



Harnessing the Tide: A New Approach to Rural Development in BC

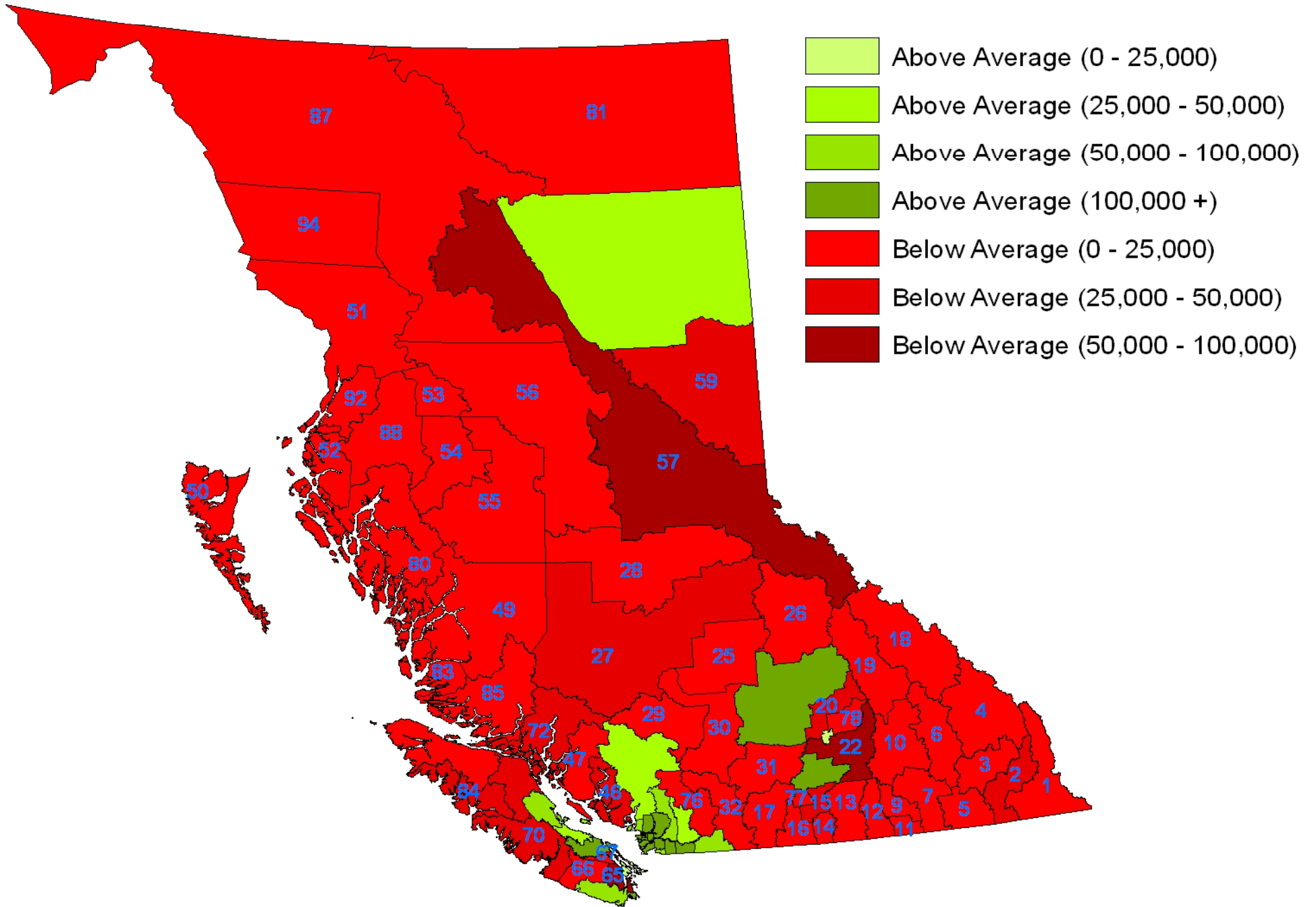
George Penfold
Regional Innovation Chair
Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC

*On the Bright Side: Rural Canada Works
Brandon, Manitoba, October 14 - 16, 2010*

