

New Rural Economy in Springhill Review of the 2001 Household Survey

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Acknowledgements:

- The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
- Ray – General picture: Pressures affecting how we got here
- Peter – Focus on rural economy: implications for policy-makers and their programs
- Bill – Focus on implications for community members

Outline of Presentation

- ◆ The NRE Project
- ◆ The Household Survey 2001
- ◆ Springhill Results and Issues of Interest
- ◆ General Discussion
- ◆ What's Next?

Outline

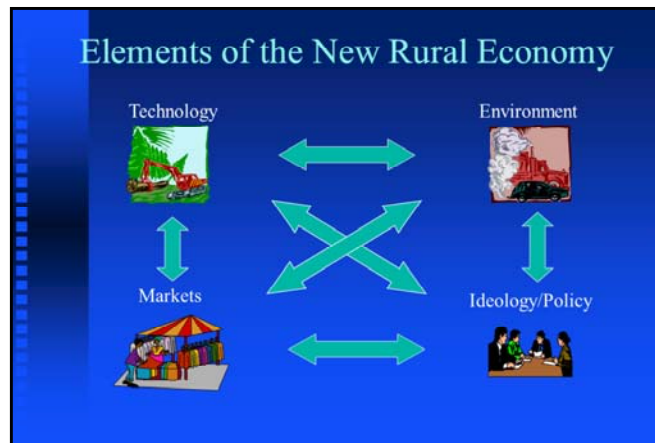
- Before getting to the action part: The New Rural Economy Project of CRRF
- What have we learned about community capacity?
- What can communities do?

What is the NRE Project?

- ◆ 5 year research and education program
- ◆ Collaborative project among communities, universities, and governments
- ◆ Mission:
 - ◆ gain an understanding of the context and systems of rural Canada
 - ◆ provide useful insights and options for communities
 - ◆ offer policy advice to governments

NRE Objectives

- NRE a project of CRRF
- Established in 1997 – 5-year project
 - Provide grounded, comparative, and comprehensive analysis of the new rural economy in Canada
 - Establish a collaborative research and education network that will build capacity to improve the quality of life for all rural Canadians
 - To develop insightful, documented recommendations for long run rural business performance, inclusive development, and public policy
 - To establish a long-term research and education infrastructure to serve the above objectives



•Pressures of the New Rural Economy

- The general pressures conditioning the rural economy in Canada are largely shared by those in urban centres and other parts of the world. They are strongly mediated by national and local conditions, however, making their consequences unique for different locations and for different types of people in those locations. It is in the interactions between these pressures and the local contexts that the complexity of rural Canada can best be understood. I have identified 4 interrelated aspects of the new rural economy to represent these pressures.

•Technology

- Technological innovations are a crucial ingredient in the dynamics of the new rural economy. Canada's traditional dependence on resource extraction has meant that the labour-shedding characteristics of extraction technology have radically changed the rural landscape. Our farms, forests, waterways, oceans, and minerals have felt the impact of those technologies and the reorganization of production that they bring. In the process, some rural communities have become more connected and more like their urban counterparts while others have disappeared.

•Markets

- The technology has not been developed or used in a social or political vacuum, however. The structure of economic markets has contributed to its growth in certain directions and not in others. Technology, for example, has been used to standardize production rather than diversify it, shed labour rather than socialize it, extract resources rather than sustain them, and increase economic inequality rather than reduce it.

- In Canada, our resource economies have been commodity based for the most part, and except for the automobile industry, we have largely depended on the shipment of raw materials for our wealth. The organization of those industries has been highly concentrated (Figure 1). In the modern, global economy, these tendencies have increased. At the same time, the ability of rural people to extract value from their commodities has diminished.

•Environmental Limitations

- Both technological development and market pressures have in turn placed the environment in jeopardy. We now have the ability to empty the oceans of fish, to remove the topsoil from the land, and strip the hills of their forests. Competition from around the globe and the high level of foreign ownership of our industries (Figure 2) has meant that we have acted on that ability in the interest of short-term gain rather than seek sustainable use of these resources.

- The limits to this strategy are now increasingly apparent, however. Environmental limitations have forced us to reconsider how we extract and use these resources and to reevaluate our treatment of common property.

Pressures Identified by the NRE

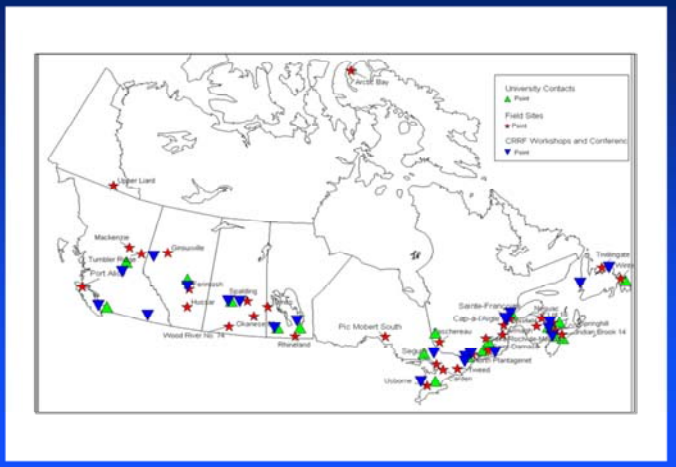
Rural Pressures

- Strong global competition
- Uncertainty and conflicts in trade policy
- Environmental challenges
- Depopulation
- Loss of non-market services
- Diminished capacity for self-organization

