

NRE

THE NEW RURAL ECONOMY



Site 29: Mackenzie, British Columbia

The community of 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 (Norske-Skog) and a pulp and paper plant (Abitibi-Consolidated) provide nearly all basic sector employment. With a local population (1996) of approximately 6,000 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.

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 considerable 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 activists are working to expand and diversify the local economic base.



Maps courtesy of Statistics Canada, Geography Division, 2000

<i>Characteristics in 1996</i>	<i>Macken.</i>	<i>B.C.</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Population	5 997	3 724 500	28 846 761
1991 to 1996 population change (%)	3.5	13.5	5.7
% of population ages 15 and over	72.6	80.2	79.5
Unemployment rate	9.5	9.6	10.1
Participation rate	82.2	66.4	65.5
% Primary industry	6.5	5.7	5.6
% Secondary industry	49.1	17.9	20
% Tertiary industry	44.4	76.4	74.4
Average number of persons in married or common-law families	3.4	3.1	3.1
Average number of persons in lone-parent families	2.4	2.6	2.6

Source: Statistics Canada

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