

The Next Rural Economies: How can communities prepare for increasingly mobile workforce?

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Outline

- Context
- Mobile labour
- “Next Generation Workforce”
- Study
 - 8 topic areas needing attention
- Discussion

1. Context

Mobile Labour I

- Post-WWII transition in labour attraction and retention
- Long distance labour commuting (LDLC)
 - Started in Canada in mid-1960s
- LDLC has grown steadily since global recession of early 1980s

Mobile Labour II

- Tipping scales towards mobile labour
 - New town construction ended
 - Cost prohibitive
 - Environment and other costs
 - Decreasing costs of “fly in” transportation
 - Corporate flexibility
 - Low cost workforces (temporary foreign workers)
 - Operations (workers) need to be as globally mobile as capital
 - Increased use of contractors
 - Global market fluctuations
 - Increased risk leads to need for increased responsiveness

Mobile Labour III

- New expectations among workers (& families)
 - Dual incomes
 - Quality of life
 - Services / amenities
- Skilled workers
 - Increasingly specialized trades / skills
 - Applied for only portions of projects / operations

2. Next Generation Workforce



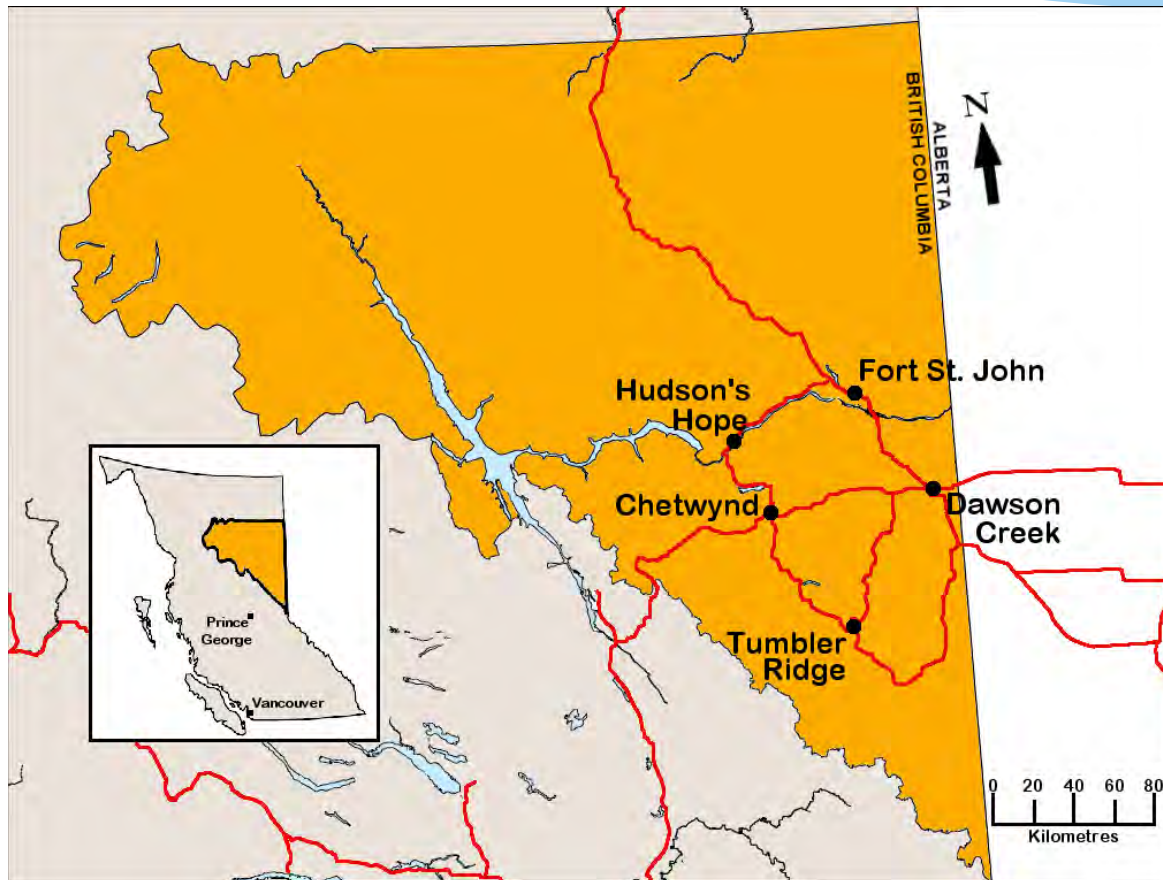
People, Places, & Labour

- Need to be competitive for the "next" economy & workforce
 - “Next” workforce is a “different” workforce
 - Changes everything about how we approach "development" and "employment"
- Two waves
 - Now
 - 25 years

