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**Authors:** Lynda Harling Stalker & John Phyne

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# **The Social Impact of Out-Migration: A Case Study from Rural and Small Town Nova Scotia, Canada**

**Lynda Harling Stalker**

St. Francis Xavier University  
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

[lharing@stfx.ca](mailto:lharing@stfx.ca)

**John G. Phyne**

St. Francis Xavier University  
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

[jphyne@stfx.ca](mailto:jphyne@stfx.ca)

## **Abstract**

By drawing from Statistics Canada and qualitative research data, we assess the social impact of population decline in the Strait Region of Nova Scotia. Statistics Canada data show that from 2001 to 2006, there was a net out-migration from the Strait Region to other areas in Canada. This was a continuance of a pattern established nearly two decades ago. This, coupled with an aging population, means that the economic viability and social vitality of the Strait Region is being slowly undermined. The decline in the population of rural and small town settlements over the past two decades has negative implications for the local economy, families and communities, and community support structures in the Strait Region. We conclude by arguing that more resources are needed for the retention of immigrants if some of the negative consequences of out-migration (such as labour market shortages) are to be redressed.

Keywords: socioeconomic structures, community support structures, out-migration, immigration

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The out-migration of youth from rural and small towns in the Global North is well documented.<sup>1</sup> Research on this subject focuses on the rationale for out-migration and the 'life chances' of out-migrants. We have little information on the social impact of out-migration for those who decide to remain in rural and small town areas.

This study documents the social impact of rural and small town out-migration on the Strait Region of Nova Scotia. Over the last two decades out-migration to other parts of Canada has coincided with the aging of the remaining population. Qualitative data from a workshop held in October 2009 show that out-migration has implications for the local

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada includes in its definition of rural areas: Small towns, villages and other populated places under 1,000 (2001 census) (Statistics Canada 2011). The 2006 census dictionary does not define small towns. However, the largest towns in the Strait Region (Antigonish [4,236] and Port Hawkesbury [3,517]) would not qualify as urban areas (Statistics Canada 2007a; 2007b). Statistics Canada (2011) defines a census metropolitan area (CMA) as having 100,000 people with at least 50,000 in the urban core; a census agglomeration has at least 10,000 in the urban core.

economy (labour markets and business succession), families and communities (out-migration and long-distance commuting), and community support structures (education, health, and volunteering).<sup>2</sup> We conclude by arguing that higher levels of return migration and immigration, as well as the greater integration of newcomers into community support structures are needed to mitigate these negative consequences.

## **2.0 The Social Impact of Rural and Small Town Out-Migration**

The literature on rural and small town out-migration emphasizes the continuing departure of youth in the Global North. These youth have skills that are either in use elsewhere, or may eventually benefit other places (Bjarnson & Thorlindsson, 2006; Corbett 2007; Hamilton et al., 2004; Hiller 2009; Haase, 2009; McGrath 2009; Palmer & Sinclair, 2000; Stockdale, 2006, 2004, 2002; Ommer, 2007).

Corbett (2007), Palmer and Sinclair (2000), and Hiller (2009) show how rural and small town areas in Atlantic Canada educate labour destined for other places. Rural youth (especially males) seek opportunities in Alberta for higher income and a more rapid way to secure an apprenticeship for employable credentials. The labour markets in Atlantic Canada cannot compete with the dynamism of the Albertan resource economy (Hiller, 2009; Ferguson, 2011; Phyne and Harling Stalker, 2011).

The consequences of youth out-migration for rural and small town areas are rarely assessed in research that largely follows the pathways of internal and international migrants (Hatton & Williamson, 2008). To investigate the social impact of out-migration on the Strait Region, we use an analytical scheme to capture the socioeconomic and community support structures of the Strait Region. By socioeconomic, we refer to the labour markets, business succession and the impact of out-migration for familial ties. Community support structures include education and volunteering.

Out-migrants may benefit their ‘home communities’ through remittances (Hatton & Williamson, 2008; Ferguson, 2011), but what about those left behind, such as single parents (usually female) in the case of ‘temporary migration’, where a spouse (usually male) has a workplace distant from home? In Canada, the long distance commuter is an entrenched phenomenon for some communities and/or occupational groups.<sup>3</sup> What does this mean for the day-to-day reproduction of households and local livelihoods? These are social consequences usually not considered.

Community support structures work alongside labour markets and contribute to the well-being of a community. These include education, health and volunteering. Canada (as other Global North nations) is experiencing declining school enrolments and health care shortages for an aging population. These are magnified in rural and small town areas of the Strait Region. Education arguably, should benefit not only those being educated, but also the host community. Yet, education benefits other places (Bennett, 2013; Corbett, 2007).

The out-migration of rural Newfoundland males to Alberta placed constraints on women in areas ranging from volunteer firefighting to recreational activities for children (Beaton 2008; Ferguson, 2011). While this pointed to the gendered nature

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<sup>2</sup> Due to space limitations, this paper will only focus upon the educational and voluntary dimensions of community support structures. A complete overview of all community support structures is available in Phyne and Harling Stalker (2010). This document is available from the authors.

<sup>3</sup> This is difficult to discern from census data. However, Statistics Canada data that point to individuals who live in one census division, but work in another, is a good basis for starting systematic research on long-distance commuters. Some of this data, as it pertains to the Strait Region, will be discussed in this paper.

of volunteering, it also captured the importance of volunteering to the social vitality of rural communities. With the resettlement of communities in rural Newfoundland to larger and more centralized areas in the 1960s and 1970s, Matthews (1976) argued that ‘forced out-migration’ ignored the social vitality present in rural communities, in favour of economic objectives. This is still pertinent. Economic out-migration from the Strait Region removes a population usually called upon to contribute to the communities’ social wellbeing.

One needs to look behind to the communities that are losing people, and not just forward to the consequences of out-migration for departing individuals. The individual and collective dimensions of actions such as migration are captured by Portes (2010). We can assess such consequences through measures such as social capital, or the “... ability to gain access to resources by virtue of membership in networks or larger social structures” (Portes, 2010: 27). In our case, what are the consequences of out-migration on the availability of social capital for communities that lose out-migrants?<sup>4</sup>

Volunteering, as measure of social capital, depends upon the availability of labour force participants who are members of a given community. Ethnic, religious and/or long-term residential ties may form the boundaries of such a community. The erosion of economic (labour force participants) and human (educated labour) capital through out-migration can undermine social capital. The boundaries of a community may fail to nurture social capital. In the final section of this paper, we show that the Strait Region has difficulties in recruiting and retaining and immigrants. Immigrants need to be integrated more into local settings, but the resources available for this are lacking.

