

Access to Federal Government Services in Rural Canada: Preliminary Field Site Findings

A REPORT

for

**The New Rural Economy Project of
The Canadian Rural Restructuring Foundation**

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Summary

This report presents a conceptual framework and preliminary findings for the analysis of changes in government and other services to rural Canadians. The findings are based on data collected from 14 of the 32 field sites chosen for the project entitled *The New Rural Economy: Options and Choices* initiated by **The Canadian Rural Restructuring Foundation**.

The framework identifies access with respect to types of SERVICES, USERS, and PROVIDERS. For this report the primary focus is on those services which have traditionally been the mandate of the federal government, although some recognition is given to their relationship to other services which they support. Less attention is directed to the users of the services, since the information regarding them will require the more extensive field work of the next phase of the project. At the most general level, there are four systems of service providers which can be considered: the private sector, the state, the third sector, and family and friendship networks. This preliminary work touches on the first three, with particular emphasis on the state.

The data suggest there are important variations in the availability of services by the type of provider, the type of service, and by structural characteristics of the rural site. The distance to services increase as one moves from the municipal to provincial to the federal level. Transportation, education, medical, and legal services are relatively distant from the sites while recreation and financial services are relatively nearby. In all cases, however, the average distances are less than 50 km, with a maximum of 140 km from the site centroid. Emergency services compare favourably with urban centres, with a maximum response time of 18 minutes in all the sites considered.

These general patterns gloss over important differences related to the structural conditions of the sites. The stability of the economy, the adjacency to metropolitan centres, and the extent of social infrastructure all co-vary with availability. Adjacency is particularly important for federal and medical services, for example. Economic stability is important for municipal and financial services.

The research affirms the value and approach of the New Rural Economy project. The type of information collected appears to enhance the comparative opportunities in the research and it remains sufficiently sensitive to variations in the availability of services. A more significant test will emerge as data from more of the sites is collected and the intensive stages of the field work enable us to corroborate these preliminary results.

Access to Federal Government Services in Rural Canada: Preliminary Field Site Findings¹

1. Introduction

Rural Canadians are experiencing significant changes in the availability of government services. Fiscal policies at all levels of government have resulted in major reductions in spending on social programs. This has contributed to the concentration of facilities and the exploration of new forms of delivery. At the same time, the population of rural areas has continued to shift among regions and between rural and urban locations. As a result, there are bound to be considerable inequities in the distribution of rural services.

In many cases, the information which would allow us to describe these changes or to analyze their consequences is not available, or remains unexamined. This means that the necessary institutional and policy adjustments are made without an accurate accounting of the distribution of services, let alone an adequate understanding of the consequences the distribution has for rural people.

The *New Rural Economy Project* provides an opportunity to rectify some of this problem. The project involves detailed field work in 32 rural sites, carefully chosen to provide comparisons on five strategic dimensions² This field work is coordinated with macro-level analysis which will permit researchers to interpret the details of the field work within a broader framework: moving the analysis beyond simply a collection of case studies. For example, the information from the sites can be compared with national and provincial data concerning the distribution of services in order to assess the actual impact of various delivery systems.

This report will provide a discussion of the conceptual framework for the analysis of the access to services. In addition, it will include results from the initial profiles of 14 of the 32 sites. As we establish contact with residents in the sites, we have collected generally available information from local leaders and materials. Such information does not include the detail which will be collected in later stages of the research, but it will provide an indication of the extent to which the most visible services are available, and an indication of problems which might occur. As such, it will prepare the way for a more detailed study of service availability as the field work proceeds.

We have also limited this initial report to focus on federal services. The range and types of public services at all levels is sufficiently varied to require much more research at a regional and local level than can be done in the space of time allotted for this report. Since federal services are more centralized, however, this will be a strategic place to start as we develop the methodology for the more detailed field work.

¹ This research has been supported with funding from The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agrifood Canada, Human Resources and Development Canada, the Government of Alberta, and Concordia University.

² The five dimensions are: the extent to which the communities are integrated into the global economy, the extent to which their economies are stable or fluctuating, their proximity to major metropolitan centres, their level of social and institutional infrastructure, and whether they are leading or lagging on a number of socio-economic dimensions. Details regarding the theoretical framework for the selection of sites and other aspects of the NRE project can be found via the CRRF web page: http://artsci-cwin.concordia.ca/SocAnth/CRRF/crrf_hm.html

There are three objectives for this report.

