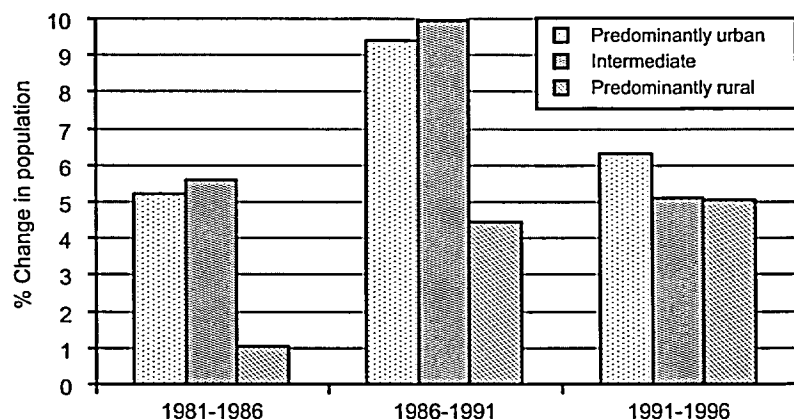


Growth rate of Canada's rural population



Source: Statistics Canada

Hearing the views of rural Canadians was the first step in ensuring that government action is relevant to rural needs and concerns. As part of the Canadian Rural Partnership initiative in 1998, rural Canadians were invited to make their views known through the Rural Dialogue. As a result of this interaction, the federal government produced the Federal Framework for Action in Rural Canada, which identifies 11 priority areas for government action (see box next page). A significant component of the Canadian Rural Partnership is to promote and foster a greater inclusion of rural considerations in federal policies and programs. All new policies and programs of the federal government are scrutinized through a “rural lens” to assess their effects on rural Canada.

A Pilot Projects Initiative was begun in 1998 to support rural Canadians as they engage in creative activities that promote sustainable community development. In 1998–1999, 68 projects were funded across Canada, and 70 more were approved for funding in 1999–2000. Pilot projects already under way have been carried out in cooperation with strategic groups from the private sector, the voluntary sector, cooperatives, and other stakeholders and levels of government. The pilot projects are varied, relating, among other themes, to community use of information technology, rural youth and Aboriginal peoples, and exploration of new value-added initiatives for rural and remote communities. For example, the Yukon On-line Project is improving the use of the Internet as a tool for commerce in remote communities in Yukon. Three communities — Haines Junction, Mayo, and Watson Lake — now receive Internet service through Yukon College. The Atikokan Fish Co-op in northern Ontario is developing a toolkit and model business plan to replicate cooperative fish farming in rural communities. This co-op is unique in

Rural Dialogue in Ontario

In April 1998, The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) was launched to act as a catalyst for rural dialogue, collaboration, and action to meet the needs and unite the voices of rural Ontario. The council comprises more than 40 members representing a cross-section of rural sectors — economics and infrastructure, resources and the environment, community and human services, government, and members at large. Similar multistakeholder partnerships have been developed in other provinces, such as Quebec's Solidarité Rurale and the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development.

Distance Learning Project Spells Job Creation

In a distance learning project in Nelson, British Columbia, 30 people were trained in using the Internet to develop the expertise to start their own business. A business based in Edmonton, Alberta, read about this undertaking and recognized a business opportunity. In cooperation with Community Futures, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Canadian Rural Partnership, this private sector business has created a virtual call centre in Nelson to employ the people who received this training.