

Taking action for sustainable rural communities



The Third
National
Rural
Conference

**Conference
Workbook**

**October 21–23, 2004
Red Deer, Alberta**



Canada

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Introduction

The 2004 National Rural Conference is part of the Government of Canada's ongoing dialogue with rural Canadians about challenges and opportunities facing their communities. Since 1998, more than 16,000 people have participated in the Rural Dialogue, a citizen-engagement initiative led by the Rural Secretariat in partnership with other federal departments and agencies.

Participants at the previous national rural conferences held in Magog (2000) and Charlottetown (2002) discussed actions to address a number of priority issues. They also delivered strong messages about the need for:

- better communication and collaboration among all players; and
- more awareness and flexibility around differing local circumstances.

This year's conference in Red Deer, Alberta, builds on the ideas and conclusions from these and other Rural Dialogue events under the theme, *Taking Action for Sustainable Rural Communities*. We will focus on successful community actions in five areas:

- community capacity building;
- entrepreneurship;
- infrastructure;
- youth; and
- northern issues.

These five subject areas were explored and validated at a series of roundtable meetings with rural stakeholders in selected communities across Canada during the past year. The views and opinions of more than 200 community leaders were sought and are reflected in this workbook.

Our aim is to better understand what rural communities across Canada are doing to remain viable and to chart a future that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. What's working? What challenges and barriers remain? What are the priorities for action at the community level? How can governments foster and support these local efforts? How can communities and governments work more effectively together? These are topics that will be explored at the 2004 National Rural Conference.

Purpose of the Workbook

This workbook is intended to encourage discussion at the Conference. It provides background on the five subject areas we will be discussing, and sets out the kinds of questions which will be considered in the Discussion Workshops on Friday, October 22. You will have the opportunity to participate in two of these Discussion Workshops.

Your input is important to us. Please take a few minutes to read this workbook and reflect on how you would answer the questions at the end of each section.

Once you decide which of the Discussion Workshops you would like to attend, indicate your top three preferences on the enclosed sheet and either fax, phone or e-mail this information to our Registration Coordinator.

Please bring the Workbook with you to the Conference so you can refer to your notes during the Discussion Workshops.

How Your Input Will Be Used

Sharing your experience and perspectives will help other participants and inform government leaders and officials and help them to understand your community's needs and aspirations. Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for rural development are encouraging the development of a National Rural Policy Framework; the discussions at the National Rural Conference will contribute to their collective efforts to foster viable and sustainable rural communities. Following the Conference, a report will be prepared summarizing the main observations, conclusions and implications for communities and governments. The Rural Secretariat will share this report with its federal, provincial and territorial partners, as well as with Conference participants, media and other interested groups and individuals.

Regional Roundtables

Between July 2003 and March 2004, regional roundtables on the theme, *Rural Communities as the Cornerstone*, were held in: Peterborough, Ontario; Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; Dawson City, Yukon; Port Alberni, British Columbia; Iqaluit, Nunavut; Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; Val D'Or, Quebec; New Liskeard, Ontario; Sackville, New Brunswick; Truro, Nova Scotia; Peace River, Alberta; and Louiseville, Quebec. Additional stakeholder roundtables are scheduled to take place in Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador prior to the National Rural Conference.

"Taking Action For Rural Communities"

Rural, remote and northern communities across Canada are taking action to plan and secure their future. While each community is unique, many face similar challenges in terms of declining populations, job losses in key industries, and closures of schools and hospitals. Others are dealing with encroachment from expanding urban centres or growth that is outstripping local infrastructure and services. Many rural communities are adopting strategies to successfully meet these challenges, as well as to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Regardless of similarities and differences, all communities must make choices when they set priorities and invest their resources. This workbook describes some of these challenges and possible community actions under the headings: Community Capacity Building, Entrepreneurship, Infrastructure, Youth and Northern Issues.

Community Capacity Building

A growing number of rural communities in Canada are preparing themselves to better meet their respective economic and social development challenges by employing an approach referred to as “Community Capacity Building.”

What is Community Capacity Building?

Community capacity building is a continuous process to develop local leadership and encourage citizen participation in the development of the community. It enables a community or region to:

- identify its strengths and weaknesses,
- mobilize internal and external resources to meet local challenges,
- develop strategies for effective action, and
- take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Community capacity building is a way of ensuring community members have the necessary knowledge and skills to build individual and collective self-confidence and to help fulfill community needs through active citizen involvement.

Why is Community Capacity Building Important for Rural Communities?

Community capacity building is not an end in itself. It is a way to develop and harness a community’s knowledge and talent in order to maximize what it can accomplish. This applies to all aspects of community well-being, including economic development, social services, recreation and culture, and preserving a healthy natural environment.

Key Elements

The most important aspects of community capacity building include:

Leadership Development – To thrive, communities need local leaders who can motivate others, articulate a vision for the community, and bring expertise to planning and implementing new initiatives.

Citizen Involvement – Having active citizen participation in community activities is also critical, be it sports and recreation, business development, charities, the arts, politics or local planning.

Effective Community Organizations – Communities need not only individual leadership and citizen participation, but also community organizations that can pursue local development goals on their own or in partnership with others.

Open Communication – Engaging citizens and community organizations in a meaningful way requires open and effective communication.

Centre Péninsule (NB) – Jobs, Pride and Confidence through Community Capacity Building

- Citizens initiated a community engagement process.
- Built local consensus on a strategic community plan.
- Secured private and public investments to become a “smart community” and foster socio-economic development.
- Built confidence to undertake \$1.5M HRDC initiative targeted at youth, rural development and technology.
- Engaged the provincial government to be part of the solution.
- Enabled the community to access additional Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency funding.

