

Synthesis Report

Making Newfoundland & Labrador a Province of Choice for Young People

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

About CPRN

Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) 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
- Publishing its research to promote broader discussion.

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 engaging the public.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

On behalf of the government, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) conducted a series of deliberative dialogues with young people from Newfoundland and Labrador. In total, 484 youths aged 18 to 30 attended 13 sessions in September and October 2008. Eleven of the sites were across the province and two outside, in Fort McMurray, Alberta and Ottawa, Ontario, where many young people have relocated.

Throughout the dialogue sessions we observed over and over the passion and pride that young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have for their province. They care deeply for the land they call home and appreciate that the provincial government has asked for their views early in the development of the *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*.

What this suggests is a tremendous willingness on the part of young people to be part of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Participants at the various sessions were able to identify some common ground values and principles that are important to them in finding ways to retain and attract youth. They place high value on:

- Good work. Without a job that offers a living wage it is not possible to stay.
- Sustaining Newfoundland and Labrador's quality of life and rural lifestyle. For the most part, people want to stay because of the lifestyle the province offers.
- The environment. It's a source of personal and community pleasure and has the potential for producing good jobs in the future.
- Accessible and practical service delivery. If services are not provided relatively close to where people live, they will leave.
- Economic development for all and for the long-term. It is important to bring stability for the future.
- Education. It is needed to enable the population to work in a variety of jobs.

Participants made it clear that not all the common ground elements could be achieved at the same time. They recognized that there are difficult choices and trade-offs to work through. Nonetheless, participants reached agreement on some trade-offs that they are willing to accept. Examples include:

- Most participants were willing to accept lower pay in order to stay in the province and benefit from the quality of life it offers. But they had to be able to live comfortably with the salary they received.
- They recognized that services need to be provided in a practical and realistic manner. They were willing to travel a certain distance to get some services.

On other issues, participants reached a better understanding of their different views. However, they did not reach agreement on what would be the best approach for the future. Examples include:

- Whether development of regional hubs as both economic and service centres would help the long-term future of the province.
- Whether it would be appropriate and fair for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to have priority as jobs are created in the province, or whether qualified individuals from outside the province should have an equal chance.
- How much change and impact on the Newfoundland and Labrador culture is acceptable as newcomers arrive to make it their home.

Finally, the section on Bold Actions shows that there is no shortage of ideas on how Newfoundland and Labrador can become the province of choice for young people. The range of their thinking and their creativity was very impressive.

These common grounds, areas of divergence or tensions, and bold actions will be explored further at the Summit on November 14-15, 2008 in St. John's, NL.

INTRODUCTION

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

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On behalf of the government, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) conducted a series of deliberative dialogues or discussion sessions with young people from Newfoundland and Labrador. In total, 13 dialogues were held in September and October 2008. Eleven of the sites were across the province and two were outside, in Fort McMurray, Alberta and Ottawa, Ontario, where many young people have relocated. At least one in-province dialogue was conducted in each of the nine Rural Secretariat regions. The locations were:

- St. John's (two sessions)
- Carbonear
- Port au Choix/Hawke's Bay
- Grand Falls-Windsor
- Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- Stephenville
- Gander
- Corner Brook
- Clarenville
- Marystown

CPRN recruited participants aged 18 to 30 using a variety of methods, including random selection, referrals by family members and friends, communication networks and media blitzes. As a result, 484 youths attended the 13 dialogues (see Appendix A for a breakdown of the numbers by location). Participants represented all of Newfoundland and Labrador's youth population, based on region, age, gender, ethnicity, education and income.

The goal of the dialogues was twofold:

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

The project's findings and recommendations will help the provincial government develop its *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*. It will provide the government with an understanding of the trade-offs and choices young people are prepared to make and which they expect to be considered by government, business, labour, educational institutions, communities and other key partners in setting future directions for the province.

Purpose of the Report

This report summarizes the results of the 13 deliberative dialogue sessions. Below are the key findings. The heart of this report consists of the sections entitled *Common Ground* and *Areas of Divergence*. The section *Bold Actions*, outlines the measures that the participants thought could be taken to achieve the province's objectives on youth retention and attraction. The document ends with concluding observations and comments.

THE DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE PROCESS

CPRN used a deliberative dialogue method to engage the participating young people. This method emphasizes:

- A commitment to the common good
- The promotion of mutual understanding
- The acknowledgement of all voices and views
- Decisions that take the needs and interests of everyone into account.