- C The first is to begin the development of a framework for conceptualizing what is meant by "access to services".
- C The second is to propose potential indicators which might be used to measure the relative ease or difficulty of access for various services.
- C The third is to provide an initial test of the framework and indicators by examining information collected from a few of the field sites.

2. Research Plan

This report provides the results from preliminary contacts in several of the field sites. It coincides with the process of establishing contact in the sites, and provides a focus for initial discussion with those living in the sites. As such, it will include only very general information which can be retrieved from informal conversations with community leaders, locally published materials, or other sources of information. This information will be of a descriptive nature for the most part.

This initial information will provide a basis for two important activities. The first is the assessment of a conceptual framework regarding access to services. The framework and categories of access to services will be modified to better represent the situation of rural people as it is revealed from the initial interviews. The second is the exploration of methods for developing more generalizable indexes for access to services. At this point, we will explore various economic and transaction models in an attempt to make comparisons over types of services. This may involve, for example, the assignment of common standards for availability of the services, and an assessment of the transactions necessary for gaining access to those services. The empirical data will help to ground such an exploration.

These two activities will prepare the way for the next stage of the research: the more intensive field work. Various instruments will be proposed and tested for collecting information regarding each of the factors identified above. These may include observational grids, interview schedules, questionnaires, or some combination of these approaches. Information will be collected regarding users, service-providers, and the geographical, social, and cultural context in which they interact.

While the field work is taking place, several initiatives will be conducted at the more general level. Specific service-providers will be approached for information regarding the nature and extent of services which they provide. This might include lists of their outlets including their locations. Using postal codes or other information, such data will be integrated into the Rural Canada Database which has been constructed by CRRF. This will provide an opportunity for macro-level analysis regarding the overall distribution of the services, the characteristics of the locations where they are provided, and the impacts which they might have on the nearby populations. This type of analysis has been successfully employed for hospital services, police services, and a mailing list for HRDC. It provides the overall view which will complement the field work. In turn, the field work will provide an opportunity to assess the utility of the general indicators.

At each stage, a number of reports will be prepared in order to coordinate the activities of the various teams and to serve as a basis for debate and development. These reports will be presented at the regular CRRF conferences and workshops in addition to special events and media wherever appropriate.

3. A Framework for Inquiry

Federal government services are seen by many as part of the social capital in rural places. To the extent that they are easily available, they provide economic, institutional, social, cultural, and personal support to individuals and groups in ways which contribute to their well-being. To the extent that there are barriers to their use, rural Canadians are forced to forgo the advantages of these services, or pay an additional price to solve the problems they face. It matters a great deal, therefore, how these services are distributed, how their distribution is changing, and how the supports and barriers to their use are changing in the new rural economy.

It is also important to understand the processes which underlie the distribution of services. This will move beyond description to provide a basis for anticipating the effects of policies regarding service institutions, assessing the impacts of changes in other sectors, and identifying the conditions under which more appropriate services and their delivery systems will function best.

Three elements are basic to this inquiry: the **SERVICES** being considered, the **USERS** and potential users of those services, and the service **PROVIDERS**. Most of our data collection and analysis will centre on these three elements and the relationships between them. We will structure our initial inquiry, therefore, with respect to the following six questions.

- C What **SERVICES** are to be considered? (For the current report, this general question will be more directed to services of the federal government: What services are actually and potentially within the mandate of the federal government?)
- C Who are the potential **USERS** of these services?
- C Who are the service **PROVIDERS**?
- C How easy is it for the various types of potential **USERS** to get access to various types of **SERVICES** from the various types of **PROVIDERS**?
- C What structures or processes affect the ease or difficulty of access?
- C How just is the ease of access for the various types of potential **USERS** in rural Canada?

The answers to these questions will provide valuable information for addressing two very basic questions regarding the welfare of rural Canadians:

- C What services are needed by rural Canadians? and
- C How might access to services in rural Canada be made more appropriate for the needs of potential users?

3.1. What **SERVICES are actually and potentially within the mandate of the federal government?**

The federal government is potentially responsible for a wide range of services. They range from support for the economic well-being of Canadians to culture and recreation. An example of the range of services can be found in the typology below.