### **3.0 Research Setting: The Strait Region**

The Strait Region encompasses the counties of Antigonish, Guysborough (both on the Nova Scotia mainland), Inverness and Richmond (on Cape Breton Island). It has an area of 10,568 square kilometres (Economic Assembly 2010) and a population of 56,670 (see Table 1). A causeway linked the region’s mainland and island portions in 1955. The region is a geographical basis for economic and public policy.

Approximately 60 to 75 per cent of the labour force is employed in the service sector. The most significant employer in manufacturing is Port Hawkesbury Paper. This firm’s predecessor employed 550 individuals in 2006 (The Economic Assembly, 2010), but now, according to the company’s newsletter, only 400 are employed (Port Hawkesbury Paper, 2012).<sup>5</sup> Other (albeit much smaller) manufacturing employers are found in the fish processing and forestry sectors.

The region is a basis for the delivery of education and health care. The Strait Regional School Board (SRSB) is experiencing declining school enrolment. This has implications for school consolidation and closure. It is exacerbated by the out-

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<sup>4</sup>This reverses the empirical questions that Portes poses for his work on immigrant communities in urban America.

<sup>5</sup> While the mill was open during the time of this research (2009-10), in the past decade it has gone through period of economic uncertainty spurred on by factors such as increases in power costs and the value of the Canadian dollar. The closure of the mill was ‘on and off again’ during this period. In the early part of the decade, NewPage, an American concern, purchased the mill from StoraEnso of Finland. Pacific West purchased it from NewPage in the fall of 2012.

migration of young families.<sup>6</sup> The Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) covers most of the region.<sup>7</sup> GASHA faces impending retirements in a health care staff that deals with an aging population. Education and health are two of the largest budget items when it comes to the delivery of public services in Nova Scotia. In 2009-10, the Departments of Health and Education combined for over 62 per cent of provincial expenditures (Province of Nova Scotia, 2009).

The Strait Region includes, in addition to the longest residents, the Mi'kmaq, descendants of Scottish, English, Irish, Acadian and African-Nova Scotian settlers dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The post-WWII Dutch represented the last significant influx of immigrants. They arrived from largely overpopulated farmlands in the Netherlands, and contributed to the Strait Region's agricultural sector (Gerrits, 1996).<sup>8</sup> Over the last 20 years, the Strait Region experienced ongoing population loss (see Section 5). With an aging demographic, net out-migration potentially threatens the economic and social well-being of the Strait Region as a whole.

#### **4.0 Data Sources and Methods**

Our data include: Statistics Canada (2006b) data on internal migration from 2001 to 2006, a target group profile of Statistics Canada (2010a) data on out-migrants from the Strait Region (2001 to 2006), and a workshop in 2009 with 14 individuals knowledgeable about out-migration from the Strait Region. These individuals come from backgrounds such as: business planning and development, business, education, health, municipal office, and community groups. Participants were divided into small focus groups to discuss topics such as the provision of health care, out-migration, education and the aging population. Note takers were assigned to each group to capture the discussion. At the end of the session, the smaller groups were brought together to identify similarities and differences in the discussions and to get feedback about the most salient issues. The workshop was supplemented by interviews with five individuals who were not able to attend, and an interview with a manager of a small 'high-tech' business that has recruited immigrants. Statistics Canada data deals with those who have left the Strait Region, the workshop and interview data provide a perspective on the consequences of such out-migration for the region.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, 12 out of the 20 workshop participants and interviewees are from Antigonish County. To compensate for this, we provide data from other sources on the region to balance our discussion.<sup>10</sup>

#### **5.0 Population Decline in the Strait Region**

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<sup>6</sup> The SRSB had an enrolment of 10,228 in 2006 -07. It is projected to fall to 7,041 by 2010 -11, and to 6,551 by 2014 -15. Only the French school board (Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial) (projected enrolment of 3,684) has a smaller projected enrolment than the SRSB. From 2006 to 2011, the enrolment in the SRSB is expected to fall by over 13 per cent, the largest projected decline for any school board in Nova Scotia (see Province of Nova Scotia 2007). Bennett (2013) estimates that school enrolment for Nova Scotia, as a whole, will drop by 16 per cent from its 2011 total of 151,680.

<sup>7</sup> The Cape Breton Regional Health Authority administers the Northern and Central portions of Inverness County.

<sup>8</sup> Today, the Mi'kmaq are concentrated in the Paq'tnkek, Waycobah and Chapel Island reservations, Scottish, English, and Irish descendants are scattered throughout the region. Acadians are largely found in Pomquet, Isle Madame, and Cheticamp, but live throughout the region. The African-Nova Scotian community, mostly descendants of Black Loyalists, are concentrated in Guysborough County. The descendants of Dutch immigrants are concentrated in Antigonish and Inverness Counties.

<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of our data and methods, see Phyne and Harling Stalker (2010).

<sup>10</sup> These include the target group profile data (Statistics Canada, 2010a) and a report on sustainability in Inverness County (Rutten, 2010).

The Strait Region’s population loss from 1996 to 2012 is shown in Table 1. The greatest losses were in Guysborough (-24.0 per cent) and Richmond (-15.2 per cent) counties. Nova Scotia, as a whole, recorded a slight increase in population over the same period (4.3 per cent). Even going back further, we see that from 1981 to 2006, the populations of Guysborough (-29 per cent), Inverness (-13 per cent), and Richmond (-20 per cent) underwent continuous decline (Gardiner Pinfold, 2007, 2008).

From 2001 to 2006, 9 out of the top 25 census subdivisions in Canada that experienced population decline were in Atlantic Canada. The Strait Region contains two of these census subdivisions. Inverness, Subdivision B (which contains Mabou) was the census subdivision with the seventh fastest declining population in Canada. The population fell from 5,769 to 5,369 or by 6.9 per cent. Antigonish, Subdivision B (which includes the eastern portion of the county) saw its population fall from 6,819 to 6,509 or by 4.5 per cent (Statistics Canada, 2007c).

