

Policy Actions Report

Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice for Young People

Canadian Policy Research Networks

September 2009

Acknowledgements

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

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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.

Executive Summary

In June 2008, Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams announced the development of a provincial *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy* (the Strategy) to counter the negative impacts of youth net out-migration, strengthen the labour market and support the economic development of the province. On behalf of the government, Canadian Policy Research Networks designed and conducted a deliberative dialogue engagement project with young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. The project took place under the direction of the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE), which is responsible for the development of the Strategy.

The goal of the project was two-fold:

- To help identify ways to encourage young people to stay, live and work in the province; and,
- To find ways to attract those who have left to come back, as well as attract newcomers.

The project sought the views and input of young people in Newfoundland and Labrador aged 18 to 30. Two key activities supported this:

- Thirteen deliberative dialogue sessions (that were attended by randomly-selected young people) held in centres across the province as well as in Fort McMurray, Alberta, and Ottawa, Ontario; and,
- A two-day provincial Youth Summit.

This report presents to the government a series of recommended policy actions prepared by CPRN to support the Strategy's development, to enhance its contribution to the province's goal of self-reliance, and, ultimately, to help make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. They are based on the input of participants and are rooted in the values and action ideas which young people identified in the engagement process. The policy actions also reflect the participants' individual and collective experience, as young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and their understanding of the policies and programs of the provincial government. The recommendations are also informed by CPRN's collective knowledge and research experience and by previous Government of Newfoundland and Labrador studies.

We describe the policy actions within a life cycle framework typical of young people aged 18 to 30. The life cycle is not linear. It has the following five phases, reflecting key decision points:

1. **Turning 18** – At age 18 young people have the right to vote. What they have learned about governance and citizenship and how they have practiced being a young citizen in their school, family and community life has readied them for the life decisions they will make, as well as how they choose to participate in society.
2. **Education** – Acquiring the knowledge and skills to prepare for life is, in fact, a lifelong process. In terms of the life cycle, there are critical decisions following the Turning 18 phase. The choices made and the transition from high school to post-secondary education (including trades programs) or from high school into the labour market is critical. Deciding what to study directly influences a career path. This period typically requires supports and resources to facilitate access to quality education and training, preferably in the province. The choices made can influence place of residence, career and financial stability.
3. **Employment** – Young people enter the labour market hoping to make a livelihood. They aspire to acquire skills to grow their careers. Many seek more opportunities to develop as professionals, trades people, or entrepreneurs. Stable, well-paid jobs are important to building a life in Newfoundland and Labrador.
4. **Family Formation** – In this period, many young people decide where they will live and form long-term partnerships. Many begin to have families. The availability of services like education, health care, transportation, affordable housing and early childhood development become important factors in their decision-making.
5. **Pursuing Life Goals** – Young people begin to build and ascertain their desired quality of life. Establishing social or business relationships, engaging in various aspects of community life including participation in diverse cultural activities, and enjoying the province’s environment are significant activities for many young people.

Values of Youth

The areas for action identified by participants in the dialogue sessions and in the Summit were highly valued and seen as important to making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. Four themes summarize the values:

- Ensuring access to high quality and affordable education and better transitions between school and work;
- Fostering economic development that creates good quality jobs and is diversified and sustainable;

- Improving public services; protecting the environment; and
- Recognizing and celebrating rural and urban lifestyles and diversity.

Actions to Support Successful Policy Implementation

The following measures, taken by the province, will support successful policy implementation:

1. Apply a “youth lens” in developing and determining government policy directions consistent with the goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. A youth lens will be a framework that enables the government to ensure that proposed initiatives meet its policy goals for retaining and attracting youth. The strategic principles of a youth lens framework to evaluate policy and program proposals would include:
 - Involvement of youth in initiative development;
 - Consideration by all affected ministries of impacts on youth;
 - Consistency with retention and attraction priorities; and,
 - Capacity to strengthen and complement existing retention and attraction policies and programs.
2. Establish a secretariat to coordinate the development of department-based youth retention and attraction policies consistent with government goals and priorities. Departments maintain responsibility for implementation. Coordination would enable government to present a coherent response to the goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people.
3. Review communications practices and update the communications strategy in support of youth retention and attraction in order to build awareness of government’s policies and programs and increase take-up of services.
Position all current youth retention and attraction policies, programs and services and all future activity to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. The strategy should consider including:
 - Use of the Internet to appeal to young people by delivering information and conducting interactive dialogue and exchange;
 - Outreach and dissemination of information through the education system and community organizations serving young people; and,
 - Earned media¹ campaigns demonstrating program take-up and benefit.

¹ Refers to non-paid communications activity.

Communicate and explain the province's youth retention and attraction agenda, based on three priority areas of activity:

- Creation of good quality jobs including entry-level jobs;
- Quality education and better transition to work through improving pathways into the labour market and relieving student debt; and,
- Strengthened services through regional hub creation and addressing service issues including transportation and health care.

Areas of Recommended Policy Action

The recommended policy actions are based on the four themes that summarize the values expressed by young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians:

1. Ensuring access to high quality and affordable education and better transitions between school and work;
2. Fostering economic development that creates good quality jobs and is diversified and sustainable;
3. Improving public services; protecting the environment; and
4. Strengthening diversity and immigration.

Within these areas, key recommended policy actions include:

Quality Education, Better Transition to Work

- Expand vocational programs in high schools; offer dual credits between high schools and colleges that allow students to earn a high school credit and a college vocational program credit at the same time.
- Further investment in post-secondary infrastructure and student housing.
- Expand post-secondary course offerings with a concentrated focus on programs that are not currently available.
- Implement a graduate student debt forgiveness program for those who stay and work in the province.
- Enhance and expand partnerships among schools, post-secondary institutions and employers to help shape the curriculum and provide links to jobs.
- Implement a voluntary registry for those who leave the province to study or work elsewhere to provide job and career information in Newfoundland and Labrador so that youth can identify opportunities to return home.

- Enhance opportunities to strengthen the role and service of career and guidance counsellors to assist young people in their education and career choices.
- Increase support to young people who are out of the school system by implementing a “second chance” program including financial aid.
- Increase opportunities to strengthen the role of civics education throughout the curriculum.

Fostering Economic Development that Creates Good Quality Jobs

- Work with employer and labour representatives to encourage the private sector to support their employees through skills and career development programs.
- 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.
- Collaborate with small business organizations to implement career development strategies for employees through skill development, training, worker rotation and other innovative approaches that support career laddering and business growth.
- Further youth entrepreneurship.
- Continue to support the development of co-operatives in rural Newfoundland and Labrador to provide goods and services where they are needed.
- Encourage entrepreneurs to create businesses to support long-term and diversified economic development with less reliance on non-renewable resources; encourage eco-tourism; and, protect the environment.
- Expand the development of a comprehensive green innovation agenda to include the adoption of energy efficient technology and the creation of businesses that use renewable resources (wind, water) in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- Expand the province’s appeal as an eco-tourism destination and create green economy jobs.

Improving Public Services; Protecting the Environment

- Create regional service hubs to cluster government services including health care, business support programs and early childhood development programs.
- Investigate options for cost-effective transportation subsidies and models within, and between, regional hubs to support citizen access to services and communities.

- Increase affordable, qualified community-based child care and early child development services.
- Strengthen the health care system by considering innovative practices, such as a system of mobile health clinics to improve access to pre-and post-natal, primary health, dental, audiologist and optical care services.
- Invest in appropriate infrastructure development in Labrador such as paved roads, and water and sewage treatment facilities.
- Consider a program of incentives for home ownership such as reducing interest rates, property tax, and land purchase costs or providing a clean energy subsidy.
- Implement a province-wide recycling and composting program supported by ongoing public education and actions on protecting the environment.

Strengthening Diversity and Immigration

- Build understanding of the benefits of immigration and diversity through public education, community dialogue and strengthened curriculums in the education system.
- Ensure a consistent level of immigrant services across the province to support language acquisition, employment and acculturation.

Finally, we strongly urge the government to conduct youth engagement on an ongoing basis and draw upon the experience of dialogue and Summit participants whenever possible to support implementation of policies developed through this youth engagement.

Policy Actions Report

Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice for Young People

I. Introduction

In June 2008, Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams announced the development of a provincial *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy* (the Strategy) to counter the negative impacts of youth net out-migration, strengthen the labour market and support the economic development of the province. On behalf of the government, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) designed and conducted a deliberative dialogue engagement project with young people, aged 18 to 30, in Newfoundland and Labrador. The project took place under the direction of the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE), which is responsible for the development of the Strategy.

The goal of the project was two-fold:

- To help identify ways to encourage young people to stay, live and work in the province; and,
- To find ways to attract those who have left to come back, as well as attract newcomers.



Report Purpose

This report presents to the government a series of recommended policy actions prepared by CPRN to support the Strategy's development, to enhance its contribution to the province's goal of self-reliance and, ultimately, to help make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. The recommendations give voice to the values and ideas for policy action developed by participants in the engagement process. They are wide-ranging and address areas of public policy related to the expressed interests and needs identified by participants to achieve the goal of reversing out-migration.

CPRN recognizes the government's considerable and important initiatives to put policies and programs in place in areas such as education, skills training and health and social services to support its youth population. This report is not an evaluation or analysis of these and other related efforts. Rather, it presents a set of policy actions based on the statements made by the participants in this youth engagement. The policy actions have also been informed by CPRN's ongoing work in socio-economic policy.

The context and background for this report is available in two documents:

- *Synthesis Report* of the project's deliberative dialogue sessions. www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1957&l=en
- *Summit Report, Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice for Young People*, a report on the provincial Youth Summit, held November 14 and 15, 2008. www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=2012&l=en

Project Overview

This project sought the views and input of young people in Newfoundland and Labrador and is based on two key activities:

- Thirteen deliberative dialogue sessions that were attended by randomly-selected young people; and,
- A two-day provincial Youth Summit.

