

Action Plan



**Opportunities@Home
Kirkland Lake and Region**

October 2001

www.fnetbcfne.on.ca/YouthForum/Youth_Forum.html

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Introduction



The Issue

Population loss, particularly the loss of the youth cohort, has been identified as a key issue affecting the development and economy of Northeastern Ontario. Between 1981 and 1996 overall population of the Northeast declined by 6.2% while Ontario as a whole grew by 25%, a discrepancy of more than 30%. Ontario's population is projected to increase by 13% between 2001 and 2011, but here in the Northeast, total population is expected to decline by 1.7% and youth population by 9%.

The problem is most acute in the Kirkland Lake area of North Temiskaming¹ which registers the greatest overall loss – more than one-fifth of its population between 1981 and 2006. (The pattern of steady decline in the town of Kirkland Lake itself is not new: from 19,000 in 1949 to 15,000 in 1970; currently under 10,000.) Out-migration of youth between 2001 and 2006 is expected to account for more than half the total (650 youth compared to 587 all other ages).

Across the Northeast, the effect of overall population loss is evident in reductions in availability and levels of service. Obvious sectors include transportation (air, rail), health care, education. However, the implications of the loss of youth population have not been fully studied in the area. More data about the economic impact of an older population with a smaller percentage of youth would no doubt show how different patterns of spending and earning for the different cohorts affect our economy.

Background

A Steering Committee was formed of representatives from Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB), Northern College, Kirkland District Community Business Corporation (KDCBC), Job Connect, FedNor, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), and Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. A Coordinator was hired for the project under the federal Youth Intern program.

The FNETB commissioned a demographic study, 'Youth Out-Migration From the FNETB Area' released in March 2001, to provide a common statistical basis about the issue.

¹ One of the seven Community Futures Development Corporation geographic areas: from Elk Lake and Matachewan in the east to the Quebec border; from Englehart and Charlton in the South to Black River-Matheson and Val Gagne in the North.

Introduction Continued...



In May 2001 a Youth Forum held at Northern College in Kirkland Lake considered the issues around youth out-migration for the North Temiskaming region. The event was attended by 100 participants, half of whom represented youth aged 15-29, and the other half community stakeholders, including industry, small business and municipal leaders. Over two days, participants identified strategies that could help keep youth in the Northeast. Their work forms the substance of this report.

Outcomes

This activity might have shared a destiny as simply one more in a series of efforts to focus on this issue – except for a decision early in the planning to ensure that recommendations are moved as closely as possible towards implementation. So although the Forum was completed in May, the project will continue through to mid-winter as the recommendations and action plan are disseminated to community constituents.

Also, the Kirkland Lake Forum has become the first of seven similar events across the Northeast being coordinated by the FNETB. The other Forums will take place in Timmins, Kapuskasing, Haileybury, Hearst, Moose Factory and Chapleau. From each of these Forums will come more information and ideas, some local and specific, others with a more regional focus. The cumulative effect of this regional activity will be sets of statistical data which are comparable and can be updated. From this comes the potential, perhaps for the first time, to develop coordinated strategies based on a common factual basis. The Northeast will be able to speak authoritatively about solutions to the issue of youth out-migration.

Most important though is the response of communities at the local level. Youth and community stakeholders from our communities in North Temiskaming developed the recommendations in this report. To effect change, we must assume responsibility at the local level wherever we can. If each small community implements a small portion of the recommendations, we will build the momentum necessary to create action at the regional level.

We can keep more of our youth here and happy in the North East.

Recommendations



The strategies brought forth by Youth Forum participants have been grouped into eight recommendations as follows:

- ▶ Improve Local Access to University Education
- ▶ Develop a Youth Resource and Activity Centre
- ▶ Support Initiatives Which Build Youth Leadership Skills
- ▶ Create Sustainable Partnerships Between Education and Business/Industry
- ▶ Develop Incentives for Youth to Work and Stay Here
- ▶ Value and Respect Contributions of Youth to the Community
- ▶ Build Northern Identity
- ▶ Value Diversity in Arts and Recreational Opportunities

Each recommendation is explained under three headings:

- ▶ Issue
- ▶ Opportunities@home
- ▶ Challenges.