- C Economic focus
 - C Income Support
 - C Labour force support and development
 - C Business and technological development
 - C Economic sector-directed programs
 - C Regional and community development programs
 - C Transportation
 - C Trade
- C Government focus
 - C Public Service
 - C Treasury

- C Justice
- C National defence
- C Veteran's Affairs
- C Postal Services
- C Social focus
 - C Education and literacy
 - C Health
 - C Welfare
 - C Housing
 - C Immigration
 - C Recreation
- C Cultural focus
 - C Official languages
 - C Heritage
 - C Public Broadcasting

We will not be able to solicit information regarding each of these areas at this preliminary stage. Instead, we will focus on those which are most visible at the local level. Such information will serve as a basis for more detailed field work as we move to cover more of those services.

3.2. Who are the potential USERS of these services?

Not all rural people have the same need for specific services. These demands will vary not only by the characteristics of individuals, but by the relationships and networks in which they find themselves. The young, the elderly, the unemployed, the sick, and the homeless are the traditional types of people for whom social services are required. We can add to these individuals, a number of other people and groups who receive support for projects and activities which are of broad social importance. Industries, business people, regional groups, and communities all claim benefits for the social goods which they provide or to cover the disasters which they face.

The justifications and delivery systems for support which these various groups claim are significantly different. They therefore require distinct considerations when addressing the matter of access to services. These variations are reflected in the identification of three rural Canadas as articulated in the CRRF proposal entitled "A Whole Rural Policy for Canada" (1996).

The **first rural Canada** is part of the competitive global economy, in cultural, political and economic terms. It has more in common with global rivals than with rural communities. Rural Canada 1 is productivist, focused on international trade, and integrated into corporate Canada and the World. It comprises most of the lumber, pulp and paper industry, mining and energy industries, the trawler fleets, commercial grain and oilseed production and cattle feedlots. It very roughly accounts for less than 10% of the rural population and employment and well over 80% of the market value of rural output of basic commodities. This world-class rural Canada is supported by sectoral policies. Agriculture Canada's new business plan approach is an example.

The **second rural Canada** is mainly in the business of producing niche products, and market and non-market services. It is focused mainly on meeting local and provincial needs, although many enterprises successfully sell far beyond provincial boundaries. Rural Canada 2 also supports Rural Canada 1 in its global trade, with professional and environmental services such as oil field servicing and silvicultural work. It also continues its historic role of producing basic commodities by fishing and farming. Households usually have more than one

source of income, commute to work in medium and large sized centres, and generally meet national viability standards.

This second rural Canada includes the rural services of national and provincial administrations, most employed workers, and small to medium sized farms, fishing boats and businesses. It contributes indirectly to economic growth through trade. It accounts for about 75% of the rural population and labour force, and 25% of the market value of agricultural output.

The **third rural Canada** focuses primarily on survival. It is infrequently employed and depends to a large extent on transfer payments. Rural Canada 3 may include up to 15-20% of the rural population and accounts for less than 5% of market valued output. Most of its individual and social resources are fully committed to maintaining the basic necessities of life.

The third rural Canada could be thought of as the residual of the other two rural Canadas. Its appearance takes the form of impoverished households, communities, and geographic regions. These people and places represent depleted human and natural resources, a production capacity difficult to bring back on-stream. They experience varying degrees of deprivation, and are largely excluded socially and politically from the rest of rural and urban Canada.

All three rural Canadas require services from the federal government. The types of services vary considerably, however, both with respect to their nature and the systems by which they are delivered. Rural Canada 1, for example, is more likely to face financial problems than rural Canada 2. Rural Canada 2, on the other hand, is likely to require investment support and the use of measures to reduce uncertainty. The latter problem is also faced by rural Canada 3, but it is also in need of services which build capacity and reduce the negative effects of social and economic marginalization. These differences mean that significant distinctions must be made when assessing both the types of services required and their availability.

3.3. Who are the service PROVIDERS?

At the most general level, we will consider four types of service providers which are available in rural Canada: the *private sector*, the *state*, the *third sector*, and *family and friendship networks*. Each of these spheres represent relatively integrated systems of control over resources and services, and each of them is guided by a different balance of goals, values, and organization principles which are crucial to understanding the processes which drive them. The private sphere, for example, is primarily organized within a corporatist structure, driven by accumulation in a market framework. The state shares some of these characteristics, however, its bureaucratic organization is much more sensitive to popular legitimation of its activities. The volunteer structure of the third sector means that it is more responsive to idiosyncratic interests, and the reciprocity at the basis of kin and friendship networks makes them less flexible to change and fashion.

