

Jarislowsky Chair Newsletter

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Edited by: Kerri Neil

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Immigration & Sustainable Development Symposium

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Ather Akbari and the Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity for sparking this conference idea and spurring discussion on immigration and sustainable development in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Atlantic Canada. This forum would not have been possible without the additional financial contribution of Memorial University's Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences through the Scholarship in the Arts (SITA) fund, and organizational expertise provided by the Association for New Canadians and Memorial University's Internationalization Office. In particular, we would like to thank Megan Morris, Jamie Baker, Lynn Walsh, Arif Abu, and Mica McCurdy for their support with this event. We would also like to thank Cadi Mahbuba Ahmed, Jane Zhu, Navjotpal Kaur, Qi Zhang, Samia Islam, and Yan Fu for taking notes and helping out with the event, and to the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning team at Memorial University led by Donna Downey and Adrian Collins for their assistance with the technical production of the symposium.

Finally, we wish to thank our keynote speaker, Dr. Ivan Emke, and panelists, Dr. Gregory Cameron, Gillian Skinner, George Lee, Delia Warren, Sarah Thompson, and Ather Akbari for sharing their expertise and engaging in a vibrant discussion around the opportunities of immigration and sustainable development in this province and Atlantic Canada. We would also like to thank everyone who attended the event for volunteering their time and expertise to generate meaningful conversation about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Dr. Tony Fang, Kerri Neil and Jason Waters



Overview

The **Immigration and Sustainable Development Conference** took place on November 29 and 30, 2018 at Memorial University in St. John's, NL. The conference was composed of two portions: a public keynote address by Dr. Ivan Emke (November 29) and an Immigration and Sustainable Development Symposium (November 30), featuring a range of panelists and speakers. The keynote address was free and open to public. The symposium was also free and by invitation.

The public keynote address by Dr. Ivan Emke was titled, **"And Who Will Help Me Grow the Food: The Fable of the Little Red Hen in an Age of Food Insecurity and Labour Uncertainty."** The Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jennifer Simpson, gave opening remarks. In this talk, Dr. Emke explored issues of population growth, immigration, rural vitality and economic sustainability through the fable of the Little Red Hen. He sought to offer hope that there are workable solutions available that will grow communities - and food - in Newfoundland and Labrador but also discussed challenges, such as labour shortages and the low prices of food items which make it difficult for farmers to earn an income.

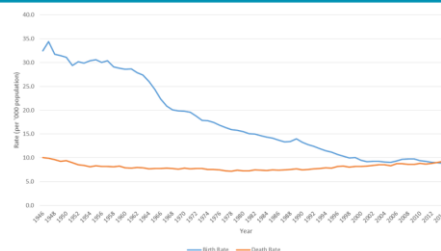
The **Immigration and Sustainable Development Symposium** was a day of informative panels, productive breakout sessions and networking. The Honourable Bernard Davis, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour offered opening remarks, followed by Dr. Aimée Surprenant, the Associate Vice-President and Dean, Graduate Studies. The event was moderated by Michael Clair, a consultant and former Associate Director of Memorial University's Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development. The panels, Rural Development and Skills Training, featured a diverse group of experts who shared their insights into current challenges in their fields as well as innovative solutions that are being implemented across Newfoundland and Labrador and in Atlantic Canada. There has been significant policy conversation in the province about agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and renewable energy over the past few years. These are sectors that have been identified as priorities for government and businesses as we all work together to explore opportunities for growth and sustainability in our communities and economy. Memorial University has also made these sectors a priority, particularly through some of the world-renowned programs at the Marine Institute. But Newfoundland and Labrador, like other provinces in Atlantic Canada, also faces human capital challenges as we require skilled labour to drive growth in these sectors and entrepreneurs to invest in innovative businesses that will allow the province to compete regionally, nationally and increasingly globally. Immigration offers several opportunities to address some of these challenges and the federal and provincial governments have been working together to attract and retain skilled immigrant workers and entrepreneurs.

During the breakout sessions, guests had the opportunity to join with other participants to discuss the roles that immigration can play in addressing some of the challenges that the agricultural, fishery and renewable energy sectors are facing, as well as how private businesses, non-profits and government can work together to address the challenges involved in welcoming and integrating newcomers into the region. It is our hope that the panels, presentations and the conversations that took place during the breaks, lunch and the breakout sessions were informative, inspired new partnerships and generated conversations and projects that will extend well beyond this day and place.