Contact Information: Charles-Edouard Landry, Collectivité ingénieure de la Péninsule acadienne (CIPA), (506) 764-1030, charles-edouard.landry@cipanb.ca

Strategic Planning – To define a common vision, communities must understand their strengths and weaknesses, identify opportunities and barriers, set objectives and develop a plan of action.

Roundtable Feedback

In the regional roundtable consultations held over the past year, community stakeholders discussed capacity building activities already underway in their communities, as well as what they would like to see done. The following are highlights of some of their observations and suggestions. These comments do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.

Roundtable participants cited the following community-level actions as good starting points to develop community capacity:

- **Invest in Leadership Development** – Conflict resolution skills, board of directors training and human resource management were identified as key areas for building a community leadership base. Many suggested leadership development should start with youth, and communities should strive to develop mechanisms to actively involve youth in community development decision processes.

- **Encourage Volunteers** – It was suggested that communities should acknowledge the contributions and challenges experienced by volunteers and take concrete steps to overcome these challenges so that community leadership and volunteerism become more attractive arenas of community involvement.
- **Build a Knowledge Base** – Information and knowledge are key ingredients to decision-making at all levels. Communities should identify and use all the knowledge resources at their disposal, both within the community and externally. In particular, they may want to “map” community assets, including both physical infrastructure (community landmarks, transportation facilities, sewers, etc.) and social infrastructure (community organizations, networks, key people, etc.). It is important to tap into both formal and informal information structures, and to share knowledge across communities. A good way to broaden the knowledge and idea base for community development is to invite citizens to play a direct role in the strategic planning process.
- **Attract Immigrants** – Communities can promote rural regions to immigrants as a good place to live. Working cooperatively with community organizations and government to create support structures and a friendly and welcoming environment will help attract new Canadians to rural communities. New Canadians often bring much needed professional skills to a community, as well as new ideas and innovative approaches.
- **Explore Partnerships with Aboriginal Communities** – Partnering with First Nations and Inuit communities on opportunities for collaborative economic development can provide enrichment through cultural exchange. Successful leadership development models in First Nations and Inuit communities should be looked at by other rural communities.
- **Preserve Community Landmarks** – Protecting and enhancing the “fabric” or “building blocks” of a community, such as schools, community halls, cultural facilities and heritage buildings, promotes a sense of belonging and citizen allegiance. It also recognizes and celebrates the distinct identity and diversity of each community.

Community stakeholders also commented on some approaches and factors that could have a significant impact on the success of communities in implementing capacity building initiatives:

- **Bottom-up Approach** – Community capacity building is not something that can be imposed from outside or from above. It requires grassroots buy-in and community participation in all stages of planning and development.
- **Strong Leaders** – To thrive, communities need local leaders who can motivate others, articulate a vision for the community and act as catalysts in planning and implementing actions.

- **Inclusiveness** – To effectively tap its human capacity, a community needs to include all of its citizens (e.g. newcomers, women, seniors, Aboriginal people, Official Languages minority communities and youth).
- **Informed Citizens** – Informing residents about community development initiatives is essential to encourage participation and build consensus.
- **Attainable Results** – It is important that community development action plans be realistic, implementable, and based on attainable results.
- **Partnerships and Networks** – Partnerships with other communities, businesses, colleges, universities and governments provide additional skills, knowledge and resources, and improve a community’s chance of success.

Evolution of Communities Matrix – The Community Futures of Central Kootenay

This matrix identifies 10 different stages in the evolution of communities. Among them are:

Conflict, Non-Cooperation and Paralysis Stages:

- Can’t accomplish anything, low self-esteem and pride.
- Can gather but not work together; no community plan; lacks listening skills; lacks shared vision; new issues cause crisis.

Coping, Simple Planning and Strategic Stages:

- Able to manage issues; little community consultation.
- Some planning; chases funding without clear needs or priorities; looking to other communities.
- More proactive; recognition of strengths and weaknesses; strategically builds on assets.

Vision, Integration, Innovation and Learning Stages:

- Proactive; follows through and updates vision/plans; cooperation among community groups.
- Shared decision making; commitment to constant learning/improvement.

Contact Information: Mike Stolte, Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL), (250) 352-1933, <http://www.theCIEL.com>, mstolte@futures.bc.ca

The following were among the suggestions for additional actions that would enhance community capacity and contribute significantly to rural Canadian communities being more successful in attaining their community development objectives:

- **Adopt a Comprehensive Approach** – Communities sometimes focus on some aspects of capacity building, such as strategic planning, while ignoring other aspects like leadership and skills development. All key elements should be included in order to be effective.
- **Develop Planning Skills and Tools** – Many different research and analytical skills and tools are required to assess community capacity and develop a plan of action. Communities may need assistance to acquire or develop the ability to:
 - determine development readiness (an inventory of strengths and weaknesses);
 - develop better resource management practices; and
 - identify economic opportunities and areas of comparative advantage.

It was suggested that governments should provide tools and data to assist communities in identifying emerging trends and opportunities, and conducting detailed socio-economic analysis.
- **Continue to Enhance Intergovernmental Cooperation** – By working together and in partnership with municipalities, all levels of government can encourage a broad approach to rural community development. In addition to economic development and social programs, this could include guidance on preservation of culture, heritage and recreation. By adopting a longer-term view of community development, government policies and programs could also benefit community sustainability and resource management.

Resources

Community Development Handbook, A Tool to Build Community Capacity, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/comm_deve/cdhbooke.pdf

A Community Capacity Building Toolkit for Quebec's English-Speaking Communities, Social Development Canada, <http://www.sdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/hip/solmc/publications/toolkit/toc.shtml&hs=oxi>

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, Asset Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University, <http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/community/buildingblurb.html>

Community Strategic Planning Overview, Rural Economic Data and Intelligence (REDDI), Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, <http://www.reddi.gov.on.ca/redtool/default.jsp?lang=e&page=guide&sub=community#start>

Community Planning and Capacity Building (links and resources), The Canadian CED Network, http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/pages/links_1.asp

Colchester Immigration Partnership

“When we embrace diversity we attract innovation and investment.”

