

# **Rural Repopulation in Atlantic Canada**

*Discussion Paper*

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## Executive Summary

Rural depopulation has been a problem and a challenge for the Atlantic region and its provinces and municipalities for several decades now. In recent years the problem has been much more acute as it has been coupled with a long period of economic adjustment and decline. Most rural parts of the region beyond urban regions have suffered slow and steady population decline.

A naturally aging population, youth out-migration, a falling birth rate below replacement rates, and a lack of immigration to the region as a whole and to the rural parts of Atlantic Canada more specifically are the demographic realities. These have very real social and economic consequences for all levels of government.

For municipal governments, falling population levels impact on the local tax base, reducing the capacity for raising sufficient revenue to provide local services. It also affects local and regional employers as the size of the potential labour pool shrinks. For provincial governments, population shifts to urban regions put pressure on the delivery of health and education services to the population as a whole. At the federal level there are pressures to ensure fairness and equity in access to programs, services and infrastructure (especially those related to transportation and communications). In some cases rural regions are falling below critical thresholds required to maintain viable public services without an undue burden on the taxpayer.

The demographic and migration shifts in recent decades have not favoured rural regions, especially those in the Atlantic Provinces. The few rural areas which attract population are those with amenities, which are attractive to retirees, or which are located in close proximity to large urban centres. The long term viability of rural regions is threatened by the declining population levels. There is a pressing need to act now, to identify repopulation strategies supported by efforts to diversify local economies.

**Repopulation of any community cannot be forced.** Instead, communities must organize themselves in such a way that make them attractive for people to remain in, or move to. In other words, we must ask the critical question: **“What makes this place a livable community?”** For most people, a livable community is one which provides:

- economic opportunity;
- access to services; and
- an overall good quality of life.

Any “strategies” for repopulating rural areas, regardless of who adopts and implements them, will most likely include one or more of the following:

- retention of existing population (including youth and seniors, both of whom are more likely to leave a rural area);
- attraction of former residents (expatriates) back to rural areas; and
- attraction of new populations to rural areas (including urban residents and immigrants from other countries).

### **Restructuring of the Rural Economy - Prospects for Diversification and Renewal Beyond the Urban Regions**

All of the evidence points to a need for economic diversification to provide economic opportunities which in turn will help to maintain services and to improve overall quality of life. Diversification is needed **at the community / county / regional level**. Dependence on one or two sectors or employers is not healthy. Diversification is also needed **at the individual enterprise level**, especially among those in the primary resource sector. Adding value to raw products before they leave the community generates more income and wealth for local residents, and generally creates more employment.

There needs to be a commitment to and a willingness to work on these diversification efforts **before** rural repopulation can be considered. Without economic opportunity, access to services, and prospects for a good quality of life, rural repopulation cannot occur. There must be a long term plan for economic diversification and renewal in rural regions and communities. Some regions and communities may not have the necessary assets and capacity in order to successfully develop and implement diversification, and thus, repopulation may not be possible. A Community Economic Development (CED) approach involving a community-owned process of identifying potential solutions and strategies for economic diversification is needed.

### **Youth**

Youth out-migration is a feature common of all types of communities - urban and rural, remote and metro-adjacent. Young people leave their communities in search of employment and education opportunities, or to “see the world”. However, many rural communities do not attract young people. Once they leave, they find it difficult to return when there are “better opportunities” in larger centres or in other regions of the country. The big challenge for rural communities and small towns is to make their communities attractive for young people.

A number of key lessons emerge from Atlantic projects aimed at youth retention and bringing back youth after the graduate from post-secondary education elsewhere. These include:

- involving youth in the identification of the issues, challenges, and solutions;
- providing meaningful ways for youth to participate in the planning for the future of their communities and regions;
- identifying opportunities for employment and business creation, and sharing those with youth;
- connecting youth with the existing programs that can help them start their own businesses or
- involving the business community in the creation of opportunities for information sharing, apprenticeship, and mentorship;
- demonstrating to youth that they are valued and that the community cares about them and their future;
- involving municipal government leaders so that they may youth concerns and issues while at the same time being able to provide information about the community (such as housing and other issues); and
- making use of information technology for communications, sharing of information and ideas, and much more.

### **Immigration**

Immigration is of interest because of its connection to demographic adaptation, economic development, labour force shortages, and the globalization of the economy. It is often seen as a way to combat the decline in fertility rates in Canada. However, this may not be sufficient since annual immigration targets may not necessarily fill the gap created by declining population replacement levels due to natural increases (births over deaths).

Jurisdiction over immigration is shared between the federal government and the provinces. While the federal government sets the targets for immigration, most provinces have entered into agreements with them under the Provincial Nominee Program. This program allows provinces to nominate an agreed-upon number of immigrants to fill regional or local economic needs.

In 2003, Canada received 221,352 new immigrants as permanent residents. This was within the target range of 220,000 - 245,000 set by the federal government. The 2004 objective was the same as the previous year's, and 165,691 immigrants came to Canada in the January - August period. The 2005 objective remains the same as 2004. Immigration into the Atlantic provinces is very weak, making up only 1.3% of all immigrants to Canada per year. Immigrants to Canada tend to prefer urban to rural: in 2001, they made up 27 percent of the population in predominantly urban regions, compared with 6 percent of the population in predominantly rural regions.

A number of common threads emerge from Atlantic projects which provide insights into how other communities might organize for immigration to rural areas:

- there must be economic opportunity; this may be opportunity for immigrant investors to start a business, or for immigrants to work in existing businesses;
- there must be a welcoming community which has been prepared for and is ready to accept and integrate immigrants into the community (this also includes a number of items summarized earlier);
- there must be access to appropriate health and education services which are tailored to meet the needs of a diverse population;
- there should be a multistakeholder community or regional group established to work through the immigration possibilities; and
- there must be a local or regional immigration plan that identifies opportunities, strategies, and targets (ideally this plan is part of a larger plan for rural repopulation).

### **Repatriation and Return Migration**

If the target is former residents, they will be more motivated by an interest and desire associated with family and personal connections rather than real or perceived economic (job) opportunities. The economic opportunity must be as good or better than what someone already has, if there is not a family reason for returning home. If the target is a more general population who may not have any local ties, there could be huge costs associated with attracting them. The lessons related to targeting seniors and retirees suggest that there must be access to health care services, and quality housing that facilitates the possibility of aging in place.

### **Government and Community - Working Together**

A key role of government is to create the conditions for economic growth and prosperity to occur, which may in turn may lead to repopulation of those rural communities and small towns where economic opportunities are developed. These include:

- investing in critical infrastructure (e.g., transportation networks, broadband);
- managing natural resources through effective policies so that they are used sustainably;
- investing in entrepreneurship development and business financing;
- maintaining key public services in rural regions, including health care and education;
- investing in human resource development and skills development so that labour force demand can be met by the existing population;
- ensuring appropriate regulations are in place that govern land use, trade, and other elements associated with business and economic development activity; and
- supporting the development and implementation economic development plans developed by regional development authorities, zone boards, community development corporations, and enterprise agencies.

The responsibility for creating the right conditions for development to occur is equally a local community responsibility. Individual municipalities have control over key items such as property taxation, land use planning, financing and building municipal infrastructure, investing in green space and recreation programs and facilities, and much more.

There are two other important roles that senior levels of government play that are more specific to the support of repopulation efforts in rural areas. The first is the provision of information about population issues and related policies and programs to communities and the development agencies which serve them. There is a need for ongoing building of the understanding and capacity at the local level about population related issues. For example, the trends and impacts of an aging population on rural communities, immigration policies, processes and targets, and recommendations from youth themselves about what it would take for them to stay, can be shared with communities. There is a wealth of information that has emerged from government-sponsored or government-led research and policy development on these issues.

The second is the encouragement of, support for, and participation in, the development of repopulation plans by

communities and the agencies which serve them. This is now part of the immigration strategy in Nova Scotia. On a larger scale, however, there can be significant benefit to having a repopulation plan that is linked to a community's or region's strategic plan for economic development and labour force development. Without a long term plan for repopulation, which identifies realistic opportunities, the types of population to attract and retain, the targets, and the actions to do so, there can be little that government can do to support local efforts. Thus, there is a need for government to work with local communities and agencies to identify if there is a realistic potential for repopulation, and identifying the appropriate actions in a collaborative manner.

Individual communities must work to make their communities a "welcoming community", and work on a regional basis with their development agencies to develop repopulation plans that fit with the economic development and labour force development plans for their region.

Governments and communities must work together in a collaborative manner. However, it is important to note that no amount of incentives, subsidies, and other "carrots" can overcome the fact that there is individual freedom and choice. Individuals will have their own preferences about what makes a community a good place to live in. Despite the best efforts of all involved, there will always be individual choices made about where to live. Youth, immigrants, and expatriates will choose to live in communities where they feel there is economic opportunity, access to services, and a good quality of life, as they define those on their own terms.

### **Conclusions**

Repopulation can only occur when individuals see that there is economic opportunity, access to services, and the possibility of a good quality of life for them. They will define these on their own terms. In addition, these will be different among youth, immigrants, expatriates, and others who may consider staying in or moving to rural communities and small towns.

Repopulation strategies are likely to be more successful if they are developed from communities and regions, rather than from senior levels of government, and with active involvement and participation from a wide range of community and regional stakeholders. They will be more viable if they are tied closely to the economic development and labour force development plans of each region.

There are a number of possible next steps or possible actions that emerge from this discussion paper:

- Senior levels of government should continue to invest in infrastructure and activities that create the right conditions for economic opportunity in rural regions.
- The four provincial governments, in partnership with their federal counterparts in the region, need to continue their dialogue on population issues. In particular there should be a discussion about the merits of the newly developed Nova Scotia approach to immigration as a possible model for the other provinces, as well as the merits of developing a regional approach to immigration that will benefit all four provinces.
- Communities and regions within each province should consider whether or not there is an interest in and a need for repopulation efforts, taking into account that economic opportunity, access to services, and quality of life are important considerations. If repopulation is deemed desirable and possible, then a process to develop and implement a plan could be started.



## 1.0 Introduction

Rural depopulation has been a problem and a challenge for the Atlantic region and its provinces and municipalities for several decades now. However, in recent years the problem has been much more acute as it has been coupled with a seemingly long term period of economic adjustment and decline. A handful of rural places, within close proximity to the largest urban centres within the region, have been growing and changing rapidly, while most other rural parts of the region have suffered slow and steady population decline.

### 1.1 Setting the Context

A naturally aging population, youth out-migration, a falling birth rate below replacement rates, and a lack of immigration to the region as a whole and to the rural parts of Atlantic Canada more specifically are the demographic realities. These have very real social and economic consequences for all levels of government.

For municipal governments, falling population levels impact on the local tax base, reducing the capacity for raising sufficient revenue to provide local services. It also affects local and regional employers as the size of the potential labour pool shrinks. For provincial governments, population shifts to urban regions put pressure on the delivery of health and education services to the population as a whole. At the federal level there are pressures to ensure fairness and equity in access to programs, services and infrastructure (especially those related to transportation and communications).

### 1.2 Purpose of the Discussion Paper

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide a summary of the key issues and possible strategies that might be considered in any possible rural repopulation effort. More specifically, the paper is intended to foster dialogue across federal and provincial government departments and agencies about how they might coordinate their collective efforts on this issue. It is also intended to foster dialogue between governments and communities with an interest in repopulation issues and strategies, about how they might work together to address community population losses and implement potential strategies.

### 1.3 Assumptions About Rural Repopulation

This discussion paper has been prepared with the following assumptions, that:

- rural repopulation at the community level as an end objective is worth discussing and debating;
- rural repopulation may be desirable in many rural regions and communities, but perhaps viable and doable in only some of those places; and
- there are many stakeholders with an interest in, responsibility for, and which have influence on, population issues (federal, provincial, municipal governments; non-governmental and community agencies; businesses large and small, individuals, and others).

**Repopulation of any community cannot be forced.** Instead, communities must organize themselves in such a way

#### Information Used to Prepare this Discussion Paper

- Government policy and program documents related to immigration.
- Articles published in widely recognized academic and policy journals.
- Articles and reports from special projects and activities from major research centres and programs including those in Canada and elsewhere.
- Interviews with a key person in community and provincial projects / initiatives related to population issues, youth retention, and immigration.

that make them attractive for people to remain in, or move to. In other words, we must ask the critical question: **“What makes this place a livable community?”** For most people, a livable community is one which provides:

- economic opportunity;
- access to services; and
- an overall good quality of life.

The relative importance of each of these will vary from one individual to the next. For **young people**, economic opportunities, social activities, access to high speed Internet, and opportunities for post-secondary education may be important. For **seniors**, access to a doctor and extended family members may be important. For **expatriates** returning home, a clean environment and access to arts and cultural activities may be important. For **immigrants**, economic opportunities and a supportive and welcoming community may be important. Furthermore, each person will have their definition of and interpretation of *what defines for them* an economic opportunity, how far they are willing to travel for services, and what makes a good quality of life.

Any “strategies” for repopulating rural areas, regardless of who adopts and implements them, will most likely include one or more of the following:

- retention of existing population (including youth and seniors, both of whom are more likely to leave a rural area);
- attraction of former residents (expatriates) back to rural areas; and
- attraction of new populations to rural areas (including urban residents and immigrants from other countries).

#### **1.4 Outline of the Discussion Paper**

The discussion paper begins with an overview of the demographic changes in Atlantic Canada in recent years. It then offers a brief discussion of the challenges and opportunities faced by rural communities which are located some distance from the major urban centres (the non-metro-adjacent communities and regions), especially as they relate to economic diversification. This is followed by discussions of issues and strategies associated with individual components of a potential rural repopulation strategy (specifically youth, return migration, and immigration). The paper concludes with a consideration of the role of federal and provincial governments in working with rural communities and regions on this issue. Each section also concludes with a series of “Questions for Discussion” which encourage the reader to think about the issues and strategies in the context of their own jurisdiction. These questions can also stimulate dialogue across government departments and agencies, and between government and communities, on the issue of rural repopulation

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Why is it a good idea for your region / province / county / municipality to consider a repopulation strategy(ies)?
2. What does the region / province / county / municipality have to offer to youth, seniors, immigrants, and ex-patriates?
3. What differentiates this region / province / county / municipality from other rural places? What is the special niche or competitive advantage that makes it attractive?

## **2.0 Demographic Change and Migration in Rural Atlantic Canada**

Demographic changes and population migration in Canada have been well documented by academic researchers and government policy and program analysts. The popular press and news media have largely focused on stories of individuals and communities struggling with the problems associated with population decline in parts of rural Canada. There are relatively few “good news” stories in the media about population growth or stability in rural regions.