Setting the Stage

To understand the context of immigration and sustainable development in Atlantic Canada, it is instructive to first review the region's demographics and labour market. For his presentation, Dr. Ather Akbari, Chair of the Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity, did just that.

Birth and death rates in Atlantic Canada, post-world war II



Source: Based on Statistics Canada Demography Division data.

SOBEY

Since 2014 the birth rate in Atlantic Canada has fallen below the death rate, causing negative natural population growth in the region. This is accelerated by youth out-migration, which is further reducing the population. Unless there is an increase in immigration to the area, the population will continue to decline, which will have economic, political and social consequences as long-term economic growth is fueled by the accumulation of capital stock; increases in labor inputs, such as the number of workers or hours worked; and increases in productivity of labour and capital.

In terms of the Atlantic Canada labour market, there is expected to be a 1.7% increase in jobs from 2016-18 but this is largely based on attrition and there will be a -0.5% decline in job growth over this period. This is a reflection of the demographic data.

Immigration will be an important part of economic growth across the country, but in Atlantic Canada, the proportion of immigrants in the labour force is much smaller. This is expected to grow based on initiatives being taken at community and government level.

Given that most natural resource industries are located in rural regions, Akbari also looked at projected employment by skill level in this particular industry. He found that there is some growth expected in professional and management occupations from 2017-2019 but negative growth is expected in technical/para-professional, intermediate and labouring occupations. The occupations with growth will require higher education and there is greater mobility for people with higher education, which has implications for retention.

Rural Development

In our modern economy, sustainable development can take many forms. For the purposes of this conference, we focused on agriculture, fisheries and renewable energy as key industries that could be further explored in Atlantic Canada. These industries are often located in rural areas, which brings unique opportunities and challenges. Rural economic development is a complex issue and there are many factors to take into consideration.

Agriculture

Ivan Emke, Honorary Research Professor at Memorial University, explained how Canada has a strong history of bringing in large groups of immigrants to grow food. Bringing in groups of people, rather than individuals, has been successful as evidenced in Manitoba or Cormac, NL, because it builds a community. There are challenges for newcomers in rural NL, including language barriers, lack of public transportation and expensive housing, but at the same time, Emke found in his research that there are a number of farmers in NL who need workers and are willing to build spaces to accommodate them. To introduce newcomers to rural NL, Emke suggested organizing “familiarization tours” to acquaint newcomers to an area by showing them the schools and hospitals, and give them the opportunity to meet locals. These have been used in Ontario to bring in farm workers and in Newfoundland and Labrador to bring in doctors. Such tours can ease the adjustment and show newcomers the opportunities that exist in rural regions. Goderich, Ontario, is a rural community that has had incredible success in attracting and retaining doctors. The secret to their success was that they talked to doctors and asked them what they wanted. They found that doctors wanted a few amenities, for example, swimming lessons for their kids, that the community was able to accommodate. The fact that they asked, and followed through, that the community did something for them, built a strong connection, and encouraged people to stay. Now people are moving to the community to access healthcare because there are so many doctors. However, Emke did express concern that immigrants will be recruited as workers, but not encouraged to become farm owners. There is currently a disparity between the proportion of immigrants as farm labourers compared to farm owners, and Emke argued we need their entrepreneurship, not just their labour.

Emke also acknowledged some challenges in agricultural development in Canada. He pointed to colonialism within the