Our focus will be on federal government sources for this initial investigation. In this respect, we will examine one element of the state sphere as conceptualized above. To the extent that we are able, some information regarding provincial and municipal services will be included along with a few comments on third sector organizations.

In most cases, federal service providers are to be found in various government departments, agencies, and Crown Corporations. Their range is considerable. For example, the Federal Services

for Rural Canadians handbook (1976) organizes the services under the jurisdiction of the following Departments:

- C Agriculture Canada
- C Canada Post
- C Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- C Consumer and corporate affairs
- C Department of Communications
- C Department of Finance
- C Department of Energy , Mines and Resources
- C DIAND
- C Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce
- C Department of Justice
- C Department of Manpower and Immigration
- C Department of Regional Economic Expansion
- C Department of the Secretary of State
- C Department of Veterans affairs
- C Environment Canada
- C Federal Business Development Bank
- C Health and Welfare Canada
- C Metric Commission
- C National Research Council
- C Revenue Canada
- C Transport Canada
- C Unemployment Insurance Commission

Our strategy at this stage is to use such a list as a guide in our search for service facilities in the field sites. Subsequent work will include an examination of the most important departments and agencies in order to assess the ways in which they may have a less visible presence in the sites.

3.4. How easy is it for the various types of potential USERS to get access to various types of SERVICES from the various types of PROVIDERS?

This question is the core issue of access to services. Answering it will provide a descriptive account of the distribution of services by potential users which can serve as an important basis for evaluation and policy. The answers will not be easy to come by, however.

A number of critical decisions must be made when identifying the 'ease' of access. The first is the distinction between objective and subjective indicators. In general, 'ease of access' should reflect the extent to which there are barriers or facilitating factors which make it more or less difficult for potential users to get access to the services. This aspect of the concept is reflected in the economists' notion of 'transaction costs'. However, the simple identification of these factors gives an incomplete representation of access without taking into account the opportunity costs which certain services and their delivery systems entail, or without recognizing that the perceptions of accessibility are important elements in the use of services.

Our approach to this question will therefore include a consideration of three aspects when constructing indicators for ease of access. The first refers to the availability of the service to potential users. This can be interpreted in relatively simple geographical terms to mean how close are the services to the users. This is only part of the issue of access, however. The second aspect refers to the various costs incurred to use the service. These may be related to finances, time, the availability of resources (e.g. transportation or communication), or social (e.g. the demands made on family or

friends). The third aspect refers to opportunity costs which may be created by using the service. In rural areas, these might include simple financial opportunities forgone, or it may include more complex aspects whereby certain benefits of rural living must be forgone in order to utilize the service.

The identification of appropriate indicators will begin with a focus on geographical proximity, travel costs, and obstacles to access which are likely to affect those with physical handicaps. Researchers will also be on the lookout for other features of the local situation which must be taken into account for future work.

3.5. What structures or processes affect the ease or difficulty of access?

The possible processes affecting ease of access are myriad. Our objective will not be to itemize them all, but to identify those which are most likely to play a role, then conduct the research to determine their relative importance. At this point only the general features will be outlined.

Access to services starts with *information*. If the user is not aware that the service exists, they essentially have no access to it. This means that processes related to information flow must be included in the evaluation of access. The level of awareness can be altered by the service provider, by the user, or by third parties of various types.

Closely related to the role of information are those processes which affect the *representation* of the service. The complexity of this aspect is well known within marketing research. Just as products can be made more or less attractive by their image and association, services are subject to the same type of effect. Thus, the provision of financial support can be made more or less attractive by couching it in the language of entrepreneurship or of welfare; the provision of health services can be made more or less attractive by including or excluding cultural representations: Aboriginal peoples have long been subject to a form of exclusion from educational services by the refusal or inability to provide those services in a native language.

A third consideration has to do with the physical or intellectual *capabilities* of potential users which might limit or enhance their ability to access the services. This issue can become even more problematic if we include psychological or cultural attributes which can limit the willingness of potential users from making use of the service. Language, religious, or ethnicity frequently play a part in this type of limitation.