### **2.1 General Overview of Urban and Rural Population Growth**

There has been a continued absolute population growth in both urban and rural Canada; however, there are very significant differences in terms of the source of this population growth, and in which parts of urban and which parts of rural Canada the growth is occurring.

Urban population growth is driven largely by international immigration to larger urban centres, especially Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, which together attract 75% of all immigrants on an annual basis. In the Atlantic context, there has been very little international immigration, even to the largest centres (1.3% or less of all immigrants each year).

Urban population growth has been further supported by an in-migration of youth and young adults from rural communities and small towns in search of education, employment opportunities and “life experiences”. This is common in major centres in each province across the country. For example, Halifax is a destination for Nova Scotian rural youth, and Moncton and Fredericton for New Brunswick youth (especially from the northeast and northwest parts of the province).

Older seniors (those 70 years of age and over) also contribute to urban population growth. They tend to move to (or closer to) large urban centres for better access to extended health care services and more appropriate housing that meets their mobility and aging in place needs. Many of the recent rental housing developments in Halifax and the other urban centres, for example, are targeted to early retirees and to older seniors.

Rural population growth is not evenly distributed. Rural communities and small towns which are “metro-adjacent” or located near to large urban centres are the fastest growing rural places, and some of them are growing faster than the cities. This is true in all regions of the country. There are two contributing factors. The first is the migration of adults 25 to 69 years of age (and their families) from urban communities to nearby rural communities where there is a perception that quality of life is better and there is still reasonable access to services in urban centres. The second is migration of population from more distant rural communities in search of economic opportunities in or near city regions.

Very few rural communities and small towns which are “non-metro-adjacent” are growing. These are growing slowly, but most are suffering from population loss because:

- death rates exceed birth rates;
- these communities receive little of the migration of adults from urban to rural communities; and
- these communities experience out-migration of youth and young adults.

In these rural communities and regions, generally located more than one hour beyond the outskirts of St. John’s, Halifax, Charlottetown, Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, the “rural repopulation” challenge is most pressing.

### **2.2 Population Changes Specific to Atlantic Canada**

The key population movement and demographic trends within the Atlantic provinces include:

- The region had negligible net migration (meaning that over time slightly larger numbers of people have left the region compared to the number who moved into the region from elsewhere in Canada) between the 1970s and the mid-1990s, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador which experienced net out-migration.
- The Atlantic provinces had relatively low rural and small town out-migration rates, but also had some of the lowest in-migration rates when compared to other rural areas in Canada.
- New Brunswick and Nova Scotia experienced a larger net rural out-migration than did Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island.
- These patterns were different than those in other provinces. Net rural in-migration is primarily happening in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, while Manitoba and Quebec have a balanced migration pattern.
- However, since the mid-1990s the pace of out-migration from rural regions within Atlantic Canada has been stronger.

In addition, Atlantic Canada is predicted to move from a period of natural increase (more births than deaths) to a period of natural decrease (more deaths than births) before the rest of Canada. Fertility rates in Atlantic Canada are below national averages (with the exception of PEI). With the aging baby boomers, the number of deaths will begin to rise after 2025. The natural decrease is expected to occur sometime between now and 2013; in Newfoundland and Labrador this process leading to natural decrease had already begun.

Rural regions share a number of common traits which make them vulnerable to population loss and make it more difficult to attract new population. These traits are common across much of Atlantic Canada, and in general they include:

- located far away (more than one hour drive) from metropolitan areas;
- low population densities;
- fewer amenities;
- higher rates of poverty;
- lack of diversity in industry and employment activities;
- employers generally pay lower wages;
- businesses tend to be smaller and less specialized, and do not require high skilled labour;
- high servicing costs (for public services of all types); and

### **Net Migration From New Brunswick 1998-2003**

New Brunswick had a net out-migration of 6,476 people to other provinces from 1998 to 2003. Most rural counties lost population, with the exception of those near Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John. The losses / gains in each county were:

- Gloucester -4380 (Bathurst-Acadian Peninsula)
- Restigouche -1917 (Campbellton-Dalhousie)
- Northumberland -1566 (Miramichi)
- Saint John - 1136
- Madawaska -1096 (Edmundston)
- Victoria -789
- Kent -566
- Sunbury - 531
- Carleton -27
- Queens +25
- Charlotte +255
- Kings +374 (Kennebecasis Valley)
- Albert +454 (Riverview)
- York +2505 (Fredericton area)
- Westmorland +5771 (Greater Moncton)

One-third of the movers to Westmorland County from elsewhere in NB were age 25-44, and 28% were age 18-24. Almost two-thirds came from Gloucester, Kent, Northumberland, and Restigouche Counties.

Source: Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, 1998-2003, by Ben Champoux, CMHC Housing Outlook Seminar, Moncton NB, March 1, 2005.

- lack of a broad range of services or they are concentrated in one community.

These are generalizations. There are specific rural regions or communities in every province which have relatively few of these problems. However, in general terms, these are some of the limitations which contribute to population loss and create a vicious cycle of business and service closures, and an additional round of population loss.

### **2.3 Impacts of Population Decline in Rural Areas**

The impacts of continued population loss have been well documented in a number of studies and reports. The list is lengthy, and includes:

- fewer opportunities for economic development, new business development, and job creation;
- depression of the resale housing market;
- rising vacancy rates in rental properties (including social housing properties in some areas);
- diminished access to and provision of social services (health care, education, etc.) as population levels fall below demand thresholds; and
- diminished municipal capacity to provide critical and necessary municipal infrastructure due to an eroding tax base.

From a public policy and political perspective, it becomes very difficult to identify optimal solutions. In Ontario, for example, the Panel on the Role of Government commissioned several background papers examining a range of issues. One paper examined rural populations and rural services, and described the situation this way:

As a direct consequence [of population decline] many rural communities ... especially the case in isolated resource-based communities in the north ... such communities also have a truncated fiscal base, and thus find it difficult to support the wide range of social services, medical services, infrastructure and cultural and recreational activities that people increasingly expect” (Slack et al., 2003: 8).

### **2.4 Summary**

The demographic and migration shifts in recent decades have not favoured rural regions, especially those in the Atlantic Provinces. The few rural areas which attract population are those with amenities, which are attractive to retirees, or which are located in close proximity to large urban centres. The lack of immigration into rural areas and the region is also a problem. For many rural communities and regions in Atlantic Canada falling population levels have resulted in problems filling vacant job positions (especially in seasonal and primary sector activities), and maintaining sufficient thresholds to support health and education service provision in their communities. There is a pressing need to act now, to identify repopulation strategies supported by efforts to diversify local economies.

To summarize, the long term viability of rural regions, and more specifically the individual communities within them, is threatened by the declining population levels. In some cases rural regions are falling below critical thresholds required to maintain viable public services without an undue burden on the taxpayer. At the same time, changes to the economy, many of which beyond the control of individual communities, are forcing communities to look at alternative futures to provide meaningful employment and livelihoods for their residents.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What specific demographic changes have you seen in your region / province / county / municipality in the last 20 years?
2. Are there examples of rural counties/municipalities which are exceptions to these trends?
3. What have been the specific impacts of population decline in your region / province / county / municipality?
4. Is the trend and associated impacts expected to continue or level off? Why?

### 3.0 Restructuring of the Rural Economy - Prospects for Diversification and Renewal Beyond the Urban Regions

In non-metro-adjacent communities the economy has for many years been largely supported by primary resource sector activities. These activities tend to be more labour intensive than other economic activities. In more recent years a number of changes have undermined the long term viability of the primary resource sectors (resource depletion, increased mechanization, and globalization of the economy). In other cases, the sectors remain viable but require fewer people to produce the same output.

In the paper prepared for the Ontario Panel on the Role of Government, it was suggested that rural communities are vulnerable to these changes in the economy, mostly because they are overly dependent on one or a few sectors. There is selective out-migration of those with the most education and skills. There is a scarcity of amenities and thus limitations on the overall quality of place which would make attraction and retention of a population possible.

Over the years many provincial governments have struggled with the challenge of finding a balance between centralizing services and population in relatively fewer, but larger centres, and allowing long time settlements to remain but with costly or relatively few services. More recently, the authors of that report to the Ontario Panel on the Role of Government identified potential settlement strategies within the context of declining population and the challenge of providing public services in rural areas. The authors suggested a distinct and comprehensive strategy for rural, small and remote communities, which would anticipate and accommodate widespread population decline. The key element would be concentrating growth and resources in designated urban growth centres - drawing on the experiences of Nordic countries - to build and maintain viable (small) cities in remote regions by concentrating public services in them.

All of the evidence points to a need for economic diversification to provide economic opportunities which in turn will help to maintain services and to improve overall quality of life. Diversification is needed **at the community / county / regional level**. Dependence on one or two sectors or employers is not healthy. In other cases, diversification is needed to open new economic activities to replace those which have decline significantly of which have closed. This provides a reason for people to stay. Diversification is also needed **at the individual enterprise level**, especially among those in the primary resource sector. Adding value to raw products before they leave the community generates more income and wealth for local residents, and generally creates more employment. This too provides a reason for people to stay, and may be a draw for people to come and work.

There needs to be a commitment to and a willingness to work on these diversification efforts **before** rural repopulation can be considered. Without economic opportunity, access to services, and prospects for a good quality of life, rural repopulation cannot occur. There must be a long term plan for economic diversification and renewal in rural regions and communities. This is not easy. Some regions and communities may not have the necessary assets and capacity in order to successful develop and implement diversification, and thus, repopulation may not be possible.

#### Broad Trends Affecting the Economic Viability of Rural Regions

- globalization of the economy
- labour force shedding in traditional / primary rural economies
- natural resource depletion
- rising costs of transporting people while costs of transporting goods is falling rapidly
- improved transportation networks
- rising importance of agglomeration economies and the need for "proximity"
- rising importance of "city-regions"
- ongoing restructuring of health and education services
- declining political influence
- lack of a holistic "rural policy"

Adapted from Freshwater, 2004; Bruce, 2003.

### 3.1 Strategic Options and Approaches: CED Approach

For many years academic researchers, consultants, and governments have developed a wide range of “recipes” or “cook books” for rural revitalization. The most successful and useful are those which have as its overarching theme or approach a focus on community economic development (CED). CED is a process whereby a community and its citizens take ownership of their problems and challenges and develop a locally-based strategy to address them, while at the same time identifying new opportunities. Furthermore, CED links economic and social development in a way so that more people from the community are able to participate in and benefit from the local economy. Finally, CED is a long term, participatory effort which requires the development of a strategic plan, with input from all stakeholders (including citizens, local groups, industry and business, and all levels of government). The particular strategies for action will vary from one community or region to the next, depending on the local issues, assets, and opportunities.

A process for developing a long term plan for the community may be led by an individual municipality, but the common practice adopted in the Atlantic region in recent years is a regional effort led by the relevant community development agencies in each provinces, whose efforts are supported by provincial and federal government programs and services:

- community economic development or enterprise agencies in NB;
- regional development authorities in NS;
- zone boards in NL; and
- community development corporations in PEI.

### 3.2 Lessons From Europe

A number of western European countries have struggled with the challenges of rural development in general and population decline in rural regions more specifically. A common theme to the response or approach in a number of countries is the development of a rural policy and related rural specific programs to support rural development. This is the case in countries such as Sweden, Ireland, and Northern Ireland. Scotland’s approach is a little bit different. It does not have a separate rural policy, but instead it has embedded rural into all of its policies, because it treats rural as an integral part to the overall well-being of the country. In most cases, there are no specific rural repopulation strategies or policies. The support of rural population retention and attraction in these countries is through efforts across a number of policy and program areas related to public services, infrastructure, environment and population health, and economic development. The end of objective of “leveling the playing field” or making it possible for rural regions to compete with urban centres while offering potential for an overall good quality of life.

#### Sweden

Sweden introduced active rural development policy during the 1970s, focusing on bottom-up approaches that included supporting small businesses. This has been successful at diversifying the local economy and increasing entrepreneurship in many rural areas. More recently a National Rural Development Agency has been established to coordinate its investments and policies related to rural and regional development.

#### Common Strategies Which Emerge from CED Processes

##### Economic Related:

- Business Retention and Expansion
- Downtown / Main Street Redevelopment
- Tourism
- Highway Commercial Development
- E-commerce and E-use
- Residential / Bedroom Community Development
- Value Added Processing of Natural Resources
- Social Economy Activities (establishing cooperatives, community-owned businesses)

##### Social Related:

- Entrepreneurship Development
- Healthy Communities
- Innovation
- Leadership Development
- Labour Force Skills Development and Training

##### Other:

- Environmental Rehabilitation
- Infrastructure Investment



In recent years the country's strategy for sustainable development has been focused on the long term viability of rural areas. A key component is a regional development program to stimulate economic growth and vitality across Sweden. The country is working towards efficient and sustainable labour market regions. By this they are attempting to encourage businesses and entrepreneurship in a large number of smaller centres so that there is less need to commute long distances for work.

A companion strategy in Sweden is a focus on innovation. **Innovative Sweden** has a number of key pillars, including investments in businesses, public infrastructure and people to improve potential for innovation. These are seen to be critical for making all rural regions of the county attractive places to live and for enterprises to work in. More specifically, the government is encouraging collaboration among businesses, research centres, and government stakeholders at all levels to identify and bring to market to new products and services. This is seen as a key element of making rural regions more attractive for population and businesses:

“..... For Swedish regions to be attractive in the long term ..... this attraction must be based on unique conditions that are difficult to reproduce anywhere else. Important components of this are well-developed networks, patterns of cooperation, positive attitudes and people's ability to act collectively to solve problems” (Ministry of Industry, Employment, and Communications, and Ministry of Education, 2004: 22).

A key component of the innovation strategy is an investment in IT infrastructure which will bring high speed Internet access to most businesses and households, and an investment in IT skills development to encourage innovative use of the technology.

### **Scotland**

The Scottish Executive's rural development policy is coordinated and delivered through three bodies: the Rural Core Network (RCN); the Scottish National Rural Partnership (SNRP); and Local Rural Partnerships (LRPs). The Rural Core Network serves to bring together members of the Scottish Executive to address priorities of rural areas (such as economic development, transport, services and social justice) in conjunction with one another. It functions somewhat similar to the Rural Secretariat and its Rural Teams in Canada. The SNRP combines public, private, and voluntary organizations to serve as advisors to the Scottish Ministers on rural development policy. The Partnership aims to coordinate policy and encourage research through a variety of bodies and organizations, oversee funding, promote information exchange, and provide liaison duties. The LRPs are affiliations among communities and public, private, and voluntary associations, who aim to encourage rural communities to take development into their own hands in coordination with other local partnerships.