... I know that the youths' voices of Newfoundland and Labrador can make a difference, now that we have the chance to speak...

Summit Participant

Deliberative dialogue is the central methodology used to engage young people in this project. It identifies the core values that participants hold and believe are important to developing public policy. The values are used to determine choices or trade-offs related to possible policy choices. Action ideas rooted in the values and trade-offs are then produced.

The project included the creation of a Youth Advisory Panel of young people from across the province, including a number who had left for work or school. They provided advice on the themes that were selected for the deliberative dialogues. A second group of youth from across the province was trained as Youth Facilitators and Note-Takers. This group participated in an intensive training program prior to the dialogue sessions. They led the deliberative dialogues in each of the 13 locations, plus the Summit, with the guidance and supervision of the project's lead facilitators.

In September and October, a series of 13 dialogue sessions took place in each of the nine Rural Secretariat regions in the province including two in St. John's (see Appendix 1 for a map of the Rural Secretariat regions). Dialogue sessions also took place in Fort McMurray, Alberta, and Ottawa, Ontario, where many young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have relocated. Up to 49 young people participated in each session. A total of 484 young people, aged 18 to 30, participated and discussed the challenge – the net loss of young adults from the province, a result of historic out-migration.

On November 14 and 15, 2008, a provincial Youth Summit took place in St. John's. Over 140 young people from across Newfoundland and Labrador met. Participants were randomly-selected from the dialogue sessions. Government, community, and private sector leaders attended and listened to the views and ideas participants identified to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. The ideas put forward were defined by the values participants believed are needed to guide policy to enhance quality of life, to build Newfoundland and Labrador's future and to retain its young people and attract more.



The development and implementation of this project was advanced and enriched with the support of the Premier, the Honourable Danny Williams. The project also benefited from the leadership of the Honourable Shawn Skinner, Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, and his successor, the Honourable Susan Sullivan, who became minister in November 2008.

I am very hopeful Newfoundland and Labrador will become that place youth today want to go back to... I really value the feeling that what I'm saying really is going to contribute to this change.

Summit Participant

Participants demonstrated a belief in a positive future. They appreciated the opportunity to provide input and contribute to informing the government's decision-making on youth retention and attraction. They are eager to work with the government and the province's business and community leaders to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice.

Report Organization

The policy actions are described using a life cycle approach that reflects the importance of public policy support at key decision-making points in the lives of young people. These include determining education and career directions, choice of residence and raising a family.

The report is organized in six sections. The *Introduction* provides background to the engagement process and this report. Section II, *The Context*, provides a brief situation analysis related to youth out-migration and the current economic downturn. Section III summarizes participant value statements and policy action directions identified from the dialogues and the Summit processes.

This is followed by Section IV, *The Life Cycle Framework*, which describes the framework for considering and developing the recommended actions. Section V, *Policy Issues and Recommended Actions*, identifies the critical policy challenges to address and the recommended policy actions. Section VI, *Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice*, speaks to the future and the key lessons from this engagement that can contribute to successfully implementing retention and attraction measures.

Background to Developing the Policy Actions

Relevant government policies currently in place have been reviewed for background purposes. These include *A Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador* (2007); *Diversity – “Opportunity and Growth”: An Immigration Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador* (2007); *Poverty Reduction Strategy, Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* (2006); *Creative Newfoundland and Labrador: The Blueprint for Development and Investment in Culture* (2006); *Innovation Newfoundland and Labrador: A Blueprint for Prosperity* (2006); *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* (2005); and, *The Regional Diversification Strategy* (2005).

The proposed actions have also been informed by previous Government of Newfoundland and Labrador studies, notably, *The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada* (2003), which included a study of the challenge of youth out-migration. They are also informed by knowledge from key CPRN studies and research, as well as other sources including policy approaches implemented elsewhere in Canada.

The Commitment of the Young People of Newfoundland and Labrador

The province’s young people believe in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. They want to strengthen the province so that it is able to offer the quality of life and opportunity they desire for themselves, their families and all citizens.

The commitment of the young people of Newfoundland and Labrador came to the fore throughout the engagement process. At each dialogue session and again at the provincial Youth Summit, participants spoke with passion and pride for the province.



They worked hard to develop ideas to help advance the province for young people. This commitment to the province's identity is deep and arguably stronger than in many of Canada's provinces and territories. The province's young people are its strength and promise. They want to be part of the building process, partnering with government, communities and business in building the future.

As announced in October 2008, Newfoundland and Labrador no longer receives federal equalization payments, making it a "have" province. Participants expressed a strong feeling that the new status provides a unique opportunity to address issues that have, until now, prevented the province from moving forward and building on its strengths and achievements. As a result of the engagement project, young people who participated, as well as their peers and members of the broader community, expect action to address the historic issue of youth out-migration. They are waiting to see what the province's leaders will do to strengthen the capacity of the province to retain and attract young people. They are prepared to be ambassadors for change and they want to contribute to making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice.

I moved home for quality of life, safety, more money and family. I hope the government really takes note of many of the issues and works with business and employers to improve the current youth retention and relocation.

Summit Participant

II. The Context

Population and Out-Migration

Many young people leave Newfoundland and Labrador to look for opportunities elsewhere. This is a long-term trend that has had a significant impact on families and communities throughout the province. Net out-migration has slowed considerably in recent years, especially compared to the mid-1990s after the collapse of the cod fishery. In fact, in 2008 the total number of people moving into the province was greater than the number of people who left. However, this trend was not observed among youth and, as a result, the province continued to experience a net-loss of young people.

The overall population loss is demonstrated in Figure 1 showing the province's population loss by Rural Secretariat regions.²

With a low birth rate and an aging population, Newfoundland and Labrador needs to retain and attract young people to sustain its population and workforce. The province's emergence as a "have" province strengthens its potential to retain and attract young people and be a dynamic and prosperous province for future generations.



² Map and charts provided by Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Secretariat. Population data based on 2006 census, the most recent available.

Figure 1. Population Change, 1991-2006

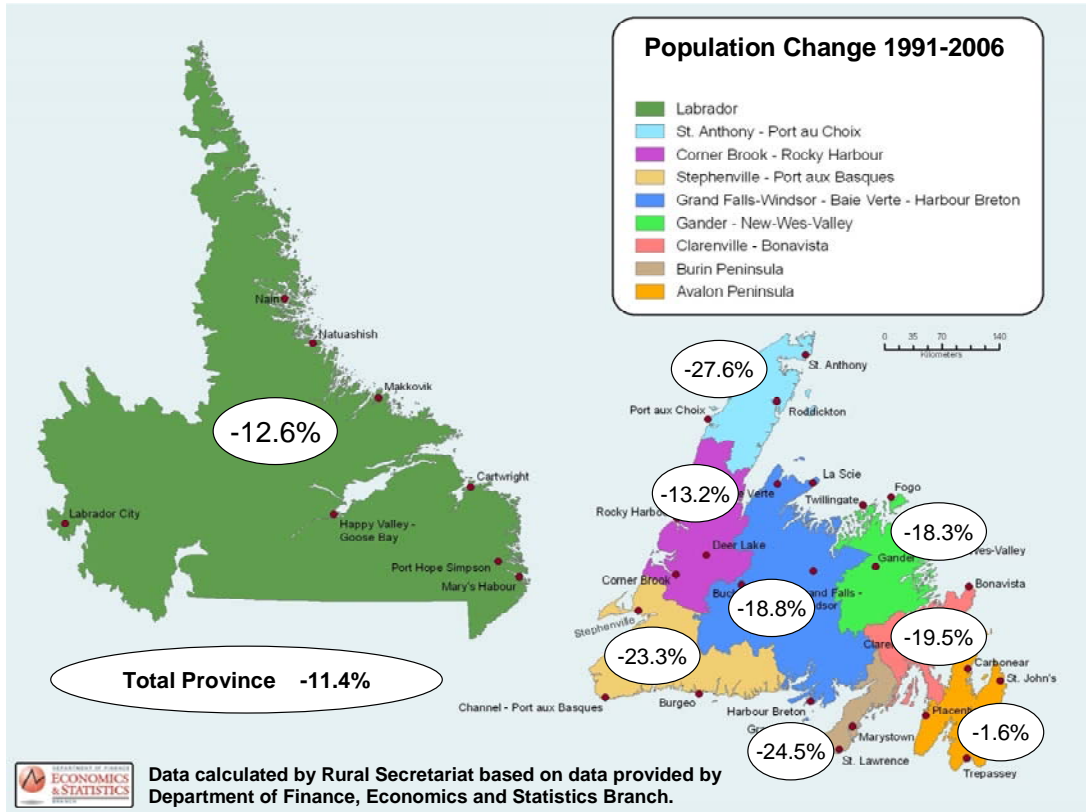
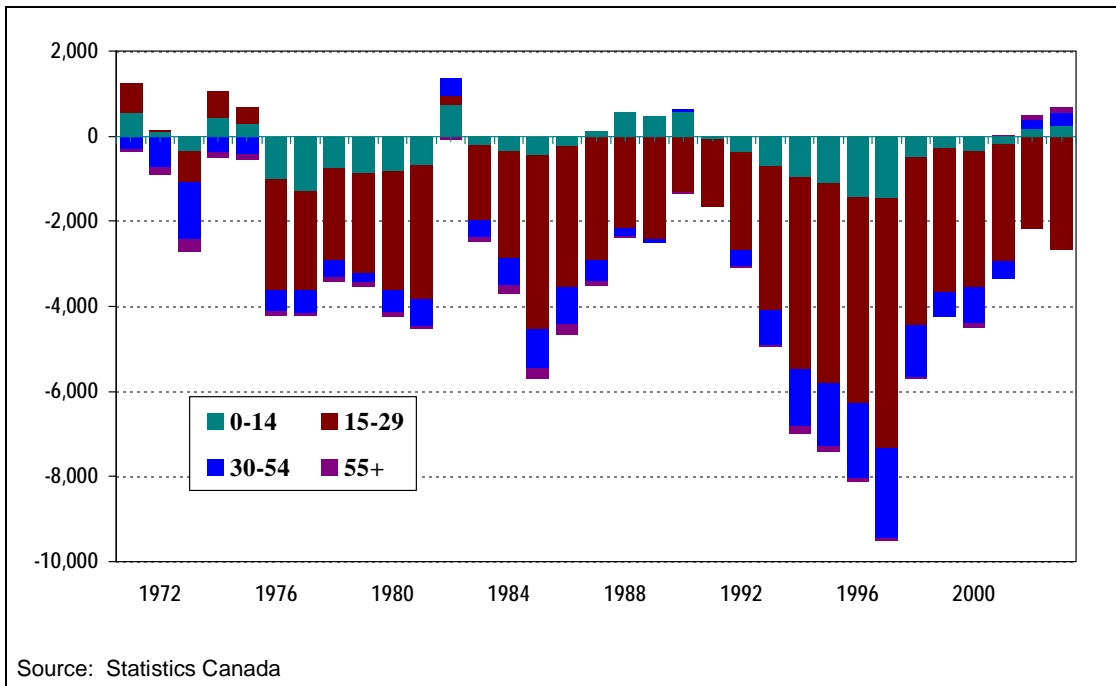