Table 1. *Population Change in the Strait Region Counties and Nova Scotia, 1996 to 2006*

<b>Census Division, Region and Province</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>Percentage Change, 1996 to 2012</b>
Antigonish	19,554	19, 578	18,836	18,779	-3.9
Guysborough	10,917	9,827	9,058	8,299	-24.0
Inverness	20,918	19,937	19,036	18,198	-15.2
Richmond	11,022	10,225	9,740	9,342	-15.2
Strait Region	62,411	59,567	56,670	54,618	-12.5
Nova Scotia	909,282	908,007	913,462	948,695	4.3

Source: 1996, 2001 and 2006 figures are based on data contained in Statistics Canada, *Census of the Canadian Population* (2006a; 2001); the 2012 data are from The Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy (2014).

Table 2 shows the median ages and age dependency ratios for the Strait Region. Guysborough County (48.3) has a median age almost 7 years higher than that for the province (41.8). All Strait Region counties have higher age dependency ratios than Nova Scotia (45.5). Health care professionals who serve this population are also entering retirement in larger numbers than in the past (Corpus Sanchez International Consultancy, 2007).

The vast majority of out-migrants from 2001-2006 were below the age of 40. Table 3 shows overall net migration (-2,910) from the Strait Region (2001-2006). Other areas in Nova Scotia (-1,360) and Alberta (-980) are places where the Strait Region experienced most of its population losses. This is the loss of a young and well-educated population. While the net population loss to Ontario is small (-50), the population that moved to that province is young and well educated (Phyne & Harling Stalker, 2012).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The small net out-migration to Ontario may represent the return of an older population that departed during earlier periods of out-migration. We do not have the data to verify this conclusion.

Table 2. *Median Ages and Age Dependency Ratios for the Strait Region Counties and Nova Scotia, 2006*

County or Province	Median Age			Age Dependency Ratio
	Male	Female	Total	
Antigonish	39.5	41.3	40.4	45.9
Guysborough	48.0	48.6	48.3	52.2
Inverness	44.0	44.7	44.3	49.7
Richmond	46.4	46.7	46.6	53.4
Nova Scotia	41.4	42.5	41.8	45.2

Source: Based on data in Statistics Canada (2008 a, b, c, and d).

Table 3. *Net Migration to the Strait Region, 2001 to 2006*

Province/Territory	Out-Migrants To	In-Migrants From	Net Migration
Newfoundland and Labrador	285	120	-165
Prince Edward Island	95	100	5
Elsewhere in Nova Scotia	3,480	2,210	-1,360
New Brunswick	395	275	-120
Quebec	160	50	-110
Ontario	925	875	-50
Manitoba	25	20	-5
Saskatchewan	70	70	0
Alberta	1,170	190	-980
British Columbia	275	195	-80
Northern Canada	70	25	-45
Total	6,950	4,040	-2,910

Source: Based on data contained in: Statistics Canada (2010a).

## 6.0 The Impact on the Socioeconomic Structures

### 6.1 Labour Markets

Since the 1990s, the Strait Region experienced difficulties in various economic sectors. The forestry sector witnessed a decline in global demand for newsprint, a factor that contributed to the uncertainty at the NewPage paper plant (now Port

Hawkesbury Paper) at Port Tupper. This, in turn, affected the price of wood and economic uncertainty for loggers that supplied the NewPage plant from their private woodlots, even before the plant's closure in the fall of 2011, and subsequent sale to Pacific West in 2012.<sup>12</sup> Second, while lobster prices were buoyant in the 1990s, this was in the midst of an overall decline in the fishery magnified by the eventual closure of a large offshore fish processing facility in Canso. There was also a decline and consolidation of farmland over the past two decades (Statistics Canada, 2010b). Finally, over the past two decades, call centres have opened and closed in a number of Strait Region communities. In the past decade, call centres opened in Antigonish, opened and closed in Canso and Cheticamp, and opened, closed and eventually reopened in Port Hawkesbury.

Workshop participants and interviewees reflected upon the labour shortages experienced in the Strait Region. Economic decline arguably contributes to out-migration, and to some labour shortages for employers in the Strait Region. Two dimensions of labour market shortages are discussed here: worker shortages in the low-end service sector and a deficit of skilled workers.

In February of 2010, an information session was held in Antigonish on Canada's *Temporary Foreign Worker Program* (TFWP). Approximately 35 business owners from the goods producing (primary resource and manufacturing) and service sectors attended this session. The TFWP is for employers who need low-wage labour, but have difficulty in accessing local supplies. According to an individual knowledgeable about this program:

This is used by employers in labour intensive work – low skills. The TFWP is usually their only option – low wages and the job does not require a degree or level of education. Mostly used in the primary resource (food producing) and services sectors. Fish processors and slaughterhouses [are two places that use the TFWP]. These are jobs that Nova Scotians don't want to do if EI competes on the wage scale...you see [shortages] in certain sectors. A fish plant and a call centre closed in Cheticamp – cannot find enough workers.

Another referred to shortages experienced by forestry firms in Antigonish County:

It is likely that a company will look for immigrants to fill in – out-migrants [have] more specialised skills [so they look for] higher paying jobs. Immigration – lower paying jobs. [At] Elite Balsam – people did not want to do the Christmas tree jobs anymore – if they have stamps [they] will not do it. Scott and Stewart had three Jamaicans working in forestry.

The Elite Balsam firm, a Christmas tree operation, employed immigrant workers in 2009 (MacEachern, 2009). Four women from Mexico were hired to make Christmas tree wreaths with 12 other employees. The firm makes 20,000 to 25,000 wreaths over the course of a few months. The owner transported workers from the

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<sup>12</sup> The Port Hawkesbury plant receives wood from Crown Land, in addition to what is supplied by private woodlot owners. The closure of the mill in the fall of 2011 negatively impacted upon many suppliers whose only outlet is the mill. Port Hawkesbury closed one of the mills at the plant. It only operates a 'high-tech' super-calendar plant that produces glossy paper for American publications like *Time* magazine.



Annapolis Valley, housed them in Antigonish and was required to pay the workers' transportation costs back to Mexico.<sup>13</sup>

[It's] probably going to cost me extra to have them work ... [but] I've got my orders filled and that's what matters...[w]e have had lots of people who come out and if they're already on employment insurance they'd rather stay on it for four weeks...[i]t's not the nicest time of the year to be working out in the rain and snow...and not everybody is accustomed to doing it or is able to do it (MacEachern, 2009).