Opportunities@home is the theme for Youth Forum 2001 and therefore a suitable heading for the positive potential of each recommendation.

These recommendations are based on the discussions of participants at Youth Forum 2001. A complete list of the discussion statements is in Appendix 1. Full participant analysis of each statement is available from the Far Northeast Training Board at 1-800-530-9176 or 705-362-5788.

1 - Improve Local Access to University Education



Issue

- ▶ Developing skills, making connections and putting down roots elsewhere
- ▶ Don't or can't come back due to limited opportunities (economy)
- ▶ No university in this region
- ▶ Access is underdeveloped (no university campus)
- ▶ Lose top performers plus don't gain their equivalent with in-migration
- ▶ Youth leaving

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Innovative, non-traditional approach to university access – maybe a combination of technology and hands-on, on-site
- ▶ Make use of unique Northeastern characteristics e.g. northern construction as a specialized semester in a PEng (Professional Engineer) program, rural medicine
- ▶ Expand Contact North concept, especially among technology program offerings, to incorporate some form(s) of campus presence

Challenges

- ▶ University cooperation: How interested are universities in reaching this market? (Need to maintain focus on rural access, not the two or three urban centres in the Northeast.)
- ▶ Numbers: still need to make access financially viable for both the institution and the student
- ▶ Replicate campus aspect of university – what are the best ways to do this?

Summary

Lack of local access to university education is a major contributor to youth out-migration. Because there is no university presence in this area, youth leave to continue their education. Once gone, they develop skills, make connections and put down roots in their new communities. After graduation, they often stay in the area where they studied because they either don't want to return or feel they can't come back due to perceived limited career opportunities. This results in the permanent loss of many of our top youth performers without any offsetting gain through in-migration. We need to build upon existing facilities (Northern College, Contact North) to offer university level programming here in the North. To succeed we will need to explore use of information technology and be innovative in the development of a campus presence.

2 - Develop a Youth Resource and Activity Centre



Issue

- ▶ Services provided to youth are scattered
- ▶ Organizations have no means to get in touch with youth
- ▶ Youth are not happy with their experience growing up in this area due to the lack of things to do

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Would improve the experience of growing up in the north
- ▶ Increase and enhance services for youth
- ▶ A centre run by youth would help build leadership skills
- ▶ Create a foundation for recreational opportunities over and above sports
- ▶ Build northern pride
- ▶ Youth will recognize the contribution from the community and feel validated
- ▶ Means to participate in community activities
- ▶ Access point for community to get in touch with youth
- ▶ Makes youth visible
- ▶ Means to coordinate services and communication
- ▶ Access to professional help that already exists

Challenges

- ▶ Develop a structure for sustainable governance and financial self-sufficiency that incorporates
- ▶ youth, in spite of its transient nature.
- ▶ Develop 'buy-in' from youth.

Summary

The lack of activities and things for youth to do in this area are reasons for youth to leave and not come back. Many youth participants at the Forum stated that they were not satisfied with their experience growing up in this area. Many feel as if their community has never really given them a reason for wanting to stay. Furthermore, many youths stated that they are not aware of the services provided for them within this area and many stakeholders at the Forum expressed their concerns of not having any means of getting in touch with youth. The development of a Youth Resource and Activity Centre would be an effective way of connecting youth to the community and community to youth.