Urban Pressures

- Vulnerable food security
- Loss of biological and sociological diversity
- Loss of amenities

National Study Site and Partner Locations



- Researches associated with more than 20 universities and institutes
- 32 field sites chosen (5 dimensions of comparison)
- Program of workshops and conferences – over 13 years, about 25 locations
- International collaboration
 - 2 sites in Japan
 - Colleagues and centres in USA, UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Mexico
- Invitation to work with us

The Household Survey: Summer 2001

- ◆ Conducted interviews in 20 different types of communities across Canada
- ◆ 1,995 households were surveyed in total
- ◆ Survey consisted of a series of closed questions pertaining to economic, social and infrastructure issues
- ◆ Statistical results now available for each site

Springhill Results and Issues of Interest

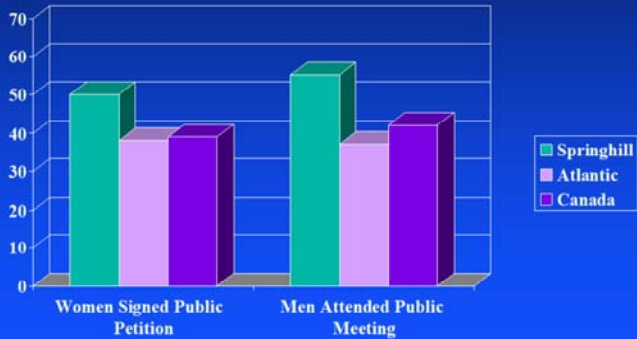


- Results based on responses of 153 households
- Major Topics of Interest
 - Community Action
 - Volunteerism
 - Leadership
 - Service Quality
 - Internet Use
 - Stress and Health
 - Attitude Towards Community

Community Action: Springhill Residents Show Interest in Local Issues

- 63% did “something” to express interest in local issues
- Most common: Signing petitions, attending public meetings, writing letters
- Springhill women showed high public participation by signing petitions
- Springhill men were keen to attend public meetings
- People aged 35 to 64 most likely to “do something”

Community Action: Petitions and Meetings

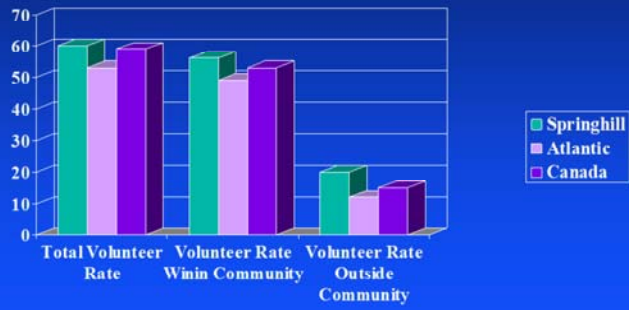


Volunteerism: Higher Than Average

- Overall volunteer rates are above the national average
- Most common in sports & recreation, public benefits and religious groups
- High participation rates among older individuals

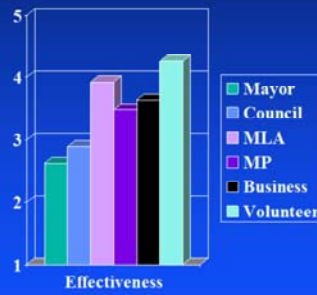


Volunteerism: Primarily within Springhill, but Strong Regional Connections

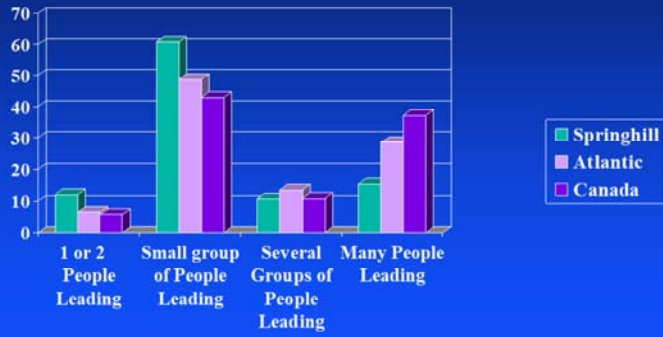


Leadership: Volunteer Groups Effective

- Volunteer groups and business groups seen as most effective in supporting the community
- Senior citizens rated effectiveness of local leaders higher than other adults
- The majority of residents feel leadership is controlled by small groups

