

Rural Horizon

Winter 2006

RURAL AND SMALL TOWN CANADA ANALYSIS BULLETIN

True or false?

- Rural residents are more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community?
- Rural residents are more likely to do volunteer work?
- Rural residents are more likely to attend public meetings?
- Canada's predominantly rural regions were visited by one-half of Canadian tourists, 39 percent of American tourists and 33 percent of overseas tourists?
- There is a much higher concentration of unskilled labour in the predominantly rural regions?

Answers to these and many other questions can be found in the Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin, an occasional publication documenting structure and trends in rural Canada. The objective is to provide basic socio-economic information and analysis for use by researchers, policy makers and for others interested in rural issues. Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin is a joint project between Statistics Canada and the Rural Secretariat on behalf of the Canadian Rural Partnership. The Bulletins are available at <http://www.statcan.ca:8096/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=21-006-X&CHROPG=1>



Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards Honourable Mention for a citizen of St-Gilles de Lotbinière

The Canadian government has acknowledged the contributions that six young people have made in their rural communities. In total, three Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards' and three 'Honourable Mentions' were awarded in recognition of exceptional contributions to rural communities involving the following categories: Innovation, Leadership and Partnership.

The recipients include Joël Delisle, a resident of St-Gilles de Lotbinière, who received an Honourable Mention in the Innovation category for establishing a first-response service in his municipality.

Upon his arrival in St-Gilles de Lotbinière eight years ago, Delisle, who is trained in first response and firefighting, noted that ambulance service in his municipality took an average 30 to 45 minutes to arrive at an accident. Well aware of the implications of such delayed interventions, he lost no time in setting out to find a solution to the problem.

"Since I knew full well that after only three minutes a person who has had a heart attack will already be suffering from significant after-effects, I decided to put my training to good use and start up a first-response service that would serve our municipality and put an end to this problem."

On May 1, 2004, the St-Gilles first-response service was officially launched. Delisle said that the successful launch came after two years of work and negotiations by members of the ambulance services, volunteer firefighters and the Régie de la santé et des services sociaux du Québec. Today, the first-response team is comprised of 15 volunteers, all St-Gilles residents, including three volunteer firefighters and 12 civilians trained in first response by the Régie de la santé.

"This is what makes our service unique. Normally, first-response teams consist only of firefighters and is provided in collaboration with the fire department, which is not the case here. This is a first in Quebec."

During its initial year in operation, the first-response team responded to no fewer than 64 calls involving life-threatening emergencies – 26 of which were road accidents – no more than three to six minutes after the 9-1-1 calls were made. The service, set up by Delisle, managed to significantly reduce the response time at the accident scene. At the same time, the service responded to twice as many emergency calls than the municipality had planned, thereby doubling the service's budget this year.

With this kind of success, this top-of-the-line service is now the envy of surrounding municipalities. It is expected that similar first-response services could be springing up in other rural municipalities across Quebec.

The Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards, sponsored by the Rural Secretariat, were awarded in November 2005 in Ottawa.