3 - Support Initiatives Which Build Youth Leadership Skills



Issue

- ▶ No data on level of youth leadership skills
- ▶ Low leadership reflected in low self-esteem, can't meet employers' expectations, low self-confidence for entrepreneurial activities (part of poor image of the North)
- ▶ Our "natural" youth leaders are encouraged to leave (for educational/career purposes)
- ▶ Leadership skills important in all aspects of life e.g. school, personal, business, industry, community (affects quality of life)

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ To develop these skills locally and derive the benefit for the whole community
- ▶ Build on existing opportunities/programming, e.g. Rotary Club's leadership program, Jr. Achievement program
- ▶ Succession-planning prepares a next generation of adult leaders for community's future
- ▶ Assertiveness training – conflict resolution to build leadership skills

Challenges

- ▶ Appeal to youth
- ▶ Youth participation
- ▶ Part of bigger problems e.g. poor image of the North, low northern pride
- ▶ Partnership between communities and schools
- ▶ Responsibility of education – start early – community, parents
- ▶ Hard to develop this discretely

Summary

Developing leadership skills among the youth population will benefit the entire community. The perception is that improved leadership skills will help develop stronger self-esteem and improve quality of life, both for individuals and the community. We can build on known and existing programs to build leadership skills among youth.

4 - Create Sustainable Partnerships Between Education and Business/Industry



Issue

- ▶ Tie into stats of projections for future shortages in business and industry
- ▶ Currently placements for engineering co-op experiences are difficult to find in the north. Students leave the area for placement opportunities and don't return. Shortages in skilled trades – students are not aware of the opportunities.
- ▶ Population loss in all Canadian mid-north – needs a broader approach by government
- ▶ Data re: why youth are leaving, where are they going, why are they staying?

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Marketing the quality of northern life for youth e.g. outdoor, active
- ▶ Offer northern lifestyle
- ▶ All government programs include youth incentives to retain youth “naturally”
- ▶ Broadened and sustained liaison between industry and education with programs like Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), School to Work Transition (beyond high school apprenticeship)

Challenges

- ▶ Impression of “no jobs, no opportunities” here
- ▶ Low technological literacy of general public
- ▶ Low knowledge of trades/skills
- ▶ Don't know about local job opportunities
- ▶ Corporation, small business – co-op and industry need to be involved to open doors wider to communities
- ▶ Need someone responsible for sustaining liaison

Summary

We need to strengthen existing links and create new links to ensure sustainable partnerships between education and business/industry. We need to coordinate education opportunities in the north with statistical projections of skill shortages for industry. We need to market the quality of northern life and target youth who seek an active outdoors lifestyle. Existing programs like OYAP and School to Work Transition need a sustained and consistent approach to improve their success.

5 - Develop Incentives for Youth to Work and Stay Here



Issue

- ▶ Youth are not seen as important factors in the development of a community
- ▶ No contact is made with youth who have left the area

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Industry and community leaders must recognize youth as an important asset for their development
- ▶ Keep contact with those who leave and keep them informed of developments in their communities to encourage them to come back or get involved
- ▶ Youth government programs must be tailored to respond to the realities of the north
- ▶ Internship programs to encourage southern youth to experience the north

Challenges

- ▶ Fewer youth here means that there are fewer role models for youth to follow
- ▶ Build support among governments and industries for northern incentives in programs and policies to attract youth to the north and encourage them to stay, e.g. adapting the model used to attract doctors to practice rural medicine or introducing a marketing campaign to sell northern advantages to young families

Summary

It is understandable that many youth want to leave their home community when they grow up in order to broaden their experience. The problem with that is that there is no communication link between these youth and the community once they have left. They are not kept informed of potential opportunities for them back home. Expanding and adapting existing models of incentives and a marketing campaign are two possibilities to attract youth to the north.