The purpose was to bring the voices of young adults into a conversation about how to address the outflow of young people from the province.

Participants examined, discussed and worked through critical issues facing their province, learning from each other, gaining an understanding of different views and identifying ways to move forward. The dialogue process offered participants the chance to use their knowledge and experience of the province to reflect on some of the difficult choices that could be taken to reduce net out-migration among young people.

Dialogue differs from debate in several ways as shown in the chart below.

<i>Debate versus Dialogue</i>	
Debate	Dialogue
Assumes there is one right answer (and you have it)	Assumes that others have pieces of the answer
Attempts to prove the other side wrong	Attempts to find common understanding
Objective is to win	Objective is to find common ground
Listening to find flaws	Listening to understand
Defends personal assumptions	Explores and tests personal assumptions
Criticizes others' point of view	Examines all points of view
Defends one's views against others	Admits that others' thinking can improve one's own
Searches for weaknesses and flaws in the others' positions	Searches for strengths and value in the others' positions
Seeks an outcome that agrees with your position	Seeks an outcome that creates new common ground

Structure of Dialogue Sessions

Each session ran a full day, beginning with introductions and a presentation of the dialogue process. Participants were then divided into breakout groups of 10 to 15 people, depending on the numbers present.

Three approaches were presented for discussion (summarized below). The participants worked through each approach in their breakout groups – identifying what they liked and disliked about each approach. During this process, young facilitators and note takers paid particular attention to common views and feelings, disagreements, and trade-offs that the young people raised. The group then found their common ground and areas of difference.

The afternoon discussion built on the morning breakout group discussions. It was an opportunity for participants to report back to everyone and to further explore choices, tensions and trade-offs together. Participants were then further divided into smaller sub-groups in which they created bold actions. The day ended with participants presenting bold action ideas that could be taken to help make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people.

THREE APPROACHES

To encourage discussion, participants were invited to consider three general approaches on how to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for young people. The approaches had been developed in a workshop with members of the Youth Advisory Panel for the *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy* of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The approaches stress different priorities, principles and values. They are not different policy options and they are not mutually exclusive. There are overlaps among the approaches. Participants were not asked to choose between them. Rather, they were asked to consider them as tools for dialogue, to serve as starting points to promote thought and discussion. The three approaches are summarized below:

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

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

This approach assumes that most young people leave the province not because they want to, but because they have to leave in order to find well-paying jobs and pay off their student loans. Once they leave, it is hard for them to return. This approach proposes that efforts be focused on strengthening and diversifying the economy in urban areas.

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

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

This approach assumes that people stay in the province through tough times because they value the province's quality of life, including the environment, the slower pace of life, the rural lifestyle, the sense of belonging to a community, and the rich cultural life and heritage. From this point of view, young people are concerned that programs, services and infrastructure are not able to keep up with the needs of people, especially in rural areas. If this pattern continues, it will be difficult to maintain the province's particular and valued quality of life, and youth will be more likely to leave and less likely to return.

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

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

Since the province's population loss will continue even if young people stay, it is very important that it be open to more in-migration of other Canadians and people from around the world. This approach raises a concern that although the province has a friendly culture, it does not always accept different people and lifestyles, which can be a reason not to move to the province or to stay. This approach places value on being welcoming and accepting of diversity in all its forms, such as people of different races, ethnicities, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

COMMON GROUND AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Common ground is the set of values, principles and strategies that the group members shared and agreed were important to respect and consider in moving the issue of youth retention and attraction forward.

Participants were not asked to prioritize the areas of common ground, so they are not listed in any particular order.

1. Valuing Good Work

Good quality jobs are very important for young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. Good jobs mean:

- A fair, comfortable wage that can cover the cost of living and meet people's needs
- A job and wage that reflect their skills and professional requirements
- A secure, permanent, full-time job
- Benefits such as pension, health plan and dental plan
- Opportunities for growth and promotion

Although participants value good jobs with security and good benefits, most of them at the sessions in the province said they were willing to accept somewhat lower pay in order to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador and benefit from the province's quality of life. Faced with a trade-off between having a high-wage job away from home versus a lower-wage (but still "comfortable" wage) job at home in Newfoundland and Labrador, most participants would opt to stay.

