

From the Rural Routes of ATLANTIC CANADA

Our Communities... Our Successes!

Canadian Rural Partnership

Spring 2005

Rural population in Atlantic Canada

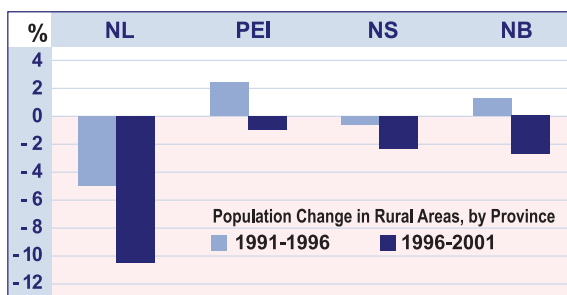
What sets Atlantic Canada apart from other regions of this increasingly urbanized country? It's the proportion of its population living in rural areas. According to Statistics Canada, 44% of the Atlantic region's residents live in rural communities, twice the national average. These rural communities contribute to the wealth of our country by producing high-quality food, engaging in the sustainable development of natural resources, and preserving the natural lands that enhance our quality of life.

However, the population of rural Atlantic Canada is declining. The last two Census years (1996 and 2001) show a decline of almost 5% in the population of the Atlantic region's rural communities, while the overall population fell more than 2%. Altogether, from 1991 to 2001, more than 74,000 people left rural communities across Atlantic Canada.

There are various reasons for this decline in the population of our rural areas. Youth are moving to urban centres in search of an education and new opportunities. There are a low number of immigrants choosing to settle in Atlantic Canada. While immigrants made up more than 18% of Canada's population as a whole in 2001, barely 3% of Atlantic Canadians were new immigrants.

More and more communities are looking forward and taking action against population decline and its effects with innovative projects that have shown positive results. Some of the initiatives showcased in this newsletter can become models for other communities facing similar challenges.

The following charts clearly indicate the decline in the rural populations of each of the four provinces.



Population Change in Rural Communities 1991-2001	
Rural NL	- 49 193
Rural PEI	856
Rural NS	- 20 579
Rural NB	- 5 132
Total for Atlantic Canada	- 74 048

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Home is where the “job” is

Home is where the heart is . . . For many young people living in the Atlantic region rural areas that may be so, but for those looking for educational and employment opportunities that old adage just isn't enough.

But what if home was also where the job opportunities were—where the career you've been training for was just down the road from your family and friends.

That's what the Work-Ready Workforce Committee for northwestern New Brunswick is banking on. The Committee, established through Enterprise Madawaska and Enterprise Grand Falls Region, developed a databank of local post-secondary graduates, so that business leaders can offer these graduates jobs opportunities in the area. This will help both employers in the region and graduates who are interested in returning to their roots and in establishing rewarding careers.

The databank, which started in the spring of 2003, now has the names and addresses of more than two thousand post-secondary graduates interested in knowing what job opportunities are available in the region. Their fields of study range from business, health services and

social sciences, to recreation, sales, trades and more.

In turn, there are many employers in the region who have agreed to post their job openings with the databank. Confidential matches are then made, allowing registrants to apply directly to the employers.

For Gilles-Luc Belanger of Alliance Caskets, the databank is an excellent tool in his company's search for qualified employees. “We are trying to find people for a few different areas of our operation from human resources and engineering to the plant site. We're always looking for new ways to recruit people, because the jobs are here—it's the skills we need.”

Over the next five years, J.D. Irving Ltd. is looking to fill more than 1,000 positions with the right skills for their sawmill and woodlands division in the northern part of the province. “Some people who have expressed an interest in our company learned about us through the databank, so it's already been a useful tool for us,” explained Renee D'Amours Ouellette, Human Resource Manager with J.D. Irving in Edmundston. “Applicants have mentioned that the databank has given them information about what's going on in the area in terms of employment

opportunities—it's given them a pulse on the jobs back home.”

