

Building Rural Capacity in the New Economy

The New Rural Economy, Phase 2

Research Team:

Bill Reimer (PI), Concordia U.

Tom Beckley, U. of New Brunswick
David Bruce, Mount Allison U.
Omer Chouinard, U. de Moncton
Ivan Emke, Memorial U.
Bruno Jean, UQAR
Greg Halseth, UNBC
Patrice LeBlanc, UQAT
Diane Martz, St. Peter's College
Doug Ramsey, Brandon U.
Derek Wilkinson, Laurentian U.

Co-Investigators:

Peter Apedaile, U. of Alberta
Ray Bollman, Statistics Canada
Augustin Épenda, UQAT
Norah Keating, U. of Alberta
Dianne Looker, Acadia U.
Bonnie McFarlane, CFS
Solange Nadeau, CFS
Katja Neves-Graca, Concordia U.
John Parkins, CFS
Steve Plante, UQAR
Richard Stedman, Penn. State U.
Ellen Wall, U. of Guelph
Anna Woodrow, Concordia U.

Project Objectives

- Anticipate the changes that are likely to affect rural Canada in the future.
- Identify conditions that enhance or inhibit capacity-building.
- Propose strategic options for building capacities.
- Build capacity for rural research through education, networks, data, and infrastructure.

Why is rural capacity important to Canadians?

- 24% of Canadians live in rural areas.
- More than 80% of Canada's trade surplus is contributed by primary products from rural areas (2003).
- Rural Canada is multifunctional: it provides food, water, recreation, pollution amelioration, and carbon sequestration for all Canadians.
- Rural Canadians are primary stewards of our natural amenities.
- Rural communities preserve a heritage of community diversity.
- Vibrant rural communities provide a valuable alternative to urban overpopulation.

Partners:

- 32 Rural Research Sites Across Canada
- 14 Canadian Universities
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- The Arkleton Centre (Scotland)
- Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Institute for Rural Revitalization in the 21st Century (Japan)
- Natural Resources Canada
- The Ontario Rural Council
- Statistics Canada



What have we learned?

- **Rural Canadians must build their capacities to meet the changing conditions of the new economy.**

Economy

- Niche markets provide opportunities for local economic sustainability.
- Local capacity can offset negative structural effects.

Governance

- The local control of assets supports economic capacity, social cohesion, social capital, and local identity.
- Local governance capacity is stronger where municipal government, private sector, and voluntary groups share leadership and power.
- Both local and external networks are necessary for sustaining local capacity.
- Since food, water, and environmental stewardship are important concerns of urban and rural people alike, they can form the basis for strategic alliances.

Social Relations

- Innovations in organization can be made by working from local strengths in social relations (market, bureaucratic, associative, or communal) to build capacities in those domains that are weak.
- Available social capital is often not fully used.
- Innovation in service delivery can meet some of the expanded demands (but the rural volunteer base has limited ability to absorb offloaded services).
- Context matters:
 - Strong market relations are most important for incomes in all types of communities.
 - Bureaucratic are important for local and stable economies.
 - Associative are important for global economies and low institutional capacity sites.
 - Communal are important for fluctuating economies and non-metro adjacent sites.

Technology

- Modern technology can open up regional, national, and international markets for products and services.
- On-line learning and the Internet can build a previously shared interest, but they don't usually create one.
- Broadband infrastructure needs community learning support to build capacity.

- **Governments (local, provincial, federal) can facilitate rural capacity growth.**

- Revise corporate and tax regulations to allow greater flexibility for communities to organize and invest in local projects.
- Encourage innovations in governance that include private and civic organizations, alternate forms of accountability, and new mechanisms of representation (e.g. Social Economy).
- Explore innovative programs supporting communal and associative relations in recognition of their critical role for economic development, social support, and social cohesion.
- Combine broadband expansion with community learning programs.
- Combine new technologies with traditional media when communicating with rural people.
- Support programs to identify new markets and facilitate their introduction to rural entrepreneurs.
- Modify organizational structures to recognize and build on the multifunctional nature of rural communities and industries.