The view that seems to be held by most of the participants is that it is preferable to have a comfortable wage and the type of lifestyle they have in the province (see Valuing Quality of Life below) than a job with higher wages away from home. Clearly, these participants link quality lifestyle with their homes and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Although most people supported this common ground at many of the dialogues, some participants said they would have to be offered more than what they were currently making in order to move back to the province. This difference is covered more fully under Areas of Divergence – Comfortable Wages vs. Competitive Wages.

Participants saw a quick move between school and work as very important to retaining people in Newfoundland and Labrador. The province needs a variety of entry-level jobs that do not require experience and allow people to pursue their careers. These jobs should provide a fair opportunity for every one. In addition, the education system needs to do more to provide career information and better preparation for the labour market in the province.

"There is a vicious, crazy cycle. You cannot get a job without experience and you cannot get experience without a job."

Gander Participant

2. Valuing and Sustaining Newfoundland and Labrador's Quality of Life and Rural Lifestyle

Participants value the quality of life that they enjoy in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly the rural lifestyle of its small towns and villages. They see it as worth keeping and sustaining. They feel it is key to both keeping young people in the province and bringing them back.

Quality of life means a variety of things to participants:

- Living in a safe and secure community – where children can play freely
- A strong sense of family
- A strong sense of community – being able to trust your neighbours and get support
- Access to the outdoors
- Generosity
- Small town lifestyles.

Quality of life means different things to different people. For many participants, a rural lifestyle is key to the quality of life. For others – mostly the session participants in larger urban centres such as St. John's and Ottawa – being able to enjoy a variety of activities such as movies, other cultural events, pubs and nightlife, was also very important. In St. John's participants felt that the city should not grow bigger because it would prevent people from taking part in the outdoors and the rural lifestyle. They also felt it would bring more “big city” problems.

Participants wanted the government to ensure that, as urban areas expand, social problems, like crime and pollution, do not get out of hand and the environment is not destroyed.

3. Valuing the Environment

Participants highly value the environment, particularly because it is critical to quality of life and rural living.

They advise that the quality of the services which maintain the environment should be improved. These include:

- Cleaning up the environment – trash removal/pick-up
- Adopting recycling and composting programs
- Park preservation to protect the “pristineness” of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Participants advise that the pristine environment must be protected by the law. It is an important resource that creates recreation/entertainment/tourism activities. It also produces economic gains by creating jobs in natural resource industries, such as mining, wind and water power, in an environmentally friendly manner.

“I moved to Kitchener five years ago. At first it was nice. I was exposed to new ideas and learned a lot. But after a while I found that you sleep and work and eat. There is no life. After that, I was prepared to come back to Newfoundland [and Labrador] and work at minimum wage.”

Hawke's Bay Participant

“We do not want big industries to come here, ravage our resources and then leave.”

St. John's Participant

Participants feel that economic development must be long-term, varied and environmentally friendly. Given the choice, some would choose to protect the environment rather than exploit it for short-term economic gain.

4. Valuing Accessible and Practical Service Delivery

Young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, both in larger urban centres and in smaller regions especially in Labrador, highly value access to a range of affordable services. There is wide agreement that services should be provided throughout the province that is in the regions as well as in St John's. These services include:

- Social services
- Health care services, such as doctors, child birth, specialized care, hospitals
- Transportation, including paved roads, improved ferry service, cheaper air fares, train and bus services
- Recreational and entertainment activities for children and teenagers
- Daycare
- Education – primary, secondary and post-secondary
- Water and sewers
- Banking services
- Superstores
- Affordable housing, particularly in Labrador.

Participants also think that how services are provided should be practical and realistic. Within regions, there should be a large enough population and an economic base to support the services offered. Participants were willing to travel a certain distance to get services that were not essential. However, there were differences of opinion on how best to deliver services. This is further explored under Areas of Divergence – Investing in Larger Centres vs. Investing in Rural Communities.

5. Valuing Economic Development for All and for the Long-Term

Participants believe that the economic boom should be managed so that the population benefits in the long-term. They are not interested in a boom-and-bust type of economy. They see a role for government in pacing and shaping economic development, creating a stable economy that will benefit future generations. For example, the government could take measures that would help communities with boom industries to survive when the boom is over. Oil revenues could be used to support people living in communities whose populations are decreasing.

