



**Initiative on the New Economy**

**Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Places:  
A Report for Mackenzie, B.C.**

**Greg Halseth and Laura Ryser  
Rural and Small Town Studies Program  
University of Northern British Columbia  
Prince George, B.C.**

**Summer 2003**



A project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation  
Un projet de Fondation Canadienne sur la Restructuration Rurale

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

	Page Number
Initiative on the New Economy - About the Project	3
About the Service Inventory	4
Availability	5
Site Description - Mackenzie, B.C.	6
Population Profile - Mackenzie, B.C.	7
Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Places	8
Education	8
Health	9
Protection Services	10
Legal Services	11
Financial Services	11
Communications	12
Elderly and Childcare Services	13
Government Services	13
Community Services	14
Transportation	15
Recreational Services	16
Shopping	17
Economic Development Organizations	18
Housing	19
Challenges and Opportunities for Mackenzie, B.C.	19
Sources of Interest	21

## INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY - ABOUT THE PROJECT

---

The *Initiative on the New Economy* project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation works closely with residents, service providers, voluntary organizations, business members, and decision makers to identify factors that contribute to building capacity in rural and small town Canada. Capacity is the ability of people to mobilize their assets and resources to cope with stress and transition, or to capitalize on opportunities. Such capacity is built from trust and relationships grounded in institutions, organizations, businesses, and services alike. The Initiative on the New Economy project is built on four key themes to explore capacity including *local governance, communications, services, and the environment*. This report explores the relationship between services and capacity.

The Services Research Centre conducted site profile surveys in the summer of 2003. This is the third survey conducted since 1998 with a goal to track services over time. Services play two key functions in building capacity. First, services help rural and small town places to cope with restructuring and transition as a result of economic downturns or closures. Job losses stemming from industrial restructuring can place increased demands on local services for education and training, counselling, health care, and other support services. Without such services, residents would have to cope with the additional burden of having to leave their town to access assistance. Job and service losses present a significant challenge to rural and small town places working on revitalization.

Second, services provide opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust. Together, these can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. For example, schools or seniors' centres can act as multi-functional facilities for the community where local volunteer groups, sporting clubs, local theatre, and others can do their work in the absence of other facilities. Another example might be the way that post offices can act as a one-stop shop for a range of government services. This report focuses on the current service provision levels in rural and small town Canada. In particular, this report will compare the availability of services in Mackenzie, B.C. with services available in other research sites across Canada, as well as with services available in other study sites within Western Canada. In each table in this report, the availability of services in Mackenzie is compared to the 22 sites surveyed across Canada and to the 8 study sites in Western Canada.