Figure 2. Since 1971, Those Aged 15-29 Comprised 71% of Net Out-Migrants



The out-migration consisted primarily of young people aged 15 to 29. This group comprised 71% of the total out-migration.

Figure 3. Boom, Bust, Echo: Newfoundland and Labrador Had a *Double Bust* after 1980

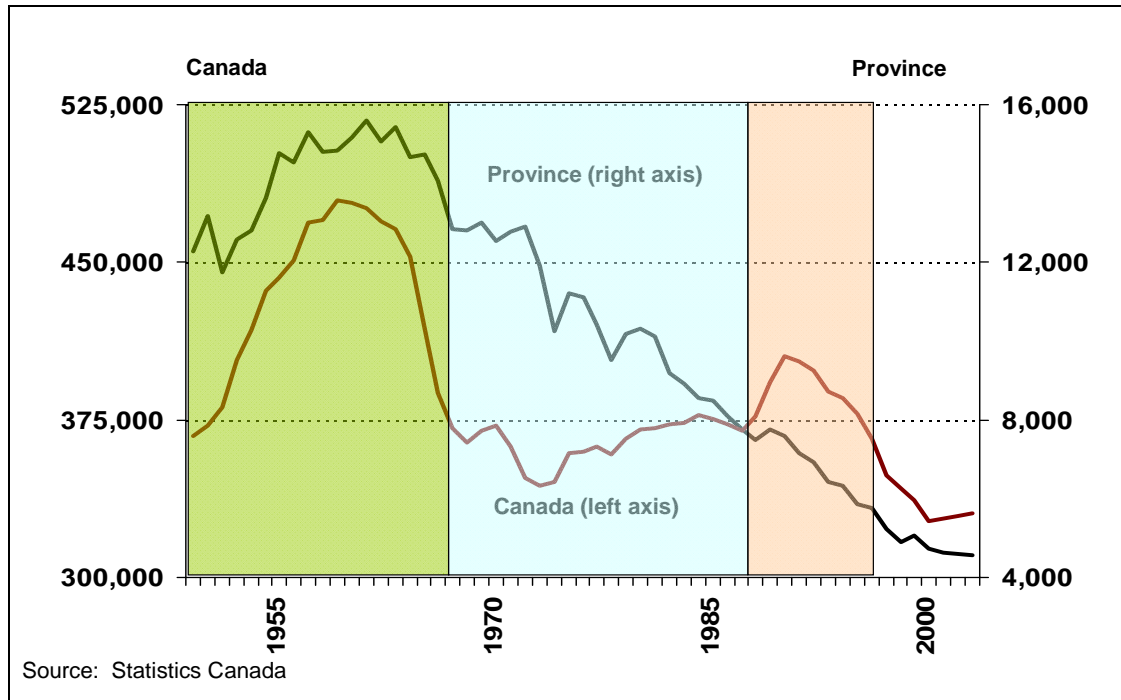


Figure 3 shows the number of births in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador between 1950 and 2004. Between 1950 and 1967, Canada experienced a *boom* or increase in the numbers of births followed by a *bust* or decline between 1968 and 1988. From 1989 to 2000, Canada experienced the baby boom echo as births increased. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the number of births continued to decline, largely due to continued out-migration and declining fertility rates.

The Economic Challenge of 2009

The global financial crisis and economic recession, which began in 2008, is challenging governments everywhere to respond with actions to mitigate its impacts and stimulate economic growth. Newfoundland and Labrador has not been immune to the impact of the recession. When CPRN began this project, the market price for oil had reached an all-time high of almost \$150 per barrel. In recent months, the price per barrel tumbled below \$40 a barrel. The drop in the price of oil will affect provincial revenues significantly. Also, changes to the federal-provincial equalization payment program announced in the January 2009 federal budget will result in a loss of \$1.6 billion in transfer payments in the three-year period beginning April 2009.

In addition, the province's forestry sector faces difficulties because of the recession and other sectors, including mining (where planned developments have been postponed), face a slowdown. There will be job losses and, again, lost revenues.

At a broader level, the current economic downturn is affecting resource development across Canada and, in particular, Alberta's oil sands and Ontario's auto manufacturing where many young people from Newfoundland and Labrador have re-located. The recession has affected these workers directly as economic activity has been cut back and jobs eliminated. As a result, a large number of young displaced workers have returned home searching for work. At the same time, young people will continue to enter the labour market and compete for the same pool of available jobs.

The provincial government has responded to the global economic downturn. In an announcement on February 18, 2009, the government launched an \$800 million infrastructure program for 2009-2010 to provide economic stimulus throughout the province. The program will accelerate the construction of needed health care, education, housing and transportation facilities. It will create jobs for Newfoundland and Labrador workers as well as those returning from outside the province. The program is timely and many of the planned projects are consistent with the infrastructure needs identified by participants as important to youth retention and attraction.

I thought this summit was a great chance for the youth of the province to help the government help attract and retain youth in this province. As an individual who is considering leaving, this summit has encouraged me to stay in Newfoundland.

Summit Participant

The infrastructure program and subsequent strategic investments announced in the 2009-2010 Provincial Budget is intended to build on the province's strong economic performance of the past five years. In 2008, employment grew by 1.5% to 220,300 primarily due to gains in construction, public administration and other service industries; the unemployment rate declined to 13.25% down 0.4% – the lowest rate since the 1970s; personal income grew 5.2% while disposable income increased 5.8%, aided by tax cuts, and retail sales expanded by 7.7% to \$7.1 billion.

The government's actions combined with upcoming developments such as Vale Inco and Hebron position the province for continued economic progress. The *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy* is important to securing a sustainable population and workforce that will advance expected progress.

CPRN encourages the government to vigorously pursue its *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*. Although the current economic circumstances may impose constraints on the government's ability to initiate some of its policy priorities for youth retention and attraction, the value of the Strategy to Newfoundland and Labrador achieving self-reliance and being a province of choice cannot be lost.



III. Summary of Value Statements and Policy Action Directions

During the deliberative dialogue process, participants revealed their values for the province and its future. The statements are based upon participants' choices and the rationale for the choice. As fundamental beliefs, they guide participants in making choices or trade-offs between actions. The value statements that were identified differ from polling or focus group findings in that they are deeply held, arrived at through dialogue and deliberation, and do not change in a short period of time or in response to current conditions. The stability of these values helps decision-makers to understand preferences for policy direction and how a population will respond to particular policies.

Both dialogue and Summit participants appreciated the complexity and interconnectedness of the challenges facing the province and the nature of possible solutions. As a result, they advised that a simplistic approach to resolving the issue of out-migration will not work.

I know all of these ideas can't happen overnight but if we do work on the steps to starting to implement these ideas, they can happen within time and NL will be the happy, wonderful place we all love.

Summit Participant

Values of Youth

The areas for action identified by participants in the dialogue sessions and in the Summit were highly valued and seen as important to making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. Four themes summarize the values:

- Ensuring access to high quality and affordable education and better transitions between school and work;
- Fostering economic development that creates good quality jobs and is diversified and sustainable;
- Improving public services; protecting the environment; and
- Recognizing and celebrating rural and urban lifestyles and diversity.

Participant Value Statements

Through the dialogue, participants identified and developed common ground, or a shared understanding about what they value most when considering approaches to youth retention and attraction. These became the basis of ideas for policy action to address the retention and attraction of young people and to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice. These included (in no particular order):

- Ensuring access to high quality and affordable education;
- Good quality jobs (security, opportunity for growth, etc.), paying a “comfortable wage” to support enjoying the quality of life Newfoundland and Labrador offers;
- Fostering economic development that is sustainable over the long-term and is environmentally friendly;
- Better access to a range of services including health care, transportation, recreation and social services;
- Better transition between school and work, e.g. more variety of entry-level jobs;
- Providing services in a practical and realistic manner;
- Protecting the environment for enjoyment and for tourism;
- Improving the quality of environmentally sustainable services (e.g. waste removal/pick-up, recycling/composting programs);
- Rural lifestyle including a strong community, safety and access to the outdoors; and
- Urban lifestyle including entertainment, culture and diversity.

