

**Service Provision as Part of Resource Town Transition Planning:
A case from northern BC**

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ABSTRACT

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This chapter highlights the critical role of services provision certainty during times of economic transition and restructuring in rural Canada. In the post Second World War period, a number of single-industry resource-dependent mining and forestry towns were established across northern British Columbia as part of a policy of 'province building'. Tumbler Ridge, BC's newest town, was founded in the early 1980s to support the development of two coal mines. Resource industry restructuring, and a decline in coal prices, put pressure on the viability of both the mines and the town. In March 2000, it was announced that the Quintette mine (Tumbler Ridge's largest mine) would be closing. The loss of this major employer raised the spectre that the town may close. Local officials and residents organized and put forward transition proposals to the provincial government. The resulting Tumbler Ridge Transition Task Force identified three stages of transition planning. Plans for the *short-term* included certainty of basic services provision, housing, and worker retraining programs. Plans for the *intermediate-term* future involved municipal sustainability, population transition, and stability for local services provision. Plans for the *long-term* focussed upon the need to diversify the local economy. These diversification plans build upon a stable services infrastructure. While Tumbler Ridge has not completed its transition, the initial certainty provided by funding to guarantee basic health, education, and social services, played a key role in removing the threat of immediate town closure and allowing transition efforts to begin. Following a brief introduction to the role of services in rural community revitalization, we will introduce the context of resource-dependent towns in Canada. This is followed by a case study of the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force, and the Services Agreements that were put in place to provide certainty during a period of rapid community change. These Services Agreements demonstrate how crucial the provision of services was for Tumbler Ridge's transition plans, and how valuable they were in the successful execution of those plans.

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Introduction

This chapter examines the critical role of services provision during community social and economic transition. Under globalization and restructuring, the economic base of rural Canada is adjusting from a dependence upon resource industries to a mixed economy where rural amenity values are now of increasing importance. However, neither resource industries nor amenity economies can function without a support base of local services. Therefore, services are not only a key tool for rural and small town places to use in retaining people and economic activities, but they are also valuable for attracting new people and economic activities. The provision of basic services (related to health, education, quality of life, and civic infrastructure) in rural Canada is critical during periods of economic adjustment, and can provide a foundation for economic revitalization.

Our example is the small town of Tumbler Ridge in northern British Columbia. Tumbler Ridge was built in the early 1980s to support the development of two massive open pit coal mines. In 2000, the closure of the town's major employer created a crisis that initiated community transition planning, and this chapter describes the services aspects of that planning. Following a brief introduction to the role of services in rural community revitalization, we will introduce the context of resource-dependent towns in Canada. This is followed by a case study of the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force, and the Services Agreements that were put in place to provide certainty during a period of rapid community change. These Services Agreements demonstrate how crucial the provision of services was for Tumbler Ridge's transition plans, and how valuable they were in the successful execution of those plans.

Services in Rural and Small Town Places

In rural and small town places, the provision of basic social, health, education, and infrastructure services provides a crucial foundation for both day-to-day activities and periods of transition. A range of research on both community revitalization and migration suggests that the availability of basic services plays a significant role in retaining and recruiting people and economic activities (Furuseth, 1998). Recent studies on youth migration, for example, cite availability of services as one of three key motives behind rural youth out-migration (Tremblay, 2001; LeBlanc, 2002; Malatest and Associates, 2002). In other words, services provide the tools necessary to sustain rural places and attract rural development.

The provision of rural and small town services has experienced considerable change over time. At present, services are under stress as a result of a reorganization of the health care system and the withdrawal of the public sector from non-metropolitan places. The closure of government offices and services has made it especially difficult to retain and recruit economic activities and residents (Desjardins *et al.*, 2002) and will make it even more difficult to cope with the impacts of an aging local population (see also Meyer and Cromley, 1989; Everitt and Gfellner, 1996).

In terms of service provision, Canada has moved through three clear eras. Historically, rural places were isolated and few services were provided by the State. Most rural and small town places had to look after their own service provision, with the result that there was tremendous variability from place to place. In the economic boom of the post Second World War period, the State expanded its social safety net role to most facets of Canadian life. Principles such as universality meant that funding for education and health care, and access to government services, became more readily available in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan Canada. The net result was a tremendous expansion of rural and small town services. Through the past two decades, however, there has been a retrenchment of these services.

