

Shopping and Commuting Patterns in Kitimat, B.C.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The University of Northern British Columbia's Rural and Small Town Studies Program works with residents, service providers, voluntary organizations, business organizations, and decision makers to identify factors that contribute to the changing social and economic nature of rural and small town places in British Columbia. This study focuses upon three key aspects of local economies including changing residential and employment patterns, changing shopping patterns, and economic leakage. In particular, this research explores shopping and commuting patterns in the Northwest region of B.C. with a specific focus upon Kitimat, Prince Rupert, and Terrace.

Over the past thirty years, transportation infrastructure has been greatly improved in northern B.C. With these improvements, and an increase in alternative media and communication methods, the rural and small town retail landscape is changing. Consumers are choosing to shop in other communities (out-shopping) where they perceive the shopping may be better or they use alternative methods, such as the Internet, to purchase goods. This 'extra-community' commuting for shopping results in economic leakage where wages earned in one town may be spent on goods and services in another town. Studies have shown that the availability of goods and services, perceptions about local shopping services, and community satisfaction are important in shopping behaviours.

This report provides information to help residents, businesses, service providers, and policy makers of each community adjust to changing circumstances. This research is funded by the Canada Research Chair in Rural and Small Town Studies. The work was carried out under the direction of Greg Halseth of the Geography Program at the University of Northern British Columbia.

AVAILABILITY

Copies of all community reports were distributed within participating sites. Additionally, copies have been posted on Greg Halseth's website (<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>).

Copies of the larger Shopping and Commuting Patterns in the Northwest Region, B.C.: Final Report are available in a number of locations. In Kitimat, copies were deposited with the District of Kitimat offices, as well as with the public library. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Weller Library or can be accessed under "Printable Research Publications" on Greg Halseth's website: <http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>.

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We wish to thank the business representatives and government staff for their help with local logistics. Many thanks to the Kitimat Public Library for providing us with the space to conduct our focus groups, as well as Joanne Monaghan, Lynn Stevenson, Janet Gladden, and Diane Hewlett for their recruiting efforts.

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GLOSSARY

In-shopping: Degree to which residents purchase goods and services locally.

Out-shopping: Degree to which residents purchase goods and services out-of-town.

Extra-community commuting: The opportunity to reside in one place and commute to another for employment or shopping.

Hamlets: These places have limited services like gasoline service stations and eating and drinking establishments.

Minimum convenience centre: These places have all the services available in hamlets, as well as a hardware store, drug store, a bank, and two other convenience functions, such as a variety store.

Full convenience centre: These places have all the services available in minimum convenience centres, as well as a laundry or dry cleaning, jewelry, appliances or furniture, clothing, lumber, building materials, shores and garden supplies, and a hotel or motel.

Partial shopping centre: These places have all the services available in full convenience centres, as well as some specialty goods and services like camera stores, florists, radio, TV stores, and women's accessories.

Complete shopping centre: These places have all the services available in partial shopping centres, as well as additional specialty goods and services.

Secondary wholesale-retail centre: These places have all the services available in complete shopping centres, as well as **less than** 32 different kinds of function services in conjunction with different types of wholesaling activities. Wholesale activities include automotive supplies, bulk oil, chemicals, paint, dry goods, apparel, electrical goods, groceries, hardware, industrial, farm machinery, plumbing, heating / air conditioning, professional, service equipment, paper, tobacco, beer, drugs, lumber, and construction material.

Primary wholesale-retail centre: These places have all the services available in secondary wholesale-retail centres, as well as **more than** 32 different kinds of function services in conjunction with 14 different types of wholesaling activities.

Metropolitan retail centre: This centre offers the widest range of services.