The highest-rated value statements were:

- Ensuring access to high quality and affordable education; and
- Ensuring access to good quality jobs.

These value statements represent the expectations and hopes participants hold for themselves and their province. Implicit is a desire to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, participants also recognized the need to be practical about what can be achieved on both a short- and longer-term basis. This makes the continued participation and engagement of young people on an open and transparent basis to determine retention and attraction policy directions so critical. They are enthusiastic and committed. It is their future that is at stake. They can help determine the priorities and solve the implementation challenges.

Policy Action Directions

The values and the action ideas put forward by participants will require a coordinated, government-wide policy response. The policy actions should consider the following:

- A focus on key life cycle transition points for young people as they make decisions about post-secondary education, where they will go for work and where they will set down roots as they establish their families. The life cycle approach could form a framework for the *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*.
- Situating the strategy as “creating a province of choice for young people” would find strong support among young people, since it incorporates both retention and attraction as its objectives.
- There is a need to identify those youth-related measures and policies already announced or launched by the government and communicate them in the context of the broader goal of being a province of choice. Many of the government’s recent youth-related initiatives were not known or recognized by participants.
- The need for good jobs, comparable wages, and a strong, affordable, quality education system including at the post-secondary level in Newfoundland and Labrador was clearly stated throughout the dialogues and the Summit. These are connected with a crucial link being an effective transition between education and work.
- Student debt is a major frustration for young people. Debt is not only a product of tuition fees, which people appreciate are comparatively low. Action on student debt also means reducing or subsidizing the associated costs of transportation and accommodation, especially for students living away from home.
- Improvements to services, including greater accessibility to services, need to be undertaken – notably transportation, education, health care and child care.
- There is a high level of interest in the environment. However, its connection to youth retention and attraction is indirect. Preserving the natural environment is critical to the quality of life goals held by young people.
- The issues of diversity and immigration, recognized as critical to the future growth and development of labour skills capacity, need to be addressed carefully, supported by leadership and public education on their value and benefit to the province.

IV. The Life Cycle Framework

Through this youth engagement process we have gained the perspectives and insights of a cross-section of young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians aged 18 to 30. This period of life can include challenging personal and family transitions. In addition, experiences before age 18 can often shape the choices available to young people as they step into adulthood.

Between the ages of 18 and 30, critical life cycle decisions are made that determine, for the most part, how people will live the rest of their lives. These decisions include: transitioning their role as citizens from youth to adulthood; deciding the kind of education they want, including moving from high school to post-secondary education or directly to a job; and where they will live and raise a family. Ultimately these choices will determine the quality of life they achieve and enjoy.

Young people need numerous supports from family and community including education, health and recreation services. These are required at critical transition points such as leaving school, establishing life partnerships, and having a family.



We describe the policy actions within a life cycle framework typical of young people aged 18 to 30. The life cycle is not linear. It has the following five phases, reflecting key decision points:

1. **Turning 18** – At age 18, young people have the right to vote. What they have learned about governance and citizenship and how they have practiced being a young citizen in their school, family and community life has readied them for the life decisions they will make, as well as how they choose to participate in society.

2. **Education** – Acquiring the knowledge and skills to prepare for life is, in fact, a lifelong process. In terms of the life cycle, there are critical decisions following the Turning 18 phase. The choices made and the transition from high school to post-secondary education (including trade programs) or from high school into the labour market is critical. Deciding what to study directly influences a career path. This period typically requires supports and resources to facilitate access to quality education and training, preferably in the province. The choices made can influence place of residence, career and financial stability.
3. **Employment** – Young people enter the labour market hoping to make a livelihood. They aspire to acquire skills to grow their careers. Many seek more opportunities to develop as professionals, trades people, or entrepreneurs. Stable, well-paid jobs are important to building a life in Newfoundland and Labrador.
4. **Family Formation** – In this period, many young people decide where they will live and form long-term partnerships. Many begin to have families. The availability of services like education, health care, transportation, affordable housing and early childhood development become important factors in their decision-making.

This is my home and I want to be here to raise my family and live comfortably.
Summit Participant
5. **Pursuing Life Goals** – Young people begin to build and ascertain their desired quality of life. Establishing social and business relationships, engaging in various aspects of community life including participation in diverse cultural activities, and enjoying the province's environment are significant activities for many young people.

V. Policy Issues and Recommended Actions

In this section, using the life cycle framework, we summarize the critical policy issues that emerged from the 13 dialogue sessions and the Summit. We then detail recommended policy actions to respond to them. The policy actions are based on the input of participants and are rooted in the values and action ideas which they identified in the engagement process. They also reflect the participants' individual and collective experiences as young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as well as their understanding of the policies and programs of the provincial government. The recommended actions are also informed by CPRN's collective knowledge and research experience.

The policy actions put forward are wide-ranging and relate to the expressed values, interests and needs identified by participants to achieve the goal of reversing out-migration.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has invested significant resources in a variety of policies and programs to address the issue of youth out-migration. A number of these measures relate to the issues and concerns raised by participants that we have reported. When this is the case, the participants' concerns reaffirm the necessity of such programs, in addition to highlighting the need to continuously inform young people of the actions being taken and the resources available to support them.

Turning 18

The interest and commitment of young people to civic affairs was demonstrated throughout the engagement process. Many participants had limited experience in dialogue or contact with government. Yet, as expressed in their feedback and evaluation, they put a high value on continuing to be engaged in the implementation of retention and attraction initiatives. Further, they placed importance on government transparency and openness. Most importantly, they expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate and believe there is a role for citizens to play in policy development and decision-making.

Engaging Youth as Community Volunteers

We believe that young people can be engaged in civic affairs and community building to advance Newfoundland and Labrador and the life of its communities. We also envision the opportunity for the voluntary sector to further combine its experience and commitment to the well-being of the province and its citizens with the energy and ingenuity of young people. This combination would enhance the leadership role of the voluntary sector, while giving young people important experience as they assume the role of citizen.

Policy Actions

1. Increase opportunities to strengthen civics education in order to develop leadership skills and to build interest and capacity for participating fully in the democratic processes before youth turn 18 years of age.
2. Draw upon the experience of dialogue and Summit participants whenever possible, as ambassadors for change in the implementation of policies that have been developed through this youth engagement process. The project's trained facilitators could be used to develop both engagement processes as well as the project outcomes. Youth engaged in other provincial processes, such as advisory committees, could also contribute.
3. Implement a government-wide program of online and in-person youth engagement to gain the input of young people on policy issues that affect them, so that these policies reflect and respond to what is important to youth. This "youth lens" enables the province to be in direct contact with those constituents who are most affected by youth issues and ensure that all policies support the broad government objectives of retaining and attracting youth.

Rationale

Participants saw citizenship as much more than voting every few years. It begins with fostering understanding and experience through the education system that supports preparing young people to actively participate in the development of policies and programs that could help resolve issues facing the province. By better preparing young people for citizenship, there is a stronger chance they will embrace a lifelong practice of voting after attaining the age of majority.

Many participants in the engagement process are interested and able to take on leadership roles in working with government and their communities. Further, through broader engagement using electronic channels, there would be more opportunities for all young people, not just young leaders, to be engaged in helping to build the future of the province.

4. Explore the feasibility of implementing an electronic voter registry system. The system would enable Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living and working out of the province, but who choose to maintain their official residency in the province, to participate in provincial and municipal elections.

Rationale

The participation rates in elections for young people are declining in many jurisdictions. CPRN's report, Lost in Translation: (Mis)Understanding Youth Engagement, identifies youth disfavour with politics and their perception that governments have difficulty acting and following through on

commitments as factors contributing to not voting. E-voting is not a determinant of youth retention or attraction. However, expanding the opportunity to vote in the way young people communicate with each other – electronically – together with more opportunities for engagement, could support increased youth participation in both voting and civic affairs. Moreover, implementing an e-voting system would position the province in a leadership role with young people, as well as placing it in the forefront of such activity in Canada.

There has been discussion in Canada by election officers and elected officials at all levels of government about the use of the Internet to increase voter access and turnout. The efforts to implement systems are developing. A number of municipalities in Nova Scotia have used electronic voting. The Regional Municipality of Halifax implemented an Internet advanced voting system for its 2008 municipal election. Voters used an assigned PIN plus their date of birth to identify themselves to the system. The municipality used provincial election lists and found that because many young people were first-time voters, they were not registered to vote and take advantage of the electronic system. The province is now engaged in an outreach campaign to encourage younger citizens to register to vote. The municipality reported an increase in voter participation among citizens aged 45 to 60. A report prepared by the municipality's Elections Returning Officer, released in May 2009, encouraged Council to adopt telephone and Internet polling during a special poll in September 2009. The goal is to evaluate the effect on voter participation with a view to expanding the method to the next general election.

5. Continue to collaborate aggressively with the voluntary sector to expand opportunities to volunteer and increase youth participation in volunteer work.

Rationale

The CPRN report, Lost in Translation: (Mis)Understanding Youth Engagement, also notes that young people choose to pursue issues through advocacy and community groups addressing issues such as protecting the environment and poverty. There is opportunity for volunteer organizations to draw on this energy and commitment to further their issues and needs.

As a development experience for students, part of the process should include the advocacy or presentation of issues to government. This approach supports building leadership skills and offering important life experiences that contribute to their maturity as citizens, while also strengthening the voluntary sector. It also provides a vital link between youth and decision-makers.

Education

Education is important to the province's success. Newfoundland and Labrador has greatly improved its levels of educational attainment and resources. High school, college and university graduation rates have continued to increase. In a knowledge economy, this trend must continue in order for Newfoundland and Labrador to maintain a competitive edge in the Canadian economy, as well as internationally.