6 - Value and Respect Contributions of Youth to the Community



Issue

- ▶ Overlap/intertwined – something that needs to happen as a result of lots of other actions
- ▶ Don't have hard data about attitude towards youth but youth feel they are not understood, valued
- ▶ Bias against youth – low tolerance
- ▶ Not an open-minded community e.g. re: youth diversity
- ▶ Respect youth's choices and priorities

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Enhance/expand mechanisms for recognizing youth e.g. HRDC's Student Employment Services Award Ceremony
- ▶ Recognition of value of our heritage (build on past e.g. family values)
- ▶ Opportunity to tie youth to their communities e.g. by getting them involved

Challenges

- ▶ Reflection of changing society's values e.g. low family ties, high movement
- ▶ Many have already left

Summary

Youth feel that they are not understood or valued as part of the community. Among their concerns is a perceived narrow-mindedness with respect to diversity. There is a need to demonstrate respect for youth's choices and priorities. In part, this can be achieved by enhancing mechanisms for identifying and recognizing youth activities.

7 - Build Northern Identity



Issue

- ▶ We raise our children to leave
- ▶ We undervalue our assets – what is common here is rare or non-existent elsewhere

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Start our own opportunities by filling existing gaps, e.g. Public Relations Firm, Advertising Agency, Speaker Bureau
- ▶ Educate our children, ourselves and our communities about the north's assets and heritage

Challenges

- ▶ Reject the "Mickey Mouse Standard" e.g. tourist accommodations
- ▶ Reverse existing perceptions

Summary

Without even noticing, parents all too often raise their children to leave this area. From a young age, children are exposed to and fascinated by the bright lights of a big city while they take for granted the beauty that surrounds us in northern Ontario. We as northern Ontarians often undervalue our assets, perhaps based on the belief that what have here is available in many other places. Our most valued assets such as beautiful lakes, clean air, and huge open spaces are not found in southern cities. These facts are often not brought to the attention of the youth living within our communities. There is also the perception that employment outside of northern Ontario offers better salaries and more opportunities for advancement.

8 - Value Diversity in Arts and Recreational Opportunities



Issue

- ▶ Accept that if we want anything to happen here, we have to be prepared to do it ourselves
- ▶ Diversity
- ▶ Create depth, value
- ▶ Not connected to Provincial/National levels
- ▶ Make what we do here count – connections

Opportunities@Home

- ▶ Groups/activities
- ▶ Local facilities available
- ▶ Opportunities such as theatre, sports
- ▶ “ripple effect” to outside communities
- ▶ Contributes to a healthy community
- ▶ Can use opportunities here as a basis for a career or future participation or excellence

Challenges

- ▶ Expanding and tapping into use of existing resources
- ▶ Numbers
- ▶ Bringing in rotating experts, e.g. swimming coach from Laurentian University

Summary

We need to develop depth and diversity in our arts and recreational opportunities by developing and promoting connections at provincial and national levels. Young people need to feel that their activities here in the north ‘count’ elsewhere and can form the basis for a career or participation at other levels. In so doing, we maximize use of our facilities and resources and build a healthier community.

Action Plan for Recommendations



The purpose of the Action Plan is to identify initiatives that will facilitate the transfer of responsibility for implementing Youth Forum recommendations to appropriate organizations. The Action Plan for the Recommendations consists of four strategies:

- ▶ Get Back Into Communities
- ▶ Inform Community Groups on Youth Forum Recommendations
- ▶ Build Momentum of Local Support to Address Youth Out-Migration
- ▶ Build Bridges to Develop Regional Strategies to Address Youth Out-Migration

These are intended to help initiate the implementation of the Recommendations made by Youth Forum participants.

A. GET BACK INTO COMMUNITIES

In order for the recommendations to be implemented, the first step is to get back into the communities. Members of the general public in North Temiskaming need to know that the implementation phase of the project is now under way. Awareness of the results is necessary to create momentum for change.

Action

In order to effectively get the results of the Youth Forum known in all the communities, a media campaign must be implemented. This campaign will begin with a press release sent to all local media announcing the release of the Action Plan. The actual release of the Action Plan will take place during a press conference attended by the sponsors and participants of Youth Forum 2001. Members of the general public will also be invited to attend the press conference. A presentation of the Action Plan will take place at this time.

