

Dialogue Summary Report – Port au Choix/Hawke’s Bay

September 27, 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 – Port au Choix/Hawke’s Bay

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 St. Anthony – Port au Choix Rural Secretariat region according to 2007 regional population demographic statistics is 12,778.¹ There are 56 coastal communities in the region.² There were 30 participants at the dialogue session in Port au Choix/Hawke's Bay that was held on September 27, 2008.

Agenda

The day started with introductions and a presentation of the dialogue process. Participants were then divided into two breakout groups.

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 two 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

- Participants strongly value good quality jobs (including seasonal and year round jobs) with competitive wages (including for seasonal jobs) as the foremost issues in youth retention and attraction. It is acceptable to commute a reasonable distance to get to work as jobs may not be available in every community.
- Entry-level employment and training opportunities need to be implemented as a way to retain youth.
- Participants place strong value on a rural lifestyle (family, friends and community) and believe that economic development cannot just focus on larger centres (St. John's, Corner Brook).
- Services (health care, education and leisure) should be developed practically and promoted as a retention strategy for youth in rural areas.
- The group values the entrepreneurial spirit and cultural richness that newcomers bring. Many recognized that many immigrants are entrepreneurs and risk takers who often will create job opportunities in the province.
- The group advises the government to promote the retention of newcomers, as well as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.
- More accessible education should be available in rural areas/communities. Several noted the need for satellite campuses in rural areas so those in remote communities do not have to drive hours to a larger centre that has the only education facilities.

Areas of Difference

- Strong differences of opinion emerged on the question of to what extent do immigration and in-migration limit education and job opportunities for inhabitants of rural communities. There was concern that foreign students were taking spaces that should be available to students from Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The group differed slightly on the extent to which it is practical to offer employment opportunities and social services in each rural community. Some recognized that a trade-off has to be made as all services cannot practically be provided to every community. Others felt services should be offered in almost all areas.

Breakout Group 2

Common Ground

- More services need to be offered in rural areas, these include services such as affordable daycare and a variety of activities for children.
- The group values a life that is not just about work, the freedom and the time to live a rural life that is enjoyable (e.g. fishing, hunting), and a safe environment for everyone.
- Participants value equal opportunities and fairness for everyone including Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, immigrants and people from all over the country.
- The group values the fishery industry as an important part of the economy that should still be supported.
- Participants advise that the benefits from the economic boom be shared and distributed fairly amongst Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want the opportunity.
- Job opportunities need be offered to young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without previous experience being the determining factor.
- The need to explore other resources and opportunities within this part of the province. For example, tourism.

Areas of Difference

- Participants could not agree on which was a priority: taking care of Newfoundlanders and Labradorian's or welcoming newcomers.

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.

- Jobs are a key priority for both groups. There was agreement that it is important for Newfoundland and Labrador based companies to offer young people a chance to get into the job market, by hiring them, offering training and on the job development opportunities in order for them to transition to the work world in the province. Companies were criticized for not offering training and only hiring those with experience already.
- Education is important, particularly access to education and training opportunities in rural areas.
- Increased services in rural areas, particularly health care, were seen by all as important. Other services such as leisure activities and even banking needed to be improved in rural areas.
- The most striking difference was that only one of the groups spoke about the issue of fishery.

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. Leaving or Staying:

- The vast majority of the group is considering leaving the province. Approximately ¼ had left at some time and had returned. Some had been to Alberta, while others had gone to Ontario.
- Reason why people would leave include:
 - There is limited opportunity for good quality jobs in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Most jobs are seasonal, low-paid, and provide no training.
 - Money – they want more competitive wages in Newfoundland and Labrador or something more comparable to what they might make nationally.
 - There are few other young people left in many rural areas. So if there were the right local job, people might not stay as there is no one their age to socialize with.
 - Youth need to explore other places and adventures outside of Newfoundland and Labrador at this point in their lives.
- Reasons why people returned to Newfoundland and Labrador after having left include:
 - The quality of life is much better and participants missed family and the rural way of life, the outdoors, their community, and friends.
 - Newfoundland and Labrador is “home.”
 - Some would be willing to move to another part of the province for work. As one participant noted: “as long as I am in Newfoundland and Labrador that is all that matters.”

2. Services in Rural Communities:

- Better services are needed in rural communities. Examples of levels of services that are reasonable to expect in rural communities include:
 - Improved health care services in rural areas are a priority area. Participants felt they should not have to drive more than 1 hour to see a doctor or should not have to go to the other side of the island (to St. John’s).
 - The idea of having a specialist doctor come to different rural communities on some rotational basis was suggested. This would allow patients to see a specialist without having to drive 3-4 hours to a more urban centre to do so, which often means taking a day off work.
 - More daycare services should be offered in rural areas. One idea was to have daycare centres that service 3 or 4 rural communities.

3. Fishery:

- Should the government focus on helping the fishery industry or on diversifying the provincial economy?
 - Several participants felt it is very important for the government to support the fishing industry as it is a part of the province's culture and heritage. Many were themselves fishers or had a family history in the fishery.
 - Others did not agree that supporting fishery should be a priority for the government noting that fishery is part of the "past" and that there was a greater need to look for other economic activities.
 - In the end, the group did seem to come to a middle ground. The government must recognize fishery as part of the province's culture. The government should support fishery when it can be a viable economic activity and support diversifying the economy.

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. Greater emphasis on tourism for Newfoundland and Labrador involving: guided Ski-Doo tours on long range mountains with ice fishing, hill climbing, camping. Boat tours with cod jigging, lobster fishing, trap making. It will bring people to visit the Northern areas of the province.
2. Travel and Tourism for all seasons with week to week tourism guides to explore rural and urban Newfoundland and Labrador.
3. Marble Mining as a great economic activity for the region, which could lead to good job opportunities (in skilled/non-skilled positions) and diversify the local economy.
4. Make Newfoundland and Labrador a world leader in organic industries such as aquaculture and agriculture. Will create jobs in rural areas.
5. Make rural community facilities into multi-functional businesses. For example, use buildings for recreation centres, storage centres, even daycare centres.
6. Newfoundland and Labrador rotation station – the idea behind this is to have a central agency that helps transport workers from remote areas (with fewer jobs) to areas of the province where there are skills shortages. This would be similar to the situation in Alberta where many of the oil sands companies fly their employees in from other regions. This sub-group suggested that this rotation station should be available for free.

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