While not having data specific to the Strait Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012) data show in the areas of Nova Scotia outside of Halifax there is a steady increase in the number of temporary foreign workers. Table 4 shows the increase in the number of temporary foreign workers for Atlantic Canada (and Canada) from 2003 to 2012. With few exceptions, the percentage increase in smaller urban areas, towns and rural areas has increased more than that for the province/territory as a whole. In Nova Scotia, the percentage increase for small town and rural areas (96.5) nearly matches that for Canada (107.5) as a whole. This suggests that there is a labour shortage of some sort in non-metropolitan Nova Scotia for employers to be turning to this program.

There is no 'actual shortage' of workers (given high unemployment rates), but Canadian citizens can circulate in the labour market; thus, they may not be willing to take insecure and low-paying work in the service sector. This can translate into higher labour turnover for employers in this sector. The TFWP Program potentially solves this problem by tying temporary foreign workers to employers. Basok's (2002) arguments about seasonal workers in the Canadian agricultural sector apply. Employers may be willing to front load the short-term costs of recruiting and transporting workers to Canada in exchange for a reduction in labour turnover.

A smoked fish processing facility in Guysborough County uses temporary foreign migrant workers. This firm smokes a variety of fish products for local and international markets (St. Mary's River Smokehouse, 2009). In a discussion preceding the workshop, a representative from the *Guysborough County Regional Development Authority* indicated that 10 to 12 Filipino workers were hired.<sup>14</sup> Local workers preferred employment opportunities in the service sector such as the (now closed) call centre in Canso.

The Strait Region is, for our respondents, a seller's market when it comes to certain kinds of labour:

At one company a couple of weeks ago about 12 decided not to show up. Educated people leave and those left behind have the employer trapped in corner.

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<sup>13</sup> It is not known whether these workers were originally recruited under the TFWP or under Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). If these workers were finishing employment as temporary agricultural workers on farm operations in the Annapolis Valley, they would have been recruited under SAWP. Whether the original recruitment is under the TFWP or SAWP, employers have to pay to ship workers to and from their point of origin (Prebisch, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> The McDonald's, Subway and A & W franchises in Antigonish also have immigrant Filipino workers on staff. At the time of our research, these workers were also present in a local meat processing plant which has since closed.

[The] Tim Horton’s franchise [has] difficulty in getting people – those kinds of jobs [are] low paying – minimum wage.

[P]eople in small communities aren’t working, they can’t find work. University workers and responsible [employers] are high paying, but there [are] rarely 15 to 25 dollar per hour jobs. People just have to go ‘cause they don’t want an X ring and work at Tim’s, and they don’t have the immediate skills to have professional jobs.

Skilled trades people are hard to find in the county – x number of carpenters and plumbers – hard to get those – St. Francis Xavier University is doing major renovations – unionised high paying jobs. Hard to get someone [in a] short period to do a lot of construction – skilled people – and you wait for a plumber.

Table 4. *Temporary Labour Force Workers in Atlantic Canada and Canada, 2003 to 2012*<sup>1</sup>

Jurisdiction	2003	2008	2012	% Change 2003 to 2012
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,156	1,295	2,286	43.2
Small & Rural	1,329	1,083	1,932	45.4
Prince Edward Island	157	448	805	412.7
Small & Rural	63	219	527	736.5
Nova Scotia	1,616	2,128	2,325	43.9
Small & Rural	514	818	1,020	96.5
New Brunswick	718	1,710	1,828	154.6
Small & Rural	316	907	1,099	247.8
Canada	102,932	190,739	213,573	107.5

Source: Based upon data contained in ‘Canada – Total Entries of Foreign Workers by Province or Territory or Urban Area’, p. 81 in Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (2012).

Note: The second row for each jurisdiction represents the smaller urban, town and rural totals. This is the ‘other’ category in the table from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012).

In addition to this, some perceive skilled worker shortages as due, in part, to the ‘perceived’ economic necessity of leaving:

I also think that other trades – the economy has gotten so bad people [have] no choice but to have to leave – look at our forestry – people with pulp trucks and the mill closes – having to sell because of [falling] price for lumber – wood cutters out of employment [and] people involved with heavy equipment [are also affected].

The skilled labour shortage extends to the SRSB:

The SRSB runs a bus fleet. Last winter [2008]...only one mechanic. They were all in Alberta. It has been helpful to the Tar Sands. [We] need to get

some tradesmen back. [We] cannot keep trades people in place – educating them and then they leave to go to Halifax and Alberta.

An interviewee knowledgeable about economic development referred to the impact of technological changes:

[The] Strait Area is industrial – Stora [now Port Hawkesbury Paper] advances technology – drive to productivity – challenge to educate current work force to keep up with technology. [It is always] the labour pool – good labour – skilled labour is the challenge – as the labour force ages and moves out of the market – skilled labour specifically. [There] is a skill shortage – instrument technicians – the boiler worker is no longer the guy with the wrench – [skill shortages] runs a gamut from production line workers to boiler operators.

One comment that we heard was that young people left in order to get their ‘red seals’ for their selected occupation. Red seal is the interprovincial designation for competency in a given trade. The apprenticeship, or on-the-job training, in Alberta is significantly shorter than in Nova Scotia (see Table 5).

Table 5. *Selected Apprenticeship and on-the-job training hours for Nova Scotia and Alberta (2014)*

<b>Trade</b>	<b>Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Hours</b>	<b>Alberta On-the-job Hours</b>
Heavy equipment technician	8,000	1,500
Welder	6,000	1,500
Hairstylist	1,500	1,400
Cook	6,000	1,500

Sources: Based upon data contained in Province of Nova Scotia (2014a) and Province of Alberta (2014).

It only makes sense that young people will go where the required hours are less so that they may start to earn an income as quickly as possible. One possible suggestion to mitigate young people migrating out of the Strait Region is for Nova Scotia to examine the required provincial red seal hours. If it were more in-line with the main out-migration destination, young people may be more willing to stay home.