The Scottish Executive developed a “new approach” to rural development in 2000. The vision of “a rural Scotland where everyone matters” guides its efforts, and thus ensures that the needs of rural communities, families, and citizens are embedded in all policies and programs. In addition to encouraging value-added development of natural resources and leveraging tourism opportunities, at the heart of the new approach is a focus on providing opportunities for young people so they do not have to leave rural areas for education, training, and career paths. Furthermore, the Scottish approach supports equitable access to public services.

There are several interesting initiatives focused on young people. First, there has been investment in information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and content material for learning and teaching in all schools, so that rural youth have the same foundations as others. Second, government investments in ICT infrastructure have made it possible for rural and remote residents to take university and college courses without leaving their regions. Third, the government is actively pursuing the possible establish of two rural universities - one in the northern highlands and islands, and the other in the south of Scotland. Fourth, life-long learning is a key element of the rural strategy. The government has invested in *learn'direct Scotland* (focusing on workplace training and skills development), the Open Rural College for Scotland (with courses designed to support rural employment), and other initiatives. These investments are linked to the capacity to deliver using ICT infrastructure.

On matters related to access to services, the government has committed to developing a new formula for allocating health and community care services which take into account the additional costs of delivery in rural and remote areas. This means, for example, moving to a salaried approach for hiring and remunerating health care professionals, as well as increasing public investments in capital improvements to modernize health care facilities. Furthermore, the ICT investments in general are designed to reduce the geographic isolation of health professionals while permitting new approaches to using information technology for records management and for telemedicine.

Collectively, these efforts by the Scottish Executive have helped to stem the tide of rural youth out-migration, has made it possible for rural regions to retain their businesses, and attract health care professionals and employees to work in rural communities.

### **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland's Rural Development Programme was implemented in 1991. It was founded based upon the following principles:

- a bottom-up approach to development;
- integrated projects rather than isolated or individual initiatives;
- balanced partnerships between central government, local authorities, rural communities, voluntary bodies, and the private sector;
- a focus on disadvantaged rural areas;
- specific funding allocated to rural development; and
- an interdepartmental rural development steering group made up of senior officials from all government departments.

The Programme has been broken up into three phases: 1991-1993, 1994-1999, and the current 2001-2006. The current phase focuses particularly on the disadvantaged rural areas and also on incorporating the more marginalized groups - women, youth, farmers, and the long-term unemployed - into the initiatives. The proposed budget for this latest phase of the Rural Development Programme is an estimated £80 million, to be funded with help from the European Union (EU). The Rural Development Programme involves five elements. First, capacity building, involves the provision of skills, knowledge and experience necessary for rural people to play a role in aiding the development process in their communities. Second, local regeneration projects and programs are intended to make the resources available to rural people to implement their plans. Third, sectoral and area based development projects and programs serve to affect specific sectors of the rural economy, environment, or society that are best conducted by area or province-wide strategies. Fourth, the goal of micro-business development is for very small businesses, including farms, to maximize their potential through the help of the LEADER+ initiative. Fifth, natural resource rural tourism, in conjunction with the PEACE II programme, aims to encourage tourism to rural areas with greater political stability.

This approach with capacity building and skills development at the core, combined with an interest in economic diversification, has helped to minimize the impacts of rural depopulation.

### **Ireland**

Ireland also has a specific department responsible for rural development. The country's strategy is designed to ensure the maintenance of vibrant, sustainable rural communities. A key concern for Ireland is ensuring a harmonious relationship between urban and rural development rather than contributing in any way to an urban/rural divide. Ireland's rural development programme focuses on four broad topics:

- Balanced regional development involving:
  - Regional planning;
  - Infrastructure (roads, rail, sewage, water, telecommunications, and transport);

- Public services (information and communications technology, transport, housing, childcare, healthcare, information) to create a proper environment for economic development, social inclusion and rural viability;
- Employment maintenance and creation, supporting economic development in agriculture, food, marine and natural resources, enterprise, and tourism;
- Investment in human resources including:
  - Education and training (access to distance education and outreach facilities through the use of technology);
  - Community development (emphasizing locally led initiatives supported by a variety of different programs, including the LEADER programme);
  - Social inclusion: anti-poverty measures;
- Maintaining culture and national identity; and
- Environmental sustainability.

### **Summary**

These brief examples from some European countries suggest at least three important lessons which underpin any possible approaches to rural repopulation. The first is the need for a rural policy that either directs significant resources for rural development activities, or is embedded in the broader policy framework for development. The second is the need for significant and sustained public investment in critical infrastructure that will create a reasonably level playing field for urban and rural communities. These investments include those in transportation, telecommunications and ICTs, health care and education, and much more. The third is the importance of partnerships. An effort to link national policy and program efforts with positive outcomes “on the ground” in rural communities must first be based on a partnership among all levels of government and other stakeholders to ensure that policies, programs, and resources are tailored appropriately to achieve the desired outcomes.

### **3.3 Examples of Economic Diversification at the Community / Regional Level**

There are many examples of rural communities, small towns, counties, and regions which have undertaken activities to diversify their economies. The brief examples provided below are intended only to demonstrate that efforts are being made to do so. Issues related to the success of the diversification efforts, the problems that have been encountered, and the details of the planning and implementing process are not discussed at this time. Followup with representatives of these is encouraged.

Burgeo is a community in southwest Newfoundland and Labrador (part of the Long Range Regional Economic Development Board zone) which experienced significant economic decline after the collapse of the groundfishery. A hydroponics greenhouse has been built, there are plans for developing a sea urchin industry, and a new food-processing facility for natural food products (using the old fish plant) opened in 2003. Tourism has also been part of the diversification efforts.

The Borden-Carleton area of PEI went through an adjustment period when the ferry service was replaced with the Confederation Bridge. Three large manufacturing / processing plants in the area either expanded (Master Packaging) or started up (a printing company and a beef processing facility) because of the quality business park in the community and because of the location next to the bridge.

The Carleton County area of New Brunswick has diversified its economy from a traditional potato producing area to one that has important value-added agriculture and forestry products destined for export markets, a variety of small scale manufacturing enterprises, and growing transportation companies.

The Cape Breton region of Nova Scotia has experienced a number of economic hardships over the years, including the decline and closure of the steel plant and coal mines, problems in the fishery, and much more. More recently, development agencies have been focusing on renewing the economy in the areas of oil and gas, environmental remediation skills and technology, tourism (including products and services based on traditional music), and information technology.

Several small micro-regions have been found to have suitable climates for operating small vineyards and wineries. These include Grand Pré (NS), the Malagash area (NS), southeastern PEI (Little Sands) near the Woods Island ferry terminal, and elsewhere. There are other places which have seen the launch of fruit-based wineries using local fruits and berries. Collectively these businesses have permitted diversification of agriculture and tourism activities in their communities and regions.

Three rural regions participate in Industry Canada's Smart Communities demonstration project. These are examples of using a variety of communications technology for many purposes, including economic diversification activities:

- La Péninsule acadienne: le village global francophone au cœur de la coopération internationale (sponsored by Collectivité ingénieuse de la Péninsule acadienne Inc., N-B);
- SmartLabrador (sponsored by Labrador Information Technology Initiative, NL); and
- Western Valley Smart Community (sponsored by Western Valley Development Authority, NS).

Collectively these examples show that there are efforts to develop new products and services, make use of existing resources in new and innovative, take advantage of information technology and broadband investments, and seek new markets.

### **3.4 Examples of Economic Diversification at the Enterprise Level**

There are also many examples of individual enterprises in rural communities, small towns, counties, and regions which have attempted to diversify their products, services, and markets. The examples provided below demonstrate that it is possible for individual enterprises to succeed in these places. Issues related to the success of the diversification efforts, and how they were financed, are not discussed at this time. Followup with these enterprises is encouraged.

Kenney & Ross Ltd. (Shelburne County, NS) is a fish and fish processing company which diversified in the 1960s to become the world's largest producer of fish gelatin. They also produce a fish-based glue. Both products are made from discard fish skins.

GFT Aerospace Technologies (Gander, NL) has evolved from a small flight training company to a multi-operation aerospace company, including maintenance and overhaul of aircraft, training in aircraft parts manufacturing, and airline flight services.

Sully's Ice Cream Parlour (Sussex, NB) started in 1998. It rapidly expanded its ice cream parlour sales and uses profits to award bursaries to high school graduates and has established an employment bursary fund. The business now serves as a meeting place and an entertainment venue as well.

Four Best Management (Saint-Joseph de Madawaska, NB) is a relatively new forest management company that has also conceptualized a new forestry-software product that it is developing and will soon market across North America. They are also offering business classes to young entrepreneurs in their region who want to start their own companies, as a way of giving back to their community.

Hurley Slateworks Company (Britannia Cove, NL) has recently opened up new export markets in 12 countries, and has developed Images in Slate - value-added products including signage and corporate gifts.

Many farms in the region have developed on-farm tourism attractions and activities to diversify their business activities. Some specific examples include Lismore Sheep Farms (River John, NS), Sugar Moon Farm (Earlton, NS), and Belliveau Apple Orchard (Memramcook, NB).

Collectively these examples show that there are efforts to develop new products and services, make use of existing resources in new and innovative, take advantage of information technology and broadband investments, and seek new markets.

### 3.5 Summary

Non-metro-adjacent regions and communities are suffering most from population loss, and they also face the most challenges in turning their prospects around to attract new population and keep their existing population from leaving. Implementing strategies for economic diversification at both the community/region and individual enterprise level is needed before repopulation strategies can be considered. Some European communities have focused on innovation and skills development as key components which lead to population retention and attraction. Others have embedded “rural” into all policies and programs in an effort to ensure that there are equal opportunities for rural communities to be viable and competitive. A CED approach involving a community-owned process of identifying potential solutions and strategies for economic diversification is needed.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Are there examples of economic diversification by communities in your region / province / county / municipality? Have these been successful? Why or why not?
2. Are there examples of economic diversification by individual enterprises in your region / province / county / municipality? Have these been successful? Why or why not?
3. What are the options for economic diversification in your in your region / province / county / municipality?

## 4.0 A Focus on Youth

Youth out-migration is a feature common of all types of communities - urban and rural, remote and metro-adjacent. Young people leave their communities in search of employment and education opportunities, or to “see the world”. However, many rural communities do not attract young people. Once they leave, they find it difficult to return when there are “better opportunities” in larger centres or in other regions of the country. The big challenge for rural communities and small towns is to make their communities attractive for young people. Perhaps a more realistic objective to tackle is to make their communities attractive for young people once they start a family and are looking for a community that offers something other than a post-secondary education opportunity or a chance to see the world.

Communities cannot be passive and assume that youth will figure out what is or is not available to them locally, especially related to employment and economic opportunity. The experience from a number of Atlantic-based population projects suggests that there must be a proactive effort to show youth what the employment opportunities might be, and to link them with existing employers and others who serve as mentors and guides.

### 4.1 Issues and Trends in Youth Migration

Youth and young adults age 15-24 years of ages are the most likely to move from rural areas. This decreases the prospects for population growth in rural areas as they are likely to start families in the near future - elsewhere. Research shows that they are more likely to leave if they are post-secondary graduates, despite the recent increased demand for and opportunities in rural areas for skilled workers. In recent years there has been a net increase in jobs in complex manufacturing (associated with printing, machinery, transportation equipment, oil and gas, chemicals, electronics, and other such industries) in rural Canada. Yet this increase in demand has not been enough to keep young people “at home”.

Where in-migration of youth and young adults has happened in rural areas, it has largely been among those people with less than a high school completion. Return migration has not been associated with any particular type of economic community. For example, areas with an abundance of natural amenities (with tourist or recreational-based economies) attract retirees and older families, but they generally do not have a strong enough economy to attract those just entering the labour force with education and skills. The one exception would be resort-type towns, such as Whistler, Jasper, Banff and others which offer high-paying, but seasonal employment in the tourism sector.

A cycle of dissatisfaction with and migration from rural communities among youth begins with low perceptions or expectations of their communities as places where

### Youth Perceptions of Advantages and Disadvantages of Rural Communities

#### Advantages of living in rural

- Quality of Life
- safety/low crime rates

The Canadian Rural Partnership supported a major research project in which rural youth made suggestions for what could be done to make it possible to return to their rural communities. These are opportunities:

- lack of jobs / severely limited opportunities for career advancement
- lack of post-secondary education opportunities
- lack of recreational opportunities associated with rural youth facilities and infrastructure
- lack of opportunity to participate in decisions about the future leaders from rural areas, and current and former rural youth; and

#### Reasons for leaving rural

- perceived a youth and identity crisis
- a necessity rather than a preference

The key needs identified related to overall,

- BHVA/Dis. Employment Opportunities
- Facilitating Access to Education and Training

#### Reasons for staying in rural

- Change of life with friends and family
- employment / work opportunities in rural
- exposure to family
- lowest expectations of rural infrastructure

• a personal commitment to self-sufficiency  
More details on these are provided in Appendix A. Adapted from Hajesz and Dawes, 1997; R.A.

Adapted from R. A. Hajesz, 2002 and Dawes, 2002.

they can lead a fulfilling life. This leads to an exodus, which in turn limits opportunities, which reinforces low perception or expectations.

Some researchers have found that among young people, staying in a rural community is associated with failure. To some extent youth admit they are influenced by media portrayal of **rural as a negative place**. They also compare what they “have” to what is available in urban places - less access to state-of-the-art facilities (such as schools, clubs, social events and spaces), little appreciation for the natural environment, and the location of most post-secondary education institutions in large urban centres.

These perceptions clearly point to the need for a proactive approach by communities to show their young people what possibilities exist for them in their communities and regions. This strategy has been employed in several Atlantic projects profiled in this paper.

To summarize, youth leave many different types of communities, urban and rural, large and small. While mostly the decision to leave is related to employment, education, and “see the world” factors, there may be others. However, rural communities are generally not a destination for young people, and it is often difficult to attract them back to rural communities once they have left.

#### **4.2 Strategies for Retaining Youth**

The strategy of several Atlantic projects aimed at addressing the youth out-migration issue have focused on two related activities: those which will keep young people from moving away; and those which will attract young people back shortly after they have to complete their post-secondary education. In this section we discuss four projects (full details of these projects are provided in Section 10.0 of this discussion paper):

- Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth (FINALLY!) Project, Newfoundland and Labrador
- Youth Repatriation Project, northern New Brunswick
- Youth Repatriation Project, Colchester County, Nova Scotia
- Programme Entrepreneurship - Régional, Communautaire et Économique (PERCÉ), Acadian Region, PEI

It is important to note that some of these projects were not just strictly about youth, but were combined with other strategies as part of a larger repopulation effort. The PERCÉ project (focusing on the Acadian population in PEI) combines youth retention efforts with efforts to attract people who had left the area years ago and have them return to work or semi-retire. The youth effort focuses largely on youth before they potentially leave the province as well as some students who may be studying outside of PEI. The other part of the program encourages those people who had relocated elsewhere to return home as they approach retirement. It also encourages those presently in government positions to seek transfers back to PEI. The Colchester County project involved a youth strategy as well as an immigration strategy.