A fourth type of process relates to changes in *entitlements* which can limit the access of the users. These entitlements may be formal, as in the case of old age assistance (where the limitation to the elderly is legally proscribed), or they may be informal, as in the case of banking credit (which has typically gone to males over females). They are often embedded in institutional arrangements and processes which both reflect and support the organization of access to services.

A fifth type of process relates to changes in the *institutional organization* of the services. These are likely to involve economic, organizational, and political processes which can alter the types of services delivered as well as their delivery. The emergence of current policies requiring cutbacks in social service spending, the processes of centralization, and the increased pressure on unemployment supports are examples of the type of processes which must be considered.

In each case, the elaboration of these structures and processes will be used to generate propositions about the sources of change in accessibility, the likely directions for the future, and to anticipate the outcomes of new policies.

3.6. How just is the ease of access for the various types of potential users in rural Canada?

This question is the most normative of those identified. It requires information regarding the *perception of rural people* with respect to the services which they need and the ease of access to those services. It will also require a consideration of the relative *costs and benefits* related to the provision of services at various levels of access. Since the positions on many of these issues will vary throughout the country, it will be important to explore them for all regions as well as the three rural Canadas.

There are no simple answers to this question. In fact, it may be impossible to come to an answer at all, since it is the type of question which must be continually debated in a public way. Our objective will be to provide appropriate and accurate information regarding the consequences of various levels of access. Such information is crucial to inform the debates, so that the normative issues can be dealt with in a context where the implications of various decisions are as clear as possible.

4. Information Requirements

The general framework provides a basis for identifying the specific types of information required in this first stage of the research. During this preliminary stage, only the first four questions will be addressed.

4.1. The type of SERVICES to be considered.

Since our focus at this stage is on federal government services, this will be the place we start. An examination of the Internet provides an illustration of the types of programs which are currently directed to rural Canada.

- C Aboriginal Representative Organizations Program (Canadian Heritage)
- C Aboriginal Women's Program (Canadian Heritage)
- C The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (HRDC/DFO)
- C Base Closures Adjustment Program (ACOA)
- C Canada Business Service Centres (Industry Canada)
- C Canada Health and Social Transfer (Finance Canada)
- C Canada Infrastructure Works Program (TB/Regional Agencies)
- C Canada-Saskatchewan Agri-Food Innovation Agreement (AAFC)
- C Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund
- C Canadian Farm Business Management Program (AAFC)
- C Community-Based Economic Development (Regional Development Agencies)
- C Community Economic Development Program (DIAND)
- C Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (Revenue Canada)
- C COOPERATION Program (ACOA)
- C Emergency Repair Program (CMHC)
- C Federal Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (DIAND)
- C First Nations Forestry Program (NRCan/DIAND)
- C Home Adaptation for Seniors Independence (CMHC)
- C Industry-led Adaptation Councils (AAFC)
- C Model Forest Program (NRCan)
- C National Literacy Secretariat (HRDC)
- C Northern Native Broadcast Access Program (Canadian Heritage)
- C Office of Learning Technologies (HRDC)
- C Pacific Salmon Revitalization Plan (DFO)

- C The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (AAFC)
- C Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (CMHC)
- C Sectoral Partnerships Initiatives (HRDC)
- C Shelter Enhancement Program (CMHC)
- C Special Fund for the Economic Development and Adjustment of Québec Fishing Communities (FORD-Q)
- C Support for Official Language Community Organizations and Institutions (Canadian Heritage)
- C TechnoRégion, Quebec City-Chaudière-Appalaches (FORD-Q)
- C Western Grain Transportation Adjustment Fund (AAFC)

In the long term, an investigation of these services should include consideration of the type of service, its cost to the user and provider, the time of its availability, the physical and social organization of its delivery, and its compatibility with cultural, religious, or ethnic norms and expectations. In the short term, we will explore for the presence of each of these programs at the local level. We will consider using a 'basket' of them to assess the ease of access to federal services at the local level.

4.2. The characteristics of the potential USER.

This information is necessary with respect to two main aspects.