- **The Challenges:** Aging population; out-migration; skilled labour shortages; limited immigration and retention.
- **The Approach:** Build infrastructure to meet newcomer needs; attract families with connections to community members; retain new families.
- **Partners:** 20 organizations including business groups, colleges, government, other community organizations.
- **Strategy #1:** Become a welcoming community: immigrant surveys; employer surveys; language training; community awareness events; recognition of professional credentials; volunteer programming and training.
- **Strategy #2:** Establish Newcomer's Resource Centre.
- **Strategy #3:** Market Colchester Region.
- **Strategy #4:** Provide feedback on immigration process.

Contact Information: Margot Begin, (902) 897-1029, mbegin@corda.ca

Questions

1) What activities are going on in your community that build capacity?

2) What's working well in your community to build capacity?

3) What else could be done?



Entrepreneurship

Business enterprises, including cooperatives, are a mainstay in the economic and social viability of rural communities. Community encouragement and support for entrepreneurs are essential to long-term economic development in rural Canada.

What is Entrepreneurship?

Entrepreneurship refers to the process of starting, developing and managing a business. Entrepreneurship is usually associated with innovating and taking risks. It is a process through which individuals and groups pursue opportunity, acquire and expend resources, and create value through new enterprises.

Why is Entrepreneurship Important for Rural Communities?

Small and medium-sized enterprises generate employment as well as provide products and services to local consumers and customers beyond their home community. Entrepreneurship is particularly important in rural, remote and northern communities where local access to products and services may be more limited than in larger centers, and where there may be a desire to expand and diversify the community's economic base.

Key Elements

The following are key components that create conditions for economic growth through entrepreneurship:

Supportive Entrepreneurial Environment –

Communities can create a supportive environment through community awareness and recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship.

Community Infrastructure – Being able to offer high-quality public services and amenities will help a community attract and retain business. Physical facilities, the quality and cost of utilities, availability of business support services and the impact of taxes and regulations all have a bearing on whether a community is viewed as an attractive place for businesses to locate.

Community Support Structures – Communities can offer assistance such as support networks, mentoring opportunities, entrepreneurial training, micro-lending services and market information.

Youth Entrepreneurship – Young people are often the agents of change in a community. A focus on developing young entrepreneurs is an important aspect of developing a climate in which new businesses can thrive and young people can create employment for themselves and others.

Entrepreneurship in Rural Schools

Examples of 2004 winners of the Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest (Student Division)

Raising Rabbits

Students in Bas-Saint-Laurent undertook a project to raise and sell rabbits. This included: project financing, day-to-day administration, breeding, feeding and care of the animals, and product marketing.

Flagada

Students at Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles developed information management software for analyzing energy consumption and providing energy management tips.

Sacoutimi

Students in Rives-du-Saguenay designed, produced and sold onion bags, scented place mats and flute bags made from recycled burlap.

In 2004, the grand prize in the Business Division went to Les Bergeries du Fjord in Saguenay-Lac St. Jean for marketing three new types of sheep milk cheeses.

Contact information:

<http://www.concours-entrepreneur.org>

Access to Capital – The ability to access capital is critical for new business projects and expansion of existing businesses. Accessing capital requires a well-developed business plan and the ability to inspire confidence among lenders and investors that the venture can generate an acceptable return on investment.

Roundtable Feedback

In the regional roundtables held over the past year, community stakeholders commented on rural entrepreneurship approaches, opportunities and needs. This section highlights their observations and suggestions. These comments do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.

Community leaders cited a wide range of actions communities are undertaking or could undertake to support entrepreneurship, including:

- **Foster Entrepreneurial Skills –** It was seen as important to support the development of entrepreneurial skills including the ability to assess risk, conduct cost-benefit analyses, prepare business plans, make decisions, and communicate and market effectively. Innovative or alternative problem-solving techniques were also cited as valuable assets for entrepreneurs to acquire.

- **Develop Regional Strategies** – Having an overall business strategy will help a community support entrepreneurs through good and bad economic cycles. Regional strategies, developed in cooperation with neighboring communities, provide opportunities to share costs, generate synergies and coordinate promotional efforts. Tourism marketing is an example of the regional planning approach being successfully applied in many parts of Canada.
- **Promote Comparative Advantages** – Rural communities should make concerted efforts to promote themselves as viable areas for investment on the basis of their competitive advantages (e.g. proximity to markets, lower real estate costs, lower taxes, availability of human resources, tourism and recreational assets). It was suggested that assessing economic development activities in other comparable communities could provide rural communities with insight into their own strengths and help them prioritize future activities and investments.
- **Target Youth** – Mentoring and apprenticeship programs are two approaches many communities are using to encourage entrepreneurship among rural youth. Business skills should be developed starting in secondary school or even primary schools.
- **Create Centres of Excellence** – Establishing centres of excellence in rural areas is seen as a way to support entrepreneurial development. Building on local strengths such as the community's natural resource base, centres of excellence can stimulate value-added product research and develop new technologies to diversify commodity-based economies.
- **Establish Joint Ventures with Aboriginal Communities** – Participants noted that joint investments with Aboriginal communities were a way to promote local economic activity to benefit both communities and strengthen cultural connections.

Community stakeholders also commented on some approaches and factors they felt had a significant impact on the success of communities in fostering business enterprises:

- **Quality Services and Amenities** – Access to business and social services, infrastructure and other amenities is taken into account when entrepreneurs decide to locate in a community. To the extent possible, communities need to remove uncertainty in these areas in order to encourage investment.

