as a means to exchange best practices and lessons learned on the Internet.
- *Success Stories and Lessons Learned* on the *Rural and Remote Canada Online* Web site links to stories focusing on challenges and opportunities of individuals and communities in rural and remote regions of Canada.

ISSUE 7: Rural, remote and northern communities need access to broadband technology

- Industry Canada launched the \$105-million Broadband For Rural and Northern Development (BRAND) Pilot Program in September 2002 to bring broadband Internet to unserved rural, remote, northern and First Nations communities. In total, the Government of Canada has invested \$4.2 million to support the development of business plans and \$79 million in the deployment of broadband services to Aboriginal, northern and rural communities.
- The Government of Canada launched the \$155-million National Satellite Initiative in October 2003. This joint project between Infrastructure Canada, Industry Canada and the Canadian Space Agency will provide high-speed broadband Internet access services via satellite to communities located in the Far and Mid North, and in isolated or remote areas of Canada.

ISSUE 8: Approaches to rural economic diversification should recognize the different “rural realities”

- The Government of Canada has been working closely with officials from all provinces and territories to develop a national rural policy framework. This framework takes into consideration the different rural realities, the need for governments to engage citizens and stakeholders in setting priorities, and the need for flexibility in finding local solutions to local challenges.

ISSUE 9: Programs and policies within the Government of Canada, and between federal, provincial and territorial governments need better coordination

- The first meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of rural development took place on April 14 and 15, 2003. Government officials have been directed by ministers to develop a national rural policy framework that will enhance inter- and intra-governmental collaboration on rural issues.
- The Government of Canada has committed \$5.2 billion to support the Agricultural Policy Framework in all regions of Canada. The framework was developed in collaboration with provinces and territories. The agriculture sector remains a significant contributor to the rural economy.

ISSUE 10: Communications between rural communities and the Government of Canada should be improved

- The third National Rural Conference is being held October 21–23, 2004 in Red Deer, Alberta. A series of stakeholder roundtables was conducted across the country to lead up to and feed into the agenda of this conference. These and other Rural Dialogue events give rural citizens and community leaders the opportunity to network and communicate directly with the Government of Canada about issues that concern them.
- Members of the Rural Dialogue and Youth On-line discussion groups share information and opinions, and seek assistance from one another.
- Since its formation in April 2002, the Advisory Committee on Rural Issues has met three times a year to consider public policy issues affecting rural and remote Canada, and to formulate advice that draws on the full range of their experience and expertise.
- The Ministerial Advisory Council on Rural Health provided recommendations on seven strategic directions in their report *Rural Health in Rural Hands: Strategic Directions for Rural, Remote, Northern and Aboriginal Communities*.

ISSUE 11: Communications among rural communities should be improved and encouraged

- The Rural Secretariat roundtable discussions and Rural Dialogue events organized by the Rural Teams have promoted increased communication and collaboration among members of neighboring communities.
- The Government of Canada supports the work of rural coordinating organizations, who bring together a broad array of organizations dealing with rural issues.

ISSUE 12: More effort should be made to provide information and to discuss rural issues with urban citizens

- A series of five town hall meetings was conducted to raise the awareness of the interdependency and the joint contributions of rural and urban communities to Canada's prosperity and to discuss opportunities for rural–urban collaboration in community development.
- The Prime Minister's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, headed by former British Columbia premier, Mike Harcourt, provides the Prime Minister with recommendations and advice as part of the government's new deal for cities and communities. The Committee has convened a sub-committee dealing with rural issues.

**For information on some of the initiatives discussed above,
please visit the following Web sites**

Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program—

<http://broadband.gc.ca/index.htm>

Canada's Innovation Strategy—

<http://innovation.gc.ca/gol/innovation/interface.nsf/engdocBasic/3.html>

Community Learning Networks Initiative—

http://www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/en/gateways/nav/top_nav/program/olt.shtml

Co-operative Development Initiative—

http://www.agr.gc.ca/policy/coop/information_e.phtml

Government of Canada Services Guides—

http://www.communication.gc.ca/guides/index_e.html

National Rural Youth Conference—

http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/youth/03/index_e.phtml

National Satellite Initiative—

<http://broadband.gc.ca/pub/program/nsi/index.html>

Rural Dialogue—

http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue_e.phtml

Rural and Remote Canada Online—

<http://www.rural-canada.ca>

Rural Dialogue On-line Discussion Group—

http://www.rural.gc.ca/listserv_e.phtml

Rural Teams—

http://www.rural.gc.ca/ruralteam_e.phtml

Rural Youth On-line Discussion Group—

http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/youth/listserv_e.phtml

Youth Web Site (includes the Youth Employment Strategy)—

<http://www.youth.gc.ca>

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