Participants in this youth engagement are, in a very real sense, *students* of the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. It is not surprising then, that education, with its connections to other life cycle phases such as employment and quality of life, was an area of great focus for participants and is reflected in the significant number of proposed policy actions. Underlying them are participant values of having a quality, affordable and accessible education system for all, and the need to have effective transition supports for students between school and work.

Participants also expressed a need to understand their increasingly interdependent world and issues such as the environment, social justice, the global economy and their growing importance to the current and future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Issues for Policy Action

A. Strengthening Education

Enhancing the quality of education, particularly at the post-secondary level, with more course choices and improving the transition from school to work with readily available training opportunities were identified by participants as top priorities. They believed that a stronger post-secondary education program could keep students in the province to learn. As well, a strong public education system is important to young parents with children in school.

Policy Actions

1. Expand vocational programs in high schools, in particular, dual credit offerings between high schools and colleges that allow students to earn a high school credit and a college vocational program credit at the same time. This has the potential to reduce high school drop-out rates and increase participation in post-secondary programs.
2. Continue to increase supports to young people at risk of dropping out of high school.

3. Ensure that those students who stay in the province for their post-secondary education have a high quality experience, through access to up-to-date infrastructure including equipment, laboratories, classrooms, and high quality residences.
4. Enhance the capacity of the post-secondary education system to respond to the needs of students and the economy. Government and post-secondary institutions need to continue to work together to expand course offerings with a concentrated focus on programs that are not currently available, in areas of high demand such as medicine.

Rationale

Participants consistently spoke about the value and importance of receiving a quality, affordable education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Completing high school and having the opportunity to participate in some form of post-secondary education is critical for access to quality jobs. In terms of the post-secondary system, participants in the dialogues felt effective courses, course availability and infrastructure are important elements that will provide more opportunity to keep them in the province for their studies.

Providing access to a high quality post-secondary education is critical to the future prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the aspirations its young people expressed. The quality of post-secondary education determines the effectiveness of the skills and knowledge transfer that underpins personal development, success in the labour market, an innovative and productive economy, and citizens who will be engaged in their communities.

CPRN's report, Fostering Quality in Canada's Post-Secondary Institutions (2006), points to the need for Canada's colleges and universities to have the resources to offer quality programs and a transparent accountability to set quality goals and report progress. Sustaining adequate government investment in post-secondary education, combined with a transparent quality improvement process in which provincial governments state publicly their broad goals for the post-secondary system, is required, together with a set of indicators that reflect the goals.

5. Ask post-secondary institutions to expand credit transfer processes among them to increase student mobility and retention in the post-secondary education system.

Rationale

CPRN's Pathways for Youth to the Labour Market project provided evidence that most students do not take a linear path from high school through post-secondary education – taking a year off, changing programs and/or changing institutions is common. Having a system of credit transfers aids students in pursuing post-secondary studies.

B. Student Debt

In the view of participants, student debt is an overriding issue. Tuition is comparatively low (tuition fees in Newfoundland and Labrador are among the lowest in the country). Debt is associated with the related costs of education: housing, food, clothing, and transportation, particularly for those who must move to access post-secondary studies. Parental incomes are also a factor, as many cannot afford to fully subsidize their children's education.

Participants stressed that students have difficulty securing well-paying jobs in the province when they graduate. They often leave for high paying employment elsewhere in order to pay the debt quickly. In leaving the province, there is the likelihood that they may not return. Instead, they settle in communities elsewhere in Canada to pursue their career and personal goals.

Policy Actions

1. Implement a graduate student debt forgiveness program for those who stay and work in the province. Strengthen the information provided to students on financial literacy and debt management.
2. Strengthen partnerships with public agencies and the private and non-profit sectors to increase intern training opportunities and co-op programs for community college, trade schools and university students to assist them in gaining work experience and earning income both while studying and after graduation.

Rationale

Both actions address the concerns and values strongly held by participants. Students seek ways of relieving their debt burden as quickly as possible so that they can more easily build the life they wish. Further, access to easy credit encourages high student debt loads which may be contrary to a retention approach. Information that supports financial literacy and debt management will be beneficial to students in managing their financial affairs to keep debt levels manageable in support of their education.

Work experience through internship training opportunities would help by giving students experience to compete in the job market and gain some income to offset expenses or debt.

C. Strengthen Career Development Programs and Services

The province has many initiatives to support career education in schools. There are programs to link employers to post-secondary students and to support people outside of the school system with counselling and services. In particular, participants expressed the need to change the attitudes of employers vis-à-vis employing and training young people, perceiving them as valuable employees to cultivate rather than just someone to fill a shift.

Policy Actions

1. Enhance and expand local partnerships among schools, post-secondary institutions and employers to help shape the curriculum for career development and provide links to jobs.
2. Implement a voluntary registry for those who leave the province to study or work elsewhere. Communicate the availability of registries through youth-oriented vehicles including websites of provincial government departments, universities, colleges, youth service organizations, as well as media web news services, online Facebook groups, and through provincial career centres. Allow participants to register electronically. Provide information on job and career opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador so that youth can identify opportunities to return home.
3. Develop further supports for individuals with low literacy levels to readily access labour market information.
4. Work with the school system and existing career development/employment offices to make understanding the labour market information system a part of the high school curriculum.

Rationale

Participants consistently spoke to the need for career development advice, in particular advice that would link to either jobs or training placements. They seek information on possible job opportunities and suggested a registry for those who leave the province for work or education. The program can be included in current efforts to provide youth with information on job and career opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Participants also expressed the need to draw on the advice and experience of employers in developing curricula and to have more information on opportunities available to them in the province. Partnerships with employers can result in them offering students co-op placements to gain experience and participating in career fairs to introduce students to career opportunities.

5. Enhance opportunities to strengthen the role and service of career and guidance counsellors to assist young people in their education and career choices.

Rationale

CPRN research has identified perceived limitations to the advice and information students received through their high school development programs. Pathways for Youth to the Labour Market: A Synthesis Report, produced by CPRN in 2008, notes that successful programs should include: active employer partnership and participation; delivery of information through a variety of means including in-person and electronic; building awareness of curriculum options early – by grade 6; and, greater coordination of information between high school and post-secondary institutions. Notably, there are no regulations related to the experience and/or training to become a guidance counsellor. A core curriculum for guidance counsellors would ensure that they have the skills needed to give high quality advice and guidance.

6. Increase support to young people who are out of the school system by implementing a “second chance” program (including financial aid) that enables them to return to school.

Rationale

Individuals no longer in the education system often have difficulty re-entering educational programs. They may face a variety of adjustment needs and financial demands. By increasing supports such as financial assistance and counselling, the province ensures that all citizens will have the opportunity to rise to their full potential.

CPRN’s report, Too Many Left Behind: Canada’s Adult Education and Training System (2006), assesses the effectiveness of Canada’s adult education systems. It discusses the availability of formal adult learning opportunities in Canada as part of a continuum of lifelong learning, and the factors influencing the participation of less-educated/less-skilled workers. Too many less-educated/less-skilled adults do not have the opportunity to improve their skills because of fragmented and incomplete learning programs, gaps in coordination, information and counselling, financial aid, employer supports, and government investment.

Employment

With the current global economic recession, there are opportunities to attract and retain a significant number of young people who have left the province, but who now face job losses, especially in Alberta. The government's February 2009 announcement of an \$800 million infrastructure program for 2009-2010 will assist in weathering the downturn by providing employment opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including young people returning from outside the province.

Many issues raised in the education phase are interconnected with employment policy actions. This is reflected in several of the underlying values held by participants. For example, education is critical to obtaining good quality jobs – with opportunity for security and growth – plus earning a wage that enables individuals and families to achieve a good quality of life. Also important is the fostering of better transitions between school and work through more and better entry-level jobs. In addition, participants valued long-term economic development that is sustainable, building a diversified economy that is not dependent on a single resource, and that is environmentally-friendly.

Issues for Policy Action

A. Creating Quality, Good Paying Jobs

Overwhelmingly, participants spoke of the need for good quality jobs and a wage that would enable them to live decently and work in Newfoundland and Labrador. With livable wages, they can either return or stay and enjoy a good standard of living, plus the benefits of the province's unique quality of life. In addition, participants expressed the importance of safe, quality work environments.

Many participants who worked in Fort McMurray stated that they would return for a "comfortable" wage, roughly half of what they were making there. These statements were also made by participants in dialogue sessions within the province who had worked in Fort McMurray. Other young people expressed a real desire for jobs with career paths and competitive wages. Strengthening the economy will ensure that there is a career ladder available to all types of workers and to achieving the goal of retaining young people.

Policy Actions

1. Regularly increase the minimum wage under provincial employment standards laws.

Rationale

CPRN's Vulnerable Workers Project Report, Risk and Opportunity: Creating Options for Vulnerable Workers (2006), summarized research showing that there is room to increase minimum wages in Canada (perhaps with a youth differential) without jeopardizing employment.

2. Continue to emphasize protection for young workers under occupational health and safety laws, since they experience the highest rate of workplace injury.

Rationale

A number of participants noted the importance of safe workplaces and ensuring that employers meet employment and workplace standards for safety.

3. Work with employer and labour representatives to encourage the private sector to support their employees through skills and career development programs.

Rationale

CPRN research has found that Canada has underperformed in workplace learning compared to other countries.³ Less than 30 percent of adult workers in Canada participate in job-related education and training, compared to almost 35 percent in the United Kingdom and nearly 45 percent in the United States. Participants indicated they desire more support from employers for career development including training and new work opportunities. Employer investment in workplace learning is critical to the development of the skills and knowledge of the province's workers.