Another suggestion, which echoes what MacDonald et al. (2013) discovered in Western Newfoundland, is the need for “good anchor jobs.” Like the Strait Region, this area of Newfoundland is experiencing a labour shortage in low-wage sector jobs, as well as jobs that were once considered “good jobs” in the fish plants. These jobs are no longer anchor jobs that encourage people to stay. St. Anthony, at the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula, is doing well because the largely diversified economic base, particularly in health employment, means that families will and can stay. When one family member has a good anchor job then other members are more willing to fill less attractive jobs as a trade-off for staying. In Antigonish, there are many anchor jobs because of the hospital and university, so the out-migration is lower than

other parts of the area. What are considered anchor jobs does change. In Newfoundland, the fishery is no longer seen as a good job (MacDonald et al., 2013).

## **6.2 The Impact on Succession Planning**

The aging population of small business owners need individuals to take over their businesses upon retirement. Some out-migrants who graduated from the Nova Scotia Community College in the spring of 2010 planned to move to Alberta not only for economic gain, but to also gain their credentials in a shorter period of time. Some would like to return to set up a business (Phyne and Harling Stalker 2011). One workshop participant noted that they are needed now:

One French community in Manitoba [has] little youth out-migration. One pig farmer trained his farm hand for three years and he [the farm hand] took over the business. They try to do this in every single industry - i.e., deal with property succession. There are 300 businesses in the Strait Region [reference to a study by the Chamber of Commerce] and no one to take over. Farmers [have to] urge people to take over.

Some are reluctant to take over farming businesses due to the risks involved:

[P]eople starting from scratch [find it] risky in any farming family. I would bet the farm because if it didn't go up in business they would lose. Mostly farm sons and daughters [face this decision]. First of all they grow up seeing and acting like farmers. Are they farmers by choice when they get older?

For one interviewee, while "...[f]arming seems to be vibrant in the area – dairy is solid...[there is an] aging farm population [the question for potential buyers] is whether it is viable to take it [the farm] on." If a dairy farmer cannot get someone to take over his/her land the quota can be sold and it leaves the community.

From 2001 to 2006, the number of dairy and beef farms declined in the Strait Region (and Nova Scotia as a whole). In Antigonish, the number of dairy farms fell from 44 to 34. The decline in Inverness County was from 27 to 20 farms (Statistics Canada, 2010b). Consolidation may also be structured by a combination of land consolidation, an aging farming population and the out-migration of individuals who could potentially take over agricultural operations.<sup>15</sup>

Rutten (2010:10) states "...the availability of labour, especially in the more rural areas of Inverness and Richmond Counties is becoming a critical factor in small business ability to expand and grow and, in some cases, even survive." There are succession issues in construction, fisheries, forestry and retail. For the retail sector (the third largest employer in Inverness County), unless succession planning takes place, Inverness County will see a declining source of tax revenue. While we lack detailed information on succession planning, it is likely that other Strait Region counties are impacted by this issue given that both the labour force and employers are aging in the region as a whole.

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<sup>15</sup> Agropur and Saputo of Quebec secured ownership of the Farmer's (by Agropur in 2013) and Scotsburn (by Saputo in 2014) dairy processing facilities in Atlantic Canada. This may be in preparation for the potential end of supply management in the dairy industry and the unlimited consolidation of dairy quotas within the context of new international trading agreements. If this is the case, then one may anticipate even further out-migration of the children of dairy farmers who 'normally' would be in a position to take over their parent's operations.

### **6.3 The Impact on Familial and Community Ties**

The search for better opportunities does not immediately translate into permanent out-migration. Long-distance commuting to Alberta imposes stresses on women left behind:

Transient workers [leave] some mothers with 3 to 4 kids. [This] affects family and community... [K]ids without fathers.

In terms of the family, people are away. The other spouse has the family responsibilities.

On the positive side – income is spent on the home [i.e. by commuting workers] if they have not made a permanent move. On the negative side – mostly these guys are not home – working age – families with kids. Suddenly you have a single mom looking after things on this end. That is difficult. I'd like to know how many from St. Andrew's are away and going to come back. We have a guy doing safety training – out West – family is back here.

The women stayed behind in most situations – [the men] are commuting back and forth. They live like that for years and their husband is away for 28 days and home for 8; it expands to a longer period of 3 months and back for a week and [then they] go again. [They all want to] return at a later date – the majority always want to come back, but the situation that has been created [i.e. work-related] – have to leave.

Beaton (2008) notes that for rural Newfoundlanders long-distance commuting has resulted in marriage breakdowns (cf. Ferguson, 2011).

Temporary migration may influence permanent out-migration. The target group profile (Statistics Canada, 2010a) shows the relationship between place of work (census division) and place of residence (census division). For the 12,605 employed males in the Strait Region in 2006, 2,700 or 21.4 per cent worked in a different census division than their residence; the corresponding figure for the 11,585 employed females was 1,715 or 14.8 per cent. None of our informants raised the implications of long-distance commuting by females. Perhaps, most females commute to work in a census division adjacent to their home. This may also be the case for males; however, males are perhaps more likely to commute to work in census divisions in Alberta. Unfortunately, the data does not identify the provincial location of census divisions that are places of work.

The two Mi'kmaq participants in the workshop referred not only to migration to Alberta, but to places within Atlantic Canada and the Northeastern United States: "For First Nations, a lot of people [who] are determined to leave also want to come back. A lot leave [because there is] not enough opportunity – poor housing and unemployment. When I was out west, 3-4 people passed away I could not come home." Another retorted:

First Nations [are] leaving, but coming back (usually Boston, Toronto, Halifax). When they got older, sell home and come back on reserve. Get reacquainted with their people. Money [can] do lots of good or can do lots of harm. See that in First Nations. [You are] "chasing dollars" [with] out-migration. No community, no sense of community. Big problems – then

there are drug and alcohol abuse – e.g. Fort McMurray see younger people with a lot of money. [The] population in indigenous communities - people are working. A lot of women are working and not as many children – 50 per cent unemployed. Work on a social services type deal – get funded for help. Can they get government to fund you to pay for job? So they leave. Some First Nations have a Tribal Council where the major office takes programs from government – mesh two programs together to pay for a job. Project-based jobs – e.g. hire carpenters, train carpenters, set out projects for them to do then go away to find work. Why? Because there is only one house to work on each year.