#### **Programme Entrepreneurship - Régional, Communautaire et Économique (PERCÉ), Acadian Region, PEI**

PERCÉ offers services to PEI's Acadian and francophone youth (primarily 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year university students) to start businesses. Beyond these specific services, the broader objectives are to:

- make PEI's Acadian and francophone youth aware of their region's assets as well as its economic and cultural possibilities;
- attract more youth by increasing the number of businesses and job opportunities;
- offer youth an opportunity to obtain work experience in their field of studies; and
- establish a communication and promotion strategy to inform youth about the various programs available to help them develop their interests, knowledge and skills.

The key program aimed at fostering an interest in staying in the region is the Career Know-How program aimed at youth in grades nine and ten. A recent study identified ten trades and five careers in which there is a labour force shortage. Youth are shown the trades and careers and encouraged to explore them. If they have a particular interest in one, they are encouraged to volunteer with someone involved in that trade/career.

#### **Youth Repatriation Project, northern New Brunswick**

This ACOA-sponsored program has focused primarily on northern New Brunswick, where there has been significant out-migration to the Moncton and Fredericton areas. It falls under ACOA's Entrepreneurship and Business Skills development umbrella. The desired outcome is to develop youth entrepreneurship and to ensure that a new crop of entrepreneurs is coming along to fill employment needs, especially in northern New Brunswick. Two pilot projects (one in the northwest, one in the northeast) were setup, led by ACOA staff, with the fundamental question being: "Can we retain entrepreneurs before they leave?" The pilot projects involved three phases:

- First, ACOA staff identified the job openings in the two regions. Then they went to the communities within the regions with students in university and college to find those graduating in the present year.
- Second, they planned a weekend for those students, where they were invited to participate in intensive meetings and learning. There the students heard about opportunities in their region, learned job search skills, networking skills, and attended information sessions about starting a business. The students met with local entrepreneurs who had job openings and met other young entrepreneurs who had started businesses instead of leaving or who had started businesses upon their return.
- Third, there was direct follow-up with the participants. For three months following the weekend, contact was maintained with the students. The purpose of the followup was to encourage them to pursue the leads and ideas they had developed, to provide additional information and services, and to provide further advice and guidance if requested. The aim was to maintain their interest before they left the area, while at the same time to attract and retain a qualified workforce from among locally-born university and college students.

The initial pilot projects have been successful. A total of 15 of the 54 students have returned or are planning to return, to either start their own business or to work in the region applying their skills acquired from university and college. A key factor in the success was the role that individual municipalities played. They helped to recruit local entrepreneurs to participate, several elected councillors attended the weekend sessions to hear the concerns of the students, and they also provided the participating students with important new information about their communities such as the services available, the quality of life, the types and costs of housing, and much more.

#### **Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth (FINALY!) Project, Newfoundland and Labrador**

FINALY! facilitates the meaningful participation of youth in decision making. The project was established to give youth a voice in their communities and province so that there might be a stronger commitment to and interest in staying at home and living in local communities or elsewhere in the province. The project's foundation is that if young people are active and involved in planning for the future, and that this is done in a meaningful way, that there is a greater chance that they will stay.

FINALY! established a provincial youth council (PYC), comprised of 13 democratically elected youth from around the province, with three representatives from each of the four regions: Labrador, Western, Central, and Eastern; and a past chairperson. In addition, a number of Youth Councils have been established in each of the regions or zones throughout the province to organize events and access funding opportunities for youth. This structure gives the youth a voice in local social and economic issues. For example, some of the youth councils have been active participants in the strategic planning processes carried out in each of the economic zones of the province.

A clear focus of most of the activities has been to building the capacity of young people to play an active and



meaningful role in their communities. In addition to the activities noted above, this effort has also involved local hands-on projects (such as Community Centre Health Day Challenge, refurbishment of White Fish youth camp, etc.) as well as more general activities such as participation public speaking events. FINALLY! faces a number of challenges and limitations. Some are associated with the non-profit nature of the program including stable and sufficient funding and dependency on volunteer efforts. In addition, the lure of opportunities in St. John's and elsewhere in the country is always a draw for the brightest and best young people.

### **Youth Repatriation Project, Colchester County, Nova Scotia**

The objective of this project is to identify and implement strategies that will reverse the youth out-migration trends in the region and to address the issues of unemployment and under-employment of youth. The Colchester Regional Development Authority (CoRDA) is working with focus groups and a steering committee comprised of youth, members of the business community, representatives of local government, and service providers. The goal is also to promote Colchester as a great place for young people to live and work through recognition of their achievements and their contribution to the community. There are several activities underway:

- A Youth Employment Strategy has been designed to provide communication on what opportunities exist for employment. Employers have been involved in providing information that will help youth plan for their future, and they conduct school visits in conjunction with a mandatory grade 11 course (Career and Life Management). A website has been developed as a communication tool and a forum for discussion. The strategy is aimed at reaching the 50% of area youth who do not participate in post-secondary education.
- A youth recognition All Star Awards event is held bi-annually where youth are thanked for their contribution to the community and awarded prizes and bursaries.
- Care Kits are sent to local university students who are studying outside of the region each April. Contained in the kits are items donated by local businesses as well as information about employment opportunities and information about living in the region. When students are registered for the Care Kits, a database is created which contains their year of study plus their area of study. The next step is to match the students with local employers to explore the opportunities. The kit is also useful as a community marketing tool; students are aware that the community cares about them and are made aware of local opportunities.

Although these programs have been highly visible and very participatory, their success will not be known for some time because they are very new and the impacts and outcomes will not be felt until several years down the road.

### **4.3 Summary of Lessons from Local Projects**

A number of key lessons emerge from these local projects aimed at youth retention and bringing back youth after the graduate from post-secondary education elsewhere. The lessons are also consistent with the findings on strategies employed in other countries such as those in western Europe as well as in Australia and the United States. The specific strategies employed in these projects also reflect some of the interests and suggestions from rural Canadian themselves (see Appendix A). These include:

- involving youth in the identification of the issues, challenges, and solutions;
- providing meaningful ways for youth to participate in the planning for the future of their communities and regions;
- identifying opportunities for employment and business creation, and sharing those with youth;
- connecting youth with the existing programs that can help them start their own businesses or
- involving the business community in the creation of opportunities for information sharing, apprenticeship, and mentorship;
- demonstrating to youth that they are valued and that the community cares about them and their future;
- involving municipal government leaders so that they may hear youth concerns and issues while at the same time being able to provide information about the community (such as housing and other issues); and
- making use of information technology for communications, sharing of information and ideas, and much more.

One item that appears in the literature and in the Canada-wide consultation but which did not emerge from our discussion with local project leaders is the importance of social and recreational opportunities for rural youth. This will need to be an issue for rural community leaders and others to keep in mind when thinking about strategies for retaining youth and attracting young people back to the community.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What have been the positive experiences for youth in this region / province / county / municipality?
2. What have been the negative experiences for youth in this region / province / county / municipality?
3. What have been the impacts on the rest of the population in this region / province / county / municipality as youth have moved away?
4. What efforts could you employ to attract / retain youth in your region / province / county / municipality? Why do you think these would work?

## 5.0 A Focus on Immigration

Immigration is very much a hot topic lately because of its connection to demographic adaptation, economic development, labour force shortages, and the globalization of the economy. It is often seen as a way to combat the decline in fertility rates in Canada. However, this may not be sufficient since annual immigration targets may not necessarily fill the gap created by declining population replacement levels due to natural increases (births over deaths).

One study suggested that immigration levels would need to be raised to over 400,000 in order to maintain a growing labour force in Canada (Palmer, 2003). The same report assessed a range of recent research reports on the issue, and suggested that demographers have concluded that even on a nation-wide scale that immigration will only serve to reduce the total amount of population decline, but will not likely reverse it. In the context of rural population decline, immigration may be seen as one part of a larger solution.

### 5.1 Overview of the Immigration Policy

Canada's current Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) replaced the Immigration Act of 1976 and is the primary tool for managing the flow of immigrants and refugees into Canada. It has four basic social, humanitarian, economic, and safety objectives:

- providing maximum economic and social benefits from migration;
- protecting refugees and others in need of resettlement;
- supporting settlement, adaptation and integration of newcomers into Canadian society; and
- managing access to Canada with a fair and effective enforcement strategy.

Jurisdiction over immigration is shared between the federal government and the provinces. While the federal government sets the targets for immigration, most provinces have entered into agreements with them under the Provincial Nominee Program. This program allows provinces to nominate an agreed-upon number of immigrants to fill regional or local economic needs. For example, in Quebec, the skilled workers, business class, and refugees are decided by the province while the family class and asylum seekers are decided by the federal government. In 2001, family class and asylum seekers made up over 40% of Quebec's immigrants. The province has an ambitious plan to increase the number of immigrants outside of Montreal, spreading them around Quebec City and the remainder of the province.

#### **Options, Choices, and Targets: Complexity in Immigration and Refugee Policy**

The federal government has primary responsibility for establishing immigration and refugee targets, with input from the provinces and territories through various agreements. There are a range of options and programs which are used to "select" immigrants to come to Canada (see Appendix B for more details). The information in this section, unless otherwise noted, is summarized from the following:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2001. **Towards a More Balanced Geographic Distribution of Immigrants.**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2004. **Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration.**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Fact Sheet 13: Overview of the New Act.*

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. **Consolidated Statutes and Regulations.** Index.

Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations. **Consolidated Statutes and Regulations.** Index.

Manitoba was the first province to sign a Provincial Nominee Program agreement with the federal government. It estimates its immigrant needs as a population growth target based on labour market needs. In 2000, Manitoba received 2% of the Canadian total of immigrants.

In addition to the Provincial Nominee Program, the federal government has recently begun to sign agreements which allow foreign students to work off campus, notably with Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec.

Individual communities are not part of the national immigration policy, as it is a shared federal and provincial responsibility. Several provinces have recently begun to adjust their provincial strategies, tactics, and targets to provide a way for individual communities to identify the opportunities for immigrants to settle in their communities.

One of the challenges of immigration is the issue of how to assess and recognize foreign credentials in a way that is comparable to those in Canada. The “non-recognition” of immigrants’ professional credentials has long been seen as a barrier to successful integration, and makes it difficult to look at the possibility of professional immigrants from other countries helping to address labour force shortage in health care and other sectors in rural and remote communities. Some provinces have begun processes to improve the way in which they handle the assessment of foreign credentials, most notably Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba. However, there is more than can be done to assist immigrants who may need assistance to improve their credentials as they attempt to integrate into local labour markets.

## 5.2 Immigration Patterns, Trends, and Targets

In 2003, Canada received 221,352 new immigrants as permanent residents. This was within the target range of 220,000 - 245,000 set by the federal government. The 2004 objective was the same as the previous year’s, and 165,691 immigrants came to Canada in the January - August period. The 2005 objective remains the same as 2004.

An annual target is set for the number of government-assisted refugees to be landed in Canada (7300 in 2001) and a range for privately sponsored refugees (2800 - 4000 in 2001). An annual plan called the *Pre-Approved Plan* indicates how many government-assisted refugees are to be sent from each major refugee processing mission abroad to listed destinations in Canada.

### Immigrant Classes

#### Economic Class

- accounts for 60% of new immigrants
- assessed according to six categories:
  - education
  - knowledge of the official languages
  - work experience
  - age
  - arranged employment in Canada
  - adaptability
- programs to assist Economic Class immigrants:
  - Immigrant Investor Program
  - Entrepreneurial Immigration Program
  - Provincial Nominee Programs
  - Live-In Caregiver Program

#### Family Class

- people who join family members already settled in Canada
- sponsors are assessed to ensure they can support the applicant / accompanying family members for 3 - 10 years

#### Protected Persons/Refugees

- emphasis on the refugees' need for protection
- takes into account economic and social factors such as the presence of relatives in Canada
- programs to assist Refugees:
  - Resettlement Assistance Program
  - Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program
  - Immigrant Loans Program
  - Interim Federal Health Program

More details can be found in Appendix B.

Immigration into the Atlantic provinces is very weak, making up only 1.3% of all immigrants to Canada per year. Immigrants to Canada tend to prefer urban to rural: in 2001, they made up 27 percent of the population in predominantly urban regions, compared with 6 percent of the population in predominantly rural regions. Recent and new immigrant groups intensified this urban trend: those who arrived between 1981 and 2001 made up just less than 2 % of the predominantly rural region population, but more than 13% of the predominantly urban region population. Between 1996 and 2001, rural metro-adjacent communities in Canada gained immigrant population, but rural non-metro-adjacent communities and northern communities lost immigrant population. In 1993 immigration to rural areas peaked at 23,200; in 2001 and 2002 it was just over 12,000.

However, when immigrants do settle in rural regions, they offer a great deal to their host communities. Immigrants in rural areas generally have higher levels of education attainment compared with that of Canadian born residents. Immigrants who arrived before 1981 have a high employment rate, are more likely to work in professional services, and have higher employment incomes, compared to that of Canadian born residents. Among the more recent and new immigrants (post 1981) the picture is not as positive. Collectively they have a lower employment rate, are more likely to work in sales and services, and have lower employment incomes, when compared to Canadian born residents. This shift may be a reflection of fewer job opportunities in some higher skill primary resource activities, and the emergence of wholesale and retail trade as the dominant employment sector in rural Canada.

Within this context, the Atlantic Region as a whole and its rural regions do not attract many immigrants. The fundamental question is this: **What does the region, and its rural communities and municipalities, have to offer to immigrants that is significantly different yet attractive, compared to other potential destinations in Canada?**

### 5.3 Strategies for Attracting Immigrants to Rural Communities

Several studies have shown that most, but not all immigrants choose their destinations first based on the presence of kinship and ethnic networks, and then on potential employment opportunities. If there is enough critical mass of an immigrant group in an area then others will follow. However, their decision to stay will also depend on employment, appropriate social services and a welcoming community. One study on immigration to rural communities in the United States found that half left within five years of their arrival, due mainly to lack of employment opportunities. However, that study also found that church sponsorship of immigrants contributed to them remaining in the community. What is clear from research on rural development in general is that social cohesion and social interaction are extremely important in rural communities; therefore, it is absolutely necessary that rural communities prepare themselves to welcome and integrate immigrants into their communities if there is any hope that they will remain and be contributors to the community.

Other research points to a variety of important actions that could be employed by all stakeholders with an interest in

#### The Challenge of Integration

Immigrants may have trouble integrating well into a community (urban or rural) because of:

- a lack of Canadian work experience
- a lack of contacts and support networks
- language deficiency
- lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experiences

Many rural communities do not offer solutions to most of these barriers.