- **Community-level Decision Making** – Many community leaders believe that government programs would be more effective in supporting entrepreneurship and innovation if there was more flexibility for community-level decision making. Examples cited where this is already happening included the Northern Innovation Fund, the Community Futures Program and Quebec's Rural Pact.
- **Regional Economic Development Agencies** – Regional economic development agencies were seen to be providing key support for business development in rural communities. Community leaders said it was important that this support for local business development be continued and increased.

Entrepreneurial Community Checklist

The Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship offers this checklist for fostering entrepreneurship.

Climate

- Awareness
- Recognition
- Culture
- Anonymity
- Quality of Life

Infrastructure

- Real Estate
- Utilities
- Services
- Taxes and Regulations
- Demand-Driven Approach

Support

Basic:

- Positive Climate and Infrastructure
- Business Services
- Focus on Entrepreneurs
- Networks and Mentors

Advanced:

- Entrepreneurial Training
- Financing
- Market Development
- Youth Entrepreneurship

High Performing:

- Enterprise Facilitation
- Equity Capital
- Entrepreneurship in Schools
- Entrepreneurial Support Organizations

Contact information: <http://www.ruraleship.org/content/content/pdf/Community.pdf>

- **Openness to New Economic Models** – Many communities have historically relied on the wage economy. Some stakeholders commented that communities may now need to consider other models and be open to less traditional approaches to entrepreneurial activity.
- **Diversification** – Sustainable development of rural businesses may require significant diversification of the local economic base. This requires community willingness to explore innovative possibilities, including new value-added products.

The following were among the suggestions for additional actions that could be taken to further improve entrepreneurship in rural Canada:

- **Support Mentoring and Career Development** – Stakeholders commented that more should be done to facilitate entrepreneurship development through long- term support of mentoring and career development opportunities in rural communities. This is viewed as important both in retaining youth and attracting needed professionals and trades people to rural areas.
- **Streamline Regulations and Funding Processes** – Simplifying regulatory and funding processes was seen as critical for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- **Develop Export Markets and Information Technology** – Government initiatives to improve export readiness and develop export markets, as well as to extend access to information management technologies, were seen as important priorities in support of rural entrepreneurship. Governments could also help by disseminating business planning tools and providing economic development consultants to assist in local business planning.
- **Enhance Research Capabilities** – Governments could play a larger role by addressing rural research needs and improving access to existing programs and networks such as the Industrial Research Assistance Program, Canadian Technology Network and Technology Partnerships Canada. More use of existing education and training facilities would expand local rural research capabilities. Rural research could be further promoted by establishing new post-secondary campuses with research capacity.
- **Facilitate Access to Capital** – Many rural leaders view access to capital as the single most significant barrier to business development in their communities. By facilitating equity investments, providing technical expertise in business development, and educating rural lenders and borrowers about entrepreneurship and risk management, governments are seen as having a key role to play in this field.

Resources

Canada Business Service Centres, <http://www.cbsc.org/>

Community Business Development Corporations, <http://www.cbdc.ca/>

Aboriginal Business Service Network, <http://www.cbsc.org/english/absn/>

Entrepreneurship and Opportunities for Rural Youth, Canadian Rural Information Service, http://www.rural.gc.ca/cris/youth/index_e.phtml

Connecting People with Expertise, Canadian Technology Network, National Research Council, http://ctn-rct.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/home_e.shtml

Community Futures, <http://www.communityfutures.ca>

Establishing Local Education and Training

The Kiwanis Enterprise Center in Dawson Creek, BC, was created because local graduates and young people were leaving the region due to unemployment. The Centre helps young people establish viable businesses by providing business skills, self employment opportunities and small business start-up assistance.

Courses:

- Business Sense for Youth
- Entrepreneurship
- Enterprise on Line
 - Developing Business Plans
 - Improving Employability Skills
 - Applying Technology in Business

Services:

- Business consultations
- Mentorship opportunities
- Workshops
- Financial assistance information
- Business resource library
- Administrative and secretarial support
- Computers with high-speed Internet access

Contact information:

<http://www.pris.bc.ca/enterprise>

Questions

1) What activities are going on in your community that encourage entrepreneurship?

2) What's working well in your community to support entrepreneurs?

3) What else could be done?



Infrastructure

Facilities and services play a key role in defining a community. A community's infrastructure will significantly affect the quality of life it offers to its residents and its ability to attract business and remain viable

What is Infrastructure?

A community's infrastructure consists of physical networks and assets, as well as core public services and institutions that are essential to economic activity and to people's quality of life. It includes physical infrastructure such as housing, highways, transportation terminals, municipal water and sewage systems, telephone and Internet connections, industrial land, energy generation and waste management facilities. It also includes social and economic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, libraries, financial institutions, economic development organizations, and community and recreation centres.

With some exceptions, community infrastructure has historically been provided and maintained by various levels of government. However, private companies and cooperatives are involved in several key areas including telecommunications, financial services, air travel, some aspects of the health care system and private schools.

Why is Infrastructure Important for Rural Communities?

Maintaining and developing infrastructure is a priority for all communities in Canada. For Canadians living in rural, remote and northern regions, basic infrastructure is considered critical for continued community development, diversification and participation in the Canadian and global economy. The combination of geography and relatively low population density in rural, remote and northern communities means that infrastructure is generally more expensive to provide and maintain in these areas. As a result, many rural communities have less developed infrastructure than their urban counterparts and some have experienced cutbacks or loss of existing infrastructure.

Key Elements

The infrastructure elements of greatest concern for rural communities include:

Transportation – Development of transportation linkages is essential to a community's economy, especially building and maintaining roads and highways, airports, harbours and public transit systems including train and bus service.

First Infrastructure Canada Program Doaktown, New Brunswick

Issue

- Domestic well water unfit for consumption and bathing due to bacterial contaminants.