Next Economy Workers

- Bargaining power:
 - "Smaller size" workforce
 - Can go where they want, demand what they want
- What do they want:
 - Clean environment
 - Reasonable services!!
 - Safe, healthy place to raise family
 - Work/life balance
 - Sense of community & global connectivity
 - High level of quality of life
- Definition of rural and small town places
- But also supports increases in LDLC

3. The Study



Methodology

- 21 key informant interviews
- 6 industry association interviews
- Each participant had multiple roles
- Questions explored:
 - Pressures
 - Actions
 - Advice

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8 Topic Areas Needing Attention

- Pressure areas based on northern BC experience
 - Local / regional gov't policies
 - Physical infrastructure
 - Regional transportation
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Community services
 - Hiring
 - Business recruitment/retention

Local / Regional Gov't

- Complexity of operations
 - Multiple levels of gov't
 - Multiple stakeholders
 - Staying on track
- Lack of communication/information
 - Transient population
 - Uncertainty of projects
- Taxation pressures
- Limited jurisdiction

Physical Infrastructure

- Increased demands on infrastructure
 - Traffic, water, sewage
- Aging infrastructure
 - Lack of funding to update / upgrade
- Communications
 - Industry secrecy – tough to anticipate needs
- Information and research
 - Mobile workers not considered
- Limited planning
 - Infrastructure not designed for expansion

Regional Transportation

- Demands on transportation infrastructure
 - Heavy highway traffic
 - Impacts of heavy trucks on local roads
 - Limited infrastructure to bring in workers
- Financial barriers
 - Maintenance / repair costs
 - Charters don't pay terminal fees
- Safety
 - Distance to airport/public transportation

Housing

- Availability / Affordability
- Population dynamics
 - Influx of workers / mobile worker populations
- Impacts on other sectors
 - Lack of housing for service sector, tourists, etc
- Development challenges
 - Lack of developer experience with mobile worker housing
 - Lack of construction trades
- Funding / investment
 - Fear of decline prevents investment
 - Lack of funding for low income housing

Health

- Limited availability of services / staff
 - Walk-in clinic, doctors
 - Emergency, mental health supports
- Additional demands from mobile workers
 - Long wait lists
- Burnout of health care workers
- Limited / aging infrastructure
- Lack of planning for projected increases
 - Census does not accurately reflect needs

Community Services

- Funding
 - No redistribution of gov't funding to account for growth
 - Lack of supports for unemployed / immigrants
- Increased demands for services
 - Transient population creates more pressure
 - Unprepared and unemployed workers
- Human resources
 - Lack of community service workers
- Changing operations environment
- Lack of cooperative planning
 - Between service providers
 - With industry

Hiring

- Shortage of human resources
 - Trades, skilled labour / service sector / community service
 - High turnover
 - Competition amongst employers
 - Can't compete with industry wages
- Capacity
 - Shortage of management skills
 - Young workforce with limited experience
- Operations
 - Affected by staff shortage
 - Increased workloads
 - No succession plans

Business Recruitment / Retention

- No information about business needs or opportunities
 - Difficulty determining future demands
- Communication / collaboration
 - Limited coordination across businesses, with industry
- Capacity
 - Limited functionality in Chambers of Commerce
 - Service sector not mature
 - Contractors can't do industry scale of work
 - Contractors don't meet industry procurement requirements
- Financial barriers
 - Cost of commercial space
- Out-of-town shopping

5. Discussion

Discussion I

- Communications
 - Hold discussions early with stakeholders
 - Continue routine communication / collaboration
 - Align messages
 - Ensure industry / First Nations part of advocacy group
- Research and information
 - Know mobile worker population / industry needs
 - Provide industry with business profiles
 - Obtain accurate information to support planning and investments
 - Complete assessment of infrastructure

Discussion II

- Planning / programs
 - Update policies, rezoning, etc.
 - Identify capacity gaps
 - Ensure adequate staff in place
 - Ensure resources in place to implement strategies / community action plans
 - Monitor changing industry needs
 - Put agreements in place
 - Community / industry

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- [*Partners in Community Development: Board Voice*](#)
- [*Spring 2013 - Speakers Series - Housing in a Changing Community: Opportunity for Innovation*](#)

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The institute emphasizes the importance of capacity-building, collaboration, learning, and complementarity between UNBC research centres. Research that is undertaken balances academic credibility with practical relevance. Beyond research, the Institute is involved in outreach activities and serves as a conduit to expand and enhance local educational opportunities related to community development.

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