New and recent immigrants (post 1981 arrivals) have not integrated well into rural regions. In addition to the barriers noted above, there have been fewer economic and employment opportunities in recent years.

This may also be due to growing and significant socio-economic differences between visible minority immigrants and existing population groups. These differences are more pronounced in predominantly rural regions.

Adapted from Beshiri and Alfred, 2002.

improving immigration attraction and retention rates in rural communities, including:

- secure and stable government investment in rural social and economic infrastructure, including maintaining vital health and education services;
- refocusing skills training available in rural communities so that what is offered closely matches the needs of local employers;
- community identification of business and employment prospects that might be attractive to immigrants, and matching investor immigrants with entrepreneurial plans to those communities where the possibilities for success exist;
- doing more to education community leaders and citizens about cultural diversity, ethnic groups, and social norms among different immigrant populations.

Several projects in Atlantic Canada (and one in Manitoba) are working aggressively to attract and retain immigrants. These include ((full details of these projects are provided in Section 10.0 of this discussion paper):

- Florenceville Immigration Project, western New Brunswick
- St.-Léonard Immigration Project (Projet de développement communautaire durable/Carrefour d'immigration rurale), northwestern New Brunswick
- Welcoming Community Project, Colchester County, Nova Scotia
- Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy
- Manitoba Experience with Immigration

Our interviews with people involved in these projects identified several factors (consistent with those found in the research) as being necessary to having or encouraging immigrants to settle in an area:

- a critical mass of already established immigrant families from a similar background;
- services offered for immigrants by the community;
- education, cultural and economic opportunities; and
- a welcoming community.

The challenge is to get all those factors working together. Perhaps the key factor is that of creating a “welcoming community”. A welcoming community was defined as one where there is strong support for contributions, challenges and diversity offered by immigrants (both in and outside of the workplace), an engaged voluntary sector to provide ongoing support to newcomers, quality local infrastructure (housing, schools, etc.) to accommodate new residents, and the provision of effective settlement services in coordination with the provincial government.

#### **Florenceville Immigration Project, western New Brunswick**

This immigration project has largely been led by the Multicultural Association of Carleton County Inc. (MACC) with assistance from Enterprise Carleton.

#### **What makes a welcoming community?**

- Provide employment opportunities.
- Be hospitable and friendly towards newcomers.
- Access to personal and community services, which ideally respect different traditions and cultures.
- Access to affordable and appropriate housing.
- Have an established infrastructure and settlement agencies/multicultural associations which can provide information on the programs and services.
- Access to cultural and recreational activities.
- Ongoing public education on cultural issues and anti-racial issues for newcomers.
- Ongoing public education on cultural issues and anti-racial issues for local residents before and after newcomers arrive.
- Opportunities for spiritual growth; churches should play an important role in seeking out and involving newcomers.
- Make available resources on cultural issues for public education through public libraries.
- Involve children in learning about different cultures through school activities.

Summarized from interviews with immigration project leaders.

MACC is volunteer-led and part of its role is to provide resources to newcomers and the public. Among other things, MACC aims to foster harmonious relationships among all cultural groups and individuals, raise public consciousness and acceptance of multiculturalism, assist newcomers in adaptability to their new community, and act as an advocate on issues dealing with multiculturalism. Over the long term they hope to make it possible for immigrants to stay in the area - and they have boasted an 80% retention rate. However, they have identified some challenges which must be addressed. As a volunteer group they have limited resources and find it difficult to do all of the things they want to do. There is not enough affordable housing or appropriate housing for those in the lower pay scales, so MACC attempts to help people with rental costs. They also hope to pursue some form of public transportation among the small towns in the County to meet the needs of immigrants who are unable to travel for services and shopping. They also see a need for more language training to be provided to newcomers to the area.

#### **St.-Léonard Immigration Project (Projet de développement communautaire durable/Carrefour d'immigration rurale), northwestern New Brunswick**

This project was established in part due to a recognition that most Francophone communities in New Brunswick have not been involved in the immigration process and have not received many immigrants. It was also established to address the out-migration from and population decline in St.-Léonard. The overarching focus is to attract and retain immigrants. The Carrefour project is strictly a voluntary effort in the community, and there is involvement from a number of community stakeholders (including municipal council, the churches, the library, and the schools). The group identifies potential immigrants, brings them into the community, and works with the local people to create the positive, welcoming environment required to retain them. A key activity is that Carrefour identifies business opportunities and helps immigrant families to set up their businesses. The group works with schools to promote businesses in St.-Léonard and bridges between the businesses and the students.

Some of the key “welcoming community” elements that have been successful here include:

- They have organized groups of potential immigrants coming into the community at different times of the year. These people are “billeted” with local residents rather than placed in motels. This builds relationships and establishes social support.
- They have taken empty buildings and started businesses for people who will be coming. This includes, in some cases, the purchase businesses before people arrive, and having local people run the businesses until the newcomers arrive.
- They help newcomers to find suitable housing, help negotiate the purchase, and help with the legal process.
- They have worked with the local schools to encourage them to offer information or courses about cultural diversity and ethnic groups.
- They have lobbied for the retention and improvement of health care services, especially for the elderly population. It was recognized that retaining new immigrants would be more likely if there was available care for their elders locally so they would not have to travel long distances to see them or to relocate for the services.
- They worked with the municipality to improve parks and green spaces, and they started an arts festival which helped to promote the town.

One limitation to the success of the project is the provincial strategy for identifying and nominating immigrant entrepreneurs. There is not an easy mechanism to do so because there is no central agency responsible for the Provincial Nominee Program.

#### **Welcoming Community Project, Colchester County, Nova Scotia**

This project is linked to a larger effort involving youth retention. A pilot project was established in 2003 to attract clusters of immigrants to small and rural communities in the County. Since the area is largely agricultural and already had a reasonably large group of immigrants involved in various operations, it was seen as an ideal location to start. An Immigration Partnership was set up involving many stakeholders. Volunteers prepared the approaches that would attract immigrant groups. This included working with the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) to identify the reasons why the existing immigrant group had chosen this area, and the potential for the area to absorb additional farm operators and farm workers. It also involved identifying countries of origin that would be a match with the existing immigrant population. This project had limited success because of restrictions in immigration policy. The policy does not lend itself to bringing in large groups of people at once; the policy is oriented to having families who are already established sponsor extended family members. The project switched gears mid-stream because of this policy and volunteers worked with the existing immigrant population to help them identify, recruit, and relocate some of their extended family members from overseas. A lack of knowledge about the immigration policy and process at the beginning of this project was the key barrier.

### **Manitoba Experience with Immigration**

There is a highly integrated approach to immigration in Manitoba. The Immigration Promotion and Recruitment Branch of the Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration, Immigration and Multiculturalism Division, is responsible for promoting immigration to the Province of Manitoba generally, and the implementation and development of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program in particular. The Canada Manitoba Immigration Agreement provides a mandate to the Immigration and Multiculturalism Division to both provide settlement services for newcomers as well as to determine and implement criteria under the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program to promote immigration to the province. The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program for Skilled Workers receives and assesses applications from skilled workers and nominates those who can demonstrate an ability to establish successfully in Manitoba for permanent residence in Canada. The Settlement and Labour Market Services Branch funds and oversees a number of services to newcomers including settlement services, foreign credentials recognition, and employment services. The Adult Language Training Branch funds and oversees ESL programs for newcomers.

Within this context, then, there is a proactive approach to involving employers and communities. Communities develop immigration plans to ensure that newcomers are recruited on a sustainable basis. This includes promoting and profiling their communities on the internet. The provincial government ensures that its programs and services noted above are supportive and tailored to community needs and local capacities.

Employers work directly with the Provincial Nominee Program to apply for skilled workers. The Program assesses applications from employers to ensure that there is both a positive labour market impact (i.e., wages are competitive, local workers are not displaced) and that there are sufficient settlement services and planning in place to retain those workers. The applications from the workers are assessed on their ability to meet the employer's requirements and remain in the community and the province. Once the first arrivals of newcomers establish themselves, they can support the permanent immigration of other family members through the Provincial Nominee Program.

Manitoba's strategy has been highly successful. Between 1999 and 2002, the percentage of immigration to rural Manitoba destinations remained relatively consistent at approximately 21% of total Manitoba immigration. That figure jumped to 72% of total Manitoba immigration in 2003.

### **Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy**

In response to a significant decline in immigration over the past decade, the province started a process in 2004 to develop a new strategy built from an extensive consultative process. The province appointed a Minister and established the Office of Immigration with a sizable budget. Under the previous system the Department of Education had a mandate to lead settlement activity and the Department of Economic Development had a mandate for the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). In addition to increasing the overall numbers, a key focus of the new strategy is to broaden the destinations so that more immigrants settle in rural areas.



Nova Scotia's immigration target is 3600/year to be achieved within four years with a 70% retention rate. There are four components to the strategy: establish welcoming communities; be more effective in attracting immigrants; retain immigrants; and integrate immigrants in local society.

The strategy involves Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) as key partners. They are tasked with identifying opportunities for immigrants to start businesses or to work in existing businesses, and to promote the importance of and opportunity for immigration at the local level. The Office of Immigration is working with each RDAs to help them develop an immigration strategy for their region of the province. It is recognized that there will be different strategies in different parts of the province, in response to local circumstances and opportunities. The strategy also involves marketing Nova Scotia as an amenable destination for immigrants, establishing an immigration-specific website, providing better labour market information for immigrants, and entering into joint ventures with the other Atlantic provinces in promoting the region at immigration conferences.

#### **5.4 Summary of Lessons from Local Projects**

A number of common threads emerge from these projects which provide insights into how other communities might organize for immigration to rural areas:

- there must be economic opportunity; this may be opportunity for immigrant investors to start a business, or for immigrants to work in existing businesses;
- there must be a welcoming community which has been prepared for and is ready to accept and integrate immigrants into the community (this also includes a number of items summarized earlier);
- there must be access to appropriate health and education services which are tailored to meet the needs of a diverse population;
- there should be a multistakeholder community or regional group established to work through the immigration possibilities; and
- there must be a local or regional immigration plan that identifies opportunities, strategies, and targets (ideally this plan is part of a larger plan for rural repopulation).

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What are the examples of successful immigrants in rural parts of the Atlantic Provinces? What has made their integration a success?
2. How welcoming is your region / province / county / municipality to people of diverse colour, race, ethnicity, and religion? What is your evidence?
3. How can your community communicate its interest or desire to have immigrants settle here? What would be the first step?
4. What efforts could you employ to attract / retain immigrants in your region / province / county / municipality? Why do you think these would work?

## **6.0 A Focus on Repatriation and Return Migration**

Repatriation and return migration are also considered to be part of a rural repopulation strategy. Repatriation implies a strategic and concerted effort to draw former residents back to their home communities and regions. Return migration may or may not be the result of direct efforts, as there may be people who return to their home communities on their own. In this discussion we differentiate these activities from youth repatriation efforts described earlier. Instead, we discuss the trends, challenges, opportunities, and strategies associated with attracting former residents who are now much older than when they left; they may be raising families, be early retirees, or have recently retired. We also include in the discussion efforts to attract and retain additional new residents who do not fit these categories nor the immigration category. There are examples in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere of communities which have attempted to market themselves as desirable residential communities or as retirement communities.

### **6.1 Trends in Repatriation and Return Migration to Rural Communities**

There is very little published work or research on these issues because there has been very little return migration in general. Most of the migration, as noted earlier, has been out of non-metro-adjacent rural areas and into metro-adjacent rural areas or to urban centres.

#### **Potential Conflict Between Long Time and New Residents**

Most of the research focuses on the more general issue of the interaction and potential conflict that may emerge between long time residents and relatively new populations, regardless of whether or not they are former residents. Two different patterns emerge. In some communities, there may be tension and conflict between the two groups if they hold significantly different views about issues such as environmental protection, natural resource management, and economic development. There may also be tensions when long time residents and families suffer from rapidly rising land values, which makes it much more difficult for them to pay their property taxes, access prime real estate (usually coastal properties), or afford new or resale housing. In other communities, there is ample evidence of both groups working together on projects and issues of common interest. The knowledge and expertise brought by each group is often complementary and results in positive actions and outcomes.

#### **Retirement Communities**

There is also some research on the issue of the congregation of older populations in rural communities and small towns. In the context of rural repopulation, some research has shown that there are naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), and those which are planned and marketed as such. In both cases, a key factor in the decision made by people to retire to a particular community is access to medical services in the community and specialty medical services within a reasonable driving distance. They also consider important quality of life features such as shopping, recreation, a clean environment, personal services, housing that is accessible and facilitates aging in place, and social opportunities. Communities which offer these are able to attract older empty nesters, early retirees, and those who have retired.

### **6.2 Opportunities and Barriers to Repatriation and Return Migration**

Communities may consider repatriation efforts as an effective means of addressing population decline. Many former residents still have family ties in the community. They will be familiar with the community and region.

The primary reason for return migration tends to be personal and family related rather than work- or economic-related. It is for this reason that return migration may not necessarily address labour force or economic development problems. People return to their original communities and regions to retire or to be with family and friends. While they may contribute to the community in a variety of ways (e.g., shopping, volunteer activities, etc.), they will not necessarily return to fill job vacancies or start a business. This is despite the fact that return migrants (and newcomers to rural areas) tend to have higher incomes and higher levels of educational attainment than long time residents.

#### **Reasons for Return Migration Among Newfoundlanders and Labradorians**

- Family/ Personal (to be closer to family, to get married, to raise children in a better environment, other kin-related reasons, homesickness, education, or medical reasons
  - Higher among women than men
- Economic push (work lay offs, job transfers, high cost of living)
  - Higher among men than women
- Economic pull (to take a better job at home)
  - Higher among men than women

In 2004 75% responded they would like to return to NL to settle, but only one-third have actual plans to return.

Adapted from Cormack-Grenfell Steering Committee, 2004; Sinclair and Felt, 1993.

A recent survey of expatriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by the Cormack-Grenfell Steering Committee in Western NL was completed to examine the prospects of attracting former residents back home. The survey found that:

- Over one half of those surveyed responded that they believed that there were future job opportunities in NL, but 40% replied that they did not believe this to be the case.
- Fewer than one half of expatriates (44%) search for job opportunities in NL; however, a higher percentage of those under the age of 30, and a higher percentage of those who had recently left the province (between 1996-2003) search for job opportunities in NL.
- The main reasons for leaving NL were (with multiple answers allowed):
  - To obtain employment - 99%
  - Lack of local job opportunities - 60%
  - Jobs in NL were too low-paying - 40%
  - Want to experience life outside NL - 40%
  - NL has poor economic prospects - 33%
  - NL has little to offer young people - 24%
  - To attend a post-secondary institution - 14%
  - To be near spouse/ partner - 12%
- Of those planning to return to NL, slightly over a half (53%) replied they would return to their hometown; however, some of the reasons for not returning included lack of job and other opportunities, a desire to work and live in a larger centre, and isolation and small size of their hometown.
- About two-thirds of expatriates said they would return to NL if there existed full time employment. The survey concluded that the majority of expatriates would like to return to NL to settle, but the lack of employment opportunities appears to be the main reason for leaving and the main barrier for returning.