## ABOUT THE SERVICE INVENTORY

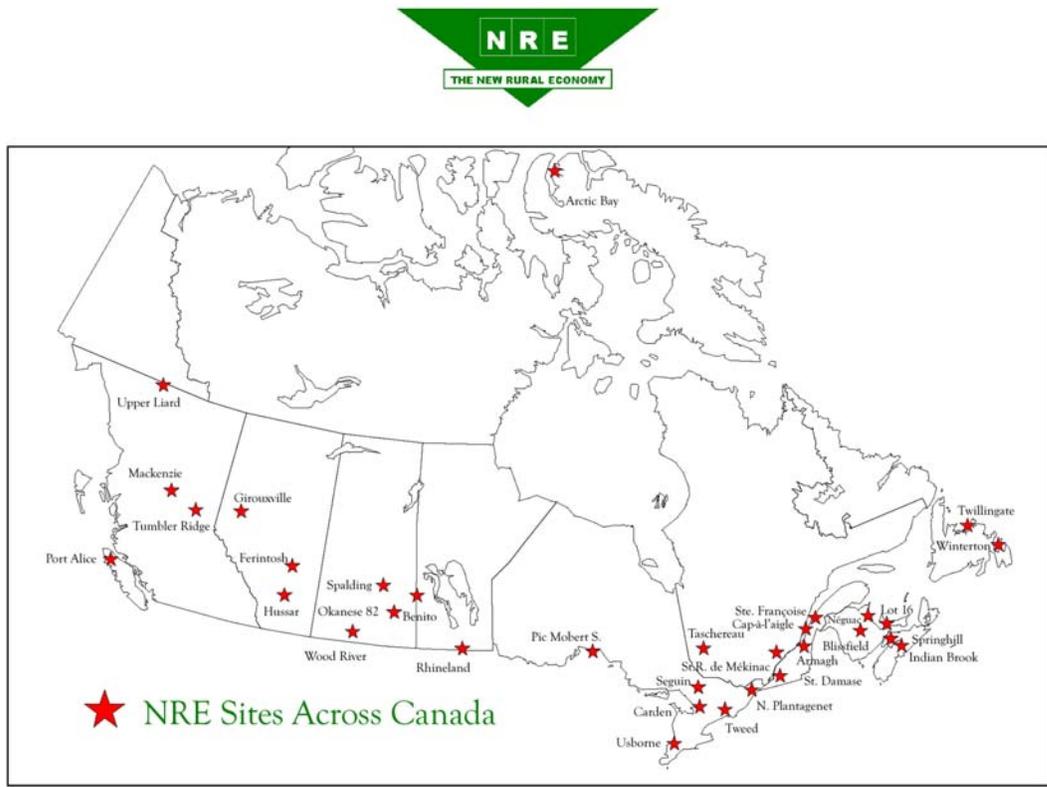
---

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation has been conducting research in 32 rural and small town sites from across Canada. These sites form a type of “rural observatory” in which aspects of the *Initiative on the New Economy* project may be examined. The sites participating in this project reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape, and include forestry and mining towns, farming communities, and tourism towns. Furthermore, some of these places are located adjacent to metropolitan areas, while others are more isolated.

In the summer of 2003, researchers visited 22 sites across Canada to update a service provision inventory. Data were collected to examine the availability of a range of services including:

- education
- health
- protection services
- legal
- business services
- communication
- elderly and childcare
- government

- community
- transportation
- recreational
- basic shopping
- commercial shopping
- economic development organizations
- housing



## AVAILABILITY

---

Copies of all site reports on services were distributed within participating sites. Additionally, copies have been posted on the INE website ([nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca)) and on Greg Halseth's website (<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>).

Copies of the larger *Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Canada* report are available in a number of locations. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Weller Library or can be accessed on Greg Halseth's website: <http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>. Copies are also available on the website of the Initiative of the New Economy at: [nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca).

For further information about this report or other available reports on services, please contact Greg Halseth at:

Geography Program  
University of Northern British Columbia  
3333 University Way  
Prince George, B.C.  
V2N 4Z9

Telephone: (250) 960-5826  
E-mail: [halseth@unbc.ca](mailto:halseth@unbc.ca)

For further information about other INE reports, please contact Bill Reimer at:

Initiative on the New Economy  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
1455 boul. de Maisonneuve O.  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec  
H3G 1M8

Telephone: (514) 848-2424  
E-mail: [reimer@vax2.concordia.ca](mailto:reimer@vax2.concordia.ca)  
Website : [www.nre.concordia.ca](http://www.nre.concordia.ca)

**Booklet Contributors:** Greg Halseth, Laura Ryser, Virginia Pow, Nora King, Onkar Buttar, and Kelly Giesbrecht.

**Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council - Initiative on the New Economy**

**INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY  
SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES: A REPORT FOR MACKENZIE, B.C.**

---

**Site Description - Mackenzie, B.C.**

Mackenzie is a resource-dependent, single-industry, “instant town”. Located in north-central British Columbia, the community was founded in 1966 in conjunction with the massive hydroelectric project which created the Williston Lake reservoir. The Mackenzie townsite was developed to be the processing centre for a regional forest industry. At present, two large sawmills (Abitibi-Consolidated and Slocan Forest Products), a pulp mill facility (Pope and Talbot) and a pulp and paper plant (Abitibi-Consolidated) provide nearly all basic sector employment. With a local population (2001) of approximately 5,200 people, a support, service, and local administration economy has also developed. The town was planned and developed by the original forest industry company (British Columbia Forest Products) using new town planning principles.

As a centre for forestry activities, Mackenzie has certainly developed a significant industrial base including the recent addition of a number of value-added forest products firms. Economic diversification has been more limited, but includes servicing regional mining operations and seasonal tourism.

Three ‘geographies’ are important in local economic development planning: 1) dependence upon the forest industry sector continues, 2) its location about two hours drive north of Prince George generates retail sector leakage, and 3) its location 20+ kilometres off the main highway has thus far limited opportunities to take advantage of passing tourist and commercial traffic. At present, community leaders and residents are working to expand and diversify the local economic base.



