

Dialogue Summary Report – Carbonear

September 12, 2008

*Making Newfoundland and Labrador a
Province of Choice for Young People*

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About CPRN

Canadian Policy Research Networks creates knowledge and leads public dialogue and discussion on social and economic issues important to the well-being of all Canadians. Since its beginning in 1994, CPRN has provided advice to Canada's leaders on the issues of our times and produced policy options to move Canada forward.

CPRN carries out its mission by:

- Having experts do original research in all major socio-economic areas;
- Conducting Canada-wide dialogues and roundtables to discuss policy issues, raise awareness, and align outcomes with public attitudes and expectations; and,
- Broadly disseminating its research to promote the engagement of Canadians in policy issues.

CPRN specializes in outreach to young Canadian leaders, helping them develop their skills and encouraging them to participate in public issues and policy development.

These approaches have made CPRN one of Canada's most recognized sources of high quality, social and economic policy ideas, as well as a leader in civic engagement.

For further information on this and past dialogues, please visit CPRN's website at www.cprn.org.

Dialogue Summary Report – Carbonear

Introduction

Many young people are leaving Newfoundland and Labrador to seek opportunities in other Canadian provinces. This long-term trend of out-migration has had a significant impact on families and communities throughout the province. Recently there have been more people moving into the province, but the number of young people leaving is still greater than those coming in, causing a net loss of young people.

On June 5, 2008, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced the development of a *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy* to counter the negative impacts of youth out-migration, strengthen the labour market and support the economic development of the province.

Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN), on behalf of the government, conducted a series of deliberative dialogues with young people from Newfoundland and Labrador aged 18 to 30. In total, 13 dialogues were held, 11 in centers across the province and two outside, in Fort McMurray, Alberta and Ottawa, Ontario, where many young people have relocated. At least one in-province dialogue was conducted in each of the nine Rural Secretariat regions with three in the Avalon Peninsula.

The goal of the dialogues was to help identify ways to encourage young people to stay, live and work in the province. The project's findings and recommendations will inform provincial government policy development and decision-making. It will provide the government with an understanding of the trade-offs and choices young people are prepared to make and which they expect to be considered by government, business and communities in setting future directions for the province.

Dialogue Process

CPRN's well established deliberative dialogue method was used to engage young people in a day-long process. The purpose was to bring the voices of young adults into a conversation about how to address the outflow of young people. Participants examined, discussed and worked through critical issues, learning from each other, gaining an understanding of different perspectives and identifying ways to move forward. The dialogue process offered participants the chance to use their knowledge and experience of the province to reflect on some of the difficult choices that could be taken to reduce net out-migration among young people.

Participants were recruited using various methods, including random selection, referrals by family members and friends, various communication networks and through media blitzes.

About the Region

Carbonear is located in the Avalon Peninsula which according to 2007 regional population demographic statistics has a population of 246,371.¹ There are 188 communities that make up the Avalon.² There were 36 participants at the dialogue session in Carbonear that was held on September 12, 2008.

Agenda

The day started with introductions and a presentation of the dialogue process. Participants were then divided into three breakout groups of 10 to 15 people.

Three approaches were presented for discussion within the breakout groups (See Appendix A). The approaches reflect different values, perspectives, assumptions and experiences. The participants worked through each approach – identifying what they liked and disliked about each approach. They then determined what their common ground and areas of difference were.

Participants returned to the plenary to further explore the choices and trade-offs that they would be willing to make. After which they were divided into smaller sub-groups in which they identified bold actions that could be implemented in the future.

Common Ground and Areas of Difference

Common ground is defined as the set of values, principles and strategies that the group thinks is important and represents what they really care about in moving forward on the issue of youth retention and attraction.

Areas of difference, divergence or tension represent matters on which the group could not agree, or where there was some level of agreement but the group identified tensions and challenging trade-offs between values.

The participants were divided into three breakout groups for this exercise. Below are their common grounds and areas of difference.

¹ Demography Division, Statistics Canada; Economics and Statistics Branch, Department of Finance

² www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/RSR5.asp

Breakout Group 1

Common Ground

- Value was placed on a rural lifestyle; however there is recognition of the need for well developed urban areas; but a balance between both is required.
- Value is also placed on a balance between salary and quality of jobs/life.
- Social support is helpful, but the economy should be designed in a way that makes people work and limits the abuse of the system. Any able bodied person should work, and be provided with the requirements to find employment.
- Blue collar workers and jobs are valued and should be protected.
- Participants valued the culture and way of life in Newfoundland and Labrador, and believe this can also exist in urban areas. There is culture in both urban areas like St. John's and rural areas.
- Diversity is valued and seen as important for a growing economy.
- Participants would advise that the pristine environment is part of what we are and must be protected by law; this would also help create jobs.
- Participants would advise that education and training programs should be more accessible including space, financial assistance, promotion and awareness of career opportunities in NL in order to retain youth.