### **6.3 Strategies for Repatriation and Return Migration**

There are several examples of repatriation and return migration strategies and projects in Atlantic Canada. They are usually tied to other strategies as part of a larger rural repopulation strategy. We examined very briefly two projects: Programme Entrepreneurship - Régional, Communautaire et Économique (PERCÉ), Acadian Region, PEI; and Move to Kings initiative in Kings County, Nova Scotia. More information is provided about these in Section 10.0. Other known similar projects include those in Miramichi NB (where they are marketing the region as a retirement community, making use of the quality housing acquired from the former CFB Chatham military base), and in Cape Breton, where they are attempting to attract retired Cape Bretoners living elsewhere to retire back home.

#### **Programme Entrepreneurship - Régional, Communautaire et Économique (PERCÉ), Acadian Region, PEI**

PERCÉ is a regional, community and economic entrepreneurship program in Prince Edward Island. The mandate of the organization is to maintain the link between francophones and government. A key component of their activities is to find former residents of the Acadian region in PEI and attract them back to the Island to live and work. This is linked to their activities focused on youth.

A database is being created of francophones who graduated from the two francophone high schools in PEI from 1990 onward to see where they have gone. A website has been created, on which jobs are advertised and resumé can be submitted for these francophones' potential return to PEI. A second activity has been the identification of francophones from PEI who are working elsewhere (those who may have reached retirement or semi-retirement age) to encourage them to start businesses in PEI or, if those people have government jobs elsewhere, to see if they could transfer to PEI. A third activity involves bringing expatriates home to network, meet, and discuss the potential for moving back. The group recently tried to organize a meeting for these people over Christmas holidays (2004), suspecting many were in PEI for the Christmas holidays, but there was a very small turnout. The meeting was likely held at a bad time, so there are plans to attempt a similar meeting at some other time of year. The project is in its early days and thus far they have not had much success in trying to attract retired or semi-retired people who have moved away.

#### **Move to Kings, Kings County, Nova Scotia**

This initiative was started in 1997 by Kings Community Economic Development Agency. It was designed to promote the County as an ideal place to move to. Initially the primary target was early retirees and recent retirees, but over time they have evolved the program to include families and households of all age groups. Most of the families moving to the area as a result of this program are those with heads of households age 40 to 50 years. Kings CED Agency spends \$35,000 per year on this effort, including the costs of a part time coordinator, marketing, advertising in print media, and maintaining a website.

It is estimated that approximately 25-30 families per year have moved to the County as a direct result of their efforts, and there may be more who have relocated but did not make themselves known through inquiries. A very small percentage of these are expatriates. The Agency does not provide any financial assistance for families wishing to relocate, nor are they involving in work placement efforts. These are the responsibilities of the family wishing to relocate. The Agency will provide them general contacts and information about the region (e.g., housing, lifestyles, major employers, economic sectors, and other information) through their website. The project has been deemed successful because of the long term economic impacts (e.g., property taxes, shopping and purchases, employment and wages, and new business starts) which can be both directly and indirectly attributed to the arrival of new families.

#### **6.4 Summary of Lessons from Local Projects**

There are relatively few lessons to be pulled from these local projects. However, it is clear that if the target is former residents, they will be more motivated by an interest and desire associated with family and personal connections rather than real or perceived economic (job) opportunities. The economic opportunity must be as good or better than

what someone already has, if there is not a family reason for returning home. If the target is a more general population who may not have any local ties, there could be huge costs associated with attracting them. The Kings experience has been successful in part because the County is a reasonably prosperous part of the province, which makes individual efforts to find a job potentially viable. It also has a university, and has a reasonably favourable climate relative to other places in the region. The lessons related to targeting seniors and retirees can not be gleaned from the projects examined, but the general lessons are that there must be access to health care services, and quality housing that facilitates the possibility of aging in place.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What prevents people who used to live here from coming back to live?
2. What are the positive attributes of your region / province / county / municipality that make it attractive for people to retire to?
3. What efforts could you employ to attract / retain expatriates (former residents) in your region / province / county / municipality? Why do you think these would work?

## 7.0 Government and Community - Working Together

The discussion to this point has shown that many communities in the region have begun to develop projects, plans and strategies to address the challenges associated with population decline. In some of the examples there has been an active role of federal and provincial government departments and agencies as partners, while in other cases they have played lead roles with support from communities.

Before discussing some of the specific ways that federal and provincial governments, it is important to note that rural repopulation may not be possible in all communities and rural regions experiencing population decline. It will be important to avoid creating false hopes or raising expectations in areas where there are few or no economic opportunities for people. Polese and Shearmur (2002), in their study of the knowledge economy in peripheral regions, advise that trying to stimulate population growth through increased economic opportunities and other means is a “mirage”. Any efforts, for example, to unduly subsidize new population growth in areas where there is no economic opportunity is likely to create more serious problems in the long run. They argue that policies should focus on ways in which population decline can be managed, along with providing adequate public services.

The discussion about the role of government is organized into two parts: the first examines the role of government in creating the conditions under which rural repopulation strategies might be developed and employed; the second examines specific actions that government might undertake to work with communities on issues of youth retention, immigration, and repatriation.

### 7.1 Creating the Conditions for Repopulation Efforts

A key role of government is to create the conditions for economic growth and prosperity to occur, which may in turn may lead to repopulation of those rural communities and small towns where economic opportunities are developed. There has been much research on the important role that government plays in:

- investing in critical infrastructure (e.g., transportation networks, broadband);
- managing natural resources through effective policies so that they are used sustainably;
- investing in entrepreneurship development and business financing;
- maintaining key public services in rural regions, including health care and education;
- investing in human resource development and skills development so that labour force demand can be met by the existing population;
- ensuring appropriate regulations are in place that govern land use, trade, and other elements associated with business and economic development activity; and
- supporting the development and implementation economic development plans developed by regional development authorities, zone boards, community development corporations, and enterprise agencies.

The responsibility for creating the right conditions for development to occur is equally a local community responsibility. Individual municipalities have control over key items such as property taxation, land use planning, financing and building municipal infrastructure, investing in green space and recreation programs and facilities, and much more.

These roles of government at all levels are generally associated with general community economic development activity. These are critical foundational activities which can in turn foster innovation and economic activity in all communities and regions.

Senior levels of government need to continue their encouragement of communities to work together on a regional basis. The existing regional agencies in each province responsible for economic development provide the basis around which communities can work together. They must be encouraged to do so on the issue of repopulation as well.

Financial resource support for groups working on repopulation projects is always an issue. It is difficult to work on repopulation strategies and projects on a “project-funded” basis because of the lack of certainty of ongoing funding. Senior levels of government should carefully consider whether or not there should be increased operational funding for existing regional agencies to support their efforts in developing and implementing repopulation strategies. The experience of the Enterprise Agencies in New Brunswick related to a new mandate for labour force development planning and implementation was supported with increased financial resources, so this model may be one to consider. In addition, there are many other NGOs which have emerged to work on the repopulation issue. Careful consideration of if and how they can and should be funded is needed.

In addition, there are two other important roles that senior levels of government play that are more specific to the support of repopulation efforts in rural areas. The first is the provision of information about population issues and related policies and programs to communities and the development agencies which serve them. There is a need for ongoing building of the understanding and capacity at the local level about population related issues. For example, the trends and impacts of an aging population on rural communities, immigration policies, processes and targets, and recommendations from youth themselves about what it would take for them to stay, can be shared with communities. There is a wealth of information that has emerged from government-sponsored or government-led research and policy development on these issues.

The second is the encouragement of, support for, and participation in, the development of repopulation plans by communities and the agencies which serve them. This is now part of the immigration strategy in Nova Scotia. On a larger scale, however, there can be significant benefit to having a repopulation plan that is linked to a community’s or region’s strategic plan for economic development and labour force development. Without a long term plan for repopulation, which identifies realistic opportunities, the types of population to attract and retain, the targets, and the actions to do so, there can be little that government can do to support local efforts. Thus, there is a need for government to work with local communities and agencies to identify if there is a realistic potential for repopulation, and identifying the appropriate actions in a collaborative manner.

### **A Process for Developing a Community / Regional Repopulation Strategy**

#### **Guiding principles:**

- must be led by communities or regional agencies
- repopulation can not be mandated by government, it has to be locally desirable and viable
- must be linked to strategic plan for economic development and labour force development

#### **Process:**

- organize multistakeholder group
  - municipal government
  - citizens
  - federal and provincial government
  - economic development agency
  - social development community groups and NGOs
  - private sector employers
  - schools and churches
  - others as locally appropriate
- assess the local / regional population trends
- decide on which populations(s) to target (youth, immigrants, expatriates)
- understand the needs - what kind of economic opportunity, what kind of services, what defines quality of life for them
- establish two linked plans - one to attract / retain population, and one to develop a welcoming community

## **7.2 Government Roles Specific to Youth Retention, Immigration, and Repatriation**

These suggestions are derived from both the interviews with leaders of repopulation projects, and from the broader research on these topics.

There are some specific activities that federal and provincial governments can undertake, in partnership with communities, to support the potential for youth retention and repatriation in rural communities and regions, including:

- Ensure funding/resources are available, through appropriate programs, to encourage young people to stay in their local area. These include:
  - entrepreneurship training and financing;
  - apprenticeship and mentorship programs;
  - identification of new business startup opportunities in rural regions.
- Invest in infrastructure and curriculum development for public and post-secondary education that takes advantage of broadband technology so that young people can obtain the education they require without leaving their region, if they so choose.

There are some specific activities that federal and provincial governments can undertake, in partnership with communities, to support the potential for immigration to rural communities and regions, including:

- At the provincial government level:
  - Organize the responsibility for all aspects of immigration under one agency or department so there is minimal confusion about where to turn for support and help. Manitoba and Nova Scotia, for example, have organized in this way.
  - Place government staff resources in each region of each province who have a responsibility for and knowledge of immigration policies and programs so they can support local and regional partners in the development and implementation of their plans.
  - Provide communities and regional agencies with guidelines or models for developing immigration plans, including information about how to ensure that immigration plans are sustainable from the point of view of the arrivals being able to be absorbed into the local and regional labour market.
  - Nominations for immigrants under the Provincial Nominee Programs should come from the communities and regions who have identified the opportunities and the potential immigrants, rather than being “parachuted in” by the provinces. This also requires that the provinces consult with their local and regional partners to ensure that there is a match or a fit between the potential immigrant and the opportunity / receptiveness in the community.
  - Ensure there is a user-friendly website which promotes the province and its regions, and provides easy access to contact and program information.
  - Work collaboratively across the four Atlantic Provinces to develop a shared approach to attracting immigrants to the region as a whole.
  - Ensure that there is a link between local employers and the development agencies which serve them so that individual businesses can identify their labour force needs that could met by immigrants.
- At the federal government level:
  - There may need to be more front line staff available to answer questions, especially when someone calls the 1-800 line for help.
  - There is a need to improve the immigration website so that it is more user-friendly to immigrants, particularly if they are in another country and do not have a good command of English or French. There does not appear to be a clear answer to “What do I do now”?, once someone looks at the possibility of coming to Canada.

There were no specific suggestions or recommendations that emerged from our interviews with project leaders as they relate to activities that federal and provincial governments can undertake, in partnership with communities, to



support the potential for repatriation of former residents back to rural communities and regions. In general there is a need for creating the right circumstances and conditions in rural regions (as noted earlier) so that return migration might be possible.

### **7.3 Summary of Government and Community Working Together**

A key role for senior levels of government is to create the right conditions in which economic opportunity and prosperity in rural regions can occur. This will in turn make it possible for communities and regions to explore and implement strategies for repopulation where it is viable to do so. Individual communities must also work to make their communities a “welcoming community”, and work on a regional basis with their development agencies to develop repopulation plans that fit with the economic development and labour force development plans for their region.

Governments and communities must work together in a collaborative manner. However, it is important to note that no amount of incentives, subsidies, and other “carrots” can overcome the fact that there is individual freedom and choice. Individuals will have their own preferences about what makes a community a good place to live in. Despite the best efforts of all involved, there will always be individual choices made about where to live. Youth, immigrants, and expatriates will choose to live in communities where they feel there is economic opportunity, access to services, and a good quality of life, as they define those on their own terms.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What are the examples of federal and provincial government policies or programs that have helped repopulation efforts in your region / county / municipality?
2. What are the examples of federal and provincial government policies or programs that have hindered repopulation efforts in your region / county / municipality?
3. What can and should be done to support existing development agencies, NGOs, and individual municipalities in the development and implementation of repopulation strategies?

## 8.0 Conclusions

Repopulation in rural regions of the Atlantic Provinces is an important issue for discussion, debate, and action. Population decline fueled by out-migration, aging of the population, and a lack of immigration threatens the sustainability of many individual communities. They will not be able to sustain local services if their tax base continues to decline. Existing employers may have problems finding enough workers to fill vacant positions. Entrepreneurship, innovation, and new business starts will be less likely. Population levels may fall below critical thresholds to sustain essential public services, especially health care and education.

Repopulation can only occur when individuals see that there is economic opportunity, access to services, and the possibility of a good quality of life for them. They will define these on their own terms. In addition, these will be different among youth, immigrants, expatriates, and others who may consider staying in or moving to rural communities and small towns.

Repopulation strategies are likely to be more successful if they are developed from communities and regions, rather than from senior levels of government, and with active involvement and participation from a wide range of community and regional stakeholders. They will be more viable if they are tied closely to the economic development and labour force development plans of each region.

Among the small number of repopulation projects in the Atlantic Provinces examined in the preparation of this discussion paper, there are a number of things that are working well. Successful youth efforts have involved those where there has been an active and direct approach to inform students about local business startup and employment opportunities. There has been success in providing apprenticeship and mentorship opportunities with local employers. There has been success in having local governments provide information to young people about housing, services, and other important elements related to living in the community. Working with the education system to employ entrepreneurship-related curriculum has also been important.

Successful immigration activities have stemmed from having a multistakeholder committee formed to work on the issue. Establishing a “welcoming community” has been important. This has involved many things, such as schools and libraries providing information to students and the general public about cultural diversity and ethnic groups, and providing cultural awareness programs in the community. The Nova Scotia strategy of bringing the responsibility for immigration under one department and having regional development authorities develop locally-sensitive immigration plans is expected to be successful.