The pattern of services change in rural and small town British Columbia has involved at least two rounds of service pressure. Starting in the 1980s, the federal government sought to withdraw from rural Canada such services as post offices, employment insurance offices, and human resources offices (Valley Sentinel, 7 April 1992; Valley Sentinel, 4 May 1995; Valley Sentinel, 31 January 1996; Hanlon and Rosenberg, 1998). More recently, federal government cutbacks in transfer payments to the provinces in areas such as health and education have meant a reduction in the availability of these services in smaller communities (Valley Sentinel, 11 February 1992; Valley Sentinel, 12 April 1994).

This pattern of service funding reduction is being repeated at a provincial government level. Through the 1990s the provincial government initiated funding changes which resulted in services closure in health, education, and line-ministry offices (Valley Sentinel, 27 November 1996; Valley Sentinel, 11 December 1996; Lawlor, 7 August 2002; CBC News, 16 August 2002). More recently, a trend towards off-loading has meant that many basic infrastructure services such as schools, courthouses, or road maintenance are not being carried by the provincial tax base (CBC News, 15 August 2002; Armstrong, 27 August 2002). If rural places wish to have these services, then they are going to have to take on the additional financial burden. Many of the recent service cuts even seem to push the 'off-loading agenda' by shifting funding responsibilities from one government ministry to another. A recent decision to cut back ferry service across Francois Lake in BC was panned by residents and forest industry representatives as making "little economic sense in the face of an expanding mountain pine beetle epidemic and a booming forest industry in the area" (Hoekstra, 11 October, 2002, p. 1). The ferry service, used by area residents and by the forest companies to move logging trucks, is run by the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Highways. It was reported that residents and loggers have been told "the scheduled cutbacks are saving the highways ministry \$250,000 a year ... but calculations show the Forests Ministry is losing \$60,000 a week in timber revenues" (Hoekstra, 11 October, 2002, p. 1).

Since the economic crises of the 1980s, urban-based models of efficiency and market parameters have been increasingly extended into evaluation of services funding and provision (Pinch, 1985; Hanlon and Rosenberg, 1998). A repeated result has been the closure of services in rural and small town places (Carter 1990; Robinson 1990; Reed, 1999). The application of urban or market-based models is often unsuited to the needs and realities of rural places and rural geographies. The closure of services through the application of inappropriate models also affects community sustainability. In discussing the impacts of restructuring in rural areas caused by industrialization and globalization, Troughton (1999, 28) makes the point that “as the reductionist process goes on, the loss or retention of key institutions, including local hospitals or health centres, can represent the difference between community survival and collapse”.

In addition to recent challenges posed by urban or market-based service delivery models, the provision of services in rural places has long faced the challenge of geography (Blacksell *et al.*, 1988; Northern and Rural Health Task Force, 1995; Carrier, 1999). As Furueth (1998, 236) argues:

even under ideal circumstances there are economic barriers to providing adequate community services in rural locales. The demographic reality of rurality means dispersed populations and low relative population density. The consequence is that the potential demand for services delivered from discrete facilities is dispersed and the per capita costs of providing services are higher than in urban or suburban settings with greater population densities.

Regardless of the service provision era, rural and small town places have struggled to deal with their servicing mandate. Well known central place models reinforce how difficult it is for rural and small town places to provide services, especially specialized services (Conkling and Yeates, 1976; Norton, 1998). The medical geography literature in particular has highlighted the difficulty of rural and small town places in providing even basic health services (Joseph and Bantock, 1984; Halseth and Rosenberg, 1991; Gesler and Ricketts, 1992). Yet, innovative solutions to these challenges are available and it is important in a democratic society that the basic needs of residents be met. For

example, the Comox Valley Nursing Centre described by Attridge *et al.* (1997), the Guthrie House community wellness centre described by Halseth and Williams (1999), and the community health provision alternatives described by Blakley and Jaffe (1999) in Saskatchewan each demonstrate innovation in rural health care delivery.

Against the context of retrenchment and closure, we find that services are increasingly important (Desjardins *et al.*, 2002). Not only are the basic needs of the population an issue in a state which still champions universality, but with rural and small town Canada experiencing accelerated social and economic transition, access to services are fundamental for providing the information and support to go through such transformations (Bruce *et al.* 1999; Sullivan, 2002). The availability of basic services is also a key building block for further economic diversification. Footloose economic activities will not locate in sites without basic educational, medical, and community services (Furuseth, 1998). A recent meeting of mayors from northern BC communities affirmed the key position of services in economic growth and diversification. With specific reference to transportation services, the participants “were adamant that funds allocated towards transportation infrastructure be viewed as investments rather than expenses in need of cutting. The overall message from the symposium was clear; investment in our transportation infrastructure needs to happen in the North and it needs to happen now. The state of our economy depends on it” (Northern Priorities, 2002, p. 1). This is exactly the same argument that civic leaders have made for decades in BC. Duff Pattullo, an early mayor of Prince Rupert (and later provincial premier) for example, argued strongly that the development of public services would be required to make towns attractive to people and economic investment (Fisher, 1990). As rural Canada confronts change almost 100 years after Pattullo’s terms in office, the availability of services will not only ease the stress of transition, but will provide a foundation for diversification.