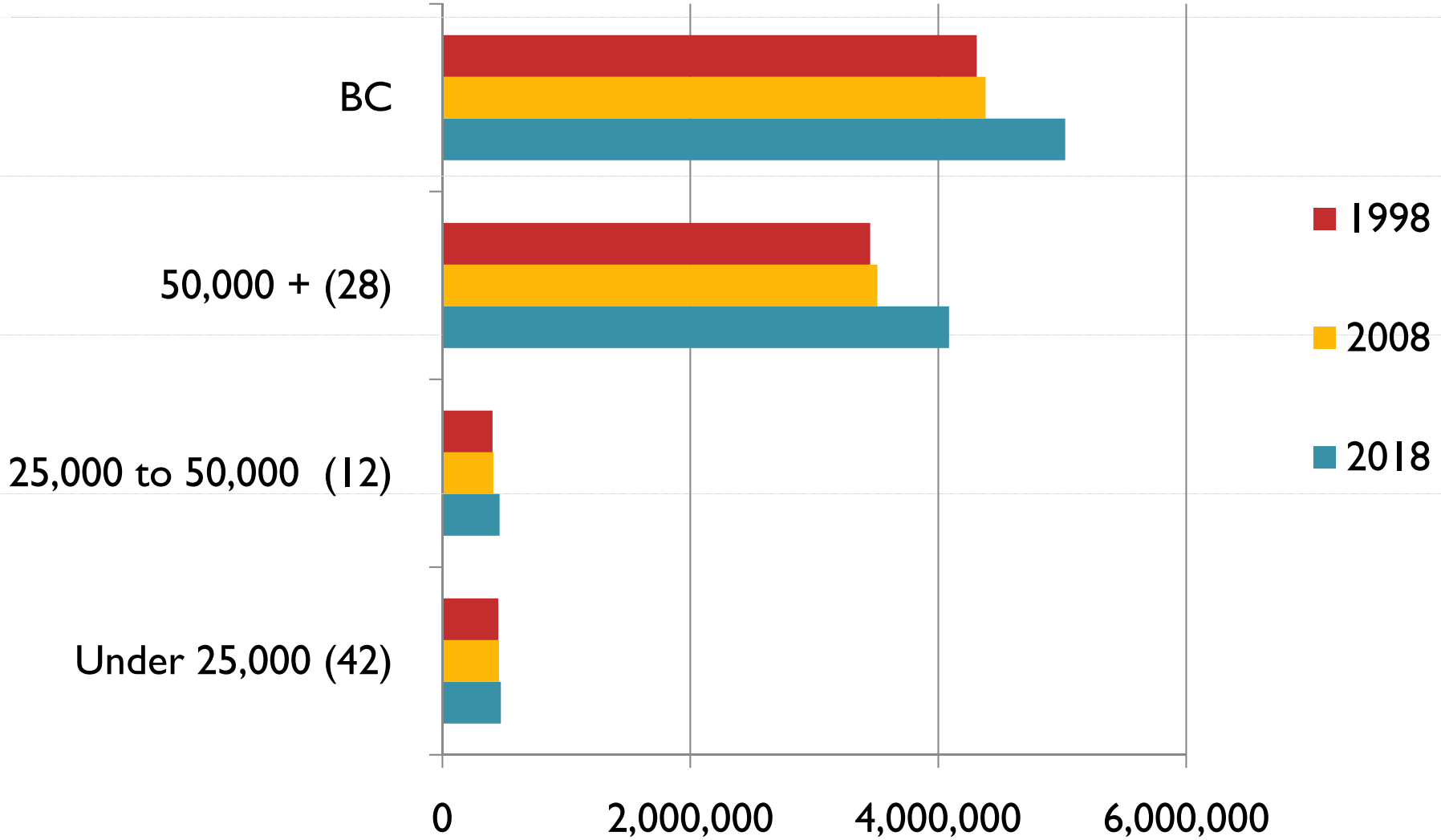
Overview

- BC Rural Realities (LHA Areas)
- Reversing the Tide to Harnessing the Tide
- Principles
- Where we are now
- Where we would like to go