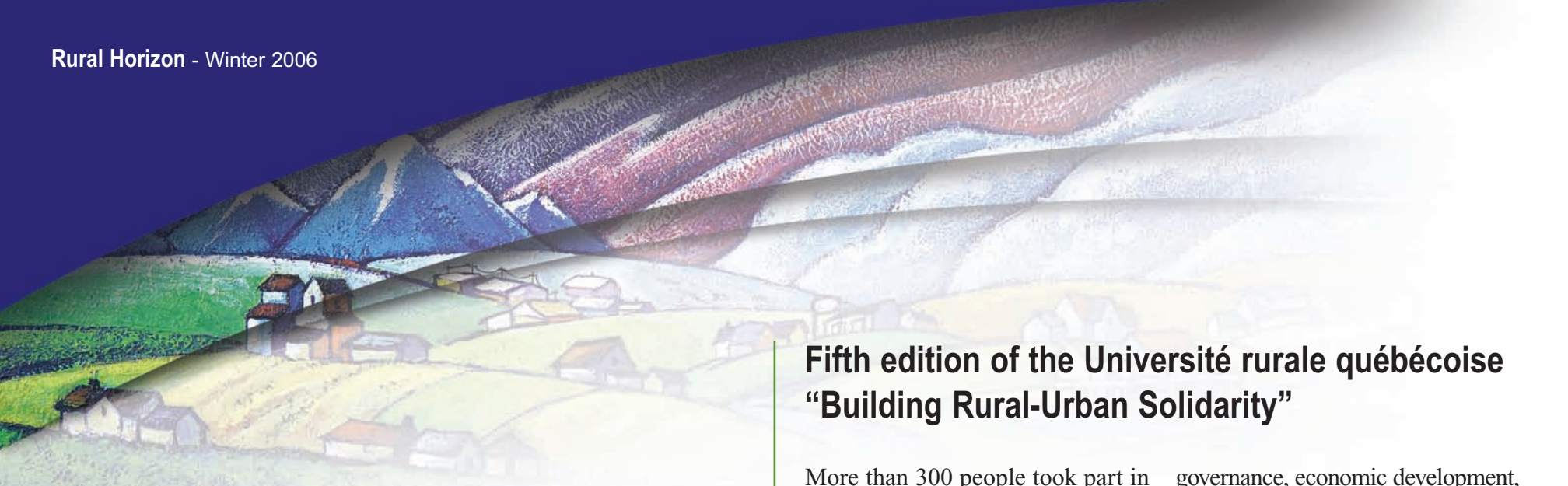
More information about the Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards may be obtained by calling the Rural Secretariat's toll-free number, 1-888-781-2222 or by visiting the rural Web site at www.rural.gc.ca



Joël Delisle received an Honourable Mention in the Innovation category for establishing a first-response service in his municipality.

In this issue

- Rural and Small Town Analysis Bulletin
- Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards 1
- Skilled workforce shortage threatens the regions
- Fifth edition of the Université rurale québécoise 2
- Creation of a new form of government in Nunavik (Northern Quebec) 3
- Improved Internet Access for Residents of the Magdalen Islands
- Census puts rural life in focus 4



Ageing workers phenomenon – Skilled workforce shortage threatens the regions

With the average age of Quebecers nearing 40, the birth rate in free fall and the out migration of youth a fact of life in the outlying areas, how will the labour market look when many of those who are currently employed retire?

Numerous studies focussing on the erosion of the workforce have been conducted by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, in partnership with Emploi Québec. Several Quebec resource centres have also sought to assess the magnitude of the workforce ageing phenomenon. These studies found that by 2010 one out of five people may have to be replaced in the skilled workforce¹.

Looking at Quebec's resource centres, which are the Lower St. Lawrence, the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the North Shore, the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Nord-du-Québec and Abitibi-Témiscamingue, there is already a clear increase in the ageing of the workforce. This is demonstrated by the fact that the working population (aged 45 and over) has risen from 92,500 to 168,100 – between 1990 to 2004, thus increasing its relative share of the labour market from 24 percent to 40 percent. This same trend was observed throughout Quebec.

According to the surveys of the major employers in the North Shore, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Abitibi-Témiscamingue regions, 14 percent to 20 percent of the skilled workforce will be eligible to retire by 2010. The same survey is underway in the Mauricie region and is expected to show the same trend. Thus, in the short term, local businesses are facing the prospect of a skills shortage rather than a general workforce shortage. Several initiatives could be used to address this situation, including aggressive recruitment strategies, on-site staff development or postponing the retirement of the professionals concerned.

In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, a first step taken by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada officials was to disseminate the findings to the key players. High school students, corporate human resource officials, youth workers and labour market integration services were the targets of an information tour. These awareness-raising events helped focus specifically on young people and adults in the process of integrating into the labour market to encourage them to complete their studies. Such study completion would prepare them to take advantage of upcoming opportunities.

Employers were encouraged by Emploi Québec to plan and train successors. At the same time, a high school professional development awareness campaign was effective and led to an increase in the number of registrations for professional development courses.

A great deal still remains to be done before the negative impact of the shrinking workforce has been assuaged. What remains a challenge is the assistance businesses require to ensure the transfer of knowledge from the retiring workers to the new labour force. Only concerted efforts on the part of support and government organizations will ensure a productive labour market with real employment opportunities.