In summary, services provision in rural and small town Canada is under stress and is rapidly changing. The loss of services, on even an incremental basis, is having a significant impact on local quality of life and the ability of places to hold or attract economic development. This loss, however, also provides some opportunities for local communities to come together to create innovative and alternative service delivery means. Communication, transportation, business, health, and education services each play a role in maintaining local economic activities in communities and can play a role in their recruitment. As a result, services are crucial in the new economy where they provide not only a foundation for economic activities, but they provide a foundation for the creation of social capital which in turn now plays an increasingly large role in the creation of flexible and innovative bottom-up economic activity (Fitchen 1991; Everitt and Gill 1993; Furuseth 1998). New services underscore a new economy; including the provision of Internet and courier tools. Services also are crucial to attracting new economic activities as the provision of medical and educational services creates the quality of life foundation that footloose economic development seeks.

Resource Towns

The particular context we wish to highlight is that of Canada's resource-dependent towns. Single-industry towns, resource boom-towns, and instant towns have been built for decades across Canada's resource frontier (Bollman, 1992). While some grew around an existing village or town, others have been purpose-built to house the labour force of new resource industries. Historically, these were company towns where the houses, work, and even the local store were owned and controlled by the company (Bradbury, 1978). Over time, this changed as companies sought to become less involved in the running of a townsite and as increasingly skilled workers called for more independent control of their lives and communities (McRae, 1970). Over the past 50 years, a new style of resource town planning has emerged and Tumbler Ridge is a product of this new planning style (Shera and Gill, 1990; Gill, 1991).

As service provision has changed, so too have resource towns (Vance, 1966; Bedics

and Doelker, 1992). McCann (1978) argued that resource boom towns were traditionally not planned. Rather, they were simply thrown together out of the need for workers to be accommodated during the various phases of industrial development. The planning of isolated resource-dependent towns in Canada has changed considerably since the start of the 20th Century. This sequence has included sleep camps, planned communities, designed communities, fly in / fly out communities, and temporary communities (Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1987). Two tensions run through this sequence; the need to create a liveable environment for the workers and their families and the concomitant need to keep non-production costs as low as possible for the company.

Building upon the idea of an historic sequence of single-industry town types, Roy Bowles (1992) has provided a useful characterization of changing strategies towards Canadian resource town planning. Bowles suggests that the development and management of purpose built single-industry towns has moved through three general eras or stages. In the first stage, common into the 1920s, a process that he describes as *additive planning* was in place. Simply put, additive planning meant that the construction and operation of resource-based company towns was simply “added” to the routine duties of the company managers. In company built and run towns like Anyox BC, the mine supplied not just the work but also owned the houses, ran the water and sewer systems, paid for the school, and ran the grocery and hardware stores (Loudon, 1992; see also general discussion by Bedics and Doelker, 1992). Much of this was of course done with attention to keeping company costs as low as possible.

Between the two World Wars, Bowles suggests that a more *holistic planning* approach to resource town planning emerged. The idea was to create self-contained towns with more attention being given to community site planning. This approach drew heavily upon land-use planning principles of the period such as a separation of residential from industrial areas, and community design to fit local topography. As Porteous (1987, p.384) suggests, “pre-war bunkhouse ‘sleep camps’, occupied largely by single males,

were replaced by larger villages with a less ill-balanced population". Whether this was a distinct stage or simply a transitional period is open to debate (Himelfarb, 1977; Bradbury and St-Martin, 1983; Bradbury and Sendbueler, 1988).

The greater attention to community design did, however, lead after the 1940s into what Bowles has called *comprehensive planning*. The goal of comprehensive planning in single-industry towns is grounded in efforts to incorporate a broader range of social and economic considerations into community development. Community health, quality of life, and social well-being were now part of the design criteria. Comprehensively planned instant towns were "designed largely to remove companies from town control, to stimulate popular local government organization and thus the provision of urban services and to foster an atmosphere of permanence" (Porteous, 1970, p.318).