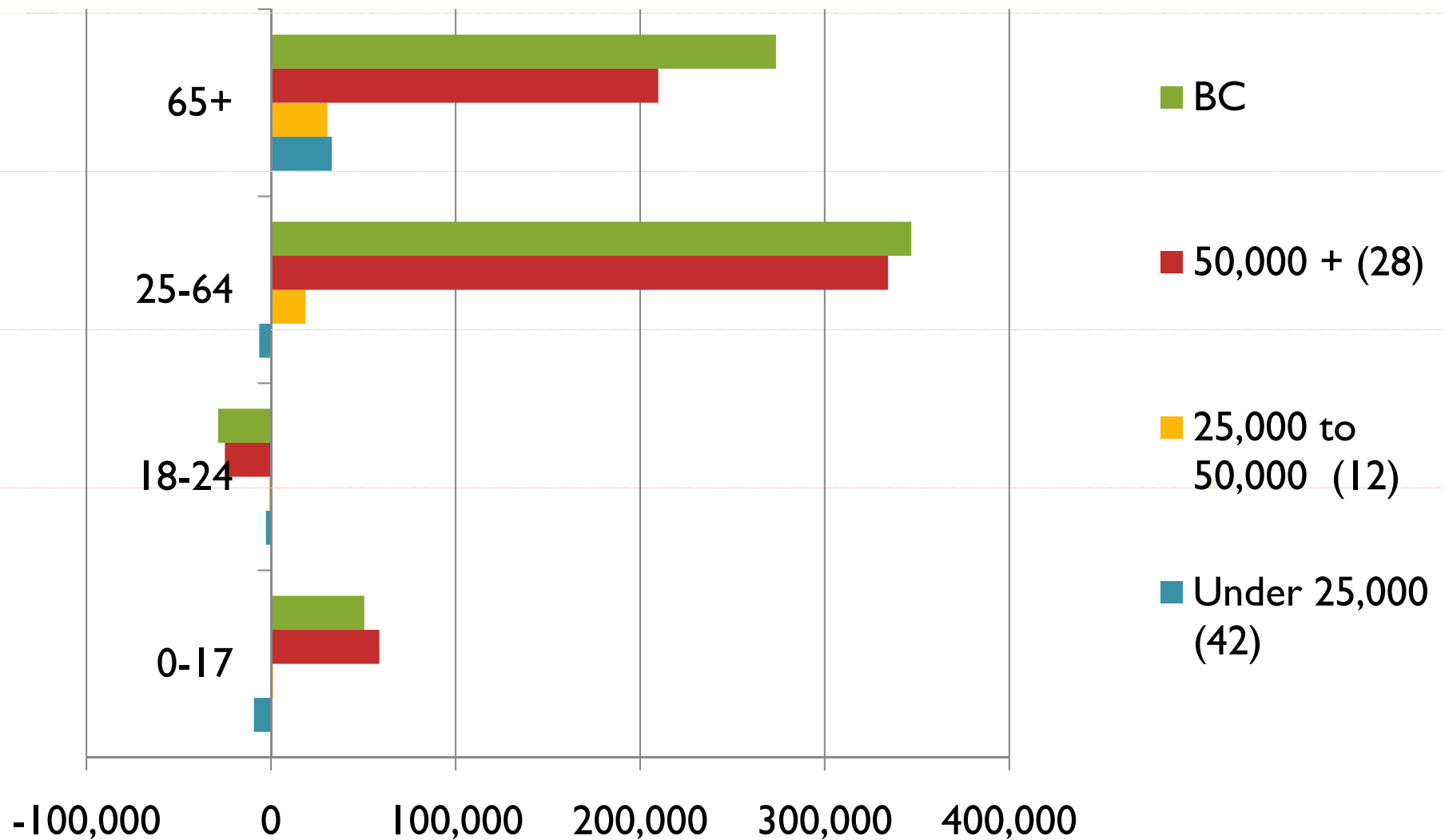
Regional (LHA) Population Growth 2008 - 2018



BC Population



...and we are ageing



Rural Issues Compared to Urban and Urban Fringe Areas

- Slow population growth (or loss)
- Ageing population
- Slower (or negative) economic/employment growth and diversification
- Still significant reliance on natural resource-based activity
- Out-migration of youth
- Lack of communications infrastructure
- Unresolved land claims
- Little access to venture capital or other catalysts to facilitate a “new” economy
- Increasing sense of political and economic isolation
- Competitiveness between rural communities and regions
- Ineffective political voice
- Small communities, lack of capacity

How can we Address Rural Issues?

Reversing the Tide Conference
Prince George, October 6-8, 2008

http://www.communitytransition.org/archive.php?article_id=105

A Resource Guide for Small and Rural BC
Communities in Transition

<http://www.communitytransition.org/uploads/1223048430.pdf>

Harnessing the Tide. March 2009

- Harnessing the Tide is a coalition of rural and First Nations organizations interested in changing this past pattern. (34 engaged so far).