The databank, one of the many initiatives of the Work-Ready Workforce Committee, was established with the support of the Government of Canada, through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and the Province of New Brunswick, through the Training and Employment Department.

The Committee is now developing a new Web site and CD-ROM on career opportunities for young people in northwestern New Brunswick. Registrants also receive a quarterly newsletter with news from home, new businesses in the area and interviews with entrepreneurs and information about northwestern New Brunswick's labour market.

Home really is where the heart is . . . Family, friends and job opportunities waiting for young people to return home and knock at their door.

For more information, contact Enterprise Madawaska at (506) 735-4769 or e-mail info@ent-madawaska.ca.

Multiculturalism in rural communities: it can happen!

For 47 years the small village of Florenceville, located in the Saint John River Valley in Carleton County, New Brunswick, has been the headquarters of McCain Foods. Today, Florenceville and other surrounding villages form a dynamic region attracting and employing people from all around the world.

Without a doubt, Florenceville is the most multicultural village in New Brunswick, perhaps in all of Atlantic Canada. Over the years, it has welcomed immigrants from China, India, Cuba, Colombia, Palestine, Egypt, the Netherlands, the United States, Great Britain, Ghana, Morocco, South Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

Created in 2001, the Multicultural Association of Carleton County helps newcomers adjust to their new circumstances. Among other things, the Association promotes diversity and multiculturalism through classroom visits, and organizes activities to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Canadian Multiculturalism Day and Canada Day. The Association is the leading resource on multiculturalism and diversity in the county, and the region is acknowledged as a model for helping newcomers with their transition.

Following an analysis of the needs of immigrant women in the region, the Association developed specialized workshops for them. With the assistance of Canadian Heritage, the Association has also designed an information kit for the general public on immigration and a series of

workshops on intercultural communication. For a year now, the Association's volunteers have been providing courses in English as a second language, and preparing courses in French as a second language.

Far from resting on its laurels, the Association is planning many other activities. Among other things, they are looking at developing and providing training workshops in job searching and leadership, as well as workshops for young mothers and on early childhood issues.

The Association continues working with the New Brunswick Department of Training and Development in connection with the hiring of newcomers, while creating linkages with the various service sectors and stakeholders. The Association is now tackling a significant issue: the recognition of newcomers' professional skills and knowledge. Through these activities and their ongoing work, they hope to improve the region's quality of life.

For more information on the Association and its initiatives, call (506) 392-6011 or e-mail macc@nb.aibn.com.

While immigrants represent 18% of the population in Canada, this table demonstrates that this group is still not very present in the Atlantic Provinces. This difference is even more important in rural regions.

Percentage (%) of immigrants in the Atlantic Provinces	
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.6
NFLD rural communities	0.8
Prince Edward Island	3.1
PEI rural communities	2.7
Nova Scotia	4.6
NS rural communities	3.5
New Brunswick	3.1
NB rural communities	2.5

From Washington DC to Saint-Léonard NB!



Thanks to Father Jacques LaPointe, a number of families are now in the process of settling in Saint-Léonard

After his arrival from Tokyo in 2000, Father Jacques LaPointe, a native of Saint-Léonard, in northwestern New Brunswick, was made pastor of St. Camillus Church in a suburb of Washington, D.C. This parish is considered one of the most multicultural in the United States, with people of more than 103 nationalities living there.

Upon arriving, Father LaPointe agreed to a request made by ten parishioners, originally from Africa and Haiti, that he celebrate a mass in French. This small group of parishioners quickly grew and today there are more than 500 French-speaking families in this parish, which now has a medical clinic and an immigration centre for French speakers.

In his contact with these new arrivals to the United States, Father LaPointe soon realized that a number of these families did not enthusiastically share the great American dream. The violence in several Washington neighbourhoods and fear of new terrorist attacks in the American capital led some immigrants to inquire about Canada and the acadian region of which Father LaPointe spoke so warmly.