An effective advertising campaign will take place before and following the release of the Action Plan. This will ensure that the citizens of North Temiskaming are aware that the implementation phase of the project is now underway.

B. INFORM COMMUNITY GROUPS ABOUT YOUTH FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Informing community groups about the Youth Forum recommendations will also play a critical role in the implementation phase of this project. The steering committee and the Youth Intern are in place until January 2002 so it is essential that those community institutions and organizations whose future rests on the success of projects such as this one take the opportunity to work together.

Action Plan for Recommendations



Action

It is the steering committee's goal to send out this report to all interested or affected local and regional community leaders, organizations and municipalities. By doing this, the steering committee is looking to raise awareness of the recommendations brought forth during Youth Forum. This report, together with the reports from the other Youth Forums being held in the Northeast, will ultimately be posted on the Youth Forum web site in PDF format for any individuals or organizations wishing to download the document. The Forum web site can be found at www.fnetbcfne.on.ca/YouthForum/Youth_Forum.html.

Furthermore, community leaders, organizations and municipalities will be presented with an opportunity to do their part in ensuring the implementation of these recommendations. A series of presentations will be conducted to a variety of stakeholders until January of 2002. During these presentations, the key players will be invited to involve themselves in the implementation of these recommendations.

The steering committee hopes that all eight recommendations will have been adopted by specific organizations and will have gained momentum and public support by January 2002. Groups receiving the Action Plan presentation will also be asked to make a commitment to the implementation phase. Stakeholders will be asked to commit to specific tasks by a specified date. This will allow the communities to monitor and promote measurable local support.

C. BUILD MOMENTUM OF LOCAL SUPPORT TO ADDRESS YOUTH OUT-MIGRATION

It would be impossible to achieve the important task of implementing the eight recommendations without local support. An all-out effort will be undertaken by the steering committee to achieve the desired level of support.

Action

The steering committee will be looking to recruit ambassadors for the recommendations outlined in this report. These ambassadors will help the Youth Intern during the presentations to stakeholders. It is likely that some of these ambassadors will be stakeholder participants of the Forum, youth participants, as well as members of the general public. Key players in the local communities are expected to endorse the measures recommended by their representatives at the Forum. The cumulative effect of individuals and organizations taking small actions across North Temiskaming and ultimately across the Northeast will lend credibility and substance to efforts to attract and retain youth.

Action Plan for Recommendations



D. BUILD BRIDGES TO DEVELOP REGIONAL STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS YOUTH OUT-MIGRATION

The Kirkland Lake and area Youth Forum was the first of seven taking place across northeastern Ontario. All forums will be looking at ways to address youth out-migration. The steering committee has taken steps throughout this project to develop regional strategies that will help all of northeastern Ontario achieve its objective of alleviating the out-migration of youth.

Action

In order to help build bridges to develop regional strategies across northeastern Ontario on how to address youth out-migration, the steering committee of the Kirkland Lake and area Forum will contribute to the development of the format and process of the regional report. The regional report will consist of the findings and recommendations from all seven forums.

Furthermore, the recommendations from this Youth Forum will be distributed to all pertinent regional stakeholders in an attempt to prepare them for possible future regional presentations and requests.

Conclusion



Youth Forum 2001 had the objective of creating the basis for an Action Plan to help the North Temiskaming area deal with the out-migration of youth. The recommendations outlined in this report are a clear reflection of the success of the Forum as well as evidence of the hard work of the participants.

The focus should now be placed on the implementation of the recommendations brought forth by members of our communities. In order to be successful in the implementation phase of this project, full regional, municipal, business, industry and community support will be needed.

Once the eight recommendations presented in this Action Plan are successfully implemented, Kirkland Lake and area will undoubtedly be a better place for youth.