- C The *need* for service of the potential user. Not all rural people have the same need for all services. It is therefore necessary to identify those who are likely to have need of particular services in order to assess whether significant constraints exist against their use of the service. Examples of potential users in each of the three rural Canada will be considered.
- C The *characteristics* of the potential user which could limit their access to the service. These would include such aspects as their physical, intellectual, financial, cultural, or gender characteristics. Much research work is required to identify the most relevant characteristics in this case.

4.3. The characteristics of the service PROVIDER.

This information includes such things as the location, hours of operation, speed of service, and architectural features which might enhance or limit access by various types of people. A more extensive analysis will include information regarding any cultural or organizational aspects of the provider which are likely to operate selectively on particular types of users, particularly those who are most likely to be in need of the services.

4.4. Ease of access to federal services.

For this preliminary stage, we will focus on the most visible features of the services which can affect their accessibility. The first is the distance between the potential user and the service facility. Since we are focusing on rural sites as reflected in census subdivisions (CSD), this distance will be calculated from the centroid of the CSD. Statistics Canada identifies a particular point in each CSD which reflects the greatest concentration of the population.³ By using this strategy, we will be able to make comparisons across CSDs and to link the field site information to the data in the rural Canada database. In order to assess the possibility of changes in accessibility, we will also identify the distance from facility to centroid for 1981 as well.

³ This point is identified by latitude and longitude.

The second type of information collected refers to whether there are special transportation needs for users. This includes whether there are public modes of transportation or whether users are dependent on such things as cars or taxis. Since transportation is potentially a major obstacle in rural areas, this type of information is crucial to assessing availability.

The third type of information concerns the availability of wheelchair access for physically handicapped users. This information is relatively easy to come by and will provide some indication of the sensitivity to various types of physical limitations.

Finally, the researchers will be asked to include any information which they feel is relevant to the accessibility of government services. These suggestions are invaluable for the identification of issues which have been overlooked.

5. Example Sites

5.1. Sites and Information.

In order to assess and develop the research instruments to be used, 14 sites have been examined using this preliminary grid: Lot 16, PE; Indian Brook, NS; Springhill, NS; Cap à l'Aigle, QC; Armagh, QC; Belleterre, QC; St-Damase, QC; Ste-Françoise, QC; St-Roch-de Mékinac, QC; Osborne, ON; Ferintosh, AB; Girouxville, AB; Mackenzie, BC; and Tumbler Ridge, BC. The information for these sites has been collected using easily available sources since the collection of more detailed information requires further discussions with the site residents. Our focus at this stage is on the adequacy of the information, possible supplemental information which is required, and the identification of issues of access which must be included in future work.

For each site, information has been collected regarding several characteristics related to access. The information includes:

- C the current distance from the centroid of the census subdivision;
- C the distance from the centroid in 1981;
- C whether there are special transportation needed for users;
- C whether there is wheelchair access; and
- C other information relevant to access in the site considered.

The facilities in bold are considered during the first stage. Several of them are likely to be the responsibility of provincial, municipal, or even private institutions, however, they are included since the verification of the extent of federal responsibility will require more involved data collection. They are listed here with respect to the types of services with which they are associated.

As a result of the initial survey, we have been able to identify several other federal government services which can be included in the initial profiles for the future. They are identified below in italics.

Economic focus

- C Income Support
 - C Employment Insurance Office**
- C Labour force support and development
- C Business and technological development
 - C *Business Development Office*
 - C *Community Access Program Site*
- C Economic sector-directed programs

- C* Sectoral Offices
- C* Regional and community development programs
- C* Transportation
 - C* **Bus**
 - C* **Train**
 - C* **freight**
 - C* **passenger**
 - C* **Air**
 - C* **Boat**
 - C* **Taxi**
- C* Trade
- Government
 - C* Public Service
 - C* Treasury
 - C* **Revenue Canada**
 - C* Justice
 - C* **Half-way house**
 - C* Band council
 - C* National defence
 - C* *Forces base*
 - C* Veteran's Affairs
 - C* Postal Service
 - C* *Post Office*
- Social focus
 - C* Education and literacy
 - C* **Elementary school**
 - C* **High school**
 - C* **Technical school**
 - C* **University**
 - C* **Extension courses**
 - C* **Other educational institutions**
 - C* Health
 - C* **Hospital**
 - C* **Blood/urine testing facility**
 - C* **X-Ray facility**
 - C* **Baby delivery facility**
 - C* **CT scan facility**
 - C* **Nursing home**
 - C* **Doctor(s)**
 - C* **Nurse(s)**
 - C* **Senior's retirement home**
 - C* **Alcohol/Drug-abuse facility**
 - C* Welfare
 - C* **Welfare Office**
 - C* **Social worker**
 - C* **Day care**
 - C* **Drop-in centre**
 - C* **Counselling services**
 - C* **Family distress**
 - C* **Women's shelter**
 - C* Housing