One of the earliest and most prominent examples of the comprehensive planning approach is Kitimat, BC. The townsite of Kitimat was created in the early 1950s to house the workforce for the Aluminum Company of Canada's (ALCAN) new smelter facility (Robinson, 1962). The townsite was designed by eminent United States land-use planner Clarence Stein. Stein's vision for the new community blended the economic needs of the corporation to have a stable labour force with the quality-of-life needs of the families and workers to feel part of a stable, permanent, and welcoming community. As Stein (1952, p.3) argued in the opening to his Kitimat townsite master plan:

The purpose of Kitimat is the industrial success of the plant. That success will depend on the degree that workers are content, that they like living in Kitimat. Unless the town can attract and hold industrial workers, there will be continuous turnover and difficulty The workers must find Kitimat more than temporarily acceptable. They must be enthusiastic about it as a particularly fine place in which to live and bring up their families. It must become the place they want as homeland, the town they are going to make their own.

In designing Kitimat, Stein incorporated earlier “garden city” concepts (Hall, 1988) into neighbourhood designs that emphasized the pedestrian, and an intricate system of walkways linking residential areas with schools and with the central shopping area and recreation complex. This central shopping/recreation area included a wide array of services, offices, and facilities (McCann, 1978). Kitimat neighborhoods were fully serviced and self contained in terms of having small convenience shopping outlets, churches, and schools.

Kitimat’s planners identified four key design features (Robinson, 1962; Hodge, 1991). The first was to create a healthy environment by using site planning tools to separate land uses. This meant grouping uses such as residential and commercial, and separating uses such as industrial from residential. This strategy was implemented in most single-industry towns built in Canada after the Second World War. The second was to build in economic diversity, which meant adding other industries and economic sectors to avoid the pit-falls of single-industry dependence. Unfortunately, this lesson seems to have been forgotten in many subsequent instant towns. Third, neighbourhood designs were used to create attractive and functional housing areas. This meant designing for the target population of young families with small children and included elementary schools, ample parks and playgrounds, and neighbourhood walkways separated from roads. And fourth, services provision for young families was considered crucial and included education, health, and community facilities. It was felt that these features were necessary to set a foundation for a sustainable community (Clawson and Hall, 1973; Hoare, 1994). The provision of amenities and services for young family households was widely implemented in the new towns built along Canada’s northern resource frontier.

Tumbler Ridge

Across British Columbia, resource-dependent small towns dominate the landscape beyond metropolitan Vancouver and Victoria. Many of these communities are what can be labelled 'instant towns', developed overnight by a company or industry to exploit a new resource opportunity. Tumbler Ridge is one of these instant towns, built as part of the province's last resource development megaproject. Located in northeastern BC, Tumbler Ridge is on the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and is about 5 hours drive from the regional centre of Prince George (Figure 1). Coal resources in the area have long been known about, but in the mid-1970s world prices and demand prompted more than 15 claims in the region around Tumbler Ridge (Utah Mines, 1976; Pacific 66, 1978; BP Exploration Canada, 1979; Cinnabar Peak Mines, 1981; Teck Corporation, 1981; Denison Mines Limited 1982; Petro-Canada, n.d.). Two mines, 'Bullmoose' (operated by Teck Corporation) and 'Quintette' (operated by Denison Mines) proceeded. The entire project development costs for the 'Northeast Coal Project' reached in excess of \$2.5 billion.

The community is based around two open pit, metallurgical coal mines whose market is a consortium of Japanese Steel Mills. Planning for Tumbler Ridge began in 1976, with construction of the townsite starting in 1981, and the first shipment of coal being sent by rail in 1983. Just like in Kitimat, social and land-use design principles were used to create a townsite that would both attract and retain skilled and professional workers and their families (Shera and Gill, 1990). The mandate of the townsite planners was to "build upon past experience and avoid some of the difficulties residents and [single-industry towns] had experienced historically' (Halseth and Sullivan, 2000a, p.28). The mining companies and the provincial government incurred a \$12 million debt as a result of the significant efforts that went into construction of the mines and the industrial infrastructure (Knight, 1990). In addition, the District of Tumbler Ridge incurred a \$36 million debt for civic infrastructure, a recreation centre, a pool, and a water treatment plant (Tumbler Ridge Financial Statements, 1983-2000).

Global commodity prices and corporate restructuring have affected Tumbler Ridge almost since its opening. Since 1990, the economic viability of the mines, especially Quintette, has been put in question as a result of a pricing conflict with the Japanese Steel Mill Consortium. In 1997, new contracts were signed that guaranteed production until 2003. However, on March 1, 2000 Teck Corporation (who had taken over management of the two mines in 1991) announced it would close the Quintette mine on August 31, 2000. Given that Quintette was the largest of the two mines, its closure brought into question the viability of the town.

Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force

The Quintette closure announcement caught everyone off-guard. In fact, provincial government leaders had been involved with Teck Corporation in talks to make the Quintette mine more viable (Vancouver Sun, 2000). Energy and Mines Minister Dan Miller stated that he was “blindsided by the decision by the mine’s operator, Teck Corporation, to speed up plans to close the money-losing mine [in] August putting 500 people out of work” (Vancouver Sun, 2 March 2000, p. D1). At the time of the announcement Miller also initially stated that the town would most likely close with the mine. Miller commented to journalists that “[t]he [town] was built for one purpose, as a [place] to house the workers for the two mines, and without the mines, I don’t know that you could convert the [town] to some other use” (Vancouver Sun, 2 March 2000, p. D2).

If the provincial government was unprepared to act, local community leaders were ready to initiate action. Having experienced town closure in other locations, local residents and decision-makers were not willing to give up on Tumbler Ridge:

[d]espite the media messages, and the abandonment of Tumbler Ridge as a disposable [town] by Provincial politicians, there is a strong current of confidence about our future running through town. Many residents are survivors from other mining towns ... [they] call Tumbler Ridge home and are not willing to move (Community Connections, 15 March 2000, p. 1).

Six days after the closure announcement, local council created an emergency action plan. By March 15, 2000, the provincial government was convinced of the need to provide Tumbler Ridge with community and economic transition support. Minister Miller traveled to Tumbler Ridge and met with a group representing communities throughout the Peace River region. Regional support had been offered to Tumbler Ridge immediately after the closure announcement. Organizers of the meeting demonstrated strong regional support and showed the Province that it was important to the entire region to have Tumbler Ridge survive.

With regional and provincial support, the next step involved the creation of a Revitalization Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force included a broad range of interests; from provincial government, to neighbouring towns, to service groups such as the regional school and health boards (Table 1). The Task Force quickly identified a clear focus upon the delivery of basic local services. According to its terms of reference (Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force, 2000b, p.1),

[t]he purpose of the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force Committee is to focus on the [town] and its ability to deliver municipal, educational, community health, and social services to a viable and stable community infrastructure. Special emphasis will be put into creating an economic environment that creates economic diversity.

Services were to be the foundation for both stabilization and revitalization.

**Table 1
Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force**

| Name | Town | Position Held |
|------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Dan Miller | Victoria | Minister of Energy and Mines |
| Karen Concurrada | Victoria | Ministry of Energy and Mines |
| Dr. Hal Gueren | Victoria | Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Development Cooperatives and Volunteers |
| Jack Weisgerber | Peace River | MLA |
| Moray Stewart | Peace River Reg. Dist. | Administrator |
| Karen Goodings | Peace River Reg. Dist. | Chairperson |
| Clay Iles | Tumbler Ridge | Mayor |
| Fred Banham | Tumbler Ridge | Administrator |
| Al Kopeck | Tumbler Ridge | Councillor |
| Tom Dall | Tumbler Ridge | Councillor |
| Bill Hendley | Tumbler Ridge | Councillor |
| Ray Proulx Jr. | Tumbler Ridge | Councillor |
| Ralph Higdon | Tumbler Ridge | Councillor |
| Glenda Nikirk | Tumbler Ridge | Councillor |
| Blair Lekstrom | Dawson Creek | Mayor |
| Jim Noble | Dawson Creek | Administrator |
| Steve Thorlakson | Fort St. John | Mayor |
| Colin Griffith | Fort St. John | Administrator |
| Charlie Lasser | Chetwynd | Mayor |
| Mike Redfearn | Chetwynd | Administrator |
| Yvonne Eldon | School District #59 | Chair |
| Bill Deith | School District #59 | Administrator |
| Sheila Barnes | South Peace Health Unit | Chair |
| Rick Robinson | South Peace Health Unit | Chief Administrative Officer |

Source: Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force, Meeting Minutes, 2000a.

In their planning, the Task Force identified three time horizons for action. In the *short-term*, the stock of rental and vacant houses was to be sold to create a municipal property tax base. Local services (especially education, health, and social) were to be stabilized through Emergency Services Agreements for funding key local services. In addition, special funding was to be brought in for employee and industry adjustment, including job search and retraining programs for displaced workers. Over the

intermediate-term, population change and municipal operations were to be founded upon an orderly transition plan and services availability. A local services committee was established to bring forward plans for addressing municipal services sustainability, population transition, property tax assessment loss, strategies for interim and *long-term* services provision, and a strategic marketing plan (Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force, 2000b). In addition, economic diversification, long ignored despite the example of Kitimat, was also crucial. In the long-term, a diversified economy would help create a more stable population. The high quality residential, commercial, and industrial service infrastructure of Tumbler Ridge was featured prominently in economic development promotion materials produced to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs. Again, local availability of services was considered a cornerstone to transition planning across all three time horizons. Services provided the certainty that both new and long-time residents needed to make decisions. Services also provided the certainty that industry and small businesses alike needed.