Areas of Difference

- The group could not agree on how much cultural change is acceptable; there was a fear of homogenization and loss of NL culture.

Breakout Group 2

Common Ground

- Value was placed on a fair living wage that can meet daily needs and pay off school debts on par with other provinces.
 - A quick transition (in terms of finding employment) between school and work experience and the availability of opportunities in various fields were valued.
- A strong sense of community, safety, access to the outdoors, and the openness and friendliness of the province were valued.
- Cleaning up the environment to help preserve the province, specifically by initiating recycling programs and trash removal around attraction sites is important.
- Participants advise the government to improve services for families, e.g. child care, special needs, children's programs in Carbonear and surrounding areas. Some of these service improvements, e.g. child care would help families earn higher wages.

Areas of Difference

- The group could not agree on the balance between maintaining Newfoundland and Labrador culture and accepting other cultures, specifically how much to accept of other cultures.
- Differences were expressed on the types of leisure entertainment that are important for youth: outdoor rural versus urban forms of activity.
- Disparity also existed regarding urban development and the issue of how much is too much (St. John's versus Carbonear).
- Similarly there was a question of how much technology is too much and the concern of losing personal touch versus modernization.

Breakout Group 3

Common Ground

- Strengthening the economy is required in order to have a better quality of life. Great value was placed on NL owned and operated businesses and not big box stores and urban sprawl which make it more challenging to start our own businesses and for them to survive.
- A strong sense of family and community is important; participants expressed a willingness to make sacrifices to maintain it; they also place significance on safety and the low crime rate in the province's quality of life.
 - There is pride in people and in their communities, and recognition of the need to address the pain caused when some communities do not survive.
 - Rural living with accessibility to urban services through regional hubs is valued.
- Long-term planning for the development of our economy is needed so that the province is not dependent on boom industries. Instead there should be sustainable development of the economy.
 - Research should be conducted into the success of other boom communities that are still surviving post boom.
 - Providing long-term employment opportunities that extend beyond the life of a development project with room for advancement in individual careers is valued.
- The province's culture is highly valued; participants expressed a willingness to coexist with other cultures as long as the Newfoundland and Labrador culture is maintained.

Areas of Difference

- There was some tension on rotation work for money to support family versus obligations, milestones and putting a strain on relations. In other words there is tension between the need to go to Alberta to do rotation work to support your family and the strain this puts on one's family.

Comparison across Breakout Groups

In the plenary session, participants presented their common ground and areas of difference. They were asked to identify key similarities and differences among the groups.

- All groups raised the need to maintain and protect NL culture while promoting an openness to diversity (with a reservation as to how much is too much in terms of other cultures).
- The need for a balance between decent jobs/salary and quality of life; the need to protect the environment; and a strong sense of community and way of life were all seen as important by all groups.
- The value of blue collar work since not everyone can be a doctor or a lawyer was raised by one group, and others agreed with it.
- The acknowledgement of the decline and loss of some small communities was discussed in one group.
- Technological advancement resulting in the loss of personal interaction and limiting the abuse of the social welfare system were raised by one group.
- One group discussed the need for long-term planning to create a sustainable economy and reduce the dependence on boom industries. Related to it was the need for research into other successful boom communities that have survived post boom.

Exploration of Trade-Offs

The participants then further discussed some issues where there seemed to be tension between different values and perspectives or contradictions between common grounds. They explored trade-offs that may have to be made to maintain or achieve what they value most.

1. Quality of Life in Terms of Wages and Jobs:

- A good proportion of the group is willing to accept a lower wage to stay in NL and have the quality of life that goes with it. People pointed out that they have already made that choice as they are in NL.
- Participants thought that they needed a salary high enough to survive comfortably and pay for daily needs. This could be 25-30% less than in other provinces.
- A good number of people would go for higher wages in another province. They noted however that they were seeing this as temporary while they are single and have no attachments. Most expressed a desire to stay or come back to NL if and when they have children.

2. Rural vs. Urban Lifestyle:

- Urban hubs provide the best of both worlds: one can live a rural lifestyle and still have access to restaurants, movies and other services.
 - There was a recognition that you need population to sustain entertainment and leisure activities and that not every hub needs to have everything but could have something (most participants agreed).
 - Carbonear was seen as a place where you can live in the country (rural) and access St. John's for work or entertainment.
- Some small communities are becoming depopulated, under-serviced and are fading away.
 - Participants agreed that the population is too sparsely laid out. Some communities served a purpose at one point in time but no longer do.
 - Some participants supported the notion of consolidating towns. Others thought that some communities will have to die off. Participants recognized that this is a hard and painful and difficult reality that will take place over time and should not be done through a government program. However, there should be support for communities going through these difficult periods.
 - At the same time, participants noted that there is potential in marketing little towns as tourist destinations. Trinity Bay is a good example. Not all small communities can develop this way but some can be supported.
 - People make the choice to live where they live and there are impacts in terms of the level of services that you have access to.