Solution

- Extend Doaktown's existing municipal water system to 130 new homes and the sanitary sewer system to 46 new homes.
- Cost – \$1.5 million.

Outcomes

- A dynamic and innovative partnership between all levels of government resolved the problem and improved quality of life in the community.

Transportation infrastructure needs vary according to local situations and community development priorities (e.g. tourism, shipping of bulk commodities, commuting to urban centres).

Telecommunications – In the information age, access to telecommunications is critical to sustaining economic development. Broadband Internet service is a major instrument for commerce, education and access to government information and services including health care. It is also important for attracting and retaining young people. The innovative use of technology provides new economic opportunities for rural Canada.

Housing – Many rural communities, especially in the north, struggle with the challenge of providing adequate and affordable housing infrastructure. Lack of housing can severely affect both economic development and the social well-being of communities.

The Environment – Environmental considerations are key determinants of sustainability for communities of all sizes. Clean water, air and land are directly related to health protection, as well as business development. Increasingly, rural communities must comply with environmental protection measures requiring major investments in new infrastructure (e.g. sewage and water treatment plants). Rural areas may also be affected by urban infrastructure requirements such as landfills for municipal garbage or energy generating facilities.

Roundtable Feedback

In the regional roundtable consultations held over the past year, community stakeholders commented on various rural infrastructure challenges and what can be done to address them. The following highlights of participant observations and suggestions do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.

Rural stakeholders cited a number of actions communities could undertake to meet their infrastructure needs, including:

- **Regional Planning** – To offset their lower tax base and to benefit from economies of scale, communities should combine their resources. Planning infrastructure on a regional basis also leads to better assessments of current and future needs.
- **Joint Planning with Government** – Communities and governments should strategically plan and manage infrastructure development together rather than addressing it on a crisis management basis.
- **Form Public/Private Partnerships** – Public/private partnerships may provide the opportunity for communities to acquire needed infrastructure and for companies to expand their customer base. Tripartite arrangements that include Aboriginal communities have proven successful in some areas.
- **Inform Public about Telecommunications Benefits** – Informing citizens about the potential economic benefits of high-speed telecommunications was seen as important. Demonstrating a critical mass of users and an increasing demand for high-speed telecommunications services is part of the business case that needs to be made to both government and private telecommunications providers to justify the required investment.
- **Expand Management Boards** – The creation or expansion of municipal management boards was seen as a good means to advance cooperation on infrastructure among northern communities.

The following were among the observations community stakeholders made about factors that influenced the success of their infrastructure initiatives:

- **Take a Long-term Approach** – To achieve efficiency and effectiveness in infrastructure investments, communities should develop a longer term approach to infrastructure development, taking into account future development as well as the current needs.
- **Local Management** – Locally managed infrastructure investments will help to ensure their appropriateness to local contexts and conditions and assure benefit for all community stakeholders.

Some of the suggested areas for further improvements included:

- **Improve Planning Expertise** – Rural communities should develop or acquire expertise and technical and financial tools that would enhance their ability to lever infrastructure funds, implement best practices and acquire new technologies.
- **Coordinated and Integrated Government Approach** – Approaching infrastructure investment in a horizontal manner across levels of government and between government departments would ensure better coordination and integration of efforts and allow all parties to accomplish more.
- **Equitable Basic Infrastructure** – An equitable level of basic infrastructure for all Canadians was seen as desirable, supported by financial and other assistance as necessary. Such an approach may require a review of the effectiveness of per capita infrastructure funding formulas, including whether they are creating barriers or inequities.

Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund

Investment

- \$1 billion over five years.
- Anticipates each level of government providing one third of project costs.

Process

- Announced February, 2004.
- Provinces, territories and federal government negotiating individual agreements.
- Each province and territory will receive a base allocation as will First Nations communities. Remaining funds will be allocated on a per capita basis.
- At least 60% nationally will go to support 'green' infrastructure.

Outcomes

- Improved and increased stock of core public infrastructure.
- Improved quality of life and economic opportunities for communities.

Contact information: http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/mrif-fimr/index_e.shtml?menu3

Resources

The National Guide to Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure,
<http://www.infraguide.gc.ca/>

Infrastructure Funding For Canada's Communities,
Infrastructure Canada, http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/funding/index_e.shtml

Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot
Program, Industry Canada, <http://broadband.gc.ca/pub/program/bbindex.html>

Green Municipal Funds, Federation of Canadian
Municipalities, http://kn.fcm.ca/ev.php?URL_ID=2825&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201&reload=1043178382

Opening Doors and Building Futures, FedNor,
<http://fednor.ic.gc.ca>

Infrastructure Canada Program in Eastern Canada, Atlantic
Canada Opportunities Agency, <http://www.acoa.ca/e/financial/infrastructure.shtml>

Infrastructure Canada Program in Western Canada,
Western Economic Diversification,
http://www.wd.gc.ca/ced/infrastructure/default_e.asp

Infrastructure Canada Program for Quebec, Canada
Economic Development, <http://www.dec-ced.gc.ca/>

Indian and Northern Affairs, Infrastructure Canada
Program for Northern Territories and First Nations,
http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/hsg/cih/ci/ic/index_e.html

Infrastructure Canada Program for Ontario, Industry Canada,
<http://www.ic.gc.ca/coip-pico/coip-pico.nsf>

Canadian Smart Communities “Learning Laboratories”

*From the presentation “Think Innovation: Canada in
the Network Age”*

BC: The SMART CHOICES Project

- Community portal to deliver one-stop shopping for community services.
- Telework benefits through reduced traffic congestion.

Calgary: INFOPORT Community Empowerment Project

- Integration and better access to social services for people at risk.
- Connected and networked social services agencies and wired drop-in centres.

