

Shaping a successful future  
for rural Canada . . . together

The Second

National

Rural



*Conference*

Charlottetown Action Plan

September 2002



Canada 

## Message from the Honourable Andy Mitchell



Rural and remote Canada is a special place. It is a place of unique values and traditions.

As Secretary of State for Rural Development, I have the privilege of hosting Rural Dialogue events across the country. Through these events, I hear directly from Canadians in rural, remote and northern communities what they feel is important and what they think the Government of Canada should be doing to help ensure the vitality of their communities.

In April 2002 I had the pleasure of hosting an especially important Rural Dialogue event—the second National Rural Conference, held in Charlottetown, P.E.I. In my closing remarks I made a commitment to conference participants to take note of their concerns and ideas, and develop an action plan. I could not shape this plan on my own, therefore I sent participants a draft to ensure it expressed their ideas and opinions.

I am very pleased that conference participants took the time to review this draft and provide me with their comments. These comments were used to finalize the *Charlottetown Action Plan*, which you will find attached. This document will guide me in my responsibilities as Secretary of State.

In 2004, the Government of Canada will host the third National Rural Conference in western Canada where I will report back to Canadians on the Government of Canada's progress in addressing the issues outlined in this document. In the meantime, I would like you to know about some important commitments the government has made since the conference, that are of particular interest to citizens in rural, remote and northern Canada:

- \$5.2 billion in new investments into the agriculture and agri-food sector
- \$105 million to bring high-speed Internet access to rural, northern and First Nations communities

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## Foreword

- \$55 million to renew the Canadian Rural Partnership for five years
- \$15 million towards a new five-year partnership with the co-operative sector
- \$5 million for a new rural community capacity building initiative

I thank participants for their involvement in the second National Rural Conference, their feedback on the draft Action Items document, and for their overall commitment to rural Canada. I wish all citizens in rural and remote Canada success in their efforts to help improve the quality of life in their communities. All of these efforts not only improve the quality of life in rural Canada, they contribute to making Canada a successful nation. As Secretary of State for Rural Development, I will continue to support your efforts and to host Rural Dialogue events which help me better understand your needs.

I am proud to have the opportunity to work with citizens who are so passionate about rural Canada.

Sincerely,



Andy Mitchell  
Secretary of State (Rural Development)  
(Federal Economic Development Initiative  
for Northern Ontario)

The many Rural Dialogue activities that were held with rural Canadians over the last two years indicated that community capacity building, as a means of improving the quality of life in rural communities, was an important theme on which to focus. As a result, the theme of the National Rural Conference 2002 – *Shaping a successful future for rural Canada ... together* was developed around this concept of community capacity building: a bottom-up and long-term process that integrates economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.

In support of this theme, and based on feedback from rural Canadians, three sub-themes were chosen to help focus the discussions during breakout sessions: leadership development, attracting and retaining people, and skills development for the new economy.

A pre-conference workbook, which included questions on each sub-theme, was distributed to participants prior to the Conference. In the pre-conference material, participants were also asked to identify which of three rural realities they belonged to: metro-adjacent, rural heartland or northern/remote. The results of this survey enabled us to organize the breakout groups with participants who were encountering similar opportunities and challenges in their communities.

The Government of Canada is fully aware that, although significant issues such as health and the environment were only touched on during breakout sessions or in plenary, they remain priorities and will continue to be prominent on the government's agenda.

The issues raised by participants during the Conference are outlined in this document. The actions that are being proposed in response to these issues are in addition to current initiatives, and can be implemented within the Government of Canada's current "toolbox."

On the following page, you will find a list of key points raised by participants, which may also be used in guiding future government actions on rural issues.

The role of the Rural Secretariat within the Government of Canada is one of coordinator, facilitator and catalyst. As such, the Secretariat will continue to ensure that the needs of rural Canada are understood at the federal level. In preparing the *Charlottetown Action Plan*, the Secretariat liaised with and sought input from other federal departments and therefore, this document is the Government of Canada's response to the issues raised in Charlottetown.

Before finalizing this document it was sent to Conference participants to ensure that it reflected the issues, ideas and suggestions they had brought forth at the conference. Their comments have been incorporated and this document will now guide the federal government in using its policies and programs to address the issues raised.