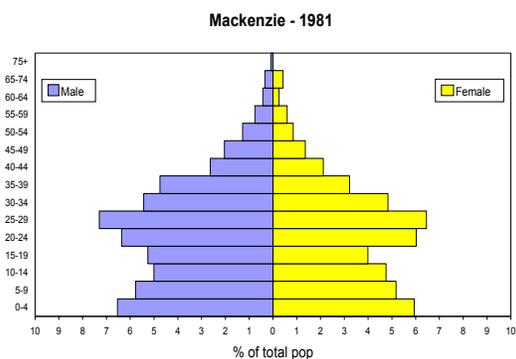
## POPULATION PROFILE - MACKENZIE, B.C.

The population of Mackenzie, B.C. declined from 5,977 residents in 1996 to 5,205 residents in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001). Overall, it still has a young, family oriented population.

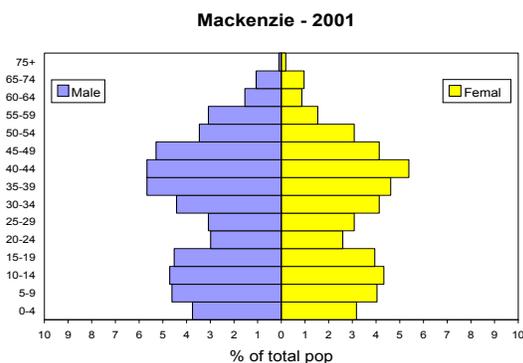
Population	Site: Mackenzie		
	Total	Male	Female
Population in 2001	5,205	2,815	2,395
Population in 1996	5,997	3,255	2,740
1996 to 2001 population change (%)	-13.2%	-13.5%	-12.6%
Total - All persons	5,205	2,815	2,395
Age 0-4	355	195	160
Age 5-14	920	490	430
Age 15-19	440	240	205
Age 20-24	290	155	140
Age 25-44	1,885	990	895
Age 45-54	835	460	375
Age 55-64	355	235	120
Age 65-74	100	55	50
Age 75-84	10	10	5
Age 85 and over	5	0	5
Median age of the population	32.9	33.5	32.2

Source: Statistics Canada 2001.

In addition to its family population, Mackenzie now also has a growing population of seniors. This will have important implications for providing services to a population with a growing range of education, health, social, transportation, housing, and shopping needs.



Source: Statistics Canada 1981.



Source: Statistics Canada 2001.

## SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES

---

Services play an important role in retaining and attracting residents and businesses as they enhance local quality of life. However, rural and small town places across Canada are experiencing tremendous change stemming from economic and social restructuring in an increasing global economy. As a result, some small towns have been experiencing population declines. At the same time, federal and provincial government policies have been withdrawing some of the service infrastructure that can provide a foundation for revitalizing rural and small town places and assist residents to cope with stress. Some rural and small town places adjusted to transition through establishing innovative services or diversifying their local economies. These types of innovation suggest one way by which services help to build capacity within a place.

Services also help to build capacity by providing opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust, which subsequently can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. Together, services can help to enhance local quality of life and mitigate out-migration from rural and small town places.

### Educational Services

Educational institutions are playing a changing role in maintaining quality of life in rural and small town places. Schools have provided other amenities through their libraries, theatres, and art galleries in places that would otherwise not have access to such services. They have also played a larger economic development role. Community colleges can provide skilled and professional workers, act as a broker of services, and act as a repository of information. They can also design programs and services that are relevant and respond to the changing labour market conditions of small places.

**Table 1: Availability of Education Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Pre-school/kindergarten	50.0%	62.5%	✓
Elementary school	63.6%	62.5%	✓
High school	27.3%	37.5%	✓
CEGEP / College	18.2%	25.0%	✓
Continuing Education	27.3%	37.5%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Results indicate that educational services are available in a greater proportion of sites in Western Canada when compared to the total sites across Canada (Table 1). Furthermore, more than half the sites in Western Canada provide early childhood educational services, including pre-school and elementary school services. Mackenzie provides a wide range of educational services to its

residents. As such, it is well equipped to cope with the needs of its young population, as well as any demands for retraining that may be required as a result of economic change. For example, the College of New Caledonia offers forest recreation, first aid, and university transfer credit courses that are oriented towards local needs. Slocan Learning Centre provides additional professional development for its employees.