There is less evidence about the success of repatriation projects. However, an aggressive marketing campaign (in the print media and on the Internet), combined with dedicated staff and financial resources, has resulted in success in Kings County, Nova Scotia, in attracting families to the area to live and work. The development of databases of graduates from local high schools, where they have gone, and their current contact information can serve as a potentially useful starting point for contacting and engaging them about the possibilities of returning home to live and work.

There are still challenges to overcome. Efforts to retain youth will always face the problem that young people seek “life experiences” which often require them to move away for a period of time. Only a small portion of youth who are exposed to business and entrepreneurship opportunities will actually follow through. The efforts to link youth with existing businesses requires human resources to organize - and these may not always be present in the community or region. The investments in technology and curriculum for post-secondary education access in rural areas is still quite limited, preventing people who wish to stay from doing most or all of their education in their home communities.

The immigration policy and process is not well understood at the community level. There appears to be a fairly rigid policy which may not be as conducive to nominating and attracting immigrants to rural areas, where there are already

very few. The lack of appropriate and affordable housing, the lack of language training, and the limited presence of immigrant support groups in most communities pose barriers. In cases where there are immigrant support groups, they have limited funding and rely on volunteers.

Repatriation strategies are difficult to implement because of the perceived or real lack of economic opportunities in some regions. It is also cost-prohibitive to bring people back home for a “look” at the possibilities, and thus community groups need to rely on individual goodwill and their own personal investment in time and travel costs to return home for a visit.

There are a number of possible next steps or possible actions that emerge from this discussion paper:

- Senior levels of government should continue to invest in infrastructure and activities that create the right conditions for economic opportunity in rural regions.
- The four provincial governments, in partnership with their federal counterparts in the region, need to continue their dialogue on population issues. In particular there should be a discussion about the merits of the newly developed Nova Scotia approach to immigration as a possible model for the other provinces, as well as the merits of developing a regional approach to immigration that will benefit all four provinces.
- Communities and regions within each province should consider whether or not there is an interest in and a need for repopulation efforts, taking into account that economic opportunity, access to services, and quality of life are important considerations. If repopulation is deemed desirable and possible, then a process to develop and implement a plan could be started.

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## 10.0 Profile of (Re)Population “Projects” in Atlantic Canada and Beyond

### 10.1 Programme Entrepreneurship - Régional, Communautaire et Économique (PERCÉ), Acadian Region, PEI

#### Purpose and Rationale

Programme Entrepreneurship - Régional, Communautaire et Économique is primarily a regional, community and economic entrepreneurship program in Prince Edward Island. The mandate of the organization is to maintain the link between francophones and government. They conduct programs in the schools and lead the Junior Achievement program. The francophone population as a whole represents about 5% of PEI’s total, about 6000 people.

PEI’s experience has been that the number of children in the schools keeps going down; the youth, particularly francophone, continue to leave PEI; and many young people have gone to other parts of Canada to find work.

This group realized they must create strategies to keep young francophones in the area and/or to attract other people, which was the main raison d’être for the creation of the PERCÉ program. Staff believe immigration is an important issue and that government must be made more aware of the challenges of the rural areas so that population can be retained and immigrants can be attracted. This group looked at a similar program in Québec and saw the same problems they were having in PEI, so they adapted Québec’s program to their area. They felt it was important to show the benefits of working in PEI. Their aim is to show a vital francophone community in which to work and live.

#### Objectives

PERCÉ offers services to PEI’s Acadian and francophone youth to start businesses. Its objectives are to:

- make PEI’s Acadian and francophone youth aware of their region’s assets as well as its economic and cultural possibilities;
- attract more youth by increasing the number of businesses and job opportunities;
- offer youth an opportunity to obtain work experience in their field of studies; and
- establish a communication and promotion strategy to inform youth about the various programs available to help them develop their interests, knowledge and skills.

#### Strategies/Actions

PERCÉ targets 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year university students. It also targets those francophones who have been gone from PEI for 10 - 20 years (those who may have reached retirement or semi-retirement age) to encourage them to start businesses in PEI or, if those people have government jobs elsewhere, to see if they could transfer to PEI.

Career Know-How is a program aimed at youth in grades 9 and 10 as the result of a recent study identifying 10 trades and 5 careers which need to attract employment. These youth are shown the trades and careers and encouraged to explore them. If they have a particular interest in one, they are encouraged to volunteer with someone involved in that trade/career.

A database is being created of francophones who graduated from the two francophone high schools in PEI from 1990 onward to see where they have gone. A website has been created, on which jobs are advertised and resumé’s can be submitted for these francophones’ potential return to PEI.

#### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

Since PERCÉ is a new pilot project, many of its strategies are works in progress. Even with the Québec program, results were not seen for 10 years. However, there has been a failure so far in trying to attract retired or semi-retired people who had moved away. They tried to organize a meeting for these people over Christmas holidays, suspecting many were in PEI for Christmas, but it got a very small turnout. They felt the meeting was



held at a bad time, but may try again during an alternate time of year.

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## 10.2 Welcoming Community and Youth Repatriation Projects, Colchester County, NS

### Purpose and Rationale

The Colchester Regional Development Authority (CoRDA) is one of 13 non-profit economic development agencies in Nova Scotia. Its mission is to enhance the social and economic well-being of citizens in Colchester through active community economic development. It conducts programs in business development, investment attraction, and community economic development as well as programs for youth retention, youth expatriate attraction, and immigrant attraction.

### Objectives

The objective of the youth repatriation project is to identify and implement strategies that will reverse the youth out-migration trends in the Colchester region and to advance the issues of unemployment and under-employment of youth within the community. CoRDA is working with focus groups and a steering committee comprised of youth, members of the business community, representatives of local government, and service providers and is developing a roster of youth and industry that will enable youth to be matched with employment. The goal is also to promote Colchester as a great place for young people to live and work through recognition of their achievements and their contribution to the community.

The Welcoming Community component focuses on immigration. The region was set up as a national pilot project in 2003 to develop an immigration attraction approach specific to small and rural communities. Since there is a large agricultural community of immigrants established in the area, CoRDA has been working with Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) on research into this group and potential attraction of additional agricultural operators. Part of the research focuses on what made people come to the area in the first place, and what made them stay or what made them leave. The goal is to develop a marketing approach and prepare the community to be welcoming and to make new immigrants feel comfortable.

### Strategies

#### Youth strategies:

- Youth employment strategy, established in 2003, identified the main issue as lack of communication leading to a lack of awareness of opportunities and available employment for youth. The strategy aims at better communication on what exists; has involved employers in planning for their future; conducts school visits in conjunction with a mandatory Grade 11 course, Career and Life Management; has developed a website (15to29.ca) as a communication tool and a forum for discussion. The region has a 50% non-participation rate in post-secondary education, so much of the strategy is aimed at reaching that 50% of youth.
- Bi-annual youth recognition All Star Awards at which business and Chambers of Commerce get together to present bursaries, etc. to youth
- Colchester Care Kits: in April, kits are sent out to students studying away from the region. The kits contain items donated from local businesses as well as employment opportunities etc. People in the community are asked to sign up the students and include on the form information on where they are studying, what year, what degree. This allows CoRDA to develop a database of available students to match up with local employers for either summer employment or permanent employment. The next step is to match the students

with the employers to explore the opportunities. The kit is also useful as a community marketing tool; students are aware the community cares about them and are made aware of local opportunities.

- Opportunity Colchester: committee made up of service providers dealing with youth + business + youth to implement the youth employment strategy. There are a number of agencies dealing with youth issues, so this committee is aiming to avoid duplication and create partnerships.

#### Welcoming Community

An Immigration Partnership has been set up. This is a local volunteer group formed to focus on the Welcoming Community initiative.

#### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

It is still early to know the impact of the strategies. The long term outcomes of the youth retention youth efforts will not be known for several years. CoRDA will do a first analysis soon on the preliminary impacts.

One strategy that has not been as successful as hoped is the immigrant attraction (Welcoming Community project). CoRDA started with the idea of attracting groups of people to come as a cluster, but because of immigration policy, found out that it couldn't be done. CoRDA is now encouraging and working with existing immigrant families in the area to bring other family members to the region and that way build up their community.

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### **10.3 Youth Repatriation, northern New Brunswick**

#### Purpose and Rationale

The provincial youth repatriation project comes under ACOA's Entrepreneurship and Business Skills development umbrella. There are 12 case workers across the province to help develop youth entrepreneurship and to ensure that a new crop of entrepreneurs is coming along to fill employment needs. Two pilot projects have been carried out, one in the northeast and one in the northwest, where most youth migrate to either Moncton or Fredericton.

#### Objectives

Case workers look at what can be done to have young people return to their regions to work, either starting a new business or working with existing entrepreneurs.

#### Strategies/Actions

Case workers asked the question, "Can we retain entrepreneurs before they leave?" A three phase plan evolved from that question:

- First, they found out what the job openings and businesses prospects were in the regions. Then they went to the communities within the regions with students in university and college to find those graduating in the present year.
- Second, they planned a weekend for those students, where they were invited to participate in intensive meetings and learning. There the students heard about opportunities in their region, learned job search skills, networking skills, and attended information sessions about starting a business and others. The

students met with local entrepreneurs who had job openings and met other young entrepreneurs who had started businesses instead of leaving or who had started businesses upon their return.

- Third, there was a follow-up done. For 3 months following the weekend, contact was maintained with the students. The aim was to get them before they left the area and to attract a qualified workforce from university and college students.

#### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

There have been two pilot projects. In the first, there were 30 participants and 8 have returned or are returning. In the second, there were 24 participants and 7 have returned or are returning. ACOA looks at this as a reasonably high rate of success. These two pilots want to redo the project again, and there are at least two other regions in the province that want to do the pilots. There has been some interest from other regions, but in some of these regions the workforce issues are more to do with labour market shortage than out-migration.

The 2004 initiatives were well received by the participating municipalities, and it was very encouraging to see the support coming from the municipalities (in the form of spreading the word in the community about the meetings plus participating and providing local information to the students) as well as the entrepreneurs. Because of the projects' success, there is a feeling that there may be a higher return rate than originally anticipated. The projects served to reacquaint young people who had left with the region and provided them with new information such as opportunities available, quality of life, housing, etc.

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### **10.4 Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth (FINALLY!) Project, Newfoundland and Labrador**

#### Purpose and Rationale

A youth driven organization, FINALLY! empowers youth to be active participants in decision making and implementation. Involvement in social and economic issues provides an opportunity for youth to build a viable future in Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### Objectives

FINALLY! facilitates the meaningful participation of youth in decision making; implementation and evaluation; promotion of the achievements of youth and young entrepreneurs; and distribution of information to youth in all areas of the province.

FINALLY!'s provincial youth council (PYC), comprised of 13 democratically elected youth from around the province, coordinates regional and provincial movement; oversees financial and administrative issues; and voices youth issues and concerns on a provincial level. The PYC is comprised of three representatives from each of the four regions: Labrador, Western, Central, and Eastern; and a past chairperson. This structure ensures a provincial focus.

#### Strategies/Actions

Youth Councils organize events and funding opportunities. They give the youth a voice in social and economic issues, and help to give the youth a chance to stay in their region.

#### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

The PYCs are very successful and ongoing, but it is a continuing challenge to motivate the youth. It is hard to deny there are opportunities outside the province or outside St. John's but some of the outcomes have included:

- Community Centre Health Day Challenge, focused on promoting the importance of physical fitness, proper nutrition, and general health awareness to children in a fun and exciting way
- refurbishment of White Fish youth camp
- involvement in zonal issues and building community capacity
- participation in such events as public speaking to build on abilities and aptitudes

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## 10.5 The Manitoba Experience with Immigration, Province of Manitoba

### Purpose and Rationale

The Immigration Promotion and Recruitment Branch of the Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration, Immigration and Multiculturalism Division, is responsible for promoting immigration to the Province of Manitoba generally, and the implementation and development of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program in particular.

The Canada Manitoba Immigration Agreement provides a mandate to the Immigration and Multiculturalism Division to both provide settlement services for newcomers as well as to determine and implement criteria under the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program to promote immigration to the province. The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program for Skilled Workers receives and assesses applications from skilled workers and nominates those who can demonstrate an ability to establish successfully in Manitoba for permanent residence in Canada.

The Settlement and Labour Market Services Branch funds and oversees a number of services to newcomers including settlement services, foreign credentials recognition, and employment services. The Adult Language Training Branch funds and oversees ESL programs for newcomers.

### Objectives

The provincial objective to reach 10,000 newcomer arrivals each year by 2006 is one component of Manitoba's Strategy for Economic Growth.

### Strategies/Actions

Individual employers identify their labour force needs. Communities develop immigration plans which include targets and actions to ensure that newcomers are recruited on a sustainable basis. Communities also promote and profile themselves on the internet. The provincial government tailors Settlement and adult ESL services to respond to community needs and local capacities.

### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

An ongoing success is the involvement of employers who can work directly with the Provincial Nominee Program to apply for skilled workers to meet their labour needs. The Nominee Program assesses applications from employers to ensure that there is both a positive labour market impact (wages are competitive, local workers are not displaced) and that there are sufficient settlement services and planning in place to retain those workers. The applications from the workers are assessed on their ability to meet the employer's requirements and remain in the community and the province.

The success of this approach is sustained because once the first arrivals of newcomers establish themselves they can support the permanent immigration of other family members through the Nominee Program.

The provision of effective settlement services to rural areas is critical to encouraging the retention of newcomers in those areas.

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## 10.6 Florenceville Immigration Project, western New Brunswick

### Purpose and Rationale

The immigration project in the Florenceville area has largely been led by the Multicultural Association of Carleton County Inc. (MACC) with assistance from Enterprise Carleton. The Association is volunteer-led and part of its role is to provide resources to newcomers and the public.

### Objectives

MACC aims to:

- facilitate contact and communications between persons of different backgrounds;
- foster harmonious relationships among all cultural groups and individuals;
- raise public consciousness and acceptance of multiculturalism;
- assist newcomers in adaptability to their new community; and
- act as an advocate on issues dealing with multiculturalism.

### Strategies/Actions

The previous objectives are or have been achieved through various programs such as Women's Programming, Cross-Cultural Communication Workshops, Multicultural Awareness Program (MAP); and ESL (English as a Second Language).

There are many other actions MACC would like to undertake but they do not have the financial and human resources to work on all of them. Their aim is to retain immigrants, primarily by being supportive of recent immigrants, encouraging them with a good quality of life and fostering a welcoming community. There is not enough affordable housing or appropriate housing for those in the lower pay scales; so the MACC strategy is to help people with rental costs. They also wish to address the issue of public transportation and how to encourage youth and newcomers to run for public office.

### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

The presence of McCain's world headquarter has contributed to the attraction of immigrants from a wide variety of countries and the community boast an 80% retention rate. Some of MACC's biggest challenges include:

- public transportation
- affordable housing
- public education
- more programs are needed for young entrepreneurs
- gender issues vary dependant upon nationalities
- reverse discrimination; locals challenge hiring practices of large corporations
- language training

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### **10.7 St.-Léonard Immigration Project (Projet de développement communautaire durable/Carrefour d'immigration rurale), northwestern New Brunswick**

#### **Purpose and Rationale**

A lack of participation by French communities in the immigration process was identified which led to the creation of the Carrefour project.

#### **Objectives**

Carrefour d'immigration rurale's mandate is to develop an immigration model for French speaking communities in rural areas outside of Québec.

#### **Strategies/Actions**

The community has organized a stakeholder group made of churches, schools, the library, the municipality, and others, so that there is a community-wide effort and participation. Carrefour's philosophy is that you must work hard at both attracting and retaining immigrants. This means creating a welcoming community so that people will want to stay. Carrefour brings in immigrant populations, and works with the local people to retain them. This increases the labour force, gives the cultural advantage of having a more diverse population - the group calls it "spicing up Acadia." Carrefour helps families to set up businesses and to bring in workers. In addition to their primary focus on immigration, it works with schools to promote businesses in St.-Léonard and tries to make a link between businesses and the students.

#### **Successes/Problems/Outcomes**

They have organized groups of immigrants coming into the community at different times of the year. These people are billeted with local residents rather than placed in motels. This builds relationships and establishes social support.

They have in some cases taken empty buildings and started businesses for people who will be coming under the immigrant investor category. They have also helped to purchase businesses before people arrive, sometimes having local people run the business until the newcomers arrive.

They help newcomers to find suitable housing, help negotiate the purchase, and help with the legal process.

They have undertaken efforts to make the community a "welcoming community". This has included working with the school system to encourage teaching and resources about

cultural diversity and ethnicity. It has also meant lobbying for the maintenance of and improvement of health and education services. This has included ensuring there are care facilities for older people, so that, for example, if older immigrants require assisted housing or nursing home care, they will be able to obtain it locally rather than having to move. There have also been investments in parks and green spaces, and an arts festival has been developed to promote the town.

One disappointing aspect to date has been the lack of positive media reporting. The local media have on occasion reported that the group is not accomplishing anything, that there are no results to be seen. However, Carrefour doesn't want to speed up the process; they want to do it right.

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### **10.8 Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy, Province of Nova Scotia**

#### Purpose and Rationale

The Province had been doing some work in immigration for many years. In 2004, they started a process to do a strategy that was built from an extensive consultative process. The Province appointed a Minister and established the Office of Immigration with a sizable budget. Previously the Department of Education had a mandate to lead settlement activity and the Department of Economic Development had a mandate for the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). Now they are under one umbrella.

The immigration numbers had dropped from 3500 in the early 1990s to 1500 recently. Eighty percent go to Halifax, and 60 percent of those move on to other parts of Canada. The fundamental policy issue is: How do we turn that around? How do we broaden the base of activity in the rural areas?

#### Objectives

Nova Scotia's immigration target is 3600/year to be achieved within 4 years with a 70% retention rate. There are 4 components to the strategy: establish welcoming communities; be more effective in attracting immigrants; retain immigrants; and integrate immigrants in local society.

#### Strategies/Actions

The PNP focus has been more on rural and small town areas than on urban. The strategy



involves Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) as key partners; they look for opportunities, and promote the importance of immigration at the local level. The Office of Immigration is working with the RDAs to develop immigration strategies in their own area. The strategy is to engage local community-based partners and build capacity / a welcoming community at the local level. It is expected that there will be different strategies in different areas (e.g., the strategy in the Amherst / Cumberland area will be different than that in Cape Breton) to take advantage of local opportunities and circumstances.

#### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

The immigration strategy is brand new so there are no real successes or outcomes to report. It will be important to build local development capacity to develop local immigration plans. The experience of some regions (Cape Breton, Kings) in developing repatriation and attraction projects and activities is an important base to build from. There is an abundance of capacity and power in the Nova Scotia strategy but it must be rooted locally. The strategy of engaging local communities and local partners is necessary to be effective is expected to work well.

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### **10.9 Move to Kings, Kings County, Nova Scotia**

#### Purpose and Rationale

Like other rural areas, Kings County experiences a decline in its population. The decline is estimated as being less than 1% per year. The Move to Kings program was designed in 1997 by the Kings Community Economic Development Agency (Kings CEDA) to attract people to the area to live and work. Initially set up to attract those of retirement age, it now attracts families of all ages, most notably in the 40 - 50 age bracket.

#### Objectives

The Move to Kings program aims to attract people to live and work in Kings County. By aggressively marketing the area as place to live the long term objective is to ensure a sufficient population to allow the area to maintain a high quality of life, retain valuable services (such as schools and hospitals), and support a variety of economic development activities, including Business Retention and Expansion.

### Strategies/Actions

The program is advertised in selected print media and on websites and encourages individuals to contact Kings CEDA for information. Once the request for information has been made, it is then prioritized (i.e., those who wish to relocate immediately; those who wish to relocate within the next 1 - 2 years, etc.). Packages are sent to the individuals, and include general overview information of the area, maps, contact information for real estate agents and other key service providers, and much more, plus any specific information requested. In terms of work placement, information is provided on job sites and available jobs in the area, but people are not placed in jobs by Kings CEDA. A business counsellor at Kings CEDA is available to help those who wish to start their own businesses.

### Successes/Problems/Outcomes

The program has responded to more than 4100 contacts over the 7 years and now sees approximately 25 - 30 families relocate each year. A small percentage of those relocating are expatriates. The program has been deemed successful because of the long term economic impacts (e.g., property taxes, shopping and purchases, employment and wages, and new business starts) which can be both directly and indirectly attributed to the arrival of new families. A key success factor has been having a dedicated staff person responsible for the program so that there is a “live person” to respond to inquiries, and to ensure followup as needed. The part of the program that has not been so successful is the advertising and marketing, especially in the early years of the program. They found that trade shows and direct mailouts were not successful with this type of program. It took some time to identify and develop appropriate marketing channels to reach people who might have interest in relocating.

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## **Appendix A Summary of Action Items Requested by Youth**

The Canadian Rural Partnership supported an important research project which youth with an opportunity to identify the key actions they would like to happen in order for them to remain in or return to their rural communities and small towns. The summary below is taken from the report **Rural Youth Migration: Exploring the Reality Behind the Myths** (R.A. Malatest and Associates, 2002).

### **Enhancing Employment Opportunities**

- Have education and training institutions provide greater access to technical/trades training.
- Have local employers provide youth employment/entry into career positions.
- Have school districts/colleges/local economic development agencies build an awareness of self-employment as a career alternative.
- Provide allowances or stipends to allow/support rural youth to attend training or networking sessions that they might otherwise be unable to attend.
- Encourage employers to make available summer employment opportunities to help retain ties with the community among those youth who have left to pursue post-secondary education.

### **Facilitating Access to Education and Training**

- Provide post-secondary education options to rural youth.
- Promote awareness of the importance of technology to local teachers and to “community influencers”.
- Make computers with high speed Internet available to rural youth enrolled in distance education.
- Have school districts/colleges/local economic development agencies build an awareness of distance education options.
- Promote group enrollment in distance education courses to facilitate learning for rural youth.
- Provide grants or interest-free loans to support rural youth in attending training sessions that teach skills needed in the rural community

### **Civic Engagement**

- Encourage local governments to adopt a pro-active approach to include rural youth in the decision-making process through several avenues.
- Encourage rural communities to make greater efforts to publicize youth issues, activities and strategies.
- Encourage local governments to identify youth initiatives as a priority in community plans and strategies.
- Encourage local governments/communities to work together to develop strategies to engage rural youth.

### **Tax and Fiscal Policy**

- Have provincial and federal governments review the opportunity to adjust student loan repayment requirements for youth who reside in rural areas upon completion of their studies.
- Encourage local governments to examine the feasibility of offering reduced property tax assessments for youth (first time home-buyers).
- Have all levels of government explore possible fiscal/tax strategies that would encourage industry to locate to rural areas and hire rural youth.

### **Work Orientation/Rural "Exposure" Programs**

- Encourage employers in rural communities to establish "work experience" programs to encourage job seekers to acquire work experience/familiarization in rural communities. This activity could also be partially funded through local community economic development offices and/or other agencies.
- Encourage local businesses to recognize the importance of youth business and establish minimum targets for youth business contracts (e.g., 5% of contracts to go to youth-run businesses).
- Have the school districts and local employers work closely together to provide work experience opportunities for youth in local industry.
- Promote the advantages of rural living.

### **Recreation/Social Activities and Infrastructure**

- Ensure that Community Recreation Plans explicitly address the needs of local youth groups including the 15 to 19 year age group and single young adults aged 20 to 29 years.
- Encourage rural communities to explore the availability of government funding (e.g., Canadian Heritage, other) to support cultural/social infrastructure or events in their local community.

## Appendix B Understanding the Immigration System

The federal government has primary responsibility for establishing immigration and refugee targets, with input from the provinces and territories through various agreements. There are a range of options and programs which are used to "select" immigrants to come to Canada.

### Immigrant Classes

Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), immigrants are admitted into Canada under three classes: Economic; Family; or Protected Persons/Refugees.

#### *Economic Class*

Economic class immigration presently accounts for 60% of new immigrants. These immigrants are assessed according to six categories:

- education
- knowledge of the official languages
- work experience
- age
- arranged employment in Canada
- adaptability

The IRPA focuses on choosing skilled workers with the flexible and transferable skill sets required to succeed in a changing and knowledge-based economy. The Act places value on skilled technical workers and tradespersons as well as university-educated professionals and stresses the importance of proficiency in English or French.

There are several programs available to immigrants who fall under the Economic Class.

- *Immigrant Investor Program*: seeks to attract immigrants with business and capital management experience. Immigrants must have a minimum net worth of \$800,000 and make an investment of \$400,000.
- *Entrepreneurial Immigration Program*: designed to attract immigrants with business experience that can be utilized in Canada. Immigrants must hold at least 33 1/3% of the equity of a Canadian business; they must actively manage the business; and they must employ at least one Canadian citizen or permanent resident.
- *Provincial Nominee Programs*: allow provincial governments to actively participate in immigration. Many provinces have signed agreements with the federal government to identify and designate the number of nominees needed for the economic development of their respective regions. Nominees must meet federal health and security admission criteria.
- *Live-In Caregiver Program*: brings qualified workers to Canada as live-in caregivers when there are not enough Canadians and permanent residents to fill the available positions. Candidates in this category are granted temporary resident status for at least two years before they can apply for permanent resident status.

### *Family Class*

The Family Class is made up of people who join family members already settled in Canada. Permanent residents 18 or over can sponsor close family members. Sponsors are assessed to ensure they can support the applicant and any accompanying family members for 3 - 10 years, depending on their age and relationship to the sponsor.

Accepting immigrants in this class is based on the philosophy that people who immigrate to Canada will establish themselves more easily if they are supported by their families. The existence of the Family Class is recognized in the Act as well as its Regulations for the first time.

The Family Class includes a foreign national who is the spouse, common-law partner, conjugal partner, child or parent of a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident. The IRPA also states that sponsored spouses, common-law partners, conjugal partners and dependant children will not be refused on the grounds that they represent an excessive medical demand. The age for dependant children has been changed from under 19 to under 22 in the revised IRPA.

### *Protected Persons/Refugees*

The new IRPA places greater emphasis on the refugees' need for protection and less on the ability to resettle in Canada than did the older Act. The new selection criteria takes into account economic and social factors such as the presence of relatives in Canada, and has as its goal the reduction of waiting times and improved efficiency in the refugee system.

Of the people protected by Canada each year, ½ are refugees selected abroad and ½ are persons who have been granted permanent resident status after claiming refugee protection once in Canada. Refugees are protected and cannot be returned to their country of origin. They are assessed against criteria set by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 2002 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

There are several programs available to assist refugees.

- *Resettlement Assistance Program*: provides income support for essential household items and for immediate delivery of essential services
- *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*: Canadian groups can take on the responsibility of helping refugees settle by providing the necessary financial and emotional support. This includes the *Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program*, in which sponsors and the government share this responsibility.
- *Immigrant Loans Program*: provides loans to those refugees seeking permanent residence and provides financial assistance to refugees/protected persons. The loans cover the foreign medical exam, transportation costs to Canada, and fees associated with the right of permanent residence.

- *Interim Federal Health Program*: covers emergency and essential health services for asylum claimants and refugees not yet covered by a provincial plan.

The second group of those in need of protection is those claiming asylum. If the claim is accepted, the person applying has 180 days to apply for permanent residence for himself as well as any other family members. Asylum claimants may apply for work permits if they cannot survive without public assistance. They may also apply for study permits and their children may attend school.

## **Appendix C History of Immigration in Atlantic Canada**

### **1635 - 1755**

French arrive (later to become known as the Acadians). Majority are deported between 1755 - 63; some evade deportation and some return following peace in 1763.

### **1713 - 49**

A few British and New Englanders arrive at Annapolis and Canso.

### **1749**

British found Halifax.

### **1751 - 53**

"Foreign Protestants" recruited to assimilate the Acadians. This group consists of Germans, Swiss and French Protestants, who primarily end up in Lunenburg Co.

### **1759 - 68**

New England planters recruited to take over lands left after the Acadians are deported.

### **1765**

Germans recruited to settle the Petitcodiac and Wallace lands of Colonial speculators.

### **1772 - 75**

Halifax authorities recruit Yorkshire immigrants from northern Britain.

### **1775 - 85**

The Loyalists arrive. Some are Colonial Americans; others are disbanded British regiments of Scottish, English and Germans, while others are African Americans who come either as freemen or slaves.

### **1780s**

Scottish and Irish settlers begin arriving. While some had come to PEI and Pictou during the 1770s, the trickle becomes greater after the Revolution.

### **1815 - Present**

After the Napoleonic Wars, Scottish and Irish come in greater numbers.

Many Irish gravitate to the cities; Saint John rapidly loses its Loyalist character and Halifax becomes predominantly Irish.

By the 1840s, the waves of immigrants bypass this region and head to rest of Canada as well as to the USA.



The region experiences a short wave of immigration in the late 19th century when a mix of Europeans come to industrial areas of Cape Breton, Pictou County and elsewhere. Some are from Belgium and France, while others come from the eastern regions and incorporate the diverse cultures of their urban setting.

In addition, there are small groups of Danes (New Denmark) and Icelanders (Shelburne County) among others.

The Jewish community increases during the era of World War I.

In last two decades, a small number of individual and groups of refugees - Vietnamese, Sikhs, Croatians, and others - arrive in the region.

Adapted from: Buckner and Reid, 1994; Forbes and Muise, 1993; and personal communication with Jim Snowdon, Acadia University.