## Important messages heard at the Second National Rural Conference

This document mostly deals with issues raised by participants during the Conference, that require government action. In addition to these issues, Conference participants made several key points that may help guide future government action. Participants told us that:

- They agree with developing a holistic and collaborative approach to support community capacity building (a long-term process that integrates the various aspects of community well-being – economic, social, environmental and cultural).
- Involving youth is key to the future of rural Canada, not only as leaders of tomorrow but as leaders of today.
- Attracting, developing and retaining people is fundamental to capacity building in rural communities.
- Rural communities have an urgent need to be supported by people with the right skills and knowledge in community development, and in the use of government programs.
- The resource-based economy (agriculture, forestry, mining, fisheries) is still the backbone of rural and remote Canada and is part of the knowledge-based economy.
- Economic growth is an important factor for ensuring rural community sustainability, but it is not sufficient to ensure the quality of rural life. Social, environmental and cultural issues are equally important.

## Principal Issues and Next Steps

- Rural communities see a role for government to facilitate the sharing of rural development tools and best practices, by strengthening networks.
- Rural Canada is not homogeneous. For example, services, programs and policy development should take into account the different rural realities (metro-adjacent, rural heartland and northern/remote).
- Governments need to improve collaboration and work with communities to develop policies, programs and services that assist rural communities in their capacity building activities.
- The solutions to challenges facing rural Canada are not found in Ottawa or provincial capitals, but in rural communities themselves.

### Priority Area #1

#### Improve access to Government of Canada programs and services for rural Canadians

**Issue: Government programs for community capacity building should be made more accessible**

#### Next Steps

- 1 Under the Rural Development Initiative, implement a more streamlined approval process, including a more user-friendly application form. (As announced, this \$2.8-million initiative supports community planning, leadership development, research and inter-community partnerships.)
- 2 Continue to develop regional products to facilitate awareness and access to programs and services.

## Priority Area #2

### Improve access to financial resources for rural business and community development

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

#### Next Steps

- 3 Work with community economic development stakeholders and Human Resources Development Canada to explore how more local people can help in community development initiatives.
- 4 Through the Rural Development Initiative, support the development and adoption of long-term, sustainable rural development strategies.
- 5 The Rural Secretariat will meet with the Department of Finance to discuss the issue of changes to fiscal policy, and how they could benefit rural Canada.
- 6 The Rural Secretariat will discuss the concerns of young farmers with Farm Credit Canada, particularly with respect to the problems faced in obtaining credit.

## Priority Area #3

### Provide more targeted opportunities, programs and services for rural youth, including Aboriginal youth

Issue: Youth should be included in the community development process

#### Next Steps

- 7 Organize the first National Rural Youth Conference in 2003, with input from rural youth.
- 8 Target a 20% average representation of youth at Rural Dialogue sessions, including Aboriginal youth.
- 9 Encourage youth mentorship in rural Canada, such as an initiative by Rural Team members to mentor a youth participant on a particular community issue.
- 10 Encourage rural stakeholder organizations and the National Youth Network (as announced, \$25,000 will be provided to help develop this Network) to establish youth–adult partnerships.
- 11 Identify and share best practices of community initiatives that attract and include youth (e.g., Place aux jeunes and ACCRO des régions, FINALLY-Futures In Newfoundland and Labrador Youth, Mobilisation régionale des organismes et initiatives communautaires jeunesse).

**Priority Area #4****Strengthen rural community capacity building, leadership and skills development**

**Issue:** Emphasis should be placed on leadership development

**Next Steps**

- 12** Use the Rural Youth Network to help develop youth leadership.
- 13** Include elements of youth leadership in the National Rural Youth Conference in 2003.
- 14** Work with organizations such as the Association of Canadian Community Colleges to explore ways of developing leadership skills.
- 15** Through the Rural Development Initiative, help fund activities that support leadership development.

**Priority Area #4****Strengthen rural community capacity building, leadership and skills development**

**Issue:** Skills development and continuous learning are important contributors to community capacity building

**Next Steps**

- 16** Ensure rural organizations and stakeholders (e.g., youth, businesses) are represented at the Skills and Learning for Canadians roundtables and at the 34 Regional Innovation Summits.
- 17** Work with non-governmental organizations such as the Association of Canadian Community Colleges to identify rural learning needs and ways of meeting them.
- 18** Through the Rural Development Initiative, provide funding for activities that support skills development.
- 19** Explore with Human Resources Development Canada how the commitment to double Sector Councils' support to \$60 million per year will support rural Canada.