## Health Services

Health services play an important role in attracting new labour and retaining residents. However, during times of economic and social restructuring, closures in hospitals and the centralization of physical and mental health services can be difficult on the elderly and the poor who do not have access to a vehicle and who live in a place with limited transportation services. However, it is not just the utility of health services that is of concern, but also the potential loss of health care jobs that can lead to a further decline in the local economy and population.

**Table 2a: Availability of Health Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Hospital	18.2%	25.0%	✓
Health centre / CLSC	27.3%	25.0%	✓
Medical clinic	40.9%	50.0%	✓
Blood / urine testing facility	36.4%	37.5%	✓
X-ray facility	22.7%	37.5%	✓
Baby delivery facility	4.5%	12.5%	✓
CT scan facility	0.0%	0.0%	
Pharmacy	40.9%	37.5%	✓
Ambulance	36.4%	37.5%	✓
Emergency services	18.2%	25.0%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Health care facilities are limited in most of the rural and small town places examined (Table 2a). Of particular interest is that fewer than 40% of sites have a health centre, hospital, or pharmacy, and just over one-third of the sites have ambulance services. This carries important implications for residents commuting for medical emergencies or health care reasons. However, medical facilities are generally more available in Western Canadian sites when compared to the national sample. In Mackenzie, all of the health care facilities examined are available with the exception of a CT scan facility. Residents must commute more than thirty minutes to the nearest regional centre in Prince George to access a CT scan facility.

The availability of health care professionals is also limited in small places (Table 2b). In fact, only home care visits are available in more than half of the sites. Even those services deemed as essential, such as doctors, are only located in just over 35% of the sites across Canada. Sites in

Western Canada are slightly better equipped with health care professionals when compared to the national sample. The majority of sites in Western Canada have doctors, home care visits, a public health nurse, and even speech therapy.

**Table 2b: Availability of Health Professionals - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Doctors	36.4%	50.0%	✓
Nurses	36.4%	37.5%	✓
Dentists	27.3%	12.5%	✓
Dental surgeons	9.1%	0.0%	
Optometrists	18.2%	25.0%	✓
Home care visits	54.5%	75.0%	✓
VON	13.6%	0.0%	
Social workers	22.7%	12.5%	✓
Public health nurse	31.8%	50.0%	✓
Physiotherapy	22.7%	25.0%	
Speech therapy	31.8%	50.0%	✓
Occupational therapy	13.6%	12.5%	
Respite care	22.7%	12.5%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

The delivery of professional health services has been an important issue for Mackenzie residents for a long time. Despite these concerns, however, the District of Mackenzie has a strong presence of health services when compared to sites across Canada, including sites in Western Canada. For specialized health services, such as a dental surgeon, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy, residents must commute approximately 180 kilometres to the regional centre of Prince George.

### Protection Services

Protection services contribute to community capacity in a number of ways. For example, volunteer fire departments and various ‘crime watch’ programs provide opportunities for community involvement and interaction, both of which can build trust and leadership.

Protection services are more available than most other service categories (Table 3). Most notably, fire departments and 911 are in more than half the sites across Canada, and these services are available in Mackenzie, B.C. Although policing services are in Mackenzie, local police or RCMP services are limited in sites across Canada overall, including sites in Western Canada. Although a neighbourhood watch program and a rural crime watch program are not available in Mackenzie, local businesses have put together a Community Policing Advisory Committee.

**Table 3: Availability of Protection Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Police (Local / RCMP)	22.7%	25.0%	✓
Fire department	68.2%	87.5%	✓
911 emergency line	86.4%	100.0%	✓
Neighbourhood Watch	31.8%	37.5%	
Rural Crime Watch	13.6%	25.0%	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

### Legal Services

Legal services are another example of specialized services that are often not found in rural areas. The absence of legal services has important implications as residents must commute to go to court, to access legal services to prepare wills or purchase real estate, or have important documents or affidavits signed.

Overall, legal services are very limited in the NRE sites across Canada (Table 4). In this case, half of the sites in Western Canada have a notary public. However, Mackenzie residents are able to enjoy a range of legal services within their own community.