- C Immigration
 - C **Citizenship court**
- C Recreation
 - C **Arena**
 - C **Public pool**
 - C **Community playing field**
 - C **Community gymnasium**
 - C **Community centre**
 - C **Theatre**
 - C **Museum**
 - C **Library**
 - C **Parks**
- Cultural focus
 - C Official languages
 - C Heritage
 - C Public Broadcasting
 - C *CBC Radio or TV*

5.2. Results

For the initial examination of the data, we have focused on services and providers. The providers have been identified in the following way.

- C federal government (citizenship courts, employment insurance offices, revenue Canada offices)
- C provincial governments (education institutions, health institutions, automobile license offices, welfare offices, half-way houses, counselling and family distress offices)
- C municipal governments (town hall, band councils, municipal pools, parks, playing fields, gyms, and centres, municipal athletic clubs, libraries, and art programmes)

The services have been classified in the following manner:

- C emergency services (fire, police, road ambulance, and air ambulance)
- C medical services (all services listed in section 6.2 of the site profiles workbook plus senior citizen's retirement homes)
- C education services (elementary, secondary, technical schools, university, extension courses, and other educational institutions)
- C legal services (lawyer, notary, and citizenship court)
- C non-government economic development services (banks, credit unions, micro-financing groups, insurance offices)
- C social support services (daycares, retirement homes, welfare offices, food banks, clothing exchanges or depots, second-hand stores, drop-in centres, counselling services, family distress centres, women's shelters, alcohol and drug abuse rehabilitation centres)
- C transportation services (bus, train, air, boat, and taxi)
- C volunteer services (food banks, clothing exchanges or depots, second-hand stores, drop-in centres, women's shelters, religious groups, business service clubs, historical societies)
- C recreation services (all services listed in section 6.9 of the workbook)

Our intention to gather information on Internet services was too difficult to do at this stage in the profile series. Local informants could not provide consistent and reliable information regarding these services, so the relevant information will be collected during the more intensive stages of the field work.

5.2.1. Basic Distances

Table 1 provides basic information regarding the average distances from the site centroids to the service providers. As one might expect, the distance to government services increases from the municipal to provincial to federal level. In our sample sites, however, even federal services are within 100 km of the community centroids.

Table 1: Average Kilometres to Site Centroid and Average Change from 1981 by Service Providers - 1998

Providers	Average Distance to Site Centroid (1998)		Average Change: 1981 to 1998	Max.: Min. (1998)
	Mean	Median (n)	Mean (n)	
Federal Government	51	55 (12)	-3.3 (8)	100:5
Provincial Governments	34	25 (12)	.1 (12)	97:10
Municipal Governments	6	4 (12)	.1 (9)	17:.5

The negative sign of the average change value for the federal government suggests that the distance to these services has declined slightly since 1981. The major contribution to this decline was the opening of an employment office closer to Girouxville in Alberta. This meant that the office was located 11 rather than 70 kilometres from the town.

Table 2 provides information regarding the distances to particular types of services. It includes as well, an indicator of the estimated time taken by emergency services to reach the centroid of the site.

Table 2: Average Kilometres to Site Centroid by Services

Service	Average Distance to Site Centroid (1998)		Average Change: 1981 to 1998	Max.:Min. (1998)
	Mean	Median (n)	Mean (n)	
emergency services	13	17 min. (7)		18:2
medical services	30	27	2.4 (12)	55:15
education services	39	26	-1.3 (10)	129:.5
legal services	27	25	0 (8)	39:.5
financial services	16	9	1.1 (8)	44:4
social support services	20	18	1.7 (8)	32:5
transportation services	44	44	1.8 (9)	78:29
volunteer services	19	18	2.0 (8)	74:3
recreation services	9	8	.7 (9)	28:1

The time for emergency services compares favourably to urban centres. In the greater Montréal region, for example, response times for ambulance services are in the order of 9 minutes. One Montréal suburban municipality even has an average response time of 22 minutes: slightly longer than the maximum time of 18 minutes in the 7 rural sites for which information is available.⁴

Most of the services show an increase in the distance to the centroid from 1981 although this amounts to very small average changes. The largest increase is for medical services, followed by those in the voluntary sector. Such results may signal a serious problem with the relationship between formal and informal health-related services. Rather than compensate for the increased distance to formal medical services, the voluntary sector may be showing the same increase. Education services are the only ones which showed a decrease in the average distance over the period considered.

