

Community Futures Program

Many departments of the federal government have initiatives directed at rural development. In 1986, as part of Employment and Immigration Canada's Canadian Job Strategy, the Community Futures Program was introduced as a community economic development program to assist rural communities in developing strategies to deal with a changing economic environment. The program is based on the philosophy that local decision making and development are the most effective means for communities to shape their futures.

Administration of the program was transferred to Industry Canada and the federal Regional Development Agencies in 1995. The Community Futures Program supports Community Business Development Centres in Atlantic Canada and Community Futures Development Corporations in other parts of the country. These federally funded, nonprofit corporations, numbering 254 across Canada, are run locally by volunteer boards of directors and salaried staff. They have the job of

- delivering a range of services to small businesses, including counselling, referrals, provision of information on federal and provincial programs and services, assistance with business plans, and entrepreneurial training and development
- providing small business financing of up to \$125 000 on commercial terms through locally governed investment funds that offer loans, loan guarantees, or equity investments for business start-up, expansion, or stabilization to create or maintain jobs
- developing and implementing strategic plans for community economic development in cooperation with other partners.

Beyond farming, many provincial and territorial projects address rural development more broadly, building communities and bolstering rural businesses. For example, Community Enterprise is part of the British Columbia government's commitment to encourage greater economic diversification in coastal and rural resource-based communities. Using \$50 000 from Community Enterprise, the Columbia Shuswap Regional District of British Columbia is building its film and television industry, encouraging use of this location for filming and developing local systems and industry to support film production.

Sustainable rural development depends on recognizing the value of rural and remote communities to the future of Canada, acknowledging the differences in these communities and channeling a fair share of the country's resources to meet the needs of rural people. As for all sustainable development, sustainable rural development depends on proper attention being given to people (the social element), their enterprises (the economic element), and how they interact with the earth (the environmental element).

Aboriginal Agriculture in Manitoba

The Tribal Wi-Chi-Way Capital Corporation and the First Nation Farm Credit (Manitoba) Corporation were awarded a grant of \$40 000 from the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council to assess the current agricultural situation in First Nations communities and to identify key strengths, opportunities, and constraints that influence sustainable development and longer-term improvement in social, economic, and environmental conditions. Results of a survey of about 50 Aboriginal farmers were included in a preliminary report on this study. Of these farmers, 87 percent had nonagricultural work and 76 percent identified barriers to farming. The survey also showed that Aboriginal farms were smaller and had lower average receipts and less capital than farms in Manitoba's general operator community.

Canadian Rural Information Service

Rural Canadians with questions about how to start a business or where to find child care or youth services can get information through the Canadian Rural Information Service. Designed to meet the need for many kinds of information, the service offers pathfinders on topics related to rural development, customized information packages on specific queries, a Web site of rural development resources, referrals to expert sources of information, customized bibliographic searches, and document delivery.