Building a diversified economy that does not depend on a single resource is valued. Participants recognize that oil and gas are non-renewable resources and they do not want the province to depend solely on them.

The fishery was rarely discussed in the sessions. However, participants agreed that it should be recognized as part of Newfoundland and Labrador culture and supported when it is an active healthy industry. But it should not be the exclusive focus of economic development activities.

“When I was pregnant, for four months, I traveled to St. John’s weekly to see a doctor.”

Marystown Participant

“You have to accept some tradeoffs when living in a small town. You give up something.”

Marystown Participant

“Quick fixes are not going to fix anything.”

Grand Falls-Windsor Participant

“The labour market focuses too much on right here, right now. Voisey’s Bay, Hebron, these are all good opportunities but will we always need 5,000 welders in the province? We need to have a variety of work, not just going with the times like we did with the fisheries.”

Corner Brook Participant

6. Valuing Education

Participants place a high value on making all types of post-secondary education affordable. The issue of student debt arose in virtually every location. Participants noted that two of the reasons for the crippling student debt load are the high cost of transportation across the province and housing for those who must leave home to study.

In general, they feel that education and training programs should be open to all and should be readily available to those in rural areas. As well, they thought financial help was crucial to avoiding high student debt and increasing the number of students taking post-secondary education and training.

Participants also value education that leads to a job. They want an education system that balances academic learning with work experience. This would help students get into the workforce.

Young adults feel it is important that they be able to transfer their education diplomas, degrees and skills to other provinces. This was particularly important for people with trade certificates.

"I am graduating from Nursing with \$52,000 student debt. I was offered a signing bonus of \$90,000 in Alberta. I don't want to leave but I have to pay off my student debt."

Stephenville Participant

"Education should provide on the job training. That way we will be able to gain experience and get a job here in Newfoundland [and Labrador]."

Corner Brook Participant

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Areas of divergence means those issues on which the groups could not agree, or where there was some level of agreement but there were also tensions and trade-offs between different values. The following shows the major areas of divergence and some of the trade-offs that were suggested in the deliberative dialogue sessions. They are not presented in any order of preference or importance.

1. Investing in Larger Centres vs. Investing in Rural Communities

As mentioned in the Common Ground, participants value having a range of affordable services near where they live. Further, they believe they should be practical and realistic. Services should be offered in areas where there is a large enough population to use them.

However, participants' opinions differed on how services should be delivered. They understood that there are challenges in providing services in a province with a large number of communities spread over a vast geographical area.

The sessions provided three different views on how services should be delivered.

1. There should be regional hubs, which were discussed in many of the dialogues
2. All rural areas should have the services they need and deserve.
3. Communities should share services throughout a region.

When discussing this question, it was clear that there were various views even on the definition of what is urban and what is rural. Participants saw St. John's and Corner Brook as urban centres. But for some people, towns such as Gander, Clarenville and Marystown were considered urban as they were the larger places in the region. Others considered them rural because of their relatively small population. For this discussion, we will call the larger towns in each region, regional hubs, compared to smaller rural communities.

Many participants wanted services to be centred in regional hubs, which would also be the focus of economic development. This would allow smaller communities around the hubs to benefit from jobs and services there. Smaller communities could still develop their economies around specific industries or tourism. People who chose to live in smaller communities would know that there would be fewer services available in their communities and they would have to travel to get other services. This was seen as an acceptable trade-off and choice, as long as the lower level of services would include access to basic emergency and medical services.

Many believed this model could work and it would allow the regions to thrive. Many participants in St. John's supported this model as they did not want the St. John's Metropolitan Area to grow bigger. They saw the development of other regions as important for maintaining the Newfoundland and Labrador culture and lifestyle.

"The population is too sparsely spread out. We have to consolidate. If not, we will lose it all."

Carbonear Participant

Participants recognized that not all small communities would survive under such a model. Participants felt it was important to recognize the problems and the pain of losing small communities, and that it was important to support communities and people going through difficult times. But it was also seen as the only way for rural Newfoundland and Labrador to survive.

For a few participants, the rural lifestyle in small communities was important to preserve and protect. They felt that people living in the small rural communities deserve and are entitled to the same services as in the other centres. They were not prepared to accept that some of the services would not be available.

