

## Regionalization of Community Services across Canada



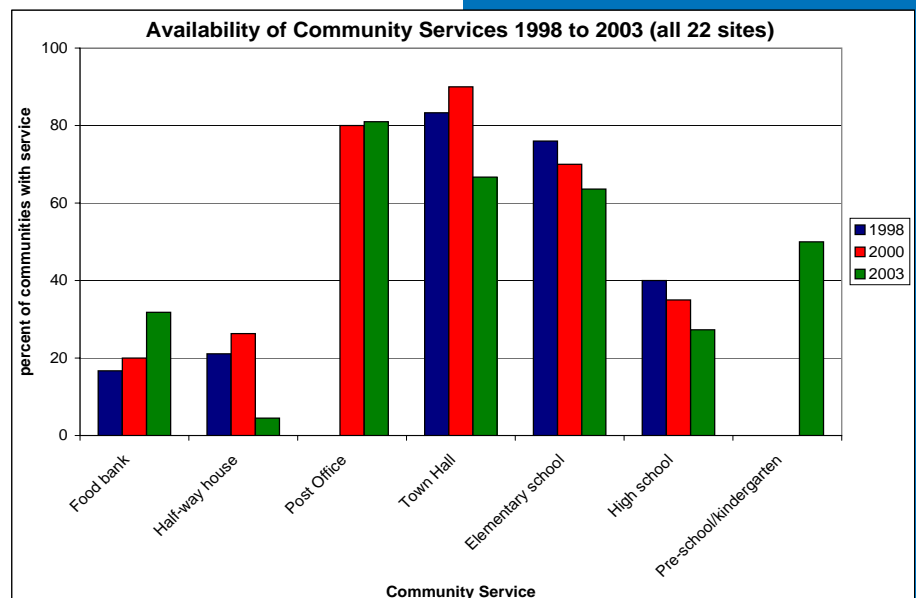
Services provide stability and quality of life in rural places; these, in turn, provide a strong base for attracting economic activity, retaining residents, and maintaining communities. Rural and small town services are especially critical to community sustainability during times of economic and social change.

Services in small places face very specific accessibility and availability issues. Rural Canada, with its large distances and low population densities, faces a challenge to maintain services with higher delivery costs relative to urban areas. This is exacerbated where population numbers are falling due to out-migration. Over the

past twenty years, government policy aimed at reducing public sector expenditures has included rural service reductions. The implications are reduced accessibility and availability of services in rural and small town

locations. Since 1998, the New Rural Economy Project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation has been tracking a range of community service changes in 22 sites across Canada.

Community services are an important local foundation, especially during times of economic and social stress. Such services provide an opportunity for engagement and interaction to build community development relationships. Some services, notably food banks, have become more available in the rural and small town sites examined. Town halls and post offices are the most frequently available government services in rural and small town



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houses is decreasing.

With the exception of half-way houses, community services are available within 30 minutes of at least half of our study the sites across Canada. As well, a much wider range of educational services are available within 30 minutes of many of the sites.

Changes in community service availability have

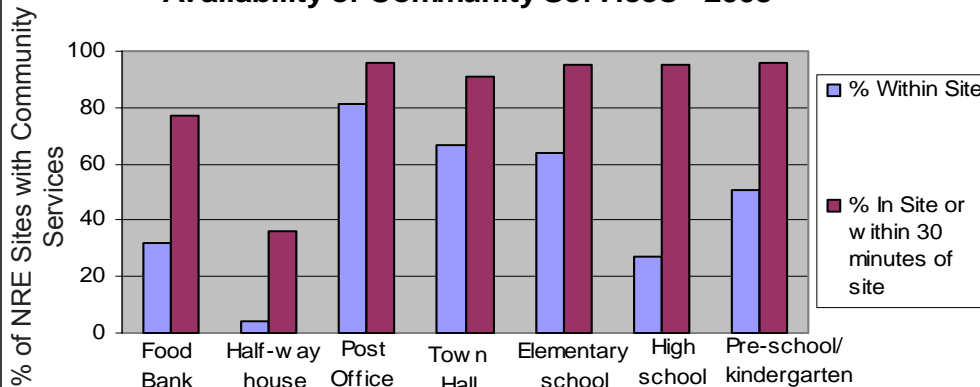
included not just reductions within sites but also likely relocation to a regional centre. Overall, tracking change across

places. Examining change over the last five years reveals that the availability of educational services and half-way

these rural and small town places indicates that community service provision is generally declining. Such declines are occurring in an arena of social and economic restructuring in an increasingly global economy. This places pressures on residents and businesses who must travel to nearby centres to access certain services. The challenge for rural and small town Canada will be to enhance local quality of life that will retain residents and businesses within these places. Such places will need to explore innovative ways, through new technologies or partnerships, to provide and improve services that will be important to their communities in an era of increased specialization and regionalization.

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**Availability of Community Services - 2003**



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