Saskatchewan: The Headwaters Project

- A marketplace for local artisans and craftspeople, training in the advantages of e-commerce and e-banking to establish credit rating for entrepreneurs.

Labrador: Technology on Top of the World

- Video-based diagnosis and medical consultations.
- Video-conference virtual bail hearings saving time and money in provincial justice system.

Aboriginal: K-net Project

- Full Grade 9 program on-line reducing emotional and financial hardship of students moving to large centres.

Contact information: http://broadband.gc.ca/pub/media/presentations/binder/presentations2002/intcities011002_e.pdf

Questions

1) What kind of infrastructure initiatives are underway in your community?

2) What are some examples of successful infrastructure initiatives in rural communities?

3) What else could be done?



Youth

The goal of achieving sustainable rural communities is profoundly influenced by the ability of communities to engage young people in their plans for the future. Young Canadians are leaders of today as well as tomorrow. They bring fresh perspectives and much needed skills to help rural, remote and northern communities meet the many challenges facing them in the 21st century.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Rural communities face a variety of challenges and opportunities which are influenced in large part by the decisions that young people make. The following are some of the most significant youth issues identified by young people and other rural community leaders:

Youth Leaving – Rural communities are faced with the reality that many young people will leave to pursue education and employment opportunities elsewhere. While this is arguably necessary if rural youth are to pursue their educational goals, gain new experiences and broaden their horizons, it may reduce a community's capacity for future growth and development if these young residents do not return and are not replaced by other young people. Research results suggest that out-migration of youth from rural areas will continue, if not accelerate. Of rural youth surveyed in 2002, more than half said they intended to move to an urban centre. Among former rural youth residing in urban centres, only a little more than one third said they planned to return to a rural community.

Access to Education – Educational options within rural areas are often limited compared to choices in larger centres. As a result, a high percentage of rural youth leave to pursue post-secondary education.

Youth Perceptions – By and large, rural youth feel their communities are safe, affordable and good places to raise a family. However, many see relocation to a larger city as a “sign of success” and are attracted to the career opportunities and cultural, recreational and sports events available in urban centres. Most rural communities have assets and advantages which are attractive to young Canadians, particularly those who have completed their formal education and are starting to raise a family. There is an opportunity to capitalize on these advantages.

Leaders of Change – Youth have potential to be innovators and leaders of change in rural communities. Their energy and enthusiasm are assets which communities need as they respond to economic, social and environmental challenges.

Youth at Risk – Many rural youth are concerned that lack of social and recreational activities in their home community are leading to boredom and contributing to an increase in vandalism, petty theft, drug and alcohol use and violent behavior.

Roundtable Feedback

In the regional roundtable consultations held over the past year, community stakeholders commented on youth activities already underway or that could be undertaken in their communities. The following highlights of participant observations and suggestions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Canada.

There are many activities that communities can undertake to promote youth involvement in rural community life. Indeed, young participants commented that they want to be more involved in their communities; but need support to do so. Suggested actions included:

- **Involve Youth in Community Development** – Integrating youth in community development and decision-making processes requires specific youth engagement mechanisms and strategies. Youth participants commented that their involvement in community development would increase if their input were seen to be producing tangible results. Communities need to demonstrate that they care about young people and are listening to them. Recognition of youth skills, abilities and contributions will also encourage greater involvement.
- **Identify Youth Needs** – In order to attract and retain youth, communities need to do a better job identifying and understanding young people's needs, and to provide economic, social, cultural and recreational options that respond to these needs. In particular, communities need to provide youth with real opportunities to make use of their skills and experiences.
- **Support Leadership Development** – Providing young people with skills that would enable them to become community leaders is viewed as an important priority for rural communities. Stakeholders stressed that development of youth leadership needs to be broadened to include individuals who are not currently involved and not just those who have already “come forward.”
- **Encourage Mentorship** – Mentorship programs through which young people learn from other members of the community have proven to be effective tools for involving youth and developing their skills.

- **Expand Local Training and Apprenticeships –** More varied and locally applicable vocational training, internships and trades apprenticeship opportunities can be provided to youth in their own communities.
- **Support Youth Entrepreneurship –** Business development strategies that focus on the creation or attraction of small and medium-sized businesses are seen as an opportunity to involve more youth in the local workforce. By linking youth entrepreneurship to apprenticeship programs in secondary schools and colleges, communities can encourage young people to acquire skills that will also be useful for local community economic development. Local businesses can be challenged to commit to a minimum level of youth employment.

In communities that have successful programs for engaging youth, the following factors were identified as fundamental in contributing to that success:

- **Proactive Communication –** Providing young people with comprehensive information about the education, career and lifestyle choices available within a community was seen as important to ensure youth make informed decisions.
- **Youth-led Organizations –** Youth organizations in which other community members provide direction through mentorship while youth leaders make their own operational decisions were seen as the best model to encourage greater youth involvement and skills development.

Roundtable participants identified a few ways that youth engagement and retention efforts could be improved:

- **Promote Post-secondary Education –** It was noted that, in some cases, a community-level shift must occur in order to encourage youth to pursue a university education. Other leaders commented that more must be done to ensure rural, remote and northern youth have access to quality post-secondary education, be it through local facilities or distance education programs.
- **Enhance Computer Skills Among Adults –** Young people in rural communities noted that some educators do not have adequate technical knowledge or skills when it comes to computers and Internet learning. Ensuring that teachers and other adults in the community are proficient in computer and Internet technology is important for improving communication with youth, as well as promoting distance learning opportunities.

- **Communicate Advantages of Rural Living –** Roundtable participants commented that negative perceptions about rural life are detrimental to rural community development. Businesses, schools, media and government in rural areas should promote the positive aspects of rural life to attract more young people to settle in or return to rural communities.
- **Preserve Culture and Heritage –** A number of participants commented that education materials should be developed to assist in preserving cultural and northern values for First Nations and Inuit youth.