Another model participants proposed was that instead of regional hubs, services be spread across various communities equally and shared. Each community would have certain services and people would have to travel to the other communities for other services. This way, small communities would survive and be encouraged to collaborate, breaking barriers that exist between communities.

Participants recognized that decisions would have to be made on which services should be provided at the rural community level, which services should be shared in a region (either in a hub or in various small communities), and which services would be available only in large urban centres.

2. Comfortable Wages vs. Competitive Wages

As mentioned in the Common Ground section, a very common view was that participants would accept comfortable wages if they could remain in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, people had different ideas on what was a comfortable wage and how it compared to competitive wages in other parts of Canada and in the world.

The vast majority of participants would accept a lower salary to enjoy the quality of life in Newfoundland and Labrador. A comfortable salary would allow them to afford decent housing, pay their bills and pay their student debt. For others, this was not enough for their definition of quality of life. They need to enjoy other activities, such as entertainment and travel.

Participants in Fort McMurray went further and noted that they would settle for a job that paid half of what they were making there in order to return home, as they would still be making enough to live comfortably back home. But they did not feel they could find those wages back home.

Other participants needed salaries that were competitive with other parts of Canada or outside. They were not prepared to accept a lower salary to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. They considered that their skills and experience needed to be recognized. Some of them felt that for too long, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have accepted what they could get rather than what they deserved. They believed that comfortable wages will not attract people to Newfoundland and Labrador; competitive wages and even higher wages are needed.

"I am deathly afraid that in 50 years it will be the province of St. John's and Labrador."

Gander Participant

"I don't care how much money I make, as long as I can live comfortably. Living paycheque to paycheque is not the way to live, but if I can make enough money to support my family, that's enough for me."

Gander Participant

"I'd be leaving a lot behind here. You'd have to offer me more than I'm making here [to move back home]."

Ottawa Participant

For most participants, this discussion clearly relates to the cost of living. If the cost of living increases, the wages also have to rise to allow people to enjoy the same lifestyle. In some areas, participants noted that recently, the cost of living had increased a lot and it was becoming an issue, especially for housing.

3. Dealing with Diversity I: Equality for All in the Job Market vs. Privileging Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the Job Market

Participants disagreed on how tolerant Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are of newcomers and people with diverse backgrounds. For some, diversity is a positive thing. A number believed that increased competition for jobs would raise the bar on the general skill level needed.

However, some questioned how much is too much. In several dialogues, participants wondered how many newcomers the province can absorb and where they should come from. Some wondered if the province wants or needs any newcomers. But the majority saw benefits in welcoming newcomers into the community and accepting more diversity.

Some pointed out that as far as the job market is concerned, what is important are a person's skills and experience, not where he/she comes from. In that sense, everybody should be given a fair and equal chance. In St. John's, a large majority of the participants agreed that jobs should be open to all.

Others expressed the view that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should come first when it comes to jobs. They think that it will take a long time for the current economic boom to have a positive impact on their lives and job opportunities. They feel that Newfoundland and Labrador has been hard done by and that its people have often had to leave the province in order to get jobs, due to economic circumstances, not choice. They feel that when jobs are available, it is only fair that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have first priority. The emphasis should be on bringing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians back home rather than on attracting newcomers or "outsiders."

Some also felt that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should have priority in post-secondary institutions; that is, foreign students should not be given priority over Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, especially in programs such as medicine.

Part of this discussion was about who is a "Newfoundlander and Labradorian." Would someone born in another province who has lived in Newfoundland and Labrador for 10 years be given priority? Would someone born in Newfoundland and Labrador but who has lived away for five years be given priority? They came to no conclusion on this.

"Diversity is key to creativity."

Carbonear Participant

"You gotta keep your house in order before you can have company."

St. John's Participant

"I am a Newfoundlander [and Labradorian] so I should have first crack."

Fort McMurray Participant

4. Dealing with Diversity II: Attracting and Accommodating Newcomers vs. Protecting Newfoundland and Labrador Culture

A number of participants talked about the older generation having more difficulty accepting newcomers. But it is clear that this generation has mixed feelings towards diversity as well, and the impact it may have on Newfoundland and Labrador's culture.