**Table 4: Availability of Legal Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Lawyer	18.2%	12.5%	✓
Notary	40.9%	50.0%	✓
Court	18.2%	25.0%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

### Financial Services

Businesses also play a role in providing a range of activities that enhance the quality of life of a place, as well as the economic viability and stability of the place. Business members also play an important role in community development as they can provide leadership in volunteer groups. Small local businesses are also an important source for fundraisers and many sponsor specific local organizations or events.

**Table 5: Availability of Business Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Banks	36.4%	37.5%	✓
Credit Union / Caisse Populaire	50.0%	62.5%	
ATM	50.0%	62.5%	✓
Micro-financing	9.1%	25.0%	
Insurance office	50.0%	62.5%	✓
Industrial park	22.7%	37.5%	✓
Real estate	18.2%	12.5%	✓
Accounting	45.5%	42.9%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Overall, credit unions, ATMs, and insurance offices are found in half the sites across Canada (Table 5). More than half the Western Canada sites also have a credit union, ATMs, and insurance offices. This has important implications for not just retaining residents, but also for retaining and attracting businesses as well. Mackenzie residents enjoy a range of financial services including banking services, ATMs, and insurance, as well as real estate and accounting businesses. For Mackenzie residents that use a credit union or micro-financing services, they must commute to Prince George.

## Communications

Connectivity is crucial in the new economy. Communication services also allow residents to maintain contact with family and friends. With improved communication infrastructure, such as telephone services, Internet, and cell phone service, rural and small town places can attract businesses that no longer have to be located in cities, and they can improve local employment opportunities. They can also use communications services to support business networks.

**Table 6: Availability of Communication Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Cell phone – analog	86.4%	87.5%	✓
Cell phone – digital	40.9%	25.0%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Mackenzie residents and businesses benefit from the availability of both analog and digital cell phone service (Table 6). Overall, analog cell phone service is widely available across the NRE sites in Canada. Almost 41% of the sites also enjoy digital cell phone service. Fewer sites in Western Canada have digital cell phone service when compared to all the sites across Canada.

## Elderly and Childcare Services

Childcare services provide an important part of the educational and care services in rural and small town places. Childcare also provides men and women with children an opportunity to participate in the labour force. Other services of importance are seniors' services including nursing homes and retirement homes. These services are particularly important given the aging of the Canadian population and that many rural and small town places are not yet well equipped to deal with seniors' needs.

**Table 7: Availability of Child and Elderly Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Daycare	45.5%	37.5%	✓
Senior citizen's nursing home	18.2%	12.5%	
Senior citizen's retirement home	31.8%	25.0%	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

An inventory of 22 sites across Canada indicates that many are not equipped to meet the needs of young families or seniors (Table 7). While some services are provided by formal groups recorded in site profiles, there is considerable informal care offered by family and friends. In particular, sites in Western Canada are less equipped with these formal services. While Mackenzie offers daycare services for young families, it does not have a nursing home or a retirement home to meet the growing population of seniors. The closest centre to offer these services is in Prince George.

## Government Services

Town halls and post offices are the most frequently available government services in rural and small town places. Post offices not only provide a service and identity, but also opportunities for routine social interaction to build relationships. Other government services play an important role in community capacity by providing a local source of expertise and knowledge upon which the community can draw.

The rural and small town sites examined do not have access to many government services overall, although the listed government services are offered by a greater proportion of sites in Western Canada (Table 8). Of particular concern to sites experiencing social and economic restructuring is that none of the sites have HRDC or Employment Insurance offices.

Furthermore, few sites have social assistance offices. Consequently, during economic change, households experiencing stress will have to go outside the site for services to help them cope.

**Table 8: Availability of Government Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Human Resources Dev. Canada	0.0%	0.0%	
Employment Insurance	4.5%	0.0%	
Provincial Auto License Office	18.2%	50.0%	✓
Social Assistance Office	22.7%	37.5%	✓
Town hall	68.2%	87.5%	✓
Post office	81.8%	100.0%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

While residents in Mackenzie have a social assistance office, other services, including Human Resources Development Canada and employment insurance, are located approximately 180 kilometres away in Prince George. Of particular interest, in 2000, a new town hall opened in Mackenzie.

### Community Services

Community services can provide an important foundation from which to build relationships, and can be important sources to draw upon during times of economic and social stress. The availability of community services in rural and small town places varied considerably (Table 9).