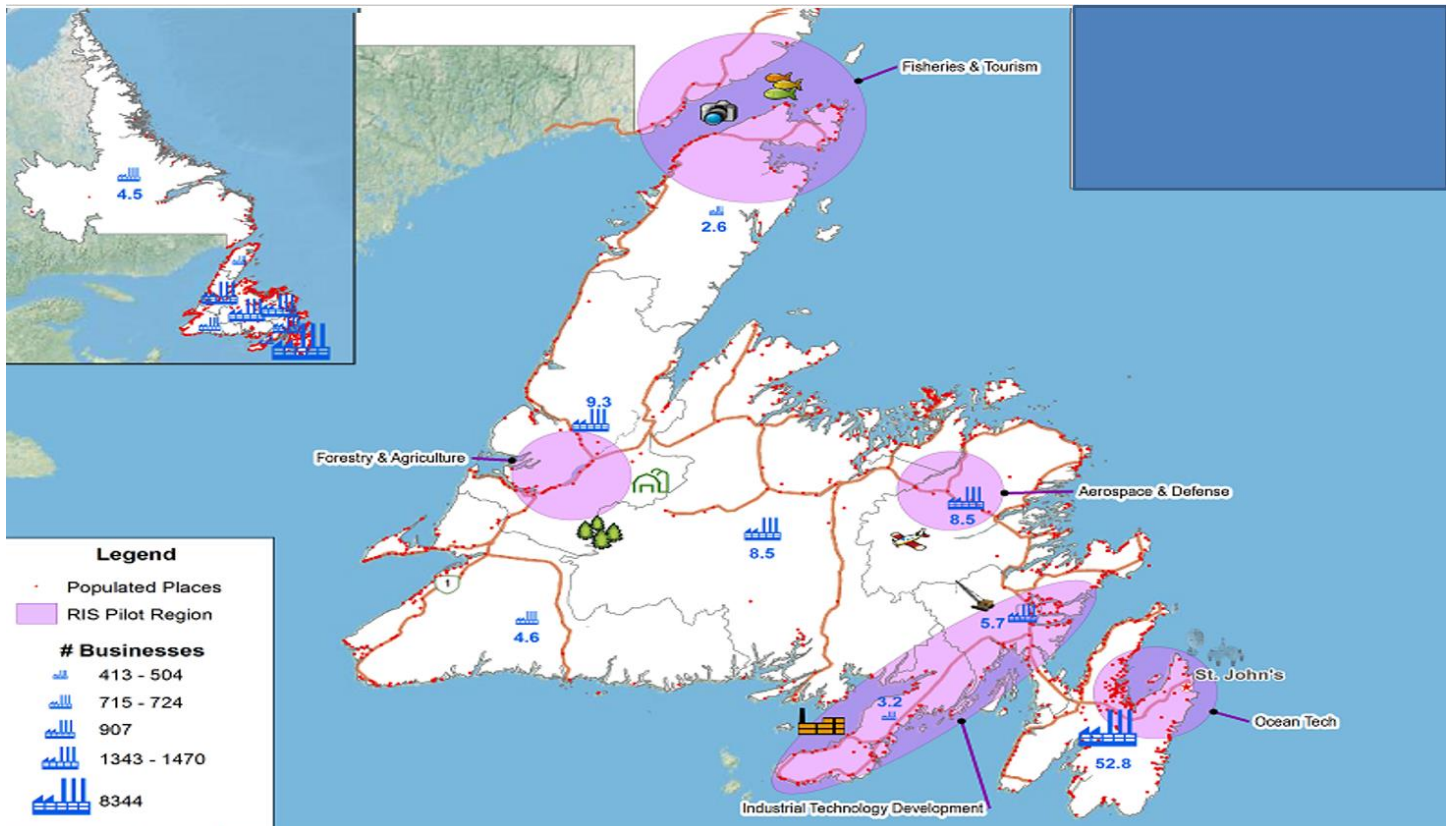
food system, as Canada imports a significant amount of food from low-income countries where people are paid little for their work, and within Canada, many farmers are bringing in temporary foreign workers to tend the crops. One reason for this is that there is resistance to farmers making a decent wage and the expectation that food will be cheap. This means that young people and immigrants are expected to work on farms for next to nothing, and this can prevent people from entering this industry.

Policy Approaches to Rural Development

As part of its economic development strategy, “The Way Forward,” the provincial government has organized a Cabinet Committee on Jobs. This includes sector plans that have taken a collaborative approach to policy-making by building on expertise in industries, NGOs and academia. These sector plans consider not just economic development but include immigration as well.

An interesting initiative the provincial government has begun is the Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) Pilot. This regional economic development model was created to increase collaboration between government, business and academia at a regional level that focuses on innovation and making connections across sectors. Based on the Michael Porter’s model used in Europe, the intent is to identify unique characteristics and assets of a region, highlight its competitive advantage, target supports for research and development for knowledge-based initiatives, and build partnerships. Skinner found that this last goal has been the most difficult, as it takes a lot of effort and trust to build a good partnership. Still, she has found that people are open to collaboration and to diversity, and is hopeful for the future of the pilot.