B. Entry-Level Job Experience

Participants spoke consistently about the need for more and better entry-level job opportunities to keep them in the province. Many young people leave in search of a first job. The private sector has an important role in creating these entry-level positions and should share with the province the desire to train and hire locally to keep young people at home.

³ CPRN, *Lessons from Other Countries Regarding Incentives for Employer-Sponsored Training*, April 2008.

Policy Actions

1. Encourage the private and non-profit sectors to create partnerships with high schools, colleges and universities to develop entry-level job opportunities that provide initial career work experience. Schools offer course credits and encourage the development of job-ready skill sets; the private and non-profit sectors provide local job experience, including entry-level opportunities, resulting in greater labour market attachment in Newfoundland and Labrador.
2. Collaborate with small business organizations to implement career development strategies for employees through skill development, training, worker rotation and other innovative approaches that support career laddering and business growth.

Rationale

Both of these actions address participant interest in a pathway to successful career development in the province's labour market. Participants consistently spoke of the need for entry-level job opportunities to begin their work careers, followed by planned career development that would contribute to their personal growth and the continued success of their employer.

CPRN's Pathways for Youth to the Labour Market, a national project conducted from 2006-2008, produced eight studies that identified policy options to improve young people's ability to identify, select, and navigate pathways that lead to rewarding and productive lives. A traditional straight-line path from school to work has given way to a non-linear path. Typically, young people "zigzag" between school and work, taking longer to complete their education and become established in the workforce. A key finding is that career development programs and services can reduce drop-out rates, increase aspirations and achievement, help people find jobs that match their talents and interests and help employers meet skill needs. The best programs begin early, by grade 6.

In addition, there is a need to work with employers and labour representatives to identify ways to encourage more employer-sponsored training. This will require removing barriers such as: the costs of training and of lost working time; lack of information about where to get training, how to organize and provide training, and what training is effective; employer skepticism about the return-on-investment of training; and concerns about the "poaching" of workers in whom the employer has invested.

C. Youth Entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship builds on young people's creativity and energy. Participants discussed the desirability and importance of support for youth entrepreneurship. They recognized there were successes in the province and believed government, private sector leaders and successful youth entrepreneurs could play partnership roles in supporting its development through activities such as advice and mentoring.

Policy Action

1. Further youth entrepreneurship by encouraging opportunities for young people to engage with experienced business owners and entrepreneurs. In addition, interactive information on youth entrepreneurship should be readily available through the Internet, HRLE offices and community career centres and schools.

Rationale

Participants believed strongly in the development of young entrepreneurship with the support of successful business leaders and young entrepreneurs. This recommendation also complements participant interest in career development opportunities.

D. Economic Development

Young people see a need to move away from economic dependence upon any single natural resource. The province's current efforts are recognized and they believe there is an opportunity to diversify the economy to attract businesses that offer well-paying jobs. Opportunities for value-added development of resources were stressed. Many participants urged for longer-term sustainable economic improvements by diversifying through the development of renewable natural resources, tertiary manufacturing and a green economy.

The quality of life that participants enjoy in the province, particularly rural life in small towns and communities, is seen as important to attracting and retaining young people. It includes a strong sense of community, safety, access to the outdoors and the lifestyle offered.

Participants recognized the challenge of rural economic development in the province. They suggested the creation of co-operatives to encourage business development in rural areas.

Policy Actions

1. Continue to support the development of co-operatives in rural Newfoundland and Labrador to provide goods and services where they are needed.

Rationale

Participants acknowledged the challenge of economic development in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and, in particular, to provide essential services. They recognized the potential for developing co-operatives to take on this role. Co-operatives support the teaching of leadership skills to young co-op members, as well as skills and experience in participating in a democratic structure. There are excellent examples around the world of co-operatives providing a variety of economic and social benefits. The region of Emilia-Romagna in Italy has the longest history of co-operatives (over 80 years) in agrarian, manufacturing, forestry and social services including child welfare and drug addiction programs.

2. Encourage entrepreneurs to create businesses to support long-term and diversified economic development with less reliance on non-renewable resources; encourage eco-tourism; and, protect the environment.

Family Formation

Decisions on family formations – marriage, having children – and how young people follow through in terms of where and how they will live and raise a family, are tied to access to services. Better access to services and improved services are important to retaining and attracting young people and to enhancing quality of life. Services important to young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians include health care, transportation, housing, recreation and social services. Participants recognized the challenge of providing these services in a sparsely-populated province. They expect development and delivery to be practical and realistic. In addition, participants emphasized the importance of affordable housing and home ownership to their quality of life and choice to remain in the province.

Issues for Policy Action

A. Regional Service Delivery

Young people appreciate that not every community can have all services within its boundaries. What they expect is their availability through regional hubs or shared among communities in a region. They look to government for leadership and action.

Participants expressed interest in regional hubs which would offer practical and realistic service delivery and would also be a focus for economic development. They are not willing to travel significant distances for basic services such as primary health care, education, child care, and groceries. However, they are willing to travel a certain distance to get services not deemed essential, such as a hospital hub with specialized services such as ultrasounds or MRIs, and to recreational services.

Service access is a barrier to the acceptance of regional hubs. Improving transportation links and subsidizing the cost of transportation to access hub-based services is suggested. Similarly, transportation to St. John's for centralized health services needs to be subsidized for low-income earners to have equitable access.

There is also a need to address perceptions of equity in considering the development and delivery of services. For example, participants from Labrador believe their region's needs, with regard to the development of services such as health care, child care, water treatment and transportation, have not been adequately addressed.

Policy Actions

1. Create regional service hubs where government services, including health care, business support programs and early childhood development programs, are clustered. The spending for services in these areas contributes to regional economic development and the local economy by providing stable employment and an economic stimulus for communities.
2. Conduct a broad citizen dialogue to support the development and implementation of regional service hubs. Intergenerational dialogue, between young people and older citizens, should be a feature.

Rationale

The availability of key social and economic services was a significant theme of the engagement. Participants urged government to move forward with a strategy that would see greater access to key services. The planning and development of regional services requires broad, community-based dialogue and discussion with citizens.

B. Transportation Services

The need to improve transportation services received a lot of participant attention and comment. The ability to travel on an efficient and cost-effective basis, on good roads and in a timely and convenient way from community to community can be challenging, especially in many rural and remote locations and in Labrador. The cost of air travel and convenient connections between Labrador and the island are major concerns. Cost-effective transportation is important to accessing services and, for students, being able to visit family members and sustaining friendships and connections with home.

Policy Action

1. Investigate options for cost-effective transportation subsidies and models within, and between, regional hubs to support citizen access to services and communities.

Rationale

Improved transportation services, including better roads and provincial bus service, were identified by participants as areas for action. In addition, arguments were made for transportation subsidies including air travel.

C. Housing

Affordable housing is important to participants and the quality of life they hope to attain in Newfoundland and Labrador. Further, it is seen as critical to building strong, healthy communities while contributing economic benefits through jobs associated with housing construction and upgrading.

Policy Actions

1. Work with post-secondary institutions and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation to increase the supply of post-secondary student housing.
2. Consider developing a program of incentives for home ownership such as reducing interest rates, property tax, and land purchase costs or providing a clean energy subsidy.

Rationale

Participants desire incentives that will assist in the purchase of housing for young people and families. In addition, they noted the need to increase the supply of affordable housing for students. Participants identified that this could be a responsibility of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

CPRN's report, Housing Is Good Social Policy (2004), describes the critical connections between housing and health, education, income security, immigration, employment and community development, all key policy priorities for the province.

Housing is important to all citizens. Adequate, affordable housing contributes to their well-being and that of their families. In turn, it supports their ability to contribute to the social and economic life of communities. The study found that if families live in adequate, affordable housing that is not crowded, and they have security of tenure that helps reduce mobility, children will experience better educational outcomes, immigrants will experience shorter periods of resettlement, and the costs of services such as health, education, and social assistance can be reduced.

D. Child Care and Early Childhood Development Services

A number of participants, including some who were young parents, identified access to child care and early child development services as a vital family support that is lacking. The availability of child care helps parents to participate in the local labour market.

The value of early childhood development programs has been shown in many Canadian, American and international studies. In Canada, the Human Early Learning Project (HELP), housed at the University of British Columbia, was selected by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a centre of excellence.

The WHO study, *Closing the Gap* (August 2008), on the social determinants of health, recognizes the strong Canadian contribution to understanding the importance of early child development to the future health of a population. It documents a significant return on investment, upwards of 30 to 1 with savings in health care, social services, and justice system costs. The investment also supports increased labour market attachment, potential for higher incomes and higher tax revenue, while helping to equalize differences between income groups and offering the right start for all children. This study asserts that there is no better return on investment than early child development for population prosperity.

Policy Action

1. Increase affordable, qualified community-based child care and early childhood development services to support families and enhance the development of children. The focus should allow communities to build services appropriate to their circumstances and within provincial guidelines.

Rationale

Both child care and early childhood development services have enormous benefits to working parents and their children. Participants spoke about how young families need these programs to be strengthened so that there are more spaces available in communities on an accessible and affordable basis.

A 2003 CPRN study, Young Families, Social Risk and the Role of Government, demonstrated the value of child care and early childhood development. The likelihood of parents working outside the home, in many cases for low pay, the lack of quality, affordable child care, and the frequent presence of aging dependants, are part of the new reality. These circumstances greatly add to the challenge of parenting, overall stress and tension in balancing the demands of work and family. These responsibilities make the need for child care and early childhood development crucial for both the effectiveness of parents and the development of children.