Overall, sites in Western Canada have more community services with the exception of food banks, clothing exchanges, and second hand stores. Regardless, youth drop-in centres, women's drop-in centres, and senior's drop-in centres are available in more than half of the sites in Western Canada.

**Table 9: Availability of Community Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Food bank	31.8%	25.0%	✓
Clothing exchange / depot	18.2%	0.0%	
Second hand stores	40.9%	37.5%	✓
Youth drop-in centre	22.7%	50.0%	
Women's drop-in centre	22.7%	50.0%	✓
Senior's drop-in centre	31.8%	75.0%	✓
Half-way house	4.5%	12.5%	
Women's resource centre	9.1%	0.0%	
Personal aid services	31.8%	37.5%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Just over half of the community services are found in Mackenzie. In fact, Mackenzie has a range of support groups for weight loss and arthritis, as well as Special Needs Adoptive Parents. This site also offers victim services, mental health services, addiction services, and child care development programs. While Mackenzie has a women's drop-in centre and a senior's drop-in centre, there is no youth drop-in centre.

## Transportation

Transportation infrastructure can have important implications not only for attracting economic activity to a place, but also for enhancing the quality of life of vulnerable groups in rural and small town places. Transportation services, especially freight services, can play an important role in attracting industry by providing additional options to export products. However, without adequate and affordable transportation options, mobility can be difficult for women, seniors, or those with disabilities to move within the community and to access services in adjacent centres. Being mobile enables citizens to have access to services, to be involved in the community, and to develop local friendships and support networks.

The higher availability of gas stations and automobile repair services in these places reflects Canada's general reliance on the automobile (Table 10). Other transportation services are less frequently available, most notably local transit service, passenger rail service, boat / ferry services, and airport service. However, sites in Western Canada offer a greater variety of transportation services. In fact, while the majority of sites in other regions did not have inter-community bus service or train freight services, most sites in Western Canada have these services.

**Table 10: Availability of Transport Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Local bus transit	0.0%	0.0%	
Inter-community bus station	31.8%	62.5%	✓
Train – passenger	4.5%	0.0%	
Train – freight	36.4%	87.5%	✓
Airport	18.2%	37.5%	✓
Helicopter port	22.7%	37.5%	✓
Boat / ferry terminal	13.6%	12.5%	✓
Taxi	27.3%	25.0%	✓
Gas station	86.4%	87.5%	✓
Automobile repair	63.6%	87.5%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

For Mackenzie, transportation services have played an important role in its development as the forest industry relies on the freight service to export products, and as residents enjoy a range of other transportation services to be mobile both within and outside their community throughout the year.

## Recreation Services

When examining all of the sites, recreational services showed the greatest availability compared to any other service category (Table 11). This bodes well for the retention and attraction of residents, as well as the overall quality of life of these places. More notable recreational services available include indoor skating rinks, community playing fields, community centres, libraries, municipal parks, skiing and hiking trails, and campgrounds. Many of these services can be important places where events are held to foster a sense of community.

Across Canada, most sites offer either an indoor skating rink or an outdoor skating rink. Recreational services less frequently available across Canada include fitness facilities, such as athletic clubs, as well as entertainment features such as live theatre or cinemas. A greater range of recreational services are available in a majority of sites in Western Canada. In fact, all of the sites in Western Canada offer municipal parks and campgrounds.

**Table 11: Availability of Recreation Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Curling rink	31.8%	75.0%	✓
Bowling lanes	22.7%	25.0%	✓
Indoor municipal swimming pool	13.6%	25.0%	✓
Outdoor municipal swimming pool	18.2%	25.0%	
Indoor municipal skating rink	50.0%	75.0%	✓
Outdoor municipal skating rink	31.8%	25.0%	✓
Community playing field	81.8%	87.5%	✓
Community gym	50.0%	62.5%	✓
Community centre	81.8%	87.5%	✓
Private athletic club	13.6%	12.5%	✓
Municipal athletic club	18.2%	37.5%	✓
Theatre (live performance)		13.6%	12.5%
Cinema (movie theatre)	4.5%	0.0%	
Museum	36.4%	37.5%	✓
Library	77.3%	62.5%	✓
Municipal parks	77.3%	100.0%	✓
Provincial parks	22.7%	25.0%	✓
Tennis courts	31.8%	37.5%	✓
Skiing trails	50.0%	62.5%	✓
Hiking trails	63.6%	62.5%	✓
Golf courses	36.4%	50.0%	✓
Campgrounds	68.2%	100.0%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Results also indicate that Mackenzie is in great shape to offer residents and visitors a wide range of recreational services for various fitness levels and age groups. In fact, its recreational assets enabled Mackenzie to host the Northern B.C. Winter Games in 2001. The curling rink, indoor pool, and indoor skating rink are located under one roof at the Recreation Complex. Moreover, the seasonal outdoor ice rink functions as a skateboard park during the summer.