Heartwood Institute – Youth Engagement

More than 20,000 young people have participated in this Nova Scotia program promoting community development through youth-leadership education.

Focus: To engage young people as partners in building positive futures for themselves, communities and society.

Core Values:

- Following passion
- Connecting with others
- Making a difference
- Taking action
- Having fun

Scope:

- Youth development
- Professional development
- Consultations
- Research
- Adult and youth partnerships

Programs:

- Youth forums
- Leadership training and wilderness adventures
- Youth inclusion
- Customized school programs
- Professional development training

Contact information: [http:// www.heartwood.ns.ca](http://www.heartwood.ns.ca)



Resources

Rural Youth, Tapping the Potential, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, <http://www.fao.org/ruralityouth>

Rural Youth: Stayers, Leavers and Return Migrants, Canadian Rural Partnership, http://www.rural.gc.ca/researchreports/ruralityouth/ruralityouth_e.phtml

Rural Youth Migration: Exploring the Reality Behind the Myths, Canadian Rural Partnership, http://www.rural.gc.ca/researchreports/youth.2002/cover_e.phtml

Tips for Working with Youth in Community Development Projects, Health Canada, <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cds/pdf/tipsyouths.pdf>

Youth Forums Canada, Canadian Heritage, <http://www.exchanges.gc.ca/forums.asp?Language=0&MenuID=3>

Youth Volunteering: Leadership, Volunteer Canada, <http://www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/youth/leadership.php?display=4,0>

Rural Youth Network, <http://www.ruralityouth.ca>

Maison familiale rurale – Youth Apprenticeship

Established in 1999 by volunteers in Le Granit, Quebec, this successful co-op program provides hands-on skills development in a live-in setting.

- Launched in response to community need for vocational training of youth in agriculture and forestry.
- Program is a work-study school (alternating two weeks of work on a farm with two weeks of classes)
- Rural youth receive an education adapted to their needs while remaining in their own community.
- Students graduate with a secondary school diploma and a professional diploma.
- Part of an international network of similar establishments in about 30 countries.
- Program has provided the community with exposure and visibility supporting tourism and other business.

Contact information:

<http://www.mfrgranit.com/contact.html>

http://www.rural.gc.ca/team/qc/prog_fin_e.phtml#maison

Questions

1) What activities are going on to involve youth in your community's development?

2) What's working well in your community to attract and retain youth?

3) What else could be done?



Northern Issues

Canada's north, comprised of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the northern parts of British Columbia, the prairie provinces, Ontario, Quebec and Labrador, is a vast area comprising more than half of Canada's land mass, but is home to a mere 2% of the country's population. Most northern residents live in communities with populations of less than 1,000 people. A large part of the northern population is Aboriginal, comprising First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. The Aboriginal population is 23% of the total Yukon population and 49% of the Northwest Territories population. In Nunavut, 85% of the population is Inuit.

Northern communities are challenged by many of the same issues facing rural and remote communities in other parts of the country, including: access to health care, education and training; availability of housing; inadequate infrastructure; and dependence on single natural resource industries. However, in the north, isolation, climate, sparse population and conflicts between traditional and modern values and ways of life, must also be taken into account.

The acceleration of resource development in the north in recent years is providing northern communities with new opportunities for employment, economic diversification and improved amenities. At the same time, environmental, social and other costs associated with these projects have very real implications for northern residents. Ensuring that development occurs in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner requires active planning and participation by northern communities.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Among the many challenges and opportunities facing northern communities, the following are at the heart of future viability and sustainability:

Resource Development – A significant proportion of Canada's natural resource wealth lies in the north. The development of these resources – oil and gas, diamonds and other minerals – has been and will continue to be a significant force in the development of northern communities. Historically, however, very limited financial benefits from resource development projects have accrued directly to northern communities. Nonetheless, natural resource activities are an important source of employment, training, and supply and service opportunities for northerners and northern businesses.

Innovation and Knowledge Fund Projects

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Innovation and Knowledge Fund provides about \$350,000 per territory per year to promote economic development and the development of northern economic institutions. Priorities are to help northerners seize opportunities in the new economy and further science and technology. Following are some examples of recent projects.

Yukon

- Strategies to help small manufacturers, builders and cultural industries develop a skill base and create jobs.
- A Web portal for the Yukon Francophone community's economic activities.

Northwest Territories

- Research to develop curriculum to train traditional knowledge interpreters.
- Set up of municipal area network and community access centre in Fort McPherson.

Nunavut

- Lapidary workshop for gem manufacturing, using sapphire deposits near the community of Kimmirut.
- Sealskin workshops to create a bridge between traditional and contemporary garment design and production.

Contact information: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/nap/norecodev_e.html

Land Claim Settlements – Land claim settlements are providing Aboriginal groups with the means to derive increased benefits from natural resource exploration and development. In areas where land claims have been settled, Aboriginal groups are concluding agreements with industry for exploration rights or access across their lands and, in some cases, taking an equity position in production facilities and pipelines. In areas where land claims have not been settled, major mine projects have proceeded on the basis of formal impact and benefit agreements negotiated with Aboriginal communities. In the Northwest Territories, the territorial government has concluded agreements with major mine project proponents. These agreements cover a wide range of socio-economic considerations, including measures to be taken to avoid or mitigate impacts on community infrastructure and services.

Self Government and Devolution – The prospect of Aboriginal self government is a significant factor in northern communities. At the same time, the devolution of federal government functions will result in territorial governments taking on significant additional provincial-like responsibilities, primarily in the area of land and resource management. Coordinating the respective roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal communities and governments will be a challenge. Establishing effective and efficient governance and new regulatory processes and institutions will be critical to the success of northern communities.