E. Health Services and Healthy Lifestyle

Newfoundland and Labrador has made significant progress toward equalizing specialty health services between the east and west of the province and strengthening acute care services. There remains a need to strengthen primary care services such as pre-and post-natal health care, ophthalmology, audiology and dental care services through alternative delivery models.

Policy Actions

1. Strengthen the health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador by considering innovative practices, such as a system of mobile health clinics, to improve access to pre-and post-natal, primary health, dental, audiologist and optical care services.
2. Identify strategies and opportunities in consultation with food industry suppliers to improve access in rural and remote parts of the province to fresh, nutritious and environmentally-sustainable foods.

Rationale

Health care service delivery is complex and enormously challenging for governments and health system managers, especially in rural areas. Participant discussion focused on both the availability of services and nutritious foods.

The concept of mobile health clinics could be considered. For example, there has been limited application in British Columbia. The Fraser Health Authority has established a falls and injury prevention mobile clinic for seniors.⁴ It provides information and education sessions with a team of health professionals (nurse, dietician, pharmacist, physiotherapist, kinesiologist and occupational therapist). Participants are individually assessed as to falls and injury risk and are provided with suggested interventions based on results.

Another British Columbia example is a Mobile Diabetes Clinic available in northern and remote communities.⁵ Services include retinopathy screening, laboratory exams to check blood glucose and protein levels, and blood pressure assessments. Clients also receive a one-on-one diabetes education session.

The mobile clinic model could have application for other health service needs.

Pursuing Life Goals

Youth pursue their personal and career goals to ascertain their desired quality of life. Young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians share values that underpin these pursuits, including a pride in the province and high hopes for its success and that of its people. Participants believe that the province has a good quality of life that can and should be enhanced for all citizens. They value and enjoy many aspects of the province's way of life: a rural lifestyle, including a strong sense of community and personal safety; access to the outdoors; an urban lifestyle including entertainment, culture and diversity; and, a unique environment that needs to be protected. Participants also understand the province's history of economic and social struggle and the opportunity of its new status in Canada as a "have" province. They value the province's culture, and realize it will be challenged in the context of immigration, increased diversity and the rapidly growing global economy. Young people draw on these values as they begin to build and ascertain the quality of life that they desire. The values set a context for their lives as they establish personal, work and community relationships.

⁴ Accessed March 25, 2009 at: <http://find.healthlinkbc.ca/search.aspx?d=SV056733>.

⁵ Accessed March 25, 2009 at: <http://find.healthlinkbc.ca/search.aspx?d=SV054522>.

Issues for Policy Action

A. The Environment

Participants value the environment and want to ensure it is protected. It is perceived as critical to quality of life and rural living in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the economy. Development of the province's natural resources should be pursued in a sustainable manner. Young people believe that over-reliance on a single natural resource is environmentally irresponsible and economically unstable.

Policy Actions

1. Implement a province-wide recycling and composting program for all residences, governments, businesses and industry, supported by ongoing public education on protecting the environment.
2. Expand the development of a comprehensive green innovation agenda to include the adoption of energy efficient technology and the creation of businesses that use renewable resources (wind, water) in an environmentally sustainable manner.
3. Expand the province's appeal as an eco-tourism destination and create green economy jobs. Promote these efforts within Canada and abroad.
4. Identify opportunities to broaden environmental protection to protect the natural beauty of the province using legislation, regulations and policies.

Rationale

Participants strongly value the environment and the concept of moving Newfoundland and Labrador on a path that would protect the environment and encourage sustainable development. The measures contained in these actions are found in these values and were identified by participants. The government has at its disposal a variety of options and opportunities including legislation, regulation, the designation of provincial parks and historical sites.

B. Understanding Diversity and Its Benefits

About one percent of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador is made up of visible minorities,⁶ five percent are Aboriginal,⁷ concentrated in Labrador, and 1.3 percent self identify as homosexual or bisexual.⁸ More so than previous generations, young people have interacted with minority groups through travel, employment and education in other parts of Canada and the world. Participants expressed a desire for increased diversity in the province and saw the benefits associated with it. However, they acknowledged that having a more diverse population might impact the province's historic cultural practices.

There is a need to build an understanding of the importance of diversity, why it is being advanced, and its benefits to the province, especially as minorities and their successive generations settle and become active in the life of the province. Further, young people recognized that a simplistic approach would not work. Rather, the province had to be ready to tackle tough problems related to diversity and discrimination.

Policy Actions

1. Implement a public education program on the significance of diversity and its benefits to the province. The education program should be implemented in workplaces, schools, community centres, and other public venues. The program should include community dialogues between minority groups and the pre-existing populace, and involve all age groups to increase understanding and deal directly with issues.
2. Build public awareness of cultural celebrations such as Asian Month and Black History Month with a Newfoundland and Labrador focus in order to achieve a deeper understanding of cultural diversity within the province.
3. Include in the education curriculum of high schools the teaching of various ethnic groups' histories in Canada. Teach youth about the contributions of minority groups including the history of immigrant settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador along with mainstream Canadian history.

⁶ Statistics Canada. 2007. *Newfoundland and Labrador. 2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census.

⁷ Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 2007. *The Future of Our Land. A Future for Our Children. A Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador*. Accessed May 28, 2008 at: www.laa.gov.nl.ca/laa/nspl/.

⁸ *The Daily*. 2004. "Canadian Community Health Survey." June 15.

Rationale

CPRN puts forward these recommended policy actions based on its review of the discussions on diversity in the dialogue sessions and Summit. There is both confusion and apprehension about diversity and its impact on the province and its culture. From this engagement process, we concluded that the issues of diversity and immigration, recognized as critical to the future growth and development of labour skills capacity, need to be addressed carefully, supported by leadership and public education on its value and benefit to the province.

The government's March 2007 policy statement Diversity – "Opportunity and Growth": An Immigration Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador, provides a basis for the discussion on diversity and the engagement of citizens in its pursuit. There is a need for a community-by-community dialogue to increase awareness, co-operation and support to foster inclusive communities.

C. Supporting Immigration

Even if out-migration is reversed and many more young people remain in the province, the government still anticipates a need to create a larger skilled workforce through immigration. Understanding diversity is important to immigration and supports the creation of an inclusive culture. However, this will not necessarily provide the supports and services that immigrants need to move to Newfoundland and Labrador and to successfully settle in communities and the labour market.

New immigrants face significant challenges in getting established and succeeding: gaining employment, language acquisition and acculturation to Canadian values and ways of life, among others. The province and its citizens need to be prepared to provide support to new immigrant communities and to address the importance of immigration to the province's economic and social goals.

Some participants expressed reluctance to see large in-migration, noting concerns such as loss of local character, culture and safety.

Policy Actions

1. Strengthen immigrant settlement services, including advice on housing, banking, education and health and social services, to facilitate the smooth settlement of newcomers. A consistent level of service support is required across the province. Services should be designed and organized to meet the language and settlement needs of newcomers.

Rationale

CPRN raises this need in the context of the province's policy statement Diversity – "Opportunity and Growth": An Immigration Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador (March 2007). The intent of the policy is to support increased immigration, specifically attracting entrepreneurs and people with skills not available in the province. While there are numerous community-based settlement services in place, it is important that they are providing consistent levels of support and information across the province that are critical to a newcomers needs. The information should also be accessible and sensitive to the language and cultural needs of newcomers.

2. Strengthen existing processes to expedite the recognition of foreign credentials and the conversion to Canadian credentials so immigrants can be employed faster upon migration. Provide support for the transition to employment phase to new immigrants through internships to help with integration into the Newfoundland and Labrador job market.
3. Organize information campaigns, community dialogues and town hall meetings to build understanding and address concerns with immigration and foster social inclusion.
4. Continue to present Newfoundland and Labrador to potential immigrants in their home countries as a viable place of residence upon migration through information and advertising that positions it as a province of choice.
5. Offer incentives to encourage business and industry to target and hire skilled workers in foreign countries in order for the province to compete in a global market.
6. Increase the number of foreign students accepted in the province's education institutions.

Rationale

These proposed policy actions are based on the values and comments of dialogue participants, who saw opportunities to put Newfoundland and Labrador forward as a welcoming place to work and live.

D. Labrador

The place of Labrador in the history and development of Newfoundland and Labrador is strong and meaningful. This was readily apparent in discussions and deliberations with youth at both the Happy Valley-Goose Bay dialogue session and at the Summit where participants expressed strong pride in their region. Young people from Labrador see themselves as a part of the larger province and their goals and aspirations are similar to youth throughout the island. However, it is clear that there was limited knowledge and understanding of the living conditions and circumstances between people living on the island and those in Labrador, and especially between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Participants from Labrador spoke passionately about their region's needs for essential basic services such as water, sewage treatment, housing, health services and transportation, which they believe are not adequately addressed. They felt embarrassed by the lack of services and poor quality of the infrastructure when visitors arrived.

Policy Actions

1. Implement activities to increase dialogue and a common understanding of culture between youth from Labrador and the island portion of the province. These activities would include initiatives to raise awareness about diversity with a focus on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. They would also include exchange programs for young people to encourage travel and living experiences between the island and Labrador.

Rationale

The concerns and challenges of living in Labrador were strongly presented by its young people during the engagement. They feel isolated and different than youth living on the island portion of the province. Likewise, in describing themselves, many identified themselves as from Aboriginal populations, which further distanced them from their island counterparts. Most Islanders have never travelled to Labrador and there appeared to be a lack of knowledge and understanding between the two parts of the province. Building relationships between young people on both sides and continuing connections will help break down the barriers caused through lack of knowledge.

2. Review the *Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador* with a youth lens to determine how it could contribute to the *Youth Attraction and Retention Strategy*.

