

# Dialogue Summary Report – Clarenville

September 20, 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](http://www.cprn.org).

# Dialogue Summary Report – Clarenville

## 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

The population of Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat region according to 2007 regional population demographic statistics is 28,272.<sup>1</sup> There are 109 communities in the region which includes the Bonavista Peninsula, Clarenville area and the Isthmus.<sup>2</sup> There were 36 participants at the dialogue session in Clarenville that was held on September 20, 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. Afterwards, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Demography Division, Statistics Canada; Economics and Statistics Branch, Department of Finance

<sup>2</sup> [www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/RSR5.asp](http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/RSR5.asp)

## **Breakout Group 1**

### ***Common Ground***

- Participants value higher salaries to provide benefits for families but not at the loss of lifestyle. A comfortable salary is adequate in order to keep the province's lifestyle.
- Rural lifestyle means a change in accessibility to services and amenities compared to urban areas. This needs to be practical; people are willing to drive for things that are not sustainable in individual communities. Clarenville is a good balance between rural life and urban services/amenities.
- Diversity in job opportunities and the industries that exist in the province is valued.
- The creativity and new ideas that open borders will bring is of value but participants advise that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should have priority for jobs and education.
- Create self-sustaining rural communities through programs such as co-ops, and develop entertainment activities in rural areas that focus on nature and the outdoors.

## **Breakout Group 2**

### ***Common Ground***

- Participants value the safety of their communities where men, women and children can feel comfortable walking the streets at night. Low crime rate, the importance of knowing your neighbours and the feeling of comfort it provides were seen as important aspects of community life.
- The group highly value education and training. These programs should be affordable and transferable to other provinces. Participants perceived a need for a more diversified education to suit the job market (including in rural areas).
- The benefits of economic development should be shared equitably among all members of a benefiting community, and not just concentrated in the hands of property or business owners.
- Value was placed on the need to increase cultural diversity in the make-up of the province's population and accept that it will alter "traditional" culture.

### ***Areas of Difference***

- There was divergence in the group on whether rural lifestyle would attract non-Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.
- There was no agreement on providing an option first to individuals who have left to return before offering incentives to others to come to the province.

## **Breakout Group 3**

### ***Common Ground***

- Participants emphasized having a strong economy as it influences every other common ground that was reached below.
- Quality of life, especially safety, environment, rural lifestyles and the province's culture are valued. In support of this, participants want the government to implement a sustainable environment program which includes recycling, composting and park preservation to preserve the province's "pristineness."
- The government should investigate efficient modes of transportation that are affordable for all (e.g. price reduction on airfare and more efficient buses around the province) while being as green as possible.
- Education and employment need to be linked with an emphasis on rural areas; specifically, entrepreneur and trade programs need to be developed and connected to job related experience.
- Participants see value in openness and changing attitudes to diversity and in-migration while taking pride in NL's culture. There should be exchange programs with other provinces and foreign countries as a way to attract people to the province.

### ***Areas of Difference***

- The group could not agree on how much is too much in terms of people moving to the province and Newfoundland and Labrador culture changing.
- A number thought that free tuition was a good way to encourage higher education; others felt that students ought to pay.

## **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 noted the need to protect and maintain the province's culture. They value the Newfoundland and Labrador lifestyle and do not want to give it up (main draw to stay).
- All groups recognized the value of education and the link to employment.
- All groups agreed on the value of diversity and being open to new ideas and the creativity that comes with that, there however was concern for some in terms of how much is too much.
- The environment was only discussed in one group.
- A key difference for all groups was the idea of maintaining the province's culture versus changing it in order to adapt and accept others.
- One group could not agree on whether rural life would attract non-NL's.
- The possibility for the government to institute free tuition was only discussed by one group.

## 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. High Wage Jobs Out of NL versus Quality of Life, Low Paying Jobs in NL:

- A significant number of participants are considering leaving. About one-third are on rotation.
- Some would accept a lower wage to live NL Reasons include:
  - Enjoy the lifestyle.
  - I need just enough to get by and provide for my family and have a little extra.
  - Looking for a median, relatively good pay on the island but I would leave if it meant putting food on the table and if I couldn't find a job in my field.
  - Security is a priority issue, I would settle for fewer wages for quality of life if it meant that I had long-term job security.
  - No job security in NL especially in the trades, companies can do as they please, it's not well regulated. A two-year contract would be enough to keep me here.
  - Good jobs would keep us here, enough to make a living and have a little extra left over.
  - Guaranteed employment in NL would stop the rotation, the cost of living is low here.
- Others would not accept a lower wage, reasons include:
  - Need to pay school debts so I would go away.
  - Salaries are so much higher elsewhere one could accept a slightly lower wage but it is not available.

### 2. Urban versus Rural:

- Urban and rural is defined differently by people. Clarenville is considered a service centre.
  - The government should invest in hubs/service centres.
  - More money should be invested in rural areas, depends on what money you are putting where.
- The participants felt the following services were essential?
  - Education – more teachers are needed, rural areas need to have the same level of education as St. John's.
  - Hospitals need to be within an hour or less, each town should have a Doctor for basic health based on numbers; government could hire doctors in rural communities and/or use nurse practitioners and mid-wives if there is a shortage.

### 3. Newcomers from Canada and the World – Impact on Jobs:

- For some participants job priority should be given to NL's first. Many have left; those that are here stayed and struggled through should be given priority. Situations forced people to leave. The system should be fair and give priority to those NL's before newcomers. Other provinces do it, e.g. Alberta does it through unions, Aboriginals have priority in Labrador.
- For other participants, the best person should get the job and it should be open to all. However, if candidates have equal skills then NL's should be prioritized.
- Foreigners will be doing jobs people in NL do not want to do. If are willing to work at minimum wage which may not go up then its fine for them to come in.

## **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. Rural community development by creating a resource community centre in every rural town. This will lead to exposure to new opportunities, i.e. variety in education, sports, career development community, community events and environment opportunities.
2. Curriculum redesign in K-12 that will have greater connection to the workforce, explicit and focused career development and exploration programs from early years, more practical course design, experiential learning initiatives and business education – how to start and run a business.
3. Focusing on NL culture in all programs and policies in NL as well as educating youth on NL culture and starting exchanges nationally and internationally to promote NL and preserve culture. This will help attract people and maintain quality of life by preserving culture.
4. Affordable, accessible, reliable, inter-provincial public transportation that will make service hubs more accessible to those living in remote areas and would aid tourists/tourism industry.
5. More interest in and more programs and activities for youth in rural communities. Will help make rural areas safer and more attractive communities for families.
6. No graduation from a post-secondary institution without a paid work-term. This way no one is left without experience. And it is easier to get entry level jobs and experience to get jobs.
7. Provide benefits such as tax breaks for people who work outside the province and keep their homes and families in Newfoundland. This will encourage people to stay in NL, and let people live in whatever part of Newfoundland they want.

8. Creating universal child care with 100% coverage tax free. It will allow two people to be able to enter the workforce, and help make NL more attractive.
9. NL government should create a crown corporation with the mandate of exploiting our resources. This will provide firm financial footing, NL jobs, money, keep lifestyle, using skills (education, training).

## **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