At the close of its first two years of active community transition, the plans set in place by the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force have met with considerable success. One of the first measures of this success would be population levels. The 1986 and 1991 population levels in Tumbler Ridge were at about 4,500 people (Table 2). Between 1991 and 1996, events connected with the coal price and volume contracts has led to layoffs and resulting population decreases. The Census count for 1996 was 3,800 while a local enumeration conducted in the fall of 1998 put the population at approximately 2,300. Following the Quintette closure, many households moved out of town, but this departing population was almost entirely replaced by people attracted to the community, the region, and the town's available housing. An estimate based on the 2001 Tumbler Ridge Community Transition Survey placed the local population at approximately 2,100.

Table 2
Population Counts

| | |
|------|---------|
| 1986 | 4,390 |
| 1991 | 4,586 |
| 1996 | 3,800 |
| 1998 | 2,300* |
| 2001 | 2,100** |

Source: 1986, 1991, 1996 data from Statistics Canada.

* local enumeration by District offices.

**2001 data estimated from Halseth and Ryser (2001) because the 2001 Census was enumerated at a time of tremendous local population turnover. By the time of the transition survey, in the Fall of 2001, local population mobility had slowed.

In regards to housing, much of the towns housing stock was tied up as rental housing by either mines (Quintette or Bullmoose) or Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Most of these properties had been privately owned but had been re-acquired by either the mines or CMHC as part of a bankruptcy protection plan for Quintette following the 1990 coal price dispute with the Japanese Steel Consortium. As estimated by the District, over 80 percent of housing was thus unavailable to people who might otherwise wish to buy a home and make a commitment to the town. With the Quintette mine closure announcement, the District of Tumbler Ridge negotiated with CMHC and Quintette to acquire title to 985 units (Table 3). These housing units were renovated and then aggressively marketed through the Tumbler Ridge Housing Corporation (TR Housing). In the summer of 2000, a national advertising campaign was launched that highlighted the availability of houses for \$25,000 and apartments for \$12,000. The cornerstone of this campaign was the provision of services in Tumbler Ridge and the high quality of those services. The housing sale went far better than expected and within two years 97 percent of properties were sold to new owners. In addition, the Bullmoose mine also entered the housing sale and disposed of most of its rental properties. A town of vacant houses and rental units was now a town of homeowners. These homeowners now began to pay property taxes, something which helped pay for municipal services such as sewer and water, road maintenance and the local recreation/aquatic centre.

Table 3

Tumbler Ridge Housing Sale

Townsite has a total of 1600 units:

1192 houses
408 apartments

District of Tumbler Ridge acquired 985 units:

725 houses
260 apartments

Housing Sales July 2000 to August 2002:

TR Housing 707 houses
 249 apartments
 (97% of stock sold)

Bullmoose mine 126 houses
Private Sales 98 houses

Source: Tumbler Ridge Administrator.

While not all new homeowners moved to Tumbler Ridge, the 2001 Transition Survey highlights that only about 14 percent of housing is used as seasonal or rental units (Halseth and Ryser, 2001). Those who did move to town also brought ideas for new businesses. In 2000 alone, 18 new business opened (Table 4).

Table 4

New Businesses established in 2000

3 bed and breakfast establishments
2 restaurants
hardware/lumberyard
2 property management companies
car wash
bunk house
roofing company
electrical contractor
small value-added sawmill
painting contractor
electronic repair shop
Credit Union
auto glass repair/replacement shop
upholstery shop

Source: Tumbler Ridge Administrator.

As noted above, Tumbler Ridge’s transition planning placed a great deal of emphasis upon local services such as education, health, and social services. Each of these three priority areas was the focus of a special Services Agreement to guarantee a base level of funding support through the transition period. For each of the indicators of community change listed in Tables 2 through 4, the availability of these basic services played a key role in retaining those who wished to remain in the town after the Quintette closure and in attracting new people to the town.

With respect to education services, an agreement was worked out with the provincial Ministry of Education, to provide 75 percent of the pre-Quintette closure funding to the community. The agreement was to last for 5 years, with the goal of providing certainty of access to education for people wishing to remain in, or move to, Tumbler Ridge. In fact, the population transition in Tumbler Ridge was so successful that the number of students has remained relatively stable and the emergency funding was never drawn upon (Table 5).