3. Impact on NL Culture of In-Migration:

- Participants recognized that the culture has changed and it can no longer be defined by fishing alone. However, there are customs and beliefs that are key and need to be preserved including speech, language, religion and religious practices as well as storytelling and mummering.

Bold Actions

Bold actions are creative ideas and strategies that could be implemented to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. The bold actions identified below are the key ideas identified by the participants that they considered most important and relevant. Other suggestions from individual brainstorming are described in Appendix C.

In this dialogue, participants were encouraged to identify a key idea that would not relate to the issue of high student debt. Bold actions in the first sessions had focused on this issue and it was important to identify a range of other bold actions. This does not mean that high student debt was not an issue, as seen in the other suggestions in Appendix C.

1. 24 hour bus transportation system that would be energy efficient, cost effective and free for children under 10. It would help improve quality of life, as it allows people to live in rural areas and commute around Carbonear and surround areas including St. John's.
2. Containerized transshipment facility would help with competitive wages and improve economy and decrease inflation in NL.
3. Youth Career initiative – Exposes young people to different career opportunities so they can make an informed decision about it, work terms based on three-month rotations over a year in a different job, work terms to be held prior to post-secondary enrolment and provision of paid tuition vouchers. This would allow for a transition from school to work.
4. Communication plan to promote/market the province inside and outside of NL. Communication is probably the most important key to making Newfoundland and Labrador a more lucrative and prosperous province to want to live.
5. Implement mandatory province-wide recycling program (plastic, glass, paper, etc.). Process recycled products in NL, repackage and sell to other provinces as 100% NL product, e.g. recycled products like Billy Boot Garbage Bags. After awhile, open up project to take in recycled products from other provinces, process and resell.
6. Introducing recruitment of industries and strategic placement of their location throughout NL it would aide diversity, job availability and bring people together.
7. Develop our own brand of gasoline within NL.
8. Recycling lead the country in recycling, make it mandatory and get rid of plastic/Styrofoam.
9. Manufacturing plant based on recycling of paper and saw mill by products for multi-purpose uses.

Next Steps

Participants were told that they will receive a copy of the session report. A Provincial Summit will be held in St. John's on November 14-15 with 160 participants randomly selected from the dialogues and 40 decision-makers.

Appendix A. Summary of the Three Approaches Used in the Dialogues

Approach 1: Making a Living in NL – Focus on the Economy

Strengthen and diversify our economy so that it can support a skilled and educated young workforce.

Most young people do not want to leave Newfoundland and Labrador. They leave because they have to pay off student debts quickly, find jobs they cannot get in the province, or earn a salary they can live on. Once they leave and make their life in another place, it is hard for them to return.

Approach 2: Enjoying Life in NL – Focus on Quality of Life

Build on Newfoundland and Labrador's strengths and ensure that the quality of life in the province is second to none.

People have stayed in Newfoundland and Labrador even during tough times because of the quality of life here. They enjoy the environment, the slower pace of life, the rural lifestyle, the sense of belonging to a community, and the rich cultural life and heritage. But we are not keeping up. Our programs and services (social, health, environmental) cannot keep up with the need, especially in rural areas. There are not enough programs and services for young people or young families such as entertainment, recreation, programs for youth-at-risk, public transportation and communication. Big city problems such as crime, urban sprawl and differences between rich and poor are growing in the Northeast Avalon. Young people no longer believe the province has the best quality of life around.

Approach 3: Opening NL to the Rest of Canada and the World – Focus on Diversity, Tolerance and In-Migration

Attract newcomers, especially young people, to Newfoundland and Labrador and help them to stay.

The population loss in Newfoundland and Labrador will continue even if our young people stay. Some say “Newfoundland and Labrador has existed in its own bubble for too long.” In the age of globalization, we must be open to outside influences and to immigration, without losing our sense of what makes us different. We are already a friendly people, but some of our views are too close-minded and narrow. We are not always open to different lifestyles and attitudes and we are not always welcoming of people of different races and cultures. If people do not feel their differences will be accepted they will not move here or stay.

Appendix B. Dialogue Agenda

Breakfast, Registration, Initial Questionnaire

Welcome, Opening, Introductions

Presentation of Key Information

Overview of the Process

Breakout Groups: Discussion of Personal Experiences

Breakout Groups: Dialogues Using Three Approaches

Breakout Groups: Elaboration of Common Ground and Areas of Difference

Plenary: Report Back on Common Ground and Areas of Difference

Plenary: Exploration of Trade-Offs

Small Work Groups: Bold Actions and Strategies

Plenary: Report Back on Bold Actions

Closing Comments

Final Questionnaire and Evaluation