5.2.2. Structural Variation

Our expectation is that these distances will be related to a number of structural changes affecting rural locations. In order to check this expectation, we conducted a preliminary examination of the distances using the five dimensions of the sampling frame (cf. Section 1 above). Although the number of cases is very small, there were indications that the important differences are likely to be found for several of the characteristics. As shown in Table 3, the statistically significant differences are the following.

- C The distance to *federal services* and *medical services* in 1998 is significantly farther in those sites which are *not adjacent* to metropolitan areas.
- C The distance to *municipal services* is significantly farther in those sites which are associated with *fluctuating* economies for both 1981 and 1998.
- C This is also the case for *financial services* in 1981.
- C The distance to *recreational services* is farther for those sites which have relatively high levels of *institutional infrastructure* in 1981 and 1998.

⁴ The average response time for Montreal Island and Laval is 9 minutes, 6 seconds (May 2, 1998:A6).

Table 3: Selected Mean Distance (km) from Site Centroids by Structural Characteristics

Services	Global-Local		Stable-Fluctuating		Adjacency		Capability	
	G	L	S	F	A	NA	Hi	Lo
federal (1998)					36	73**		
municipal (1981)			1	12**				
(1998)			3	13**				
medical (1998)					21	44**		
financial (1981)			2	20**				
(1998)							9	29*
social support (1981)	35	12*						
voluntary (1998)			11	34*				
recreational (1981)							10	1**
(1998)							13	2**
emergency response time (1998)			8mn	12mn*				

* p < .07
 ** p < .03

6. Conclusions

These results are very tentative since they rely on data from only 14 of the sites. They provide some indication of the potential value of the research, however. As more sites are added to the database, we will be in a better position to make the comparisons which are necessary for more explanatory analysis.

The results from our initial contacts have also revealed important considerations for subsequent work. For example, as shown above, we have identified a number of programs and facilities which should be included in future local inventories (cf. those in italics in section 5.1). These include the presence of Forces bases, the nearest Post Office, Business Development Centres, bars, and taverns.

The results also confirm the value of pursuing this direction of research. Not only have we found important variation in the distances by type of SERVICE and type of PROVIDER, but the preliminary analysis of the structural variables suggests they are likely to play an important role in understanding the reasons for some of this variation. It is clear that both the expansion of the sample to the other sites and the collection of more extensive and precise information will contribute a great deal to this understanding.

This preliminary work also reinforces the validity of the measures we are using. Much more detailed work must be done to corroborate this finding, but the patterns emerging seem to support the utility of such information for comparative work.

We have also identified a number of suggestions of a more substantive nature from this preliminary analysis. Government services clearly vary in availability by their jurisdictions. In addition, there are important hints that the structural characteristics of rural places play an important role in this variation. The stability of the local economy and the adjacency to metropolitan centres appear to be especially significant in this regard.

There are, in addition, several other observations which have emerged from the more informal discussions in the field. They are outlined below.

- C The ordinary rural citizen's concern regarding access is often different than those of their elected officials. For local people, the issue of access is most important: they need not have the service on site if they are easily accessible in some other way. For elected officials, the presence of services on site has become a sign of a dynamic community and an important source of employment. For them, rural development is no longer an issue of employment in primary industries, but of employment in the service sector. By having the service on site, it not only attracts population, but contributes directly to the tax base of the municipality.
- C The problem of access in rural areas appears to be most severe for those elderly without an automobile and for youth with few recreational facilities.
- C Our approach to rural services must always keep in mind the vision of rural dwellers. The norms for services which are assumed by urban dwellers are not necessarily accepted by those in rural areas. In fact, rural dwellers may be willing to accept certain inconveniences in services for the lifestyle which rural living affords. It may also be that response times for some services are better in rural areas even though the distances are greater.