For additional information on this initiative, contact Luc Blanchette at the Abitibi-Témiscamingue Human Resources Canada Centre at 1-800-567-6465 (extension 316).

**Luc Blanchette, Economist,
Abitibi-Témiscamingue HRCC**

¹ The skilled workforce consists of workers whose functions require a professional diploma, either in the form of a college diploma or a university degree.

Fifth edition of the Université rurale québécoise “Building Rural-Urban Solidarity”

More than 300 people took part in the fifth edition of the Université rurale québécoise (URQ). Local and regional development stakeholders and university researchers from all across Quebec met from September 12 to 16, 2005 in several locations in rural Outaouais.

Under the theme “Building Rural-Urban Solidarity”, the Université rurale québécoise organized activities that gave researchers an opportunity to share their knowledge with those who have an ongoing involvement in their communities' development.

Drawing on the European experience, this bi-annual national and international event was established by a group of research professors in the Université du Québec network in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region. Since its inception in 1997, URQ has met with success in the Lower St. Lawrence, North Shore, Mauricie and the Outaouais regions.

The 2005 programming offered different learning opportunities, including 18 excursion workshops, plenary sessions and discussion forums on six central themes:

governance, economic development, land management, identity and heritage, public service and skills development. In addition, the entire event was marked by a forecast exercise involving rural-urban Quebec in the year 2050.

Serge Gagnon, professor at the Université du Québec in Outaouais and 2005 URQ spokesperson indicated that this year's event presented participants with an opportunity to improve their understanding of the rural milieu and its connection with urban centres; participants also shared potential solutions for closer collaboration between these rural and urban areas.

Rural communities need accurate and practical information to plan successful community development projects. The Government of Canada is proud to support the Université rurale québécoise since 1997, an initiative that promotes sharing knowledge and experience that will help with the sustainable development of rural development.

The Université rurale québécoise is looking forward to its 2007 event.



Watershed management workshop, under the rural-urban governance theme, at Mont-Sainte-Marie ski center in the Outaouais region.

Perspective of the Chief Federal Negotiator Creation of a new form of government in Nunavik (Northern Quebec)

The Second World War catapulted Northern Canada and inevitably its residents, the Inuit, onto the international scene. In 1953, the Government of Canada created the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, leading to the establishment of a federal presence in the country's north. In 1963, the Gouvernement du Québec created the Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec to also create a presence throughout the northern part of its territory.

These factors permitted the Inuit of Nunavik to voice their concerns to different levels of government and motivated them to assume responsibility for their own future. In 1984, the Federation of Co-operatives of Northern Québec prepared a series of general principles concerned with the creation of an autonomous government. These events have set the stage for the current governance project; current negotiations are simply one more step on the road to self-government.

In 1967 and 1968, I travelled for the first time to Nunavik, specifically to Fort Chimo (now called Kuujuaq). From there, I was invited by Tivi Etok to live with his family in the community of Kangiqsualujuaq (George River) on the eastern shores of Ungava Bay.

By allowing myself to be integrated into this family and village, I learnt a great deal about the Inuit way of life, their values, and the difficulties they faced daily in their quest for food and family essentials. This was an opportunity for me to witness not only their capacity to survive but their creative responses to many obstacles.

Nunavik's self-government project is a challenge equally for the residents of Nunavik and the governments of Canada and Québec. I am certain that the Inuit will meet this challenge and that they are aware of the need for innovative solutions. Allow me to quote one of the current Inuit negotiators, Harry Tulugak, from an interview with *Le Devoir* on April 1, 1989: "The traditions that have governed the daily lives of Inuit are no longer suited to all the new realities of an ever changing world. Inuit are no longer the homogenous community of days gone by. Traditional methods are no longer adequate to develop the consensus that had long been the foundation of Inuit public life. We need an assembly where opposing viewpoints may be expressed and where solutions for Inuit society may be defined. But this assembly must emulate Inuit traditions as much as possible. For their part, non-Inuit must also have a place in an autonomous government."

In 1994, the Government of Canada was invited by Makivik Corporation and the Gouvernement du Québec to take part in negotiations concerning self-government in Nunavik. The Canadian government has always backed the governance aspirations of the Inuit of Nunavik and will continue to work closely with the Inuit and Québec government to make these aspirations reality.