We have two data sets for the out-migration of First Nations (Statistics Canada, 2010a). One data set pertains to Aboriginal identity. 2,230 individuals in the Strait Region identified themselves as Aboriginal in 2001, and 185 (or 8.3 per cent) of these migrated by 2006. In 2001, 1,440 individuals in the Strait Region had a Registered Indian Status and 60 (or 4.2 per cent) of these individuals had migrated by 2001. These data suggest that the livelihood status for those with Aboriginal identity, but lacking Registered Indian Status, may be more precarious than for those with such status.

Prior to the workshop, a leader in the African Nova Scotian community commented that she spends time as a ‘development worker’ assisting African Nova Scotians with their resumes for work outside of the Strait Region. People are going to Halifax and coming back, and heading out West and coming back. At the workshop, she noted:

In Black communities, people will go anywhere to get hours. Travel [takes] time. Children see this growing up and think they have to leave or they do exactly what parents do – have to leave in order to work. Sit home or leave – cannot do anything else. Much work you do in [your] community is not recognised and valued. You do so much in your community, but it is not considered valuable work, so [there is] no money in it. You have people who are committed to community, your culture, so much knowledge. Money is valued, so the job that pays is valued.

The African Nova Scotian community has experienced a high out-migration rate. There were 560 African Nova Scotians residing in the Strait Region in 2006. 145 African Nova Scotians left the Strait Region from 2001 to 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2010a). Most out-migrants relocated to other places in Nova Scotia (60) or to Ontario (75). These data do not reveal those African Nova Scotians who may be temporary migrants. A culture of ‘having to leave’ is seen to contribute to out-migration:

Young people leave, but other people are here for the quality of life. We don’t sell [this place]. If I keep telling my kids nothing here for you, you cannot turn around and tell them the quality of life is good. [You need] to tell young families to come back – good place to raise your kids – issue of marketing to promote that.

When the cod moratorium happened in the ‘90s, there was a lot of people retraining and they told their kids to leave, there was nothing for them.

Development workers are not promoting what we, as a community, want. They are promoting things that will cause them to leave. They should look at training applicable to the area (cf. Corbett, 2007).

## 7.0 Community Support Structures

### 7.1 *The Impact on Education*

The SRSB covers a large geographical area with one of the lowest school board enrolments in Nova Scotia. One result is an ongoing debate over school closure. Some parents formed a pressure group to keep two schools open in Antigonish County and two schools opened in Guysborough County (MacEachern, 2010a; Bennett, 2013).

For the 2010-11 year, the SRSB projected a decline from 7,413 to 7,169 students. This decrease meant 14 fewer staff. The board superintendent indicated that this would not affect teachers on permanent and probationary contracts (MacEachern, 2010b). This has consequences for recent Bachelor of Education graduates from the Strait Region who want to pursue a teaching career in the Region (see Phyne and Harling Stalker, 2010).

Table 6 shows the school age population portion of the migration stream from 2001 to 2006. 1,035 left from 2001 to 2006, more than the population of the biggest school in the Strait Region. Many aged 18, but especially 19, are largely out of school, so their numbers potentially distort the total number of school goers who left the Strait Region.<sup>16</sup> We get a more precise calculation of the total number of school goers lost to the Strait Region by looking at those aged 5 to 14. The third column in *Table 6* shows that 705 individuals aged 5 to 14 had left the Strait Region from 2001 to 2006. This figure represents over 68 per cent of the population aged 5 to 19.

Table 6. *The Provincial Location of Strait Region Out-Migrants (2001 to 2006) 5 to 19 Years, 2006*

Provincial Location	Age 5 to 19	Age 5 to 14	Percentage 5 to 14
Newfoundland and Labrador	60	25	41.6
Prince Edward Island	20	20	100.0
Within Nova Scotia	500	355	71.0
New Brunswick	55	25	45.4
Quebec	30	30	100.0
Ontario	150	110	73.3
Alberta	135	95	70.4
British Columbia	85	45	52.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,035</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>68.1</b>

Source: Based on data contained in: Statistics Canada (2010a).

<sup>16</sup> Since Statistics Canada groups the population in intervals of 5 years, exact data are not available for those 18 and 19 years of age.

2,340 women aged 15 to 44 left the Strait Region from 2001 to 2006 (calculated from Statistics Canada, 2010a). Additional births for this cohort mean the loss of future students for schools in the Strait Region. From 2001 to 2006, there were also lower birth rates for the aging Strait Region female population (The Economic Assembly, 2010). Lower birth rates combined with high levels of out-migration and low levels of in-migration means that school populations will most likely decline further over the next decade (Province of Nova Scotia, 2007). This will have an impact upon enrolments at St. Francis Xavier University, which traditionally has significant inputs of students from the Strait Region. According to one interviewee:

...[i]n 1982 – 1,375 at the Regional High School when I started teaching and now it is 800 – the largest school in the Strait District. You notice it in the neighbourhoods. You [used] to take your life in your hands to drive in neighbourhoods – all kinds of kids out playing. Not one game of street hockey, but three – you don't see that now.

The largest high school in the Strait Region, Dr. John Hugh Gillis in Antigonish, was anticipated to decline from 876 to 817 students, for the 2010-11 academic-year (MacEachern, 2010b).

A workshop respondent noted that declining enrolments have impacts beyond the school system. “What is going to happen when people leave? The education system decreases, [there is] a reduction in services when there is a reduction in population. It is a vicious cycle.” Bennett (2013) argues that the closure of small schools and centralization of children into larger schools will have a downward spiralling impact on rural communities suffering population decline. The absence of schools will militate against attempts to attract newcomers. When this is magnified across the Strait Region as a whole, this has the potential to turn many rural communities into ‘ghost towns’. In the spring of 2013, the Minister of Education, in the midst of protests from rural residents, put a halt to the school closure review process (Bennett, 2013).<sup>17</sup>

One individual targeted the education program at St. Francis Xavier University:

You cannot expect 200 teachers to come out of St. Francis Xavier University each year and where do you go because there are no jobs for them around here.” For another, the problem was that ‘knowledge skills’ were given more emphasis than ‘mechanical skills’ at the post-secondary level.

Another added:

...[there is] nothing in educational systems that talk about options. Many come from a liberal arts background – very little exposure to business and/or cooperatives or lobster fishing. [Those who used to be in] fishing – go to computers then don't have any trade. [They] are importing people with trades in Alberta now. But, we could have used those people.