Rationale

The government is moving to meet many of the challenges expressed by youth through *A Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador* (2007). The strategy sets social and economic priorities, including infrastructure, to enhance accessibility, tourism and cultural development, and strengthened health care services, as well as initiatives such as its food drop program.

3. Strengthen investments in appropriate infrastructure development in Labrador such as paved roads and water and sewage treatment facilities.

VI. Making Newfoundland and Labrador a Province of Choice

The dialogue sessions and the Summit focused on participants' values and action ideas to retain and attract young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants expressed discomfort, particularly at the Summit, in having to make a choice between retention and attraction. They strongly preferred a more balanced approach, beginning with retention and then moving towards attracting young people back. The directions of retention and attraction present tensions and confusion and could limit the government's opportunity to explain clearly its overall goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people.

Lessons Learned

The youth engagement process demonstrated a number of lessons critical to policy success. They are:

- Young people appreciated being asked for an opinion. They learned from the experience, gaining a better understanding of the challenges facing the province and of governing and being a responsible citizen. Participants credit government with giving them the opportunity to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and to help shape that future. Success is based on taking responsibility, managing challenges, and recognizing that engaging citizens is the most effective way to govern.
- As the government moves to implement new policies and programs to support its *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*, the participants in this process can provide further input or be catalysts to encourage implementation in their communities and regions. The government should involve them on an ongoing basis.
- Young people think and communicate differently than most adults. Today's communication is different from that of a decade ago, and it will continue to change. Government must be attuned to these changes and provide opportunities for young people to be leaders and active participants in civil society. Communications strategies must employ new technology effectively and continually in order to engage young people in the public policy process.
- Government needs a true partnership with its citizens. There is a need for transparency and ongoing engagement, not only with young people, but all citizens. While this effort focuses on government, it is essential that all parts of the economy and civil society are engaged: local government, the education system, and communities of all kinds, including both the private and non-for-profit sectors, as a way of thinking and undertaking the business of governing.

- Newfoundland and Labrador will benefit and be stronger from diversity. Its traditional culture will flourish, while other cultures flourish around it. It is not a zero sum game where one group gaining means the other loses or sacrifices.
- Labrador is unique within the province. Attention needs to be given to its basic services. The new infrastructure funds announced can be directed to address long-standing concerns in order to improve living standards for Labradorians.
- The government has initiated a significant number of policies and programs that relate to youth retention and attraction. Participants had limited knowledge of these initiatives and how they could provide support and assistance to them. There is a need to inform youth about measures and policies already announced or launched and communicate them in the context of the broader goal of being a province of choice. Raising awareness of the government's activities as related to youth retention and attraction as well as its other directions for the province will increase program participation rates and extend opportunities for citizens to take advantage of those government services for which they are eligible.

I hope that we get a chance to continue this relationship and make decisions that will directly change many issues, most importantly education (i.e. student debt) and job wages. Thank you!

Summit Participant



Actions to Support Successful Policy Implementation

The following measures, taken by the province, will support successful policy implementation:

1. Apply a “youth lens” in developing and determining government policy directions consistent with the goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. A youth lens will be a framework that enables the government to ensure that proposed initiatives meet its policy goals for retaining and attracting youth. The strategic principles of a youth lens framework to evaluate policy and program proposals would include:
 - Involvement of youth in initiative development;
 - Consideration by all affected ministries of impacts on youth;
 - Consistency with retention and attraction priorities; and,
 - Capacity to strengthen and complement existing retention and attraction policies and programs.
2. Establish a secretariat to coordinate the development of department-based youth retention and attraction policies consistent with government goals and priorities. Departments maintain responsibility for implementation. Coordination would enable government to present a coherent response to the goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people.
3. Review communications practices and update the communications strategy in support of youth retention and attraction in order to build awareness of government’s policies and programs and increase take-up of services.

Position all current youth retention and attraction policies, programs and services and all future activity to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. The strategy should consider including:

- Use of the Internet to appeal to young people by delivering information and conducting interactive dialogue and exchange;
- Outreach and dissemination of information through the education system and community organizations serving young people; and,
- Earned media campaigns demonstrating program take-up and benefit.⁹

⁹ Refers to non-paid communications activity

Communicate and explain the province's youth retention and attraction agenda, based on three priority areas of activity:

- Creation of quality jobs including entry-level jobs;
- Quality education and better transition to work through improving pathways into the labour market and relieving student debt; and,
- Strengthened services through regional hub creation and addressing service issues including transportation and health care.

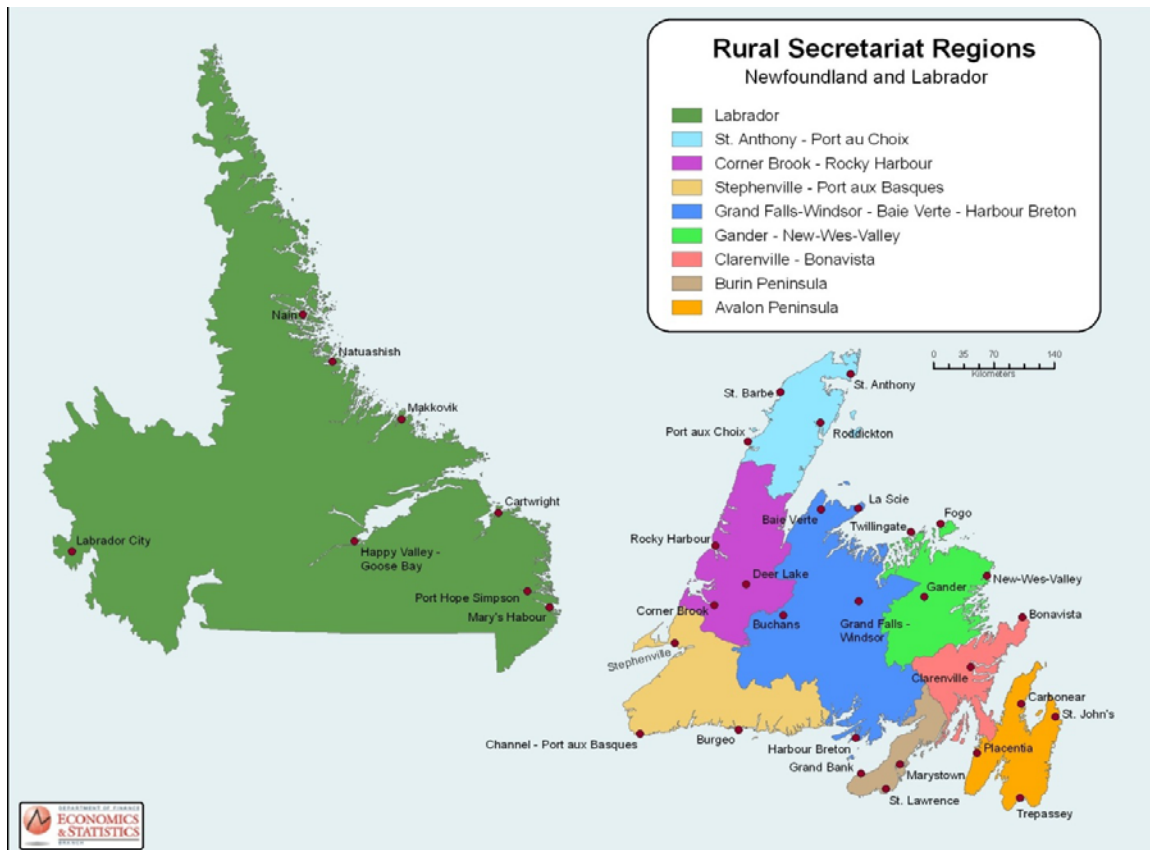
Newfoundland and Labrador can benefit from embracing a broad-based citizen model of engagement that moves beyond traditional stakeholder consultation. Young people understand the complexity of today's issues. They have a real desire to be engaged in helping to work through the issues and provide the value-based foundation from which durable policy can be forged and implemented successfully.

There are many ways to encourage the practice of deliberative democracy, but all involve two-way opportunities for citizens and their governments to consider what's important in finding realistic and productive ways forward. One-way engagement is no longer acceptable. Genuine citizen engagement can and should happen at all levels – schools, communities, municipalities, regions and provincially. Annual community dialogues, citizen panels and deliberative dialogues are just a few of the possible approaches to use, in addition to online vehicles.

The government should consider ways to apply the principles of deliberative democracy to guide its relations with its citizenry through its ministries and agencies. This can serve as a basis for creating new approaches to communication with citizens and for strengthening the province's democratic life. Moreover, it also provides a strong underpinning for achieving the government's goal of self-reliance for the province.

Participants hope for change and believe in the goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice with strong communities and offering a rich quality of life, including a stable and secure future for themselves and their families supported by good jobs, decent wages and accessible, modern services. Most importantly, they want to be part of the process, partnering with government, communities and business to realize this goal.

Appendix 1. Rural Secretariat Regions and Dialogue Information



Attendance at Youth Dialogues by Location		
Date	City	Number of Participants
Thursday, September 4	Gander	34
Saturday, September 6	Corner Brook	38
Saturday, September 6	Grand Falls-Windsor	39
Monday, September 8	Stephenville	49
Wednesday, September 10	Marystown	41
Friday, September 12	Carbonear	36
Saturday, September 13	Happy Valley-Goose Bay	45
Sunday, September 14	St. John's	41
Monday, September 15	St. John's	41
Saturday, September 20	Clarenville	36
Saturday, September 27	Hawke's Bay	30
Saturday, September 27	Fort McMurray, AB	10
Sunday, October 5	Ottawa, ON	44
TOTAL		484

Appendix 2. CPRN Publications for Reference

Turning 18

Citizen Engagement

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School-to-Work Transition

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A Desirable Quality of Life

Community

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Rural/Regional Development

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