Enticed by the quality of life that Father LaPointe described in Canada, representatives of immigrant families decided to visit Saint-Léonard, NB to look into the possibility of moving there permanently. The first visit in 2001 was followed by a second in 2004. During their stays, the visitors met with the municipal council, business people in the region, immigration specialists, and federal and provincial government representatives. They also lived with residents to familiarize themselves with the geographic, social and cultural environment of Saint-Léonard. Today, a number of the families are in the process of settling in this small town, unknown to them short years ago.

In response to the enthusiasm created by these visits, the elected officials and the residents of Saint-Léonard have decided to create the Carrefour d'immigration rurale [rural immigration crossroads]. They offer front-line services designed to support and promote the full participation of new immigrants in the community, and have become an innovative model that could be adapted in other francophone rural areas.

Two birds, one stone: dealing with out-migration while helping newcomers

People from Colchester, Nova Scotia understand the benefits of a safe, caring and supportive community with abundant natural beauty. And yet, like so many other small and rural areas throughout the country, they face the challenges of poverty, unemployment, under-employment, out-migration, homelessness, low literacy rates and skill shortages. These are issues that they simply cannot afford to ignore as they work towards growth and development in the region.

Spurred by out-migration and low population growth within the region, the focus has shifted to becoming a community that is welcoming to immigrants. The Colchester Regional Development Agency developed the Colchester Immigration Attraction and Retention initiative entitled "Becoming A Welcoming Community—An Approach to Immigrant Attraction and Retention for Small and Rural Communities." This initiative develops the programs and support needed for Colchester to help newcomers. In turn, the community will be better able to attract immigrants and help them connect with employment opportunities so that ultimately they decide to stay.

This project evolved from an idea of attracting five new families who share some connection either to each other or community members. This approach addresses one of the main challenges for immigrants in small and rural communities: loneliness and lack of contact with those who may share a similar language or ethnic background. By attracting family groups who share some connection to each other or to the community, it creates a network of support and increases the likelihood that newcomers will stay in the community.

Designated a national pilot project by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Colchester Immigration Attraction and Retention initiative has currently attracted four families who are all at various stages of the immigration approval process.

This immigration initiative is one of many tools being used. A number of similar initiatives are underway to attract new skills, resources and investment to the Colchester region that will help deal with a labor and skill shortage, while stimulating growth in the economy. It is widely recognized, however, that the community's success in keeping newcomers and increasing the population depends on the extent to which they are truly welcoming and inclusive.

For more information on the Colchester Immigration Attraction and Retention project, call the Colchester Regional Development Agency at (902) 897-1029.

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Youth: key to successful community development

Youth are the future of rural communities, yet rural areas across Canada are losing their young people to cities. Seventy-four percent of 15–19 year olds say they want to live in a city. Across rural Atlantic Canada, countless communities are asking themselves: "How can we get young people to stay and get involved in their community?"

One organization is looking to find answers to this question. HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development is a leader in youth development programs in Nova Scotia, each year helping over 3,500 youth reach their personal best. The organization has developed the Community Youth Development Framework based on its research of what contributes to successful youth action in communities. The Framework, which blends community and youth development, is designed as a guide for encouraging, supporting and planning active youth involvement in their communities and agencies. It can be adapted to fit the needs of each community.

Getting youth involved is a great opportunity for rural communities, which requires a combined effort from both youth and adults. By calling on the talent, interest and skills of young people, community leaders can help youth build their skills and self-confidence, while contributing to a healthier community. Youth who are involved in their communities will feel better respected and develop stronger ties within the community, making it more likely that they will stay as adults.

Youth can help support their communities, but this potential is often not realized. In a time when rural communities are struggling with complex issues such as

population decline, innovative ideas, fresh perspectives and inspired action are needed. Youth who are fully engaged in building a better community also have the power to get others involved.