Kangirsuk, a village in Nunavik

It is also appropriate to mention the remarkable work of the Nunavik Commission whose members were appointed by the Inuit, provincial and federal parties. Created in 1999, the mandate of the Commission was to develop a set of recommendations concerning the structure of a Nunavik government. The public consultations conducted in all the communities of the region revealed the current concerns of residents, their vision of an autonomous government and their commitment to this collective project. The report of the Nunavik Commission is available on the Web site of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca.

This innovative governance project is leading us in a new direction. We are creating a new type of regional autonomous public (non-ethnic) government that is adapted to the realities of the Inuit living in Arctic Québec and in line with the country's fundamental legal framework.

I am very happy to be part of this project as the chief negotiator for Canada and to be able to make a personal contribution.

Nakurmik!

Donat Savoie, Chief Federal Negotiator, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.





AGRICULTURE

Census puts rural life in focus

By Akoulina Connell-Delaney, M.A., Communications Advisor

How is the average farm doing today? Going directly to the source, only farm operators can truly answer this question. They can do so through the Census of Agriculture.

Conducted every five years by Statistics Canada, the census is the only source of information that gathers and publishes data direct from the community level. It is perhaps the only tool developed that presents a clear picture of life on Quebec farms and in rural communities. The current Census takes place on **May 16, 2006**.

Since 1956, the **Census of Agriculture** and **Census of Population** have been conducted simultaneously. In 1971, a special Agriculture-Population database was created to provide a unique socio-economic profile of farming communities. It matches farm operators with information provided on the Census of Population, thereby providing an image of Canadian farmers, their families and households. It also allows characteristics of the rural population to be compared to the general population.

Census data are used to:

- Portray the viewpoints of farm operators to legislators, the media and the public
- Plan how and where to market agricultural products and services
- Evaluate the impact of floods, droughts or other natural disasters on agriculture
- Develop, implement and evaluate agricultural policies and programs, such as farm income safety nets or those pertaining to environmental sustainability or rural development

Farming is constantly changing. Census data offers comprehensive information on agriculture from the township or rural municipality to the national level, on topics ranging from livestock numbers, crops, and organic farming to manure management and even farm-related injuries.

For instance, the 2001 Census of Agriculture indicated that environmentally friendly land management practices had outstripped conventional tillage methods in popularity. Practices such as conservation tillage minimize the number of passes farmers make over their fields, which in turn decreases fuel costs and lowers carbon dioxide emissions. Since environmental concerns are a vital issue, the Census 2006 questionnaire has improved the section on manure use and its application.

The information collected by the Census of Population delivers a bird's eye view of Quebec and Canada – close-ups of communities. For instance, the median age of Quebec farm operators rose from 42 in 1996 to 45 in 2001. In the same time span, the percentage of rural farm population as a percentage of the total rural population dropped from 7.1 percent to 6.4 percent in Quebec. What will the numbers look like in 2006?

For the most accurate results possible, we must all pitch in. We are legally obligated to fill out forms for both the Census of Population and Census of Agriculture. The privacy of the information we share is protected by the same law. Mail them in or file via the Internet.

For more information on the Census, visit www.census2006.ca

Improved Internet Access for Residents of the Magdalen Islands

Magdalen Islands residents now have improved Internet access thanks to a project that involved the laying of underwater fibre optic cables.

Through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the federal and Quebec government, each contributed \$6.9 million to the project through its public infrastructure modernization budget, for a total of \$13.8 million.

This initiative, an example of partnership between the governments and communities, has given Magdalen Islands residents a sustainable development tool. They now have a high-speed telecommunications network that will, among other things, improve their access to online government services. The underwater cables are expected to meet the Magdalen Islands' capacity requirements for at least 25 years.

The Réseau intégré de communications électroniques des Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RICEIM) played the lead role in getting this project off the ground.

For more information about this initiative, please visit www.infrastructure.gc.ca



Belle-Anse (Fatima), Magdalen Islands

FOR INFORMATION ON GOVERNMENT OF CANADA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

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TTY/TDD: 1-800-465-7735
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Service Canada Access Centres



The Rural Horizon is a semi-annual publication of the Rural Team Quebec for the residents of rural and remote communities of Quebec.

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