Twillingate, Newfoundland (Site 02)



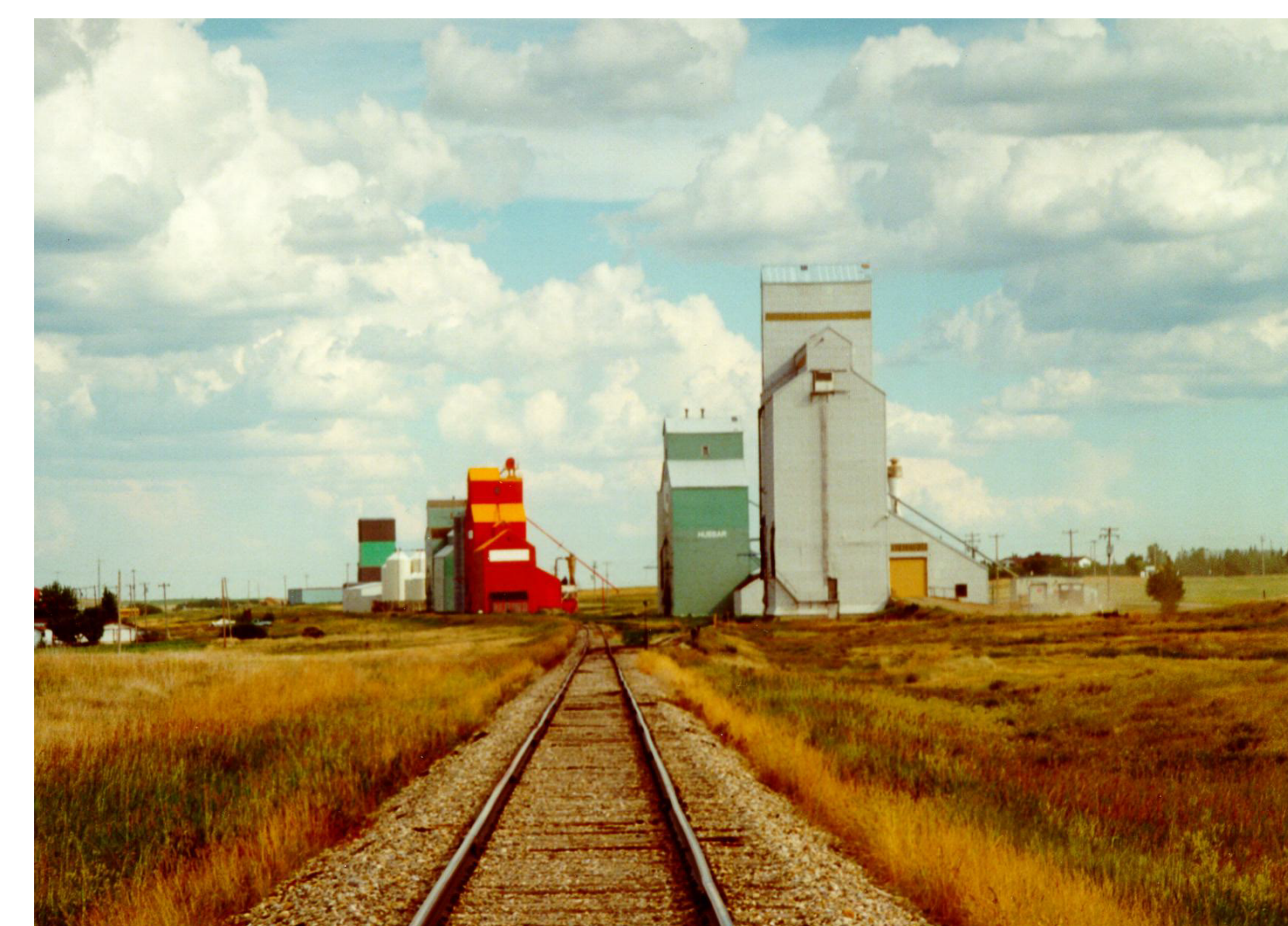
Lot 16, Prince Edward Island (Site 03)



St-Damase, Québec (Site 11)



Tweed, Ontario (Site 15)



Hussar, Alberta (Site 25)



Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia (Site 28)