Table 5
Number of Students Attending Public School in Tumbler Ridge

| School Year | Number of Students |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 1999/2000 | 429 |
| 2000/2001 | 403 |
| 2001/2002 | 401 |
| 2002/2003 | 402 |

Source: Tumbler Ridge Administrator.

With respect to health, a similar emergency funding package was put in place. Secure funding for health care professionals was especially important for both seniors moving to town, and for families with young children wishing to stay in town. The package was sufficient to secure the services of two physicians and a nursing staff. Tumbler Ridge, like most rural communities in Canada, does still face difficulty in attracting and recruiting a nursing staff. For physicians, however, the house sale and population

transition was so successful that their case loads have increased rather than decreased. The arrival of a large number of older residents seeking a retirement community has no doubt bolstered these caseload levels.

As shown in Table 6, the age distribution of Tumbler Ridge in the early 1990s had an age distribution typical of resource boom towns (Lucas, 1971; Bradbury, 1988). As a new resource town, many young people and young couples starting families came in search of the work opportunities. Following the Quintette closure and the housing sale, the age distribution of the town now mirrors almost exactly the provincial pattern. The out-migration of young households in search of alternate mining or resource town work was countered by an in-migration of households characterized as being in their 'early retirement' years. The outcome for Tumbler Ridge's health services was both an increase in total service use and a shift in the types of care now being requested.

Table 6
Tumbler Ridge Age Distribution

| Age | 1991 Census (%) | 2001 Transition Survey (%) |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0-9 | 21.9 | 16.8 |
| 10-24 | 22.9 | 12.3 |
| 25-34 | 25.9 | 9.1 |
| 35-44 | 18.2 | 18.6 |
| 45-54 | 8.0 | 19.1 |
| 55-64 | 2.7 | 17.3 |
| 65 and up | 0.4 | 6.8 |

Source: 1991 Census - Statistics Canada.
2001 - Halseth and Ryser (2001).

With respect to social services, the challenge was to continue providing a full range of services on a reduced budget. An innovative solution included the consolidation of social services under a single umbrella. The Ministry of Health had previously funded

assessment and referral services, counselling, and self-improvement programs as separate services. These social services were consolidated into one office. To this consolidated office, a social worker was specially added to assist youth going through the transition process. This umbrella office was then supported by the Tumbler Ridge Family Support Society - a local volunteer group that had a long history of involvement and activity within the town. Together, a range of special services for the transition period, including youth counselling, worker retraining, and employment search, were put in place.

Tumbler Ridge continues to work through its economic and community transition. A significant hurdle in this process was the town's debt and the revenue shortfall with the closure of Quintette's industrial plant. The town still had a \$10.8 million infrastructure debt left over from the original construction of the town. This amounted to the highest municipal debt per capita in all of British Columbia (Northern Development Commission Presentation, 2001). This debt, and the expected loss of property taxes from Quintette, posed significant problems for Task Force members. Quintette paid for 34 percent of the municipal property tax revenue. Immediately, Tumbler Ridge would lose \$44 million in annual property taxes. This would grow to \$68 million annually if the Bullmoose mine closed. To eliminate the debt, the Provincial Municipal Finance Authority provided credits realized from sinking fund surpluses and debt reserve funds to a total of \$5,086,443. The provincial government provided \$3,480,072 in lieu of its responsibility in providing future debt servicing grants. Finally, the town used the balance of its own debt reserve fund to pay the remaining \$1,700,452. As a result, Tumbler Ridge cleared its debts by December 22, 2000. Through the housing sale, many new homeowners began to pay property tax, which helped pay for municipal service costs.

Finally, the Task Force identified economic diversification as a long-term priority. The provincial government hired consultants to research the economic diversification potential in Tumbler Ridge, and their reports highlighted a diverse range of opportunities. While the town's services and infrastructure is ready to accommodate most of the diversification suggestions, many residents and decision-makers, however, are resistant to change and still look towards big resource sector projects.

A survey of residents conducted in the fall of 2001 (Halseth and Ryser, 2001) confirmed the role of services in holding longtime residents and attracting new residents. When asked about the things they 'most liked' about Tumbler Ridge, most respondents cited the mountains, the natural environment, and the small town lifestyle. These assets were followed by services such as the Recreation Centre (and its associated facilities) and the local social and medical services. Interestingly, the most cited issues under 'least liked' aspects of Tumbler Ridge was the availability of shopping services, a common problem for small towns and one which Tumbler Ridge's community transition may assist with revitalizing. Survey respondents were also satisfied with a range of government provided community services in Tumbler Ridge. These included health and policing services, children and family services, schools, road maintenance, fire protection, sewer and water services, garbage collection, and recreational facilities. One critical part of the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force recommendations was that funding be provided to ensure that basic community services be maintained over a period of community change and uncertainty. This provision of funding has clearly been critical to maintaining resident quality of life, community satisfaction, and the attractiveness of Tumbler Ridge for residents interested in purchasing a home and investing in the future of the town.