- Some participants were fearful of losing their culture with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants. They wanted to maintain and protect traditional Newfoundland and Labrador culture, such as its language, music and entertainment.
- Others stressed that being welcoming to others is part of their cultural tradition. They considered the province's culture to be healthy and vibrant, even with the addition of newcomers.
- Others pointed out that Newfoundland and Labrador was built by immigrants and that the culture has changed and expanded over the years. They thought that it would be a good thing for the culture if it reflected more ethnic diversity.
- Others felt that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not exposed to cultural diversity enough. They thought a change in attitude should be encouraged so that the province might become more accepting of differences.

Some participants saw aspects of the province's culture as being not so attractive. For example, they noted that some Newfoundlanders and Labradorians suffer from an inferiority complex. The problem lies in the stereotypes that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have of their own people.

The suggestion was made, too, that there is a polite, low key or even open racism in Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants gave examples where they have seen or experienced different forms of racism. Someone from a visible minority group who had grown up in Newfoundland and Labrador mentioned that he wanted to raise his children in a place with more diversity and openness than was available here. He was leaving the province to go to medical school.

Racism towards Aboriginals received particular attention. Some Aboriginal people experience bitterness and resentment from others in the province because of the benefits and services they receive from the federal government. Two Inuit participants said that they have been directly affected by racism, including in their workplace.

It was also frequently mentioned that the flip-side of close-knit communities and cultures is that people from other parts of the province, let alone from other parts of the country or diverse cultural backgrounds, are not accepted. Many participants mentioned that it is very difficult to be accepted if your lifestyle is different. People with different sexual orientation talked about being discriminated against. So did people with different eating habits, such as vegetarians or vegans, or with non-traditional careers, such as a female mechanic or a male nurse.

"There's huge racism against people from the First Nations and other aboriginal people. We don't like to talk about it because it's ugly, but it's there."

Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Participant

"Sometimes the strength of community/identity gets in the way of sharing and working together."

Marystown Participant

"My spouse is a CFA [Come from Away]. And it has not been easy to integrate into the Newfoundland and Labrador culture."

Clareville Participant

5. Going vs. Staying

The decision to either go or stay in Newfoundland and Labrador is often a difficult one. People leave for various reasons:

- To pay off their student debt
- To find a good job
- To provide for their families
- To explore other places and find adventure outside of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some leave temporarily, others permanently and a large number of people rotate – spending some weeks working outside and some weeks inside the province.

Some participants saw moving away as a natural step in the growth of young people and thought it should be encouraged. It allows people to understand different cultures and to develop their skills and expertise. In the end, it benefits Newfoundland and Labrador when they return and it should be a key focus to attract these types of young people back.

Others saw the hundreds or thousands of young people leaving the province as deeply disturbing. Among other things, they are aware of the problems and threats faced by the families left behind. And they are concerned about people not returning. They thought it would be better for the province to make the necessary investments to encourage people to stay in the first place.

Some participants noted that rotation work is now very much a part of the way of life in Newfoundland and Labrador. They saw real benefits, such as money coming into the local economy and providing families with a fair living. But they also recognized very real problems, such as increased drug use and crime, as well as workers not being there for key family events – their children’s milestones – and the difficulties of family life with one parent constantly away. They noted that, in some cases, relationships have been torn apart by lonely partners looking to others for comfort, resulting in infidelity and divorce.

“It’s almost bred into kids now – the question is not, ‘what are you going to do?’ it’s ‘where are you going?’”

Gander Participant

“I am willing to trade [earning more] money away for keeping the family unit together and seeing the first day of school of my children.”

Marystown Participant

BOLD ACTIONS

Bold actions are the creative ideas and strategies that Newfoundland and Labrador could use to become a province of choice for young people. The following are the bold actions, grouped by category, that the participants proposed. Some were phrased generally while others were more specific.

Most often, participants named assistance for education (debt relief) as an important bold action, followed by business development and transportation. They are presented here from the topics where the most bold actions were suggested, to those with fewer bold actions.

Education

Overwhelmingly, the education proposals addressed affordability. Many participants felt that student debt was an important factor in young people's decision to leave the province. They needed to get a higher-paying job so they could pay their debt off faster. Participants want the provincial government to make education more affordable. The specific proposals ranged widely:

- Provide free education for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians
- Decrease tuition fees as a student gets closer to graduation
- Give rewards for exceptional performance
- Offer more and longer co-op and work terms
- Set up a program that supports students with promising careers through government subsidies and job security.