Given that youth involvement can make a positive impact on communities and other young people, HeartWood realized it would be useful to find the key elements that make this process successful. They identified and researched 5 elements that need to be put in place for youth to participate fully in community development:

- *meaningful contribution (taking action to meet a genuine need);*
- *peer team support (creating an atmosphere fostering a strong team);*
- *youth/adult partnerships (gaining inspiration, support and guidance through a relationship of mutual caring and respect);*
- *adventurous learning (engaging individuals through real life experiences, encouraging them to step outside their comfort zone); and*
- *empowering culture (providing opportunities to initiate, commit, plan and choose paths to work together with peers and the community as active citizens).*

The HeartWood experience shows that getting youth involved in their community benefits everyone: youth grow as individuals, as they help to build vibrant and thriving communities.

For more information on HeartWood, visit www.heartwood.ns.ca or call (902) 543-8531.

Home again...

Many young people leave Prince Edward Island to go to school and then decide to stay outside the province, in some cases because they don't know about the job opportunities back home.

The Programme d'entrepreneuriat régional, communautaire économique (PERCÉ) [regional economic community entrepreneurship program] helps Acadian and Francophone youth find career opportunities on the Island and become aware of the benefits of returning to their home province.

Last summer, in the first year of PERCÉ, eight young university students took a journey of personal and professional discovery. First, they underwent a week of personal development training where they were encouraged to imagine what their careers and personal lives would be like if they returned to Prince Edward Island after completing their studies.

The young participants then visited several businesses in the province to become familiar with the range of employment opportunities available to them. This was followed by a 12-week paid internship, working with a mentor in their chosen field of study. They also had the opportunity to become involved in discussions with business people in meetings organized by the chambers of commerce.

After the eight-month program, the participants said that PERCÉ had opened their eyes to the possibility of returning to PEI—an option they might not have thought about before.



The participants in the PERCÉ program had a chance to meet with the Lieutenant Governor of PEI. Front row from left to right, the Hon. Léonce Bernard, Christian Gallant, Krista Bernard and Mélanie Richard. In the second row: Mark Richard, Sheldon Arsenault, David Millette, guide Gabriel Cormier, Andy Gallant and Jean Aucoin.

The businesses also benefited considerably from their involvement with the young interns. Some business representatives said they would like to hire the same person again next summer. All of them expressed real satisfaction with the work that was accomplished by the interns.

Given the success of this pilot project, which was sponsored by The Baie Acadienne Development Corporation and funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the PERCÉ program will return in the summer of 2005 with a new group of youth from PEI who are interested in learning more about themselves, their province and its opportunities.

For more information on PERCÉ, e-mail janine.arsenault@rdee.ca or call (902) 854-3439, ext. 232.

Connecting PEI to the world

Picturesque Prince Edward Island, with its rolling farms and endless sandy coastline, is a magnet for visitors who come in droves to enjoy its legendary rural beauty. No wonder people want to stay. But as is the case throughout Canada, people living in PEI's rural communities have often found themselves isolated from the rest of the province, and the rest of the country.

An ideal way to bring rural communities like PEI's closer to the rest of the nation is through access to the World Wide Web.

The Morell Region Community Learning Centre, for example, used money from the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program to connect eleven rural communities in PEI to high-speed Internet. They can now benefit from e-learning and e-commerce, and quickly get information on Government of Canada programs without ever having to leave home.

Elsewhere on the island, the Cardigan Communities Development Association introduced Pooles Corner to the benefits of the Internet by taking advantage of the Community Access Program (CAP). CAP helps communities set up free-access public Internet sites in places like libraries and schools, and has helped Canadians, wherever they live, to learn how to use the Internet.

As it turned out, the EasTech Advanced Internet CAP site was so popular, that in addition to regular free access during the day, the EasTech business centre also started a 24-hour Internet "club." For a small fee to cover the cost of an access card, the club's 30 users can come and go as they please, which means that the many rural Islanders who don't work a standard 9-5 day can use the site at any time that suits their schedule.

Industry Canada developed these and other programs to help connect all Canadians. "The system works well, and it meets the needs of rural residents for truly barrier free access to the Internet," says Tim Wartman, Commerce Officer at Industry Canada's PEI office.