## Priority Area #4

### Strengthen rural community capacity building, leadership and skills development

Issue: Innovative community development approaches should be identified and shared

#### Next Steps

- 20 The Rural Innovation Summit was held in Portage La Prairie on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002. The meaning of innovation to rural communities and how these communities can contribute to achieving national goals of competitiveness and socio-economic prosperity was discussed.
- 21 Ensure rural participation at the 34 Regional Innovation Summits and at the Skills and Learning for Canadians roundtables, as part of Canada's Innovation Strategy ([www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca](http://www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca)).
- 22 Make the *Assets Mapping Handbook* available on the rural Web site.
- 23 Through the Rural Development Initiative, target human resources development, community consensus building, asset identification, and implementation of a community plan.
- 24 Promote co-operatives as a model for community cooperation.
- 25 Promote the *Rural Dialogue On-line Discussion Group* ([www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/youth/listserv\\_e.phtml](http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/youth/listserv_e.phtml)) and the *Rural Youth On-line Discussion Group* ([www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue\\_e.phtml](http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue_e.phtml)) as a means to exchange best practices and lessons learned.
- 26 Continue to share success stories and lessons learned on *Rural and Remote Canada Online* and *Rural Times Newsroom* ([www.rural-canada.ca](http://www.rural-canada.ca)), and in the *Rural Times* newspaper.



## Priority Area #6

**Connect rural Canadians to the knowledge-based economy and society, and help them acquire the skills to use the technology**

**Issue: Rural, remote and northern communities need access to broadband technology**

### Next Step

- 27 Continue to work with Industry Canada, other federal departments and provincial/territorial governments to ensure that broadband access is available to all rural communities by 2005.

## Priority Area #7

**Strengthen economic diversification in rural Canada**

**Issue: Approaches to rural economic diversification should recognize the different “rural realities”**

### Next Steps

- 28 Continue to examine the characteristics of different rural realities, through research and Rural Dialogue initiatives.
- 29 Develop a comprehensive national rural policy framework which fosters better collaboration among stakeholders and takes those rural realities into consideration.
- 30 Ensure rural participation in key federal consultations, including the Skills and Learning roundtables and the 34 Regional Innovation Summits.

**Priority Area #10**

**Foster strategic partnerships, within communities, between communities and among governments to facilitate rural community development**

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

**Next Steps**

- 31** Hold a first meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers on rural development in the fall of 2002.
- 32** Accelerate work with provinces and territories in the development of a national rural policy framework to achieve common objectives and improve collaboration.
- 33** Continue to work within the Government of Canada, with provinces and territories to implement the Agricultural Policy Framework.
- 34** Continue working closely with the provinces and territories on the Rural and Remote Health Innovations Initiative (Health Canada), to help address the health concerns of rural citizens and communities.
- 35** Through discussions with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, examine Canada's current immigration policy as it relates to rural Canada.

**Priority Area #10**

**Foster strategic partnerships, within communities, between communities and among governments to facilitate rural community development**

**Issue: Communications between rural communities and the Government of Canada should be improved**

**Next Steps**

- 36** Publish the report of the proceedings of the second National Rural Conference.
- 37** Launch the Rural and Remote Services Web site portal, offering single-window access to services and resources available to rural and remote Canadians.
- 38** Host the third National Rural Conference in 2004 in western Canada.
- 39** Continue to consult with rural citizens on framing the issues in advance of the next National Rural Conference.
- 40** Continue regional Rural Dialogue sessions, including on-line discussions.
- 41** Strengthen collaboration with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- 42** Draw on the expertise of advisory bodies such as the Advisory Committee on Rural Issues and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Rural Health.

## Priority Area #10

**Foster strategic partnerships, within communities, between communities and among governments to facilitate rural community development**

**Issue: Communications among rural communities should be improved and encouraged**

### Next Steps

- 43 Develop processes and tools for a “community space” on the rural portal to facilitate on-line dialogue on common rural issues.
- 44 Support the establishment of the National Rural Network by connecting existing regional and sectoral networks of organizations representing rural community interests across the country.
- 45 Through the Rural Development Initiative, help fund activities that support inter-community partnerships.
- 46 Use the National Rural Youth Network to help communities discuss and learn from each other.
- 47 Solicit citizen contributions to the *Rural Times*.

## Priority Area #11

**Promote rural Canada as a place to live, work and raise a family recognizing the value of rural Canada to the identity, vitality and success of the nation**

**Issue: More efforts should be made to provide information and to discuss rural issues with urban citizens**

### Next Steps

- 48 Provide rural success stories to media through the *Rural Times Newsroom*, an electronic media service providing stories to community newspapers and helping produce radio clips for distribution to rural radio stations.
- 49 Use Rural Dialogue sessions to enhance discussions between rural and urban citizens.
- 50 As part of the Urban Dialogue Initiative, the Secretary of State will continue to deliver key messages about rural Canada to urban citizens and organizations.

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