One individual concerned about population losses in small towns such as Canso, stated that “... [t]he educational institutions are not teaching students jobs that will keep them in town. They are not teaching specific skills what we need to sustain our community”. Others argued that a central problem was the fact that skilled

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<sup>17</sup> While this is beyond the scope of our analysis at this stage, in our conclusion we will turn to the role of rural schools as ‘community hubs’ that can strengthen rural communities and assist in combating rural depopulation.



individuals (many of whom received NSCC education) were leaving for better paying jobs out ‘West’.

## **7.2 The Impact on Volunteering**

There are also too few individuals involved in running volunteer organizations (see Beaton, 2008; Ferguson, 2011). One individual summarised the situation by stating that “...[t]here is volunteer burnout. Baby boomers are running volunteer organizations. Organizations suffer.” There are fewer government services available for an aging population. One interviewee involved in economic development devotes some of his time to community-based organizations staffed by volunteers:

Volunteers ... seniors [are] the core group doing that. [There are] challenges trying to sustain what we have. This is where some communities are holding their own – infrastructure and programs. [The] newest concern is volunteer fire departments – cannot get new recruits. [The current volunteers] have been doing it 20 to 30 years. Demands are higher concerning training and equipment. Cannot get volunteers 25 to 30 years old; [they] are not around. Local fire departments are more sophisticated than in the past.

Another echoed:

Volunteer firefighting – we [are] always trying to recruit new members. [T]he majority [of volunteers] are travelling back and forth in the labour force. [They are] not here to do that and younger ones –if going [i.e. leaving] are not there to do that. Older people [have] chronic illness [and] looking for a break [in] Pleasant Valley and Clydesdale area. Maryvale – stable, but one in Pleasant Valley and Clydesdale – always trying to recruit. You have to be physically fit.

For Inverness County, Rutten (2010:79) states that “...[f]ire protection services in the Municipality are entirely driven by volunteer efforts. The aging and declining population is impacting upon the continuity of the quality of services provided, and will continue to do so unless alternative governance approaches are considered.” There are 16 volunteer fire departments in Inverness County, 17 in Guysborough County, 8 in Antigonish County and 8 in Richmond County (2010).

In one rural Newfoundland community, women with husbands working out West had to put out two fires in the community in a short period of time (Beaton, 2008). The men who normally staffed the local volunteer fire department had taken the keys to the fire hall with them. One interviewee from the Strait Region stated that “...the mom can’t volunteer –she is looking after the family [since] the other person is away. [It’s] not a possibility. [There are] large numbers who are working away.” She added. “...[It was] said at a meeting last week [that] once you are on a volunteer committee [you’re] there till you die. [It is] hard to find replacements. People stay on volunteer jobs for a long time...We are saying that because of out-migration, people are not there [to volunteer]”.

Temporary and permanent out-migration to the West poses problems for volunteering. This extends to recreational activities that contribute to the quality of life in a community. One interviewee noted:

You see it [aging volunteers] in church groups, the Exhibition, sporting programs – the coaches are not young. The Regional Development

Authority is trying to track this volunteer situation and trying to get a volunteer pool – we tried to put in the bid for Summer Games – we had a good pool of volunteers. We had a Highland Dancing Event (in 2004) – 98 per cent women – 350 women – a summer event [that] drew on teachers, friends and parents of former dancers. People who could not come had someone replace them. They took ownership of it – amazed how committed they were to the cause.

She added. “[W]hen people do volunteer, they do take it seriously. I see the burnout factor. You can burn your volunteers out quickly. Because we have a lack of young people, I don’t know who is going to step up to the plate.”

## **8.0 Conclusions and Public Policy Implications**

The Strait Region experienced net out-migration from 2001 to 2006. This continued a long established pattern. Most out-migrants are young, well-educated and largely employed elsewhere in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta. Places such as Alberta are attractive not only in terms of higher income, but also for a quicker access to credentials (Phyne and Harling Stalker, 2011). All out-migrants have low rates of return. Return migration often happens either due to economic downturns or at a later point in the life cycle of an out-migrant (cf. Stockdale, 2006). This does not bode well for rural areas with aging populations.

Out-migration has negative implications for the local economy. A labour shortage in the low-income service and goods producing sectors is a common theme. Some businesses are turning to temporary foreign workers to fill this void. There is a high turnover by local workers who by virtue of being Canadian citizens have the freedom to circulate and seek more favourable employment in the labour market. Low-end service work may become an entrenched ‘ghetto’ for temporary foreign workers. There are now controversies involving employers who are abusing the TFWP because it brings in compliant workers locked into long-term labour contracts (Gollom 2014). Temporary foreign workers are no recipe for sustainable immigration and population retention (The Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy, 2014).

The aging business population is facing problems in succession planning. It is here that St. Francis Xavier University and the Nova Scotia Community College (with a campus in Port Hawkesbury) should explore the possibility of connecting university students with training in small business development and community college students in specific trades to become part of a joint internship with small businesses in the region. These post-secondary institutions should identify those businesses facing a succession problem. A joint internship coupled with low interest lending may foster business succession and the retention of small firms that may otherwise go out of business.

Long-distance commuting to places such as the Albertan Tar Sands places stresses on households and community volunteer work. Long-distance commuting does not show up in official out-migration figures, but has real consequences that are rarely documented. We need data on the impact of long-distance commuting on families. Beaton (2008) and Ferguson (2011) provide some evidence here, but systematic research through a snowball sample of long-distance commuters can shed more light on this issue. On the positive side, long-distance commuting does provide income for those remaining in the region. Once again, a study of long-distance commuters would enable us to collect data on income. In a fine-grained analysis, such data

would enable the researcher to estimate the contribution of such income to the overall income of a rural community and/or small town.

The community support structure side of the social impact equation includes education and volunteering. Out-migration and an aging population translate into school closures. Out-migrants who left the Strait Region from 2001 to 2006 took with them over 1,000 school age children – more than the largest school in the region. School closures, due to declining enrolments, can have a domino effect on local population losses, simultaneously fostering more out-migration and hindering immigration. Bennett (2013) notes that the closure of smaller schools due to declining enrolments is not a cost-effective as it seems. Larger schools require more infrastructure costs for receiving communities. Added to this are the negative social costs of long distance bussing. Smaller schools can stay open as ‘community hubs’ that provide a space for smaller businesses and community groups. This can defray the expensive infrastructure costs of these organizations. The maintenance of smaller schools as ‘community hubs’ can serve to attract newcomers to small town and rural areas. This will not solve depopulation, but the alternative of larger schools and the centralization of school populations will only accelerate out-migration and hinder in-migration (Bennett, 2013).

