Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in Canada whose population is forecast to decline at least until 2043, according to Statistics Canada. In the worst-case scenario, the population would decline by nearly 20%.

- Government efforts to increase the fertility rate or to repatriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living away have not been successful in slowing population decline.

- Not only is the population decreasing, but it is also aging at a faster rate than in any other province.

- Twenty-five years ago, for every 100 new entrants into the workforce, an estimated 50 people were exiting. Today, for the same 100 people entering, there are 125 people exiting.
A decreasing and aging population will result in a smaller workforce, less economic activity, fewer people to pay down the country’s largest per-capita debt, higher health care costs, fewer workers to pay the taxes necessary to deliver public services, and less political influence on the national scene.

If the population of the province is to increase, the only plausible solution is immigration.
The Current Status of Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador

- Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest percentage of immigrants of any province in Canada. First-generation immigrants make up just 2.5% of the province’s population compared to the national average of 22%.

- The province’s annual intake of immigrants is minuscule in the national context. During the period from 1980 to 2018, the province took in only about 0.33% of all immigrants coming to Canada per year. The province’s share jumped slightly to half a percent in 2019.

- Most of the immigrants were in the economic class, followed by refugees and family reunification members.

- There are two ways of entering the country legally: as a permanent resident (that is, an immigrant) or as a temporary resident (mostly foreign workers and international students.)
The number of temporary foreign workers increased during the mega-projects boom starting in 2008 but never exceeded 1% of the national intake of such workers. Their number has been decreasing since 2015.

The number of international students at Memorial University has increased seven-fold in the last twenty years and is set to increase even further. The College of the North Atlantic has not been active in recruiting international students until very recently.

It is more efficient to transition temporary residents who are already in the province into permanent residents than to recruit immigrants from their countries of origin.
The Benefits of Immigration

- The median age of the immigrant population is 10 years younger than the Canadian population overall, and 15 years younger than the median age in Newfoundland and Labrador.

- Immigrants bring not only their work **skills and experience** to the workforce, but also contacts with markets in their countries of origin, creating **export opportunities**.

- Immigrants bring **new ideas and new opportunities** in music, food, fashion, the visual arts, and so on. Every dynamic society has a high rate of immigration.

- International students **help sustain** the province’s post-secondary educational institutions and help keep tuition fees affordable for Canadian-born students.

- Including the children of immigrants in a daycare or a classroom provides Canadian-born children with an **understanding of diversity and promotes empathy** for different cultures.

- Becoming more inviting to immigrants **makes society more welcoming** to all citizens, including persons with disabilities, Indigenous persons, persons identifying as LGBTQ+, females in non-traditional occupations, etc.
Businesses that improve their operations — by raising salaries, improving Human Resources policies, or offering perks — to better retain the immigrants that they have spent so much effort recruiting will, by the same token, benefit their locally-hired employees.

Making it easier for immigrants to find employment by removing barriers in the labour market makes it easier for Canadian-born job seekers to find employment.

Immigrants are more entrepreneurial than the Canadian-born and their new firms create more jobs than those of their Canadian-born peers.

Because of the inherent inertial nature of culture, it is extremely unlikely that newcomers will significantly alter the host culture in any detrimental way.

For all these reasons, it is advantageous to increase the rate of immigration, even in a province like Newfoundland and Labrador that has a high rate of unemployment.
Retaining Immigrants

- Immigration consists of recruiting people in their countries of origin, helping them settle in the province and retaining them over the long term.

- The federal government sets the rules for the number and types of immigrants allowed into the country and helps immigrants become settled, for example, by providing language training.

- The provincial government determines the number of economic immigrants and refugees it wishes to see settled in the province and provides them with health insurance coverage.

- Businesses, organizations and educational institutions play an essential role in recruiting immigrants in their countries of origin.

- Municipal governments play a major role in making immigrants feel welcome in their communities.

- Once recruited, there is no guarantee that immigrants will remain in the province. In fact, Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest retention rate of any province – and it is not because of the weather.

- The main reasons why people leave the province are:
  - the lack of employment opportunities, despite a high demand for certain skills;
  - the lack of medical insurance coverage for temporary residents who wish to become immigrants; and
  - the difficulty for stay-at-home spouses to integrate into society.
A Whole-of-Society Approach

- If Newfoundland and Labrador is to remain sustainable over the long term and not simply survive but thrive, it has no other option than to significantly increase the number of immigrants to the province. This is not the responsibility of governments alone, but of all of society. Everyone has a stake in ensuring that the population of the province increases. We must:

- Decide that growing the population through immigration is a priority, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the province.

- Determine the appropriate number of economic immigrants required every year to sustain the workforce and make it easier for employers to recruit immigrants.

- Create opportunities for cultural exchanges, where newcomers learn about the culture of the province and Newfoundlander and Labradorians learn about the cultures of the newcomers.

- Create a critical mass of immigrants from a limited number of countries as a way to raise the retention rate.
A Whole-of-Society Approach

- Enhance the likelihood that newcomers will remain in the province by streamlining the settlement process.

- Ensure that newcomers are made to feel welcome at the community and neighborhood levels.

- Enhance the likelihood that newcomers will remain in the province by making it easier to match job vacancies with qualified people and vice-versa.

- Maximize the potential of immigrants in the economy by helping them create new enterprises and making it easier to export goods and services to their countries of origin.

- Ensure the K-12 education system is properly resourced.

- Remove the barriers that prevent permanent and temporary residents from accessing the province’s health care system.

- Maximize the post-secondary education system as a gateway into Newfoundland and Labrador.