## Shopping

Shopping services contribute to the success of the local economy and are considered to be an important gauge of economic health of rural and small town places. Shopping is also an important recreational activity and provides opportunities for social interaction. Low levels of shopping services can lead to out-of-town shopping and perhaps even out-migration.

The service inventory indicates that most sites across Canada are able to offer shopping services that residents would need to access on a more frequent basis, notably grocery stores (Table 12). A greater proportion of sites in Western Canada have a grocery store and a liquor store. Mackenzie residents are able to access most of these basic shopping services.

**Table 12: Availability of Basic Shopping Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Grocery store	68.2%	87.5%	✓
Farmer's market	13.6%	12.5%	
Liquor store	54.5%	75.0%	✓
Bakery	27.3%	25.0%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Most of the sites across Canada are minimum convenience service centres (Table 13). These places generally offer a hardware store, a drug store, a bank, and two other convenience functions such as a variety store. About one-third of the sites function as a full convenience centre. These places offer all the services of a minimum convenience centre, plus a laundry or dry cleaning store, jewelry, appliances, or furniture, clothing, lumber, building materials, shoes, garden supplies, and a motel or hotel. Finally, just under 20% of the sites fulfill the role of a partial shopping centre. These towns carry all the services of a full convenience centre plus some specialty services such as a camera shop, a floral store, radio or television store, or women's accessories. Full convenience centres and partial shopping centres were more likely to be located in sites that were not adjacent to metropolitan areas. The availability of commercial shopping services in Western Canada is very similar to the national average.

**Table 13: Availability of Commercial Shopping Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Minimum Convenience Centre	86.4%	87.5%	✓
Full Convenience Centre	36.4%	37.5%	✓
Partial Shopping Centre	18.2%	25.0%	✓
Complete Shopping Centre	0.0%	0.0%	
Secondary Wholesale Retail Ctr	0.0%	0.0%	
Primary Wholesale Retail Ctr	0.0%	0.0%	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Mackenzie functions as a partial shopping centre with the availability of two malls - Alexander Mackenzie Mall and Evergreen Mall. The greater range of shopping services available in Mackenzie can be attributed to its population size, its relative isolation from a nearby regional centre, and perhaps even winter conditions that may impact the degree of out-of-town shopping.

### **Economic Development Organizations**

Economic development organizations can play an important role in promoting the community to attract not only additional businesses, but also to attract a wider population base. While there is not a wide range of economic development organizations in these sites, it is particularly critical to note that only approximately 20% of sites across Canada have local business development corporations or rotary clubs (Table 14). As these organizations are comprised of local business individuals, they are important sources to draw upon during economic and social restructuring.

**Table 14: Availability of Economic / Development Organizations - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Community Business Dev. Ctrs	0.0%	0.0%	
Fed / Prov Econ. Dev. Agencies	0.0%	0.0%	
Chamber of Commerce	18.2%	25.0%	✓
Local Business Dev. Corporation	18.2%	37.5%	
Economic / Community Trust	4.5%	12.5%	
Career Training / Placement	13.6%	25.0%	✓
Financial / Business Consulting	27.3%	37.5%	✓
Real Estate Boards	0.0%	0.0%	
Tourism Associations	27.3%	25.0%	
Rotary clubs	18.2%	12.5%	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Economic development organizations appear to have a stronger presence in sites in Western Canada than the national sample. While Mackenzie does not have a local business development corporation, it does have a rotary club and a Chamber of Commerce.

## Housing

A new category added to the service inventory in 2003 was housing. Housing has been used as an incentive to attract residents to rural and small town places. However, lack of housing options is a problem in rural and small town places that can lead to out-migration. Housing options can improve the quality of life of residents, especially the more vulnerable citizens, including senior citizens or those with disabilities.