Discussion

This research was conducted between 1998 and 2002. During this period, the Quintette mine closed and the town of Tumbler Ridge underwent a significant change. This process of change is not yet complete as resource industry dynamics, and the town's revitalization plans, continue to unfold. The success of Tumbler Ridge in staving off immediate town closure means that, like so many places across rural Canada, it now will have to work continuously to find its way. However, it can draw upon the experience of its successful response to the mine closure crisis as a demonstration of the resiliency which will be important in their future efforts at local diversification.

We feel that the case of Tumbler Ridge has a wider application across rural and small town Canada. Globalization and restructuring are a reality across rural areas (Neil *et al.*, 1992; Stabler and Olfert, 1996; Barnes and Hayter, 1997; Hayter, 2000) and restructuring in corporate, political, and social sectors is both complicating the crises and providing opportunities for innovative local solutions. Increasingly, communities are being left to fill gaps left by the withdrawal of economic activities or state delivered services (Allen and Dillman, 1994). As rural and small town places are changing, the availability of services has significant quality of life implications (Hodge and Qadeer, 1983; Bowles and Beesley, 1991; Bruce and Halseth, 2001). The very availability of services may be a key factor in the attraction of new residents and new economic activities (Champion, 1990; Hallman, 1990; Nelson, 1997; Halseth and Sullivan 2000a and b). The Tumbler Ridge example highlights that service provision certainty can provide a foundation for revitalization based on local initiatives and solutions, in concert with regional and provincial partners.

The emphasis which the Tumbler Ridge Transition Task Force placed on services builds upon a long understanding of their role in creating a liveable environment for retaining and recruiting workers and their families. While Stein argued this in the 1950s, recent research still points to the value of local services. Halseth and Sullivan (2000b) recently

conducted as survey of employees working for the major forest product companies in Mackenzie, BC. The study looked at the phenomena of 'extra-community commuting', where workers travel daily, weekly, or monthly to and from a work place located in one community while living in a completely separate community. In this case, the loss of local workers' families to the regional centre of Prince George can have serious negative implications for Mackenzie. When asked why they had moved to Prince George, those engaged in extra-community commuting cited the high cost of living and lack of services in Mackenzie. When asked what attracted them to Prince George, these extra-community commuters cited better services and better housing investment. When asked to identify changes needed to retain residents in Mackenzie, the most common suggestions were better medical services and greater shopping choices. Clearly, service provision continues to play an important role in retaining and attracting workers and their families to resource towns.

As shown in the Tumbler Ridge transition example, certainty in health, education, and community services plays an important role in community transition. The availability of services not only reduces stress on the town's residents, but provides certainty to the new homebuyers who move into the town. In turn, these new residents provide the property tax base to support town services such as roads, sewer, water supply, the recreation centre and others. Further, the services themselves provide opportunities for employment and a foundation for diversification. For example, the town's golf course is a centrepiece of both the retirement town marketing and local tourism development initiatives. A new coal mine proposal seeks to use the heavy industrial infrastructure of rail lines and equipment repair facilities. Two value-added sawmills have now moved into the town's fully serviced Heavy Industrial Park. A closed elementary school is being considered for redevelopment into a senior's activity centre. Finally, the library is a focal point for the museum society working to capitalize on the dinosaur fossil and trackway finds in the Tumbler Ridge area. Therefore, we need to think of services as a key building block for rural and small town transition.

Conclusion

Services provide stability and quality of life in rural places, something which in return provides a strong base for attracting economic activity, retaining residents, and maintaining communities. Not only do rural services meet the day-to-day needs of residents, but some such as post offices and schools serve as multi-function centres and focal points for community activity and interaction. Rural services thus also provide opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust; attributes that can lead to new partnerships and innovative rural service delivery options. Rural and small town services are especially critical to community sustainability during times of economic and social restructuring. If services close, there is increased local uncertainty and decreased ability to cope with stress and change. If more people are required to leave in order to access needed services, increased out-migration may lead to community closure. Control and ownership of civic infrastructure and local services is a foundation for revitalization.

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Figure 1

NE BC MAP