Culture and Heritage – Development policies and programs for northern communities need to take into account the cultural values and relationships that First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations have with the land. The loss of traditional livelihoods, language and ways of life are having a major impact on Aboriginal communities in the north. Managing economic and social development in a way that respects and preserves Aboriginal heritage is an ongoing challenge for northern community leaders.

Environmental Protection – The northern landscape encompasses a wide variety of unique and fragile ecosystems. Major industrial activities such as mining, drilling, refining and processing, road construction, shipping and waste management threaten sensitive areas. As economic activity increases, environmental impact monitoring, assessment and mitigation measures are critical. Northern communities are also being affected by warmer temperatures associated with climate change, which are more pronounced in northern latitudes. Thinning ice and melting permafrost associated with this warming trend are having a dramatic effect on the region's flora, fauna and connected human activities such as hunting. Climatic changes could also result in increased vessel traffic if the Northwest Passage becomes navigable year round.

Health Care – Social problems are particularly acute in some northern communities. High unemployment, inadequate housing, increased incidence of tuberculosis, alcoholism and fetal alcohol syndrome, family violence and suicide place high demands on local social services and health care in these communities. In addition, northern communities face challenges associated with dispersed population and expansive geography.

Youth – The population in northern communities is growing due to high birth rates. Aboriginal population growth is almost twice the national average. Key issues facing young people in northern communities include access to cultural resources, isolation and boredom. A high percentage of young Aboriginal people in some northern communities suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), and teaching methods and resources often do not adequately address the needs of those with FAS or other disabilities.

Infrastructure – The need for more housing is a challenge in many northern communities, particularly in the territories where material and building costs can be up to three times higher than in other parts of Canada. Northern conditions require unique physical infrastructure, often with cost implications. Transportation infrastructure is also a major issue for northern communities, both in terms of cost and limited access. Many remote communities have no ground transportation links to other areas. Water routes are not open year round. Air transportation is expensive and the number of flights is limited. Further development of the tourism industry may encourage more investment in transportation and other community infrastructure. Access to the Internet is by satellite, with inherent technical requirements and costs. At the same time, Internet access represents new opportunities for education, business, health services and interpersonal communication.

Success Story – Searchmont Waakaakin Community Centre

Located north of Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, this village of 300 people acquired electricity in 1962. In 1999 the Federal Community Access Program (CAP) provided Searchmont with \$40,000 to support computer technology and Internet access.

Capabilities and Equipment:

- Email and Web browsing, word processing, Web site authoring, fax access, digital camera, printer, photocopier, laminator, paper cutter, book binding machine.

Sample Activities

- Historical society created a cookbook as a fundraiser to save a historic church and train station.
- Community youth can access educational software and computer games.
- Local tourist association created Web site, brochures and business cards.
- Centre is staffed by volunteers who receive extensive technical training.

Results

- Dramatic increase in computer literacy in the community.
- CAP Centre plays an important role in community life.

Contact information: <http://cap.ic.gc.ca/english/4000newonsuSearchmont.asp>

Regional Roundtable Feedback

At the regional roundtable consultations held over the past year, community stakeholders discussed the challenges and opportunities facing northern communities and talked about activities which are underway or could be undertaken. Their observations and suggestions are summarized below. These comments do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.

Northern stakeholders suggested communities should already be pursuing actions such as the following:

- **Adopt Best Practices** – Northern communities can learn from practices that are working in neighbouring communities. Increased communication between northern communities was viewed as important.
- **Promote Healthy Living** – Communities can partner with federal and territorial governments to create ‘healthy living’ education programs; these could incorporate First Nations’ knowledge and traditional practices.
- **Develop Local Leadership** – As with all rural communities, development of a local leadership base through skills training was identified as a priority. Such programs should be specifically geared to the conditions and needs of northern residents.
- **Celebrate Distinct Identity** – Recognizing and celebrating the distinct identity and diversity of northern communities was seen as central to empowering citizens and encouraging them to contribute in their communities.
- **Attract Newcomers** – Northern communities can do more to attract new immigrants and residents from southern communities through better marketing of the quality of life, economic and cultural assets they have to offer.

The following were among the ideas put forward for additional action that would enhance development of northern communities:

- **Establishment of East–West Northern Corridor** – A trade corridor between Canada’s northern territories was suggested as a way to strengthen and expand linkages between northern communities. The resulting synergies and potential growth in the movement of goods and services is seen as a way to create new opportunities for northern entrepreneurs and to reduce dependency on products and services from other parts of Canada.

- **Funding for Infrastructure** – Stakeholders commented that senior levels of government need to commit additional funds for essential infrastructure including, roads, broadband, and water treatment and monitoring.
- **Skills Development** – Community stakeholders recognized that additional skills are required to use high-tech services and to operate high-tech businesses. It was suggested that community colleges need to offer more business and skills training for both professionals and labourers, especially computer and other high-tech programs.
- **Commodity Regulations** – Some regulations governing commodity industries including mining, forestry and fisheries were sometimes seen as barriers to development in northern communities. It was suggested that such regulations be reviewed and revised to consider unique conditions in the north.

Resources

Arctic Net, <http://www.arcticnet.ulaval.ca/>

Northern Affairs Program, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/nap/index_e.html

FedNor, <http://fednor.ic.gc.ca>

Arctic Cooperative Development Fund, <http://inuit.pail.ca/acd-fund.htm>

On-Reserve Non-Profit Housing Program, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/ab/onre/index.cfm>

Prince of Wales, Northern Heritage Centre, Community Programs, Northwest Territories, <http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/programs/comm.htm>

Smart Communities Demonstration Projects, http://smartcommunities.ic.gc.ca/program_e.asp

Questions

1) What are the challenges facing northern communities?

2) What are some examples of successful initiatives that address these challenges?

3) What else could be done?