Although social housing does not appear to be widely available in sites across Canada, there are strong regional differences (Table 15). A greater proportion of sites in Western Canada offer a range of social housing options. In fact, half of the sites in Western Canada have assisted or subsidized housing for seniors.

**Table 15: Availability of Social Housing Services - 2003**

Services	NRE Sites:		Within Mackenzie
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	
Co-op Housing	13.6%	25.0%	
Rent Supplement Units	22.7%	37.5%	✓
Subsidized Housing - Seniors	31.8%	50.0%	
Subsidized Housing - Families	31.8%	37.5%	✓
Subsidized Housing - Single People	9.1%	25.0%	
Subsidized Housing - Special Needs	13.6%	25.0%	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

However, there is not a wide range of social housing options in Mackenzie. Rent supplement units and assisted / subsidized housing for families is available.

## Challenges and Opportunities for Mackenzie, B.C.

Although Mackenzie faces challenges in coping with on-going restructuring of the forest industry, it has a foundation of services that contribute to its capacity to cope with change. Mackenzie residents do face some challenges in accessing government services such as HRDC programs or employment insurance. Fortunately, the town has a range of educational services to provide new training and educational opportunities. The availability of analog and digital cell phone services, along with Internet capabilities, have also provided Mackenzie with a solid communications infrastructure to build capacity. For example, residents can now access university web courses. Mackenzie also has a wide range of community services, including numerous support groups, to provide personal aid during more stressful periods. Its solid transportation infrastructure is also an asset to attract economic activity.

A further issue for Mackenzie has been the limited availability of specialized shopping and health services. As residents must drive two hours south to Prince George, the range of availability of these services is a constant challenge. The business community in Mackenzie has come together through their Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce to support the community and deal with these concerns. Additional seniors' services, such as a retirement home, as well as social housing may also be important to help the community to adjust to and retain the changing demographics of the population. Furthermore, despite being located roughly 20 kilometres off the main highway, Mackenzie is continuing to promote its recreational assets. In particular, it has been promoting winter tourism, including snowmobiling and skiing. These assets will go a long way, not just in attracting tourists and economic activity, but also for retaining residents.

## SOURCES OF INTEREST

---

### Books

Bruce, D. and G. Lister. 2003. *Opportunities and Actions in the New Rural Economy*. Pictou, Nova Scotia: Advocate Printing.

Ilbery, B. 1998. *The Geography of Rural Change*. Essex: Longman Ltd.

Halseth, G. and R. Halseth. 2004. *Building for Success: Explorations of Rural Community and Rural Development*. Brandon, Manitoba: Rural Development Institute and Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation.

Halseth, G. and L. Sullivan. 2003. *Building Community in an Instant Town: A Social Geography of Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge, B.C.* Prince George, B.C.: University of Northern British Columbia.

McLaren, L. 2002. *Information and Communication Technologies in Rural Canada*. Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin. Vol. 3. No. 5. Catalogue no. 21-006-XIE. 1-26.

Pierce, J. and A. Dale. 1999. *Communities, Development, and Sustainability across Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

### CRRF Reports

These reports are accessible through the project website of the Initiative on the New Economy: [nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca).

Bruce, D. 2003. *Connecting to the Connecting Canadians Agenda: Rural Internet Use for Government Information*. Sackville, New Brunswick: Mount Allison University. Draft Working Paper: <http://www.mta.ca/rstp>.

Bruce, D. and L. Lyghtle. 2003. *Internet Use for Health Information Among Rural Canadians*. Sackville, New Brunswick: Mount Allison University. Draft Working Paper: <http://www.mta.ca/rstp>.

Bruce, D. 2001. *The Role of Small Businesses and Cooperative Businesses in Community Economic Development*. IWG Final Report. Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation.

Emke, I. 2001. *Community Newspapers and Community Identity*. Québec City: Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association Annual Meetings. Unpublished presentation.

Reimer, B. 1999. *Voluntary Organizations in Rural Canada: Final Report*. Montréal: Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, Concordia University.

### **Internet Sources**

Center of the Study of Rural America. Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.  
[www.kc.frb.org](http://www.kc.frb.org).

New Rural Economy. [nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca).

Statistics Canada. <http://www.statcan.ca>.