From left, David Dunphy (Eastlink), Tim Wartman (Industry Canada), Lisa O'Keefe MacAulay (Morell Regional Community Learning Centre) and David Caldwell (Eastlink)

And that's important. It means that all Canadians have access to the Internet and the opportunities it offers, wherever they come from, wherever they choose to live.

For more information on this initiative, call (902) 426-5592.

Making a difference with Web-4-All

For most Canadians, turning on a computer and surfing the Web is a common thing to do. For many others, it's a real challenge. Language, low literacy, physical disabilities and learning difficulties can all be barriers to people who would like to access the Internet.

Enter Web-4-All, a program that uses special technology called "smart cards" to help the disabled, seniors and new Canadians to use public Internet sites and enjoy the benefits of cyberspace just as easily as everybody else.

With the swipe of a card, people with special needs can use a regular public computer as if it were designed just for them—people who are blind or

cannot see well can have screens magnified or read aloud; people with difficulty using their hands get tools that are easier to use than a mouse or keyboard; people with trouble reading can find information using images and sound; and people unfamiliar with the Web can see simple, clear pages.

The Independent Living Resource Centre, in St. John's has placed 75 Web-4-All units throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, including in isolated and remote communities. They're conveniently located at Community Access Program (CAP) sites, libraries, community organizations and employment service offices.

"In my opinion, Web-4-All is a wonderful tool, making a real difference, and providing equal opportunities when it comes to the use of the Internet," says Dawn LeMessurier, Project Officer at Industry Canada's Newfoundland and Labrador office.

Learning, training and access to information are all things that can help make people's lives better and fuller. With Industry Canada's special Web-4-All technology, Canadians who might not otherwise be able to use computers can now take advantage of the Internet.

For more information on Web-4-All, call (902) 426-5592.

If you have a question, comment or would like to receive a copy of this newsletter, contact:

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Diversity & trust—key to rural development

Rural communities need to understand the importance of cultural diversity and trust as keys to their future, former Red Deer Mayor Gail Surkan told delegates at the third National Rural Conference in Red Deer in October.

"Somewhere [during the conference], you will talk about the importance of immigration to rural communities," said Surkan. "If that, in fact, is a part of our future, the values that we develop around inclusiveness and respect for diversity will be one of the most powerful economic and social development tools that we can have."

Surkan noted that rural communities have always been inclusive, but they've also been largely homogeneous. "They (rural communities) have not really dealt with true diversity, and yet, the future of our rural communities will depend on being inclusive of many cultures, languages and values that may not be as familiar as those that we've historically had inside our communities," she said. The real challenge, said Surkan, is to be inclusive after being homogeneous for so long.

To do this, she said, a community needs to understand itself at a much deeper level than just its physical form. It also has to understand its importance and to design and plan for its survival.

Surkan also pointed to the need to understand rural communities "as essential living environments where people feel they have a sense of a shared future, where they have influence, where they work together to build common value systems."

This, she said, would provide more effective ways to support the process of community development and sustainability.

In addition to inclusiveness, Surkan spoke of the need for communities to re-establish and strengthen trust and collaboration.

"We have to be...collaborative rather than adversarial," said Surkan. "Many of us, especially here, in the west, are only one generation away from when we actually knew how to gather together to raise each other's barns, or to share our resources to build the first place of worship, or to find a way through our family and community networks to support those that were less fortunate in our communities."

Surkan added that collaboration and cooperativeness are among the most important values that show the importance of rural communities.

"We know that in our communities, a lot of what we have done in the past has depended on our ability to trust one another. Trust is an enabler." As an example, Surkan highlighted the Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) comprising over 40 communities in central Alberta that banded together originally to work on economic development.

She said the partnership met the challenge of moving from a competitive environment to one where the future was seen as being shared.

This is a good example, according to Surkan, of communities who understand that they aren't in this alone. If they are to succeed, they need to recognize the importance of supporting the entire network.