There are 5 RIS pilots happening across the province. Each pilot has a specific focus and includes: Fisheries and Tourism (Northern Peninsula and Southern Labrador); Forestry and Agriculture (West Coast); Aerospace (Gander and Central); Industrial Technology Development (Clarenville area and Burin Peninsula); and Ocean



Technology (St. John's). Each pilot area has a committee largely made up of industry, academia and some government. The goal of the pilots is to collaboratively identify three or four common and attainable initiatives. The objectives of the pilots are to enhance connectivity; identify opportunities to explore innovations for adaptation and adoption for existing and new technologies; foster greater global opportunities and global pipelines; and encourage further collaboration between wider entrepreneurial actors.

Co-operatives

One aspect of rural development that was enthusiastically discussed at the Symposium was the need to empower people living in rural areas to develop their own businesses. However, starting a business comes with a degree of risk and it can sometimes be difficult for new entrepreneurs to get start-up loans.

A solution to this challenge is starting a cooperative. Co-operatives (or co-ops) are associations of individuals who jointly own and control an enterprise. In his presentation,

Greg Cameron, Associate Professor at Dalhousie University, laid out the universal principles of the world co-operative movement as including: a voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; continual education; cooperation among co-operatives; and concern for community (ICA). These principles, some of which have been around since the 19th Century, distinguish the co-operative from other business models.

Co-operatives can fit in any socioeconomic systems and are prevalent in both the Global North and Global South. Many new Canadians, for example, would have knowledge of co-operatives from their home countries and this is a skill that can be tapped into. The co-operative effect is applicable to all parts of an economy including industry, services, and agriculture, and offers unique competitive advantage over other forms of businesses including economies of scale in buying and selling; value added processing; the elimination of the middleman; enhanced control over prices and quality control; the pooling of investment; technical specialization; community building; and formulating a united political voice.

Skills Training

Our economy is changing, and so are the skills required to work. Our host, Mike Clair, introduced the panel with a discussion of the new era of our economy, the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In this era, the economy will be disrupted with new innovations such as 3D printing, robotics, biotechnology, the internet of things, and artificial intelligence. These innovations will create new job opportunities, while making others obsolete. Preparing for these changes will be important to sustaining economic growth.

In his presentation, Akbari discussed the impact that skills training can have on the economy. Skills training is a source of economic growth as it can increase worker productivity and wages. Training can include formal classroom training and informal, on the job training. The latter can be more general or specific to a firm. Firms are more likely to provide specific training and it can increase worker retention. If workers are more involved in a firm's decision-making process, which can also increase worker retention. Most studies show that people with more training earn higher earnings.

Given that most jobs in Atlantic Canada will be opened through attrition, Akbari recommended more attraction and retention of immigrants through initiatives such as the Atlantic Immigration Pilot.

From Temporary Foreign Worker to Canadian Citizen: Addressing Gaps in the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program

Fishing is the heart of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and there is a need to integrate immigration with the local fishing industry. George Lee, President of New Land Futures, presented on the work that he is doing to address labour shortages in seafood processing and population decline in rural areas through immigration. Lee was inspired by the introduction of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program. This program offers immigrants a pathway to citizenship after working in Canada for one year, but requires the receiving company to guarantee 12 months of work. However, fish plants that would like to utilize this program can only employ for a maximum of 7 months out of the year.

Fish plants that are facing labour shortages are utilizing the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to fill the gap, but the temporary nature of the program does not help rural regions in

terms of building a population. To address this gap, Lee and his associates are working on a pilot program that would recruit temporary foreign workers to work in a fish plant for 7 months and then match them with an internship for the other 5 months so that they receive 12 months of work and are able to apply for permanent residence. The internship would be created through a partnership with an organization that is responsible for the training of fish processors, for example, the Marine Institute in Newfoundland and Labrador. Most of the internship would take place prior to going to work at the fish plant so that workers get skills training before beginning the job, while some of the internship could take place after the work term. They are also exploring the possibility of having some of the internship take place in the individual's country of origin based on international connections that Memorial University has already made with universities around the world, particularly in China. They are also working with an immigrant settlement organization, the Association of New Canadians, to develop this pilot and include settlement as part of the internship. This year-long pilot would fit the criteria for the Atlantic Immigration Pilot and allow fish plants to recruit temporary foreign workers while also building the community as workers would be able to bring in their family and settle in their new home.

