

# Addressing Nova Scotia's Demographic Challenges

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# Agenda

- ▣ Introduction
- ▣ Demographic Snapshot
- ▣ Provincial Programs and Initiatives
- ▣ International Strategies
- ▣ Repopulating Rural Canada
- ▣ Welcoming Communities
- ▣ Recommendations

# Introduction

- Nova Scotia's population is declining and aging
- Population Forum 2010 highlighted ideas, solutions, and experiences across four main themes:
  1. Workforce availability
  2. Attraction, retention and repatriation
  3. Roles of federal and provincial governments
  4. Roles of municipalities, businesses, and RDAs

# Our Commitment

- UNSM, NSARDA, and the NS Chambers of Commerce has prepared a report that examines:
  - challenges facing key demographic groups
  - existing programs, services and policies
  - local, national and international best practices
  - recommend potential strategies for attraction, retention and integration



# Demographic Snapshot

## Seniors

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- ▣ 15.4% of residents are over the age of 65
- ▣ Projected increase of 107% between 2001-2034
- ▣ Recent trend towards employing senior workers
- ▣ “Aging in place”

## Youth

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- ▣ Expected to decline by 21.8% in the same period
- ▣ Out-migration of rural youth
- ▣ Youth with a stake in their community are more likely to return
- ▣ Support from local government is vital

# Demographic Snapshot

## International Students

- ▣ 10% of the international student population in Canada chose to study in NS
- ▣ Young, highly-educated, English-speakers
- ▣ 40% report the intention to stay and work in NS after graduation

## Immigrants

- ▣ Nova Scotia attracts <1% of immigrants to Canada
- ▣ 75% settle in HRM
- ▣ Suggested that immigration may reverse negative demographic trends

# Local and Provincial Strategies

- Seniors
- Youth
- University Students
- Immigrants

# Seniors

- ▣ Strategy for Positive Aging
  - ▣ Adopting age-friendly community initiatives is a preventative and proactive approach to meeting the challenges of population aging
  
- ▣ Rural and Remote Communities Initiative
  - ▣ Guysborough County
  
- ▣ Resources and Funding Initiatives
  - ▣ Grant Programs
  - ▣ Employment Programs

# Key Issues: Seniors

- Lack of affordable and accessible housing
  - Promotes independent living
- Transportation needs
  - Relies heavily on semi-formal or volunteer transportation services
- Employment and volunteer opportunities
- Recreation and social activities

# Youth

- Strategies for Youth Inclusion
  - Youth Secretariat provides toolkits and best practices
- Youth town council, associations, and centres
  - There is an increasing need for municipal governments and organisations to integrate youth representation in decision-making
- Retention & attraction strategies
  - Maintaining contact
  - Addressing employment needs
  - Providing incentives

# Key Issues: Youth

- ▣ Youth voice not heard in decision-making
- ▣ Stereotypes about youth generation
  - ▣ E.g., youth are lazy, apathetic, unmotivated
  - ▣ Employment barrier
- ▣ Recreational facilities, after school programs, events
  - ▣ Opportunities for community engagement

# University Students

- ▣ Province of Nova Scotia offers incentives to university graduates who choose to stay and work in the province
  - ▣ Graduate Retention Rebate
  - ▣ Post-Graduate Work Permit
  - ▣ Nova Scotia Nominee Program – International Graduate Stream

# Key Issues: University Students

- Lack of affordable housing
  - Many graduates earn reasonable incomes and can afford to pay for modestly-priced rental housing
- Transportation needs
- Barriers to employment
  - Lack of work experience
  - Skills do not match the market

# Immigrants

- Nova Scotia Nominee Program
  - Offers quicker entry for qualified workers and entrepreneurs
  - Six identified streams:
    1. Agri-food
    2. Skilled worker
    3. Family business worker
    4. International Graduate
    5. Non-Dependent child
    6. Community-identified

# Immigrants (cont.)

- Funding programs
  - Labour Market Funding Program
  - Settlement Funding Program
  
- Settlement and integration services
  - ISIS (formerly MISA and HILC)
  - Colchester Immigration Partnership
  - Regional Immigration Navigator Program

# Key Issues: Immigrants

- Employment barriers
  - Foreign Credential Recognition
  - Lack of work experience in Canada
  - Job-specific language training
- Lack of affordable housing
  - Banking and mortgage
- Transportation
- Negative stereotypes

# International Strategies

- “Active Aging” Initiatives from Japan
- Free Land Incentives in Kansas, USA

# Japan

- “Active aging” recognises the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the willingness and financial stability to function independently in old age
- Given rise to business and industries called “silver markets”
  - Real estate and home renovation
  - Recreation
  - Voluntary sector
- Additional opportunities lie in developing and implementing training schemes that will suit the needs of older workers