Many participants mentioned measures to deal with student debt. Some want the provincial government to simply forgive their debt, while others made less dramatic proposals. For instance:

- Loans to students be interest-free or that loans carry a low interest rate if the student agrees to stay in the province
- Students be given back 20% of the loan for each year of schooling they complete
- Students be excused from paying income tax until the loan is repaid in full.

Several participants linked education and employment. For instance, it was suggested that governments fund on-the-job training programs and apprenticeships.

Business Development

Participants suggested a number of ideas for business development in order to generate quality jobs in a wider selection of careers. For example:

- Fund private business ventures that promote local economic growth and that encourage industries to set up in strategic locations in the province.

There were also proposals to encourage those wanting to set up their own businesses. For example:

- Create an Entrepreneurs' Program that would provide grants to cover 30% of business start-up costs. A portion would be paid back if the business succeeds. Also, team up with insurance companies to provide entrepreneurs with benefits at lower rates, and provide the individual with bankruptcy protection, decreasing over time.
- Offer incentives to new and expanding business owners, such as tax breaks, business incubators, salary subsidies, help with international trade.

Some business development bold actions addressed Newfoundland and Labrador's natural resources. For example:

- Become a world leader in fish farming and agriculture; develop our own brand of gasoline and reinvest in marble mining.
- Place greater emphasis on tourism development. This could include creating boat tour businesses, lobster fishing businesses, and businesses that would provide guided ski-do tours of the province's mountains.
- Create a strategy to diversify the economy that would reduce the province's dependence on one or two natural resources and would attract workers and employers.

The only proposal on the environment called for the construction of a manufacturing plant to recycle paper and saw-mill by-products. Proposals for protecting the environment follow in a later section.

Transportation

Almost all of the proposals on transportation dealt with moving residents more quickly and efficiently, at an affordable cost. Participants said they felt isolated in small rural communities because of the lack of convenient transportation, such as paved roads or quick ferries, and because transportation services are too expensive. Participants felt that young people were moving out of rural areas and leaving the province because of this isolation and because they could not get the things they need for themselves and their families. They recommended that the government:

- Design an improved, efficient version of the "Newfie Bullet" as part of a provincial, environmentally friendly public transportation programme.
- Provide public transportation in Labrador to access essential services. The province should manage, the federal government should subsidize, and companies should cooperate.
- Provide an affordable, accessible, reliable intra-provincial public transportation system, including air, train, ferry/boat, and bus travel, to make service hubs more accessible to those living in remote areas and to promote tourism. Transportation fees would be regulated and kept low.

The only proposal not related to the movement of people called for the construction of containers for easy shipping and transportation of goods.

Jobs and Wages

Although entry-level jobs were highly valued in common ground discussions, only a few bold action ideas addressed the creation of entry-level jobs. One bold action argued that employers could attract entry-level workers by offering extended work contracts, a signing bonus, and competitive salaries and incentives. Similarly, it was proposed that both the minimum wage and the wages of entry-level jobs be increased.

Other proposals had a different approach. They focused on help for businesses, recommending in one case that business taxes be cut but that 75% of the tax cut go to wage increases. In the second proposal, the government would provide financial support for businesses to help them increase salaries.

Two other proposals called for:

- Improving work life by increasing pensions, based on the number of years lived in the province; lengthening paid vacations to one month; guaranteeing a minimum income; providing free prescription drugs; providing adequate child care; basing energy rates on income; and setting up full environmental programs.

- Setting up a system to provide young people with experience in a job without requiring them to commit to it; government should fund young people who wish to pursue their interests and turn them into a career.

Attracting Newcomers and Providing Incentives to Stay

Participants identified a number of ways to encourage people to come to the province. These applied to newcomers as well as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who had left, and also to those who are in the province.

Some proposals had to do with people's basic needs:

- Provide basic amenities, such as food, shelter and health care, for people who come to Newfoundland and Labrador to work – particularly for newcomers.
- Establish a central agency to transport workers, for free, from remote areas with few jobs to areas of province with skills shortages.
- Address the cost of living in rural areas; ensure access to basic necessities, especially affordable and good quality food.

Some proposals aimed at encouraging permanent settlement in the province included:

- Reduce mortgage rates for post-secondary graduates to encourage them to buy property and stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Provide benefits, such as tax breaks, for people who work outside the province and keep their homes and families in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Provide isolation pay or income supplements, create employment incentives to attract people to Newfoundland and Labrador such as decrease taxes, Living Outside Allowances (LOAs), bonuses, training/upgrading opportunities.