Youth out-migration means that volunteering increasingly falls on the shoulders of aging and long-time volunteers. Shortages are notable in areas such a firefighting and community recreational activities. The decline in local labour supplies undermines the social networks of small town and rural areas. Socioeconomic and community support structures are interrelated.

While attracting more immigrants is part of the solution for some of the problems that out-migration brings, in a previous study, we noted the inability to attract new immigrants and to maintain existing ones (Phyne and Harling Stalker, 2011). In 2006, there were 1,465 immigrants in the Strait Region; over 30 per cent arrived before 1961. From 2001 to 2006, there were 110 immigrants, but only 70 remained. Over 36 per cent of all Canadian immigrants (over a four-year period between 2001 and 2005) underwent secondary migration, or moved elsewhere in Canada (see Houle, 2007). Overall, 260 immigrants left the Strait Region from 2001 to 2006, or nearly 20 per cent of the population of immigrants that remained. Of the 260 immigrants who left the Strait Region, 70 remained in Nova Scotia, 90 moved to Ontario and 50 relocated to Alberta (calculated from Statistics Canada, 2010a).

While many informants pointed to the difficulties of retaining immigrants from a visible minority background (Phyne and Harling Stalker, 2011), our quantitative data show that these are most likely not the majority of immigrants in the Strait Region. Over 75 per cent (1,100) of the 1,465 immigrants residing in the Strait Region were born in either: the United States (500), the Netherlands (250), the United Kingdom (200) or Germany (150). For the 260 immigrants who left the Strait Region from 2001 to 2006, the percentage of Americans and Europeans is even higher. The 70 immigrants who migrated elsewhere in Nova Scotia, 65 were born in either the United States or Europe. The corresponding number of immigrants who left for Ontario (with numbers born in the United States and Europe in parentheses) was 90 (70) and Alberta 50 (45). Only in British Columbia was there a majority (20 out of 25) of immigrants who left the Strait Region who listed a country of the South (in this case India) as their place of birth (calculated from Statistics Canada, 2010a).

Visible minorities, including those from the Global South, are not a significant part of the resident or immigrant out-migrant population – a key group given recent patterns in Canadian immigration trends. Visible minorities constituted less than two

per cent (790) of the population in the Strait Region in 2006. 560 of these were African-Nova Scotian (Statistics Canada, 2010a).

Low immigrant retention is an issue shared with other small town and rural areas in Canada (see Reimer, 2007). Canada's largest cities attract the majority of immigrants, and also serve as a basis for the 'secondary migration' of new immigrants. Secondary migration is highest in Atlantic Canada and for communities with less than 100,000 people. Over 30 per cent of immigrants (15 and over) who had arrived in Atlantic Canada from 2000 to 2001 left their original point of settlement for a new destination after two years. Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia only failed to retain 10 per cent (or less) of their immigrants (Houle, 2007). The challenge of integrating immigrants into smaller communities is emphasized in recent work on Atlantic Canada (Baldacchino, 2006; Bruce, 2007; Davison, 2009).

The decentralization of some immigration to the provinces is a mixed success. It cannot work in Canada's smaller cities and rural and small town areas unless resources are put in place. In the Strait Region, the 'Welcoming Communities' initiative that is part of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) that needs to connect more directly with the volunteer sector.<sup>18</sup> This initiative consists of gatherings where immigrants can interact with community residents. Paid employment is a contractual obligation that may not connect newcomers to small town and rural areas. Volunteering has a greater potential to connect newcomers to local social networks.

In addition to the PNP, there is the Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) network based out of Halifax with rural settlement offices in Truro, Bridgewater and Sydney (Nova Scotia's second largest city). The offices in Truro and Sydney are on either side of the Strait Region. Each office is at least a one-hour drive from the Region. These offices seek volunteers to assist in integration by introducing newcomers to the community, sharing cooked meals and having conversations in English. Volunteer training sessions are in Halifax. The Strait Region, which is short of volunteers, would need to send 'potential volunteers' for training in Halifax in order to enhance the integration of newcomers in rural Nova Scotia (Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, 2014).

The measures discussed above are not sufficient. What is needed is an enhanced immigration integration office in the Strait Region that can direct newcomers to volunteering possibilities and social networks. Unless this takes place, the urban bias in immigration will continue.

Added to this problem is the fact that the province of Nova Scotia is phasing out Regional Development Authorities (RDAs), and replacing these with Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs). The RENs, to date, include the Valley and Western RENs, both of which are located in western Nova Scotia. The province has a guidebook for municipalities in Nova Scotia to set up their own RENs in order to enhance enterprise development (Province of Nova Scotia 2014b). Although this means the end of the Antigonish, Guysborough and Strait Richmond RDAs, the scope and practice of the RENs that will emerge in the Strait Region is far from certain. This only adds to the uncertainty attached to the retention of newcomers.

Even a comprehensive initiative connecting immigrants and long-term residents through the volunteer sector will be limited? Will it merely integrate entrepreneurs and professionals? The few permanent immigrants in the Strait Region appear to be either entrepreneurs or professionals. One individual, involved in the immigration

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<sup>18</sup> The PNP is discussed in more detail in Phyne and Harling Stalker (2011).

process, noted that 25 to 30 families immigrated to the region as entrepreneurs since 2006. Most came from Europe (Phyne and Harling Stalker 2011).

What about temporary foreign workers? Anecdotal data suggests that such workers are mostly from the Global South, in particular the Philippines. As Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012) points out, this is the main source country of temporary residents in Canada. Assuming the trend continues, the number of temporary foreign workers will continue to grow. This is particularly the case as wages in service sector and agricultural jobs are below what people, men in particular, can make in Alberta. If temporary foreign workers do increase in numbers, what will their status be? Given the prevalence of low-income work in the service and good producing sectors, and ongoing labour shortages, are we on the verge of an emerging stratification amongst newcomers? That is an issue that another generation of researchers may be investigating.

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