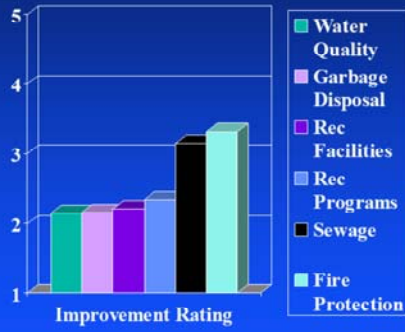


Leadership: Thought to be Small Group

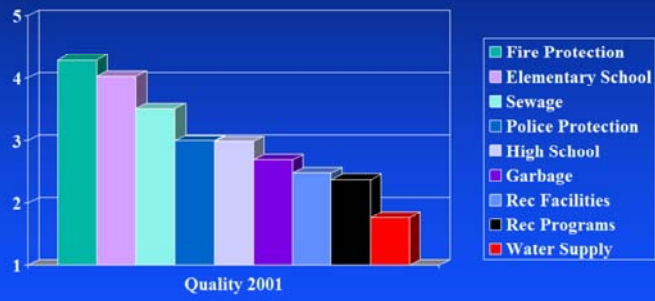


Services: Declining in Quality

- Quality of water supply, garbage disposal, recreational facilities and programs declined since 1996
- Fire protection and elementary schools rated the highest quality

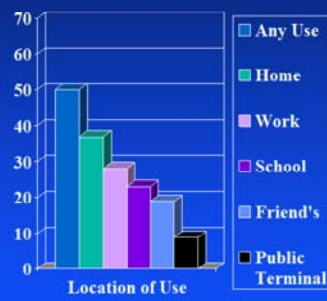


Services: Quality of Services



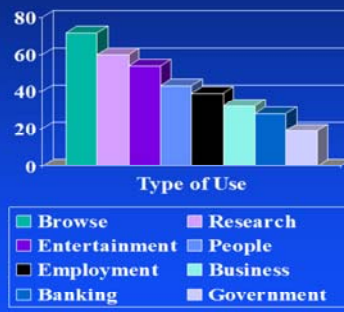
Internet: "Typical" Users

- 50% use the Internet
- Most use at home
- Higher use if child in the home, and with higher incomes
- Youth use the Internet most
- Internet improves access to information, but not economic situations or community relationships

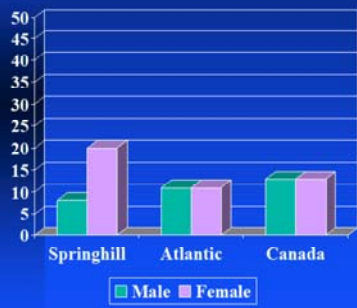


Internet: What's it for?

- Most use for browsing, research, entertainment
- Seniors use to gather health care information

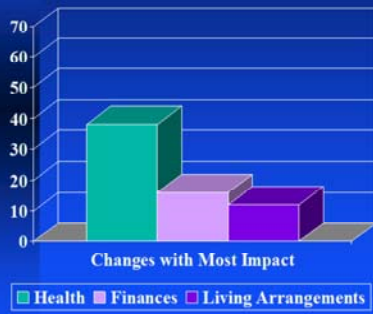


Stress: Residents Leading Stressful Lives



- Stress ratings higher than national averages (16%)
- More women than men are stressed
- Older adults (35 to 64 years old) were among those with the highest stress scores

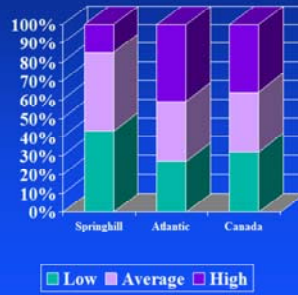
Stress: Related to Major Change



- 73% of households experienced a major change in past year
- Health related changes had the greatest impact
- Both positive and negative changes create added stress

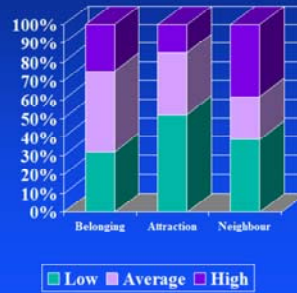
Attitudes: Feel Indifferent about Community

- Springhillers rated their social cohesion lower than in other communities
- Most felt neither a strong positive or negative attachment



Attitudes: Low Social Cohesion Ratings

- More positive about **neighbourliness**
- Less positive about sense of **attraction** to the community
- Challenges within and outside the community can contribute to social cohesion levels



General Discussion

- What questions do you have about the future of Springhill?
- What else do you want to know about your community?
- Comments and suggestions
- Arena Replacement
- Water Supply
- Policing
- Economic Development
- Partnerships
- Community Events
- Leadership
- What else?

What's Next?

- ◆ Conference
 - “Rural Matters: CRRF Rural University in Miramichi”
 - October 26-29, 2002
- ◆ Preparing 4 books plus articles on rural issues
- ◆ Funding for 2003-2006 research and community projects

The NRE Project: Building Capacity in Rural Canada

A Project of the Canadian Rural
Revitalization Foundation

www.crrf.ca

www.nre.concordia.ca



Finally:

- Make use of other groups and networks – like CRRF
- Cannot deal with these problems alone
 - Many of them are rooted in pressures over which communities have no control (cf. Peter, Ray)
 - The complexity of NRE requires continuous learning and information from a wide variety of sources
 - Capacity building is a social and long term process