Social Services

Participants highly value social services, such as child care, affordable housing and most importantly, health care. They believe that the lack of services, particularly in small, rural communities, is a factor in deciding to leave the province for urban areas of the country where their needs and those of their family could be met.

Health Care

Proposals for health care mainly related to improving services in rural areas. For example:

- Fund a mobile doctor service to provide health care to rural areas with little or no access to health care services.
- Establish travelling clinics in rural communities that do not have medical services.

Child Care

- Provide government-run affordable and accessible community daycare centres, and increase wages for daycare workers.
- Introduce universal child care with 100% coverage tax free.

Housing

- Build affordable housing, as rent and housing prices have risen and housing is a basic necessity.

Decentralization of Government Services

- Decentralize services from the Avalon Peninsula and move them to selected hubs across the province. Which hubs are chosen should be determined by demographic, geographic and economic factors.

Environmental Protection

Participants highly value the environment. Their bold action ideas reflect an interest in protecting the environment through recycling programs and the development of clean energy. They feel recycling is an important service and a modern need for the province. Participants see the potential for quality job creation in the development of renewable energy, such as wind and solar power. They linked environmental protection to youth retention and attraction in that they do not want to lose the outdoor opportunities that are a key element of what they value in the province's quality of life.

Development of Recycling Programs

- Make Newfoundland and Labrador the recycling capital of the world by:
 - Developing the province's recycling infrastructure to be the best in Canada
 - Offering new incentives for using green items
 - Decreasing property taxes for building green
 - Developing and testing new green methods (wind and solar)
 - Offering educational opportunities creating new jobs
 - Attracting recycling manufacturing industries.
- Eliminate plastic and Styrofoam.

Alternative Energy Development

- Explore renewable energy sources, such as, wind or solar.
- Use greener energy sources that benefit the people – harvest wind energy, utilize hydro electric power; use renewable resources.

Community Development

Participants were worried about keeping the unique rural lifestyle alive. To keep their rural towns thriving and to keep young people in small towns, participants suggested bold actions related to community development.

- Establish a community resource centre in every rural town to open up new opportunities in education, sports, environmental matters, community events and career development.
- Turn rural community facilities into multi-functional businesses, for example, use buildings for recreation centres, storage centres, even daycare centres.

Diversity

Participants largely found common ground on valuing diversity and openness to others. Although they did not agree on the extent of accommodation and how to proceed, many participants saw a need for education on diversity.

- Develop community education centres where youth are valued for their differences. Youth can help educate community members on diversity and integrate newcomers into the community.
- Encourage immigration to diversify the population.

Image and Perception of the Province

Some proposals addressed the need to change how Newfoundland and Labrador is seen, both within and outside the province. Participants feel that within the province, people grow up thinking that there are no opportunities and are told they should leave to become successful. Participants also feel that when Newfoundlanders and Labradorians travel elsewhere, they come across negative stereotypes about the province and people. They feel these perceptions and the image of the province need to change, as expressed in these bold actions:

- Develop a communication plan to market the opportunities the province has to offer both inside and outside of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Set up exchanges nationally and internationally to promote Newfoundland and Labrador culture.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the dialogue sessions we observed over and over the passion and pride that young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have for their province. They care deeply for the land they call home and appreciate that the provincial government has asked for their views early in the development of the *Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy*.

What this suggests is a tremendous willingness on the part of young people to be part of making Newfoundland and Labrador a province of choice for all. Participants actively discussed what is important for them and the hard choices and trade-offs that they are willing to make for the future of the province. They came up with very creative suggestions for bold actions to tackle the issue of youth retention and attraction. Their ideas were very thoughtful and impressive, ranging from tax incentives for parents needing child-care, to the creation of jobs for a post-boom environment, through to turning the province into the recycling capital of the world.

The results of the dialogues described in this report, including the bold actions, will be explored further at the Summit on November 14-15, 2008 in St. John's, NL. And the energy that participants showed during the dialogues is a good starting point for very interesting conversations ahead.

APPENDIX A.

Youth Dialogue Participation 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	Port au Choix/Hawke's Bay	30
Saturday, September 27	Fort McMurray, AB	10
Sunday, October 5	Ottawa, ON	44
TOTAL		484