Appendix I

Process for Developing Recommendations



Participants worked in groups to develop statements proposing a *specific* action which could be taken to encourage youth to stay in or return to the north. Each statement began with “We should...” and was completed by an action intended to create opportunities at home for youth. Each group was mixed, with both youth and stakeholder participants, and generated 3 - 5 statements which were transcribed onto sheets. Back in plenary, the statements were posted and explained so that the larger group could understand the intent of each proposal.

Once all ideas were posted, participants signed up for discussion groups. Discussion was based on generating the ‘plus’, ‘minus’, and ‘interesting’ (PMI) points about the propositions. Groups then accepted, rejected or revised the propositions they considered.

Back in plenary, rejected proposals were set aside. Accepted and revised propositions were posted, and once again clarified where necessary. In plenary the group identified ideas which were 1) the most effective 2) the easiest 3) the quickest to implement. The steering committee reviewed the results and considered whether any ideas or issues had been lost or forgotten. The discussion statements selected by the participants became Recommendations that formed the basis of the Action Plan.

The detailed analysis for each of the following discussion statements is available from the Far Northeast Training Board, 1-800-530-9176 or 705-362-5788.

Discussion Statements (in random order)

WE SHOULD . . .

- ▶ *develop* a Youth Centre to specifically serve youth needs.
- ▶ *offer* an experience work program and incorporate a “bring youth to work week” regularly at an early adolescent age.
- ▶ *develop* youth intern programs with government funding initiatives.
- ▶ *have* more entertainment.
- ▶ *create* a university presence in KL in partnership with Northern College.
- ▶ *establish* a university, using Northern College’s bricks and mortar.
- ▶ *develop* incentives to education.
- ▶ *build* northern pride.

Appendix I

Process for Developing Recommendations



- ▶ *promote* community pride.
- ▶ *develop* partnerships, resources etc. in promoting and educating youth leadership skills.
- ▶ *develop* a program to educate youth on how to create opportunities.
- ▶ *build* leadership skills among young people.
- ▶ *have* mentorships, more practical, hands-on training with community-oriented partnerships.
- ▶ *create* mentoring, educational and internship programs.
- ▶ *improve* town infrastructure regarding schools, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, etc. *Beautification Program*
- ▶ *promote* the north as youth friendly – hire a Youth Ambassador.
- ▶ *bring* more diversity into employment.
- ▶ *lobby* government to implement education incentives/relief programs for youth (students) coming to work and stay in the north.
- ▶ *provide* incentive funds for students to study in the north or return to the north & forgivable incentive funds for established residents.
- ▶ *learn* to work together as Northeastern Ontario.
- ▶ *promote* tourism because it is a growing, employable, revenue generating industry.
- ▶ *accept* and *respect* personal autonomy (diversity) within the youth population in the north.
- ▶ *publicly recognize* more youth accomplishments to increase involvement and encourage unity and ongoing participation.

Appendix I

Process for Developing Recommendations



- ▶ *recognize* youth achievements while they are still in the north.
- ▶ *validate & valorize* our youth.
- ▶ *encourage* creative, positive thinking.
- ▶ *have* less talk and more action.
- ▶ *increase* awareness on employment programs.
- ▶ *involve* more youth in organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and EDC's.
- ▶ *have* an advocacy office to make lobbying accessible.
- ▶ *develop* affordable housing and transportation.
- ▶ *encourage* audiovisual and theatre arts.
- ▶ *offer* service excellence courses to help change attitudes.
- ▶ *offer* leadership programs/camps for youth.
- ▶ *teach* youth to build goals and what to do with them.
- ▶ *have* more recreational opportunities.
- ▶ *promote* positive compromises to accommodate youth in the workforce.
- ▶ *emphasize* the uniqueness of the north, promote it at a younger age. Emphasize what we have! (marketing to youth and community)
- ▶ *encourage* and *organize* more awareness for our grade school youth (grades 7&8) , e.g. job/career fair, summer job creation, volunteering
- ▶ *develop* partnerships for schools, businesses and educators to promote the existing opportunities.