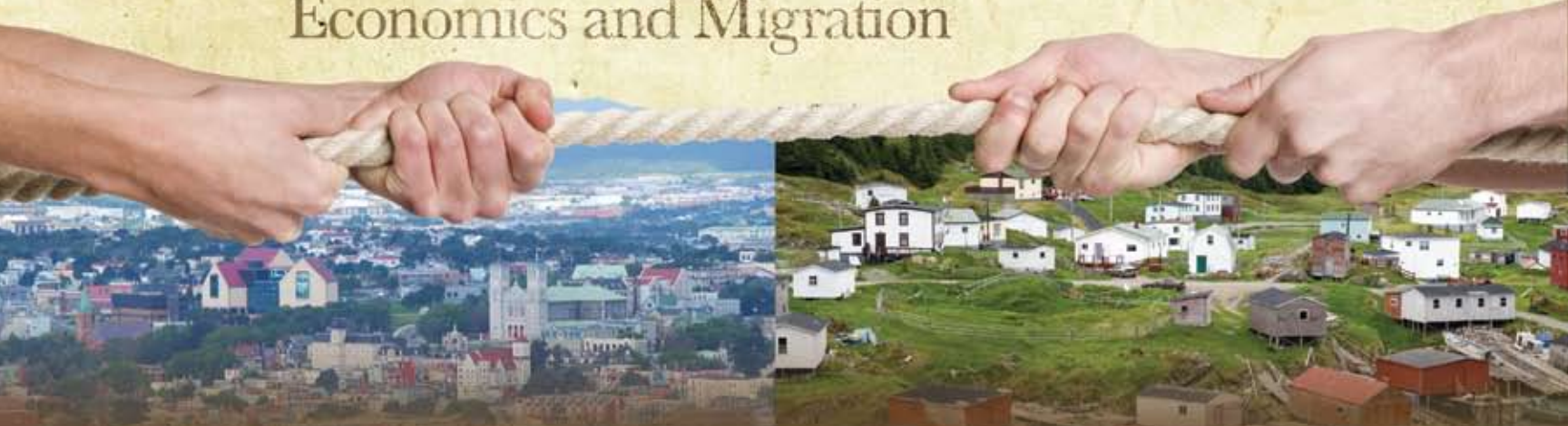




# AT ISSUE

## Economics and Migration



3.133 An urban community

3.134 A rural community

Throughout this course we have seen that economic factors can have a significant influence on culture and society. In fact, economic opportunity was one of the major factors affecting European settlement of Newfoundland and Labrador. We learned in this chapter that the promise of employment, the appeal of land, and the chance of a new and better life all encouraged English, Irish, Scottish, and French immigrants to settle here. In other words, economic factors were among the most significant **push and pull factors** affecting the settlement of Newfoundland and Labrador. Push factors encourage people to leave their points of origin and settle elsewhere, while pull factors attract migrants to new areas.

Today, economic push and pull factors continue to affect patterns of **internal migration** in Newfoundland and Labrador, as people move from one region of the province to another. Our province is becoming increasingly urbanized. This means that significant numbers of people are choosing to leave their homes in smaller communities to settle in larger centres, such as St. John's and Corner Brook. In almost every year since Confederation, for example, the number of people leaving rural communities has far exceeded the number of those moving in. Why is this happening? What push factors may influence people to leave rural areas and what pull factors may prompt people to settle in urban areas?

The answers to these questions may vary from one individual or family to the next, but it is possible to outline general push and pull factors motivating immigration into urban areas. Generally, economic and social forces

are among the most significant push and pull factors. Small communities tend to offer fewer and lower paying jobs than larger towns and cities. Also, residents in urban areas often have access to a greater range of social services such as hospitals, daycare centres, better-equipped schools, and more efficient modes of public transit, than people living in rural areas.

Although out-migration has long been a reality in rural areas of the province (and in much of Canada), it has intensified in recent decades. This is because a powerful new push factor emerged in the 1990s to encourage emigration from outport communities. In 1992, the Northern cod stocks collapsed and the federal government imposed a moratorium on the fishery. Approximately 30 000 people were suddenly out of work and no other industries or businesses existed in rural communities to absorb the unemployed. In the coming months and years, thousands of people left



3.135  
Harbour Buffett,  
Placentia Bay in  
the 1930s

their homes to find work. Some moved to other parts of Canada or the United States, but many also moved to urban centres in the province.

Today, rural areas continue to lose residents to urban centres. Most people leaving small communities are either young adults, between the ages of 15 and 24, or families with young children. Although they leave for a variety of reasons, the most common are to find jobs or to have better access to educational and medical facilities.

Much uncertainty now surrounds the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The moratorium is still in place and it is unknown when or if the cod stocks will rebound. The growth of a shellfish industry has created work for some displaced workers, while tourism and small businesses have generated employment in other sectors. Nothing, however, has been able to curb the flow of people from small communities to St. John's, Alberta, and elsewhere, or to employ as many rural people as the centuries-old cod fishery once did.

## **For Discussion:**

1. What are the "benefits" of urbanization?
2. What are the "limitations" of urbanization?
3. Why do some people continue to live in rural, even isolated, areas?
4. What can be done to reduce the negative effects of urbanization?
5. What should be done to ensure that the cultural roots of our province are preserved?
6. How might continued out-migration from rural areas affect families and individuals still living in small communities?

## **Questions:**

1. What push and pull factors originally brought your family to the community or region where you live?
2. How is your community or region changing today?
3. Where do you see yourself living and working 10 years from now? What push-pull factors account for this? Which factor will be the most significant?
4. Do you have any friends or relatives who left your community to live in a larger centre? If so, how has this affected you?