# Ellsworth, Kansas

- The “Welcome Home Plan” offers free residential lots to new residents, or alternatively, down payment assistance to families to enrol children in the school district
  - Since 2005, there have been 9 new homes built on free land
  - 26 families have participated in the DAP since 2003, bringing in an additional \$650,000 to the school district
  
- Considerations
  - Similar plans have not been as successful elsewhere in Kansas
  - Highly dependent on the availability of jobs and amenities

# Repopulating Rural Canada

- Winkler, Manitoba
- Tisdale, Saskatchewan

# The Winkler Initiative

- ❑ Signed an agreement with the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program to attract Russian-German immigrants to fill labour shortages
- ❑ Between 2001 and 2006 the population grew from 7,943 to 9,106 (an increase of 14.6%)
- ❑ Important factors in Winkler's success:
  - ❑ Strong religious, cultural and linguistic ties to the German population
  - ❑ Settlement services funded by Chambers of Commerce, Province, and municipality
  - ❑ Volunteer and in-kind support from community members

# Tisdale, Saskatchewan

- ▣ Immigration initiative led by local business seeking skilled labour
  - ▣ Youth out-migration due to higher paying opportunities in Alberta
- ▣ Based initiative on the established Ukrainian community
- ▣ Recruited 32 employees and their families through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program
- ▣ Factors of success:
  - ▣ Establish Ukrainian community helped in attraction and settlement
  - ▣ Innovative banking and loan programs
  - ▣ Local leaders willing to step up and act

# Welcoming Communities

- What is a “welcoming community”?
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

# What is a “welcoming community”?

- Represent a collective commitment to fostering a culture of inclusiveness
- Actions that support inclusion and equity across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions

***“Until newcomers feel that their skills are being used, there is no inclusion” – Ashworth, 2008***

“Municipal governments, in partnership with other orders of government and local and national groups, have an important role to play in creating welcoming and inclusive communities, as they function at the most practical level, and are the most closely involved in the lives of their citizens”.



# Alberta Urban Municipalities Association: *Welcoming & Inclusive Communities Initiative*

- ▣ Partnership between AUMA, Human Rights Commission, Alberta Culture, and Government of Alberta
- ▣ Toolkit offers strategies, approaches, and policies that can be adapted to the unique needs of individual municipalities
- ▣ Linked to toolkits for Affordable Housing, Municipal Sustainability Planning and Citizen Engagement

# Welcoming Communities in NS

- ▣ Cumberland (CREDA)
  - ▣ Regional Repopulation Strategy – youth retention and immigrant attraction
  - ▣ Developed with Mount Allison University
  
- ▣ Colchester (CoRDA)
  - ▣ “Growing Colchester Plan” – youth and immigrants
  - ▣ Focus on business and targeted marketing in the UK
  
- ▣ Pictou County (PRDA)
  - ▣ Welcoming & Inclusive Community Strategy – immigrants
  - ▣ Developed “Immigrate to Rural Nova Scotia” website

## Recommendations for Nova Scotia Communities

- Develop a plan for repopulation
- Attracting residents and businesses to rural Nova Scotia
- Encouraging people to stay

# Develop a Plan for Repopulation

1. Community Asset Mapping: Identify the unique strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities offered by your community

1.1. Build relationships between stakeholders

1.2. Encourage information sharing

2. Institutionalise “Welcoming & Inclusive Communities” in long-term planning

2.1. Develop a strategy for your community based on the goals set out in community’s long-term plan

3. Look beyond immigration as a long-term solution to repopulation

# Attracting Residents and Businesses

4. Work with local businesses and employers to determine labour force gaps and potential demographic groups for recruitment
5. Leverage provincial and federal programs to address labour shortages
6. Work with employers to focus on job creation, recruitment, and hiring practices
7. Consider new, innovative opportunities for entrepreneurship based on the strengths of your community
8. Consider offering incentives to attract new business developments and residents to the community

# Encouraging People to Stay

9. Confront issues of affordable housing
10. Develop solutions to public transportation challenges
11. Apply for/request federal and provincial funding for capacity building and infrastructure improvements
12. Identify opportunities for increasing volunteerism
13. Engage youth in decision-making on issues and program for youth
14. Combat negative perceptions that may lead to discrimination
15. Promote the benefits of life in rural and small town Nova Scotia

## and finally...

### 16. Don't give up!

- ▣ There is no “magic bullet” solution to the repopulation challenge – requires a mixed approach
- ▣ The cost of inaction is too great in the face of increasing out-migration, an aging population, and impending labour shortages
- ▣ Continue to move forward on the strength of a trial and error approach