Rural Solutions – Best Practices Context

In the BC context these “Best Practices” would apply to all rural communities including First Nations rural communities

- Acknowledgement that a rural economic problem actually exists
- Acknowledgement that it will require strategic government intervention to address the systemic issues.
- Strong advocates for rural development both within government and outside of government.
- Regional collaboration among rural communities and with First Nations.
- Recognition by senior governments that a “one-size fits all approach” to rural economic development will not work, and

Rural Solutions – Best Practices Context

- Acknowledgment by senior governments and rural communities that rural regions must be directly involved in decision-making.
- Commitment by senior governments of significant and long-term financial assistance to rural regions so that they can create and support necessary rural economic development catalysts.
- Commitment to developing mechanisms that allow rural regions to capture and reinvest some portion of regional economic activity so that the region can be “self-funded” in terms of rural economic development activities.

Rural Solutions – Best Practices Tools

- Dedicated rural development organizations operating at a regional level.
- Mechanisms that give rural communities greater levels of local control over public lands and resources.
- Active involvement of post-secondary institutions in rural economic development revitalization.
- Provision of appropriate rural venture capital and business development .

Rural Solutions – Best Practices Tools

- Provision of specialized assistance (e.g. Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI), Rural Development Initiatives Inc. of Oregon, etc.)
- Development of stronger economic development and business linkages between communities, businesses and First Nations.
- Adopting a holistic approach to rural revitalization that includes the integration of social, environmental and economic objectives and strategies.

Opportunity - Harnessing the Tide

- Build cooperation and relationship between rural communities, First Nations, educational organizations and other development initiatives.
- Change the rural conversation from competition and growth to resilience and sustainability.
- Develop a new focus on regional development and self sustaining regional development initiatives and organizations that have the capacity to plan, invest, and make venture capital available to emerging and expanding businesses and sectors.

Opportunity - Harnessing the Tide

- Leadership from the Province in recognizing the importance of rural areas, including First Nations communities, and a long term commitment to their long term well being.
- The process of moving forward on these initiatives will be inclusive and transparent.
- Based on our understanding of best practices and the learning from case studies of successful rural areas in other jurisdictions, the key principles of change are:

Opportunity - Harnessing the Tide

1. Create a Rural Strategy and Strong Rural Advocates for BC

- Meaningful provincial Rural Strategy
- Creation of strong rural advocates within and outside of government
- Additional supportive policies and financial resources

2. Create new Rural Development Catalyst Organization and Programs

- A Rural BC Project - advocacy, knowledge, skills and practices to facilitating rural policy and rural revitalization and development.

3. Create new Regional Development Organizations in Rural BC

- Strategically collaborate and work both at the local and regional level.
- Do not replace the need or role of local economic development agencies,
- Work at the regional and sector level where the magnitude of impact can be achieved through economies of scale and focused, specialized interventions.

Opportunity - Harnessing the Tide

4. Create a New Venture Capital Fund and Supporting Entrepreneurial Assistance

- Focus on companies and entrepreneurs in rural communities

5. Facilitate the Strategic Use of Public Lands and Resources for Regional Development in Rural BC

- BC communities are linked and dependent upon the lands and natural resources that surround their communities.

6. Retain and Reinvest a Greater Proportion of Wealth in Rural BC

- New forms of dedicated multi-year financial resources that are controlled by rural regions themselves.

7. Maintain Viable Rural Communities in BC

- Commitment to implement new or enhanced strategies and tools to maintain viable rural communities in BC.

Progress to Date

- Presentations to the BC Rural Network, BC Rural Team, Opposition Rural Caucus, 3 Pine Beetle Coalitions, Kootenay Local Government Association
- 2 day “Rural Dialogue” with the BC Ministry of Community and Rural Development and Academics
- Follow up “policy paper” project
- 2 hour province wide video conference with participants from the March 2009 workshop and CFDC managers
- \$30,000 funding

Next Steps

- Steering Committee: Victor Cumming, David Laird, Maureen Lebourdais, George Penfold, Tim Pringle, Rhona Martin, Gerry Thiessen
- Develop a one page statement of intent
- Look for further funding to continue the conversation
- Hire a coordinator
- Develop a broader list of organizations to engage
- Get a better understanding of B.C. Economic Advisory Council process

Contact: gpenfold@selkirk.ca