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Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice for Young People

Newfoundland and Labrador youth tell province to focus on affordable education, diversified and sustainable economic development

Youth engagement key to successful *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*, says CPRN

(Ottawa) – Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) unveiled its policy recommendations to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador today as a further step toward the development of a province-initiated, *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy* announced by Premier Danny Williams in June 2008. The Strategy is intended to counter the negative impacts of youth net out-migration, strengthen the labour market and support the economic development of the province.

Policy Actions Report: Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice for Young People is based on findings from a series of deliberative dialogues with young people from the province; the dialogues were designed and conducted by CPRN, under the direction of the Newfoundland Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE), which is responsible for the development of the strategy.

The priority issues expressed by youth in the dialogues and recommended by CPRN as primary areas for policy action include: access to high-quality and affordable education and better transitions between school and work; economic development that creates good quality jobs and is diversified and sustainable; accessible and high quality public services, including those that protect the environment; and strengthening ethnic diversity and immigration in the province.

“A government that asks young people for their ideas and guidance gets good answers,” says Sharon Manson Singer, President of CPRN. “Young people are savvy, smart and engaged, despite what is often said. If you include them in the policy-making process, they readily identify the issues and offer up creative and innovative solutions that may directly influence their future.”

The deliberative dialogues included more than 480 youths (aged 18-30) from Newfoundland and Labrador, and were conducted between September and November 2008. 13 full-day sessions were held in centres across the province, including one session in Fort McMurray, Alberta and one in Ottawa, Ontario. There was also a two-day provincial Youth Summit held in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Looking Ahead: CPRN Policy Recommendations

CPRN makes many policy recommendations in its report to the province designed to encourage young people to stay, live and work in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to find ways to attract those who have left the province to come back, as well as attract newcomers. Highlights include:

Education and Transition to Work: CPRN recommends that the government invest further in post-secondary infrastructure and student housing, and implement a graduate student debt forgiveness program for those who stay and work in the province. CPRN also suggests enhanced and expanded partnerships among schools, post-secondary institutions and employers to help shape the curriculum and provide links to jobs.

Economic Development: CPRN suggests that the government work with employer and labour representatives to encourage the private sector to support their employees through skills and career development programs. CPRN also suggests that the government should encourage the private and non-profit sectors to create partnerships with high schools, colleges and universities to develop entry-level job opportunities and increase intern training opportunities and co-op programs.

Public Services: The report suggests that the government create regional service hubs to cluster government services, including health care, business support programs and early childhood development programs. It also recommends that the government investigate options for cost-effective transportation subsidies and models within, and between, regional hubs to support citizen access to services and communities.

Diversity and Immigration: CPRN recommends building an understanding of the benefits of immigration and diversity through public education, community dialogue and strengthened curriculums in the education system.

“The Newfoundland and Labrador government has made the important step of engaging youth directly in the development of its Strategy,” says Manson Singer. “Continuing to include the viewpoints of youth, and adopting a ‘youth lens’ as a framework across policy departments will help to move the Strategy forward in a meaningful way.”

CPRN also recommends that the government establish a Secretariat to coordinate the development of department-based youth retention and attraction policies consistent with government goals and priorities.

“Governments that ask citizens – especially young citizens – for their participation, make good policy,” adds Manson Singer.

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For more information:

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- *Policy Actions Report*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2082&l=en
- Video: *Province of Choice*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1958&l=en
- *Synthesis Report*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1957&l=en
- *Summit Report*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2012&l=en
- *Dialogue Summary Reports*, by region:
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Carbonear*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2069&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Clarenville*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2070&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Corner Brook*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2071&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Fort McMurray*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2072&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Gander*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2073&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Grand Falls-Windsor*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2074&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Happy Valley-Goose Bay*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2080&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Marystown*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2076&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Ottawa*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2077&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Port au Choix/Hawke’s Bay*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2075&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – St. John’s (Sept. 14, 2008)*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2078&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – St. John’s (Sept. 15, 2008)*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2081&l=en
 - *Dialogue Summary Report – Stephenville*: www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2079&l=en

About Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)

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