Bridging the Divide: Connecting and Preparing Refugees for the Province's Agriculture Industry

Sarah Thompson, Project Manager with the Association for New Canadians, presented a pilot project that she is working on called "Bridging the Divide."

The pilot began with a situational analysis by interviewing local farmers across the province to learn what their challenges are in terms of labour shortages and access to skilled labour, and by interviewing newcomers who were farmers in their home country, to learn about their skills in farming and secondary processing. This analysis informed the next phase of the project, which will train newcomers in the Newfoundland and Labrador farm environment and employers for them to effectively receive the newcomers and work with a diverse population. Once the training portion of the project is completed (expected to end in March 2019), the next phase will include job placements. The ANC is aiming to have 8 to 10 job placements on farms or secondary processing facilities throughout the province in the Spring and Summer of 2019.

From Oil to Renewable Energy: Transferring Skills for the Future

Delia Warren, Director of Iron and Earth East, gave an overview of skills training programs that she is leading with Iron and Earth, a non-profit organization that began in Alberta in response to lay-offs and job volatility in the oil and gas industry, and an increased focus on climate change. Recognizing that the skills required in the oil and gas industry had parallels with that of the renewable energy industry, the organization was started to help workers in oil and gas transition to the green economy. The goals of Iron and Earth is to promote renewable energy, create networking and training opportunities for trades workers, advise government and industry on renewable energy policy, and increase public education and awareness. While the organization was founded in Alberta, a chapter was opened in Newfoundland and Labrador because the province faces similar challenges and opportunities in terms of transitioning from an oil and gas to a green economy. However, in Newfoundland and Labrador, there has been little movement in terms of generating renewable energy besides large hydro, so the local chapter has focused its efforts on public education, exploring opportunities and dispelling myths with regards to renewable energy potential in the province through a Speaker Series.

Iron and Earth East have completed several skills training workshops to teach people the skills required in the renewable energy sector. In 2017 they began the project “365 Greenhouse” to install solar panels on a greenhouse that would allow it to run all year long without producing greenhouse gas emission. This project was a partnership with the Autism Society, a social enterprise located in St. John’s that helps people with autism. The society has a greenhouse to grow food for a restaurant that the enterprise runs. For this project, the organization upskilled electricians through several, short training sessions and volunteer labour was used to install solar panels at the Autism Society. The next steps will be to install panels on the greenhouse, which is set to finish in August 2019. This project was beneficial both for the volunteers as they were able to learn new skills and for the organization, who will be able to grow food all year long through renewable energy.

Conclusion

In her opening remarks, Dr. Jennifer Simpson asked the audience, “what’s at stake?” The audience responded with concerns about food security, the lack of young people who are entering farming, and the lack of collaboration within communities. This simple question highlighted the challenges that Newfoundland and Labrador, and Atlantic Canada faces in terms of sustainable development, but also the opportunities that immigration can bring. Focusing on agriculture, aquaculture and renewable energy, this conference brought to life the potential that exists in rural development, and what skills are needed to move forward. Through this research symposium, participants learned about innovative pilot projects bridging the divide between emerging sectors and individuals with transferable skills, as well as new opportunities to develop existing resources. Not all of the presentations were hopeful. The Atlantic Canada labour market is stagnating, and new job opportunities are made possible only through the senior population retiring or dying. Based on 2011 data, agricultural co-operatives in Newfoundland and Labrador were declining and competition has weakened the ability to collaborate. Still, there is potential to bounce back. With new sectors come new job opportunities and innovative pilots have the capability to make permanent change. The total number of co-operatives is growing and meeting demands in key industries such as child-care. Preparing workers for the economy of tomorrow will be vital to sustaining economic development and understanding what’s at stake can motivate us to move forward.

The event was recorded. The [Rural Development Panel can be found here](#) and [the Skills Training Panel here](#). More information, including breakout session and guest bios can be found at <http://www.mun.ca/jchair/outreach/>

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