SITE DESCRIPTION - KITIMAT, BC

Located at the head of the Douglas Channel, Kitimat is situated in northwest British Columbia, 60 kilometres south of Terrace and 210 kilometres southeast of Prince Rupert. Incorporated in 1953, the planned community of Kitimat was established as one of British Columbia's newest northern towns and the site of the world's largest aluminium smelter. Prior to the commencement of the Alcan project in 1951, the valley was home to more than 1,000 Haisla people and a small number of agricultural settlers. In 1950, a power agreement between the B.C. Government and Alcan was signed with the first potline at Alcan starting in 1954. From the late 1960s until the 1980s new industries were attracted to Kitimat's deep-sea port location including Eurocan Pulp and Paper, one of the largest kraft paper mills in North America. Methanex Corporation established a petro-chemical plant at Kitimat in 1981 and later added an ammonia production plant in 1994. A number of support and service industries have located in Kitimat to meet the needs of these larger industries.

Today, Kitimat is a modern community with a hospital, a school system, and a wide range of recreational and shopping facilities. The Nechako Centre opened in 1954 and the City Centre shopping mall opened in 1956 to provide local residents other choices of where to shop. While Kitimat offers a diversified industrial sector, some services are now only accessible in adjacent communities. Transportation improvements, industrial restructuring, combined with a diversified retail-commercial sector in the nearby community of Terrace, draw consumers from Kitimat. These stresses impact the local retail sector and have increased the potential likelihood for out-of-town shopping.

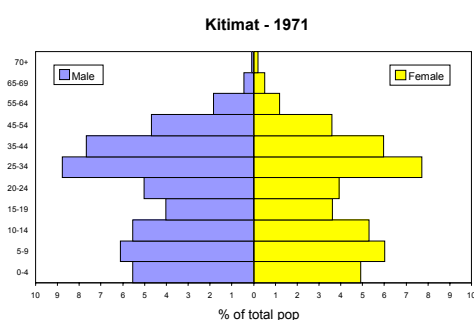


Downtown Kitimat, BC

POPULATION PROFILE - KITIMAT

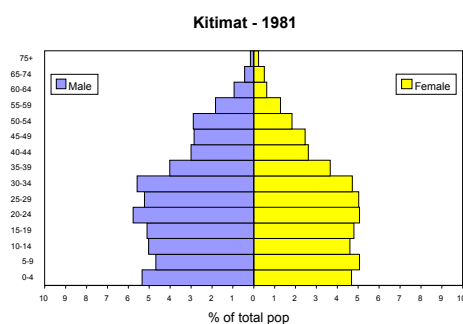
In 1971, the population of Kitimat was 11,805. Just over half the population was male. The population was composed largely of young families. Additional industrial developments brought growth to Kitimat. The population grew to 12,825 in 1981. A young family-oriented population was retained and the gender gap became smaller. Unlike other small towns, there was very little youth out-migration during this period. The diversified industrial sector was able to offer a range of employment opportunities for young adults during this period.

Population of Kitimat - 1971



Source: Statistics Canada 1971

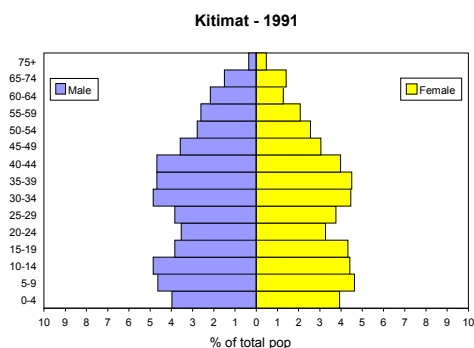
Population of Kitimat - 1981



Source: Statistics Canada 1981

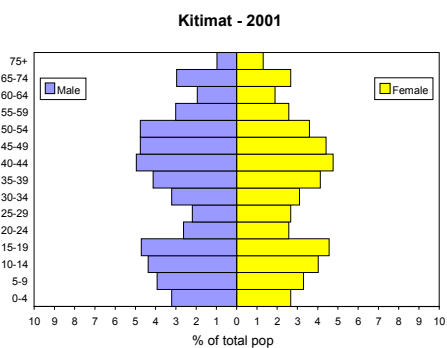
The population of Kitimat declined by 11.7% from 1981 to 1991. The population profile shows the emergence of youth out-migration during this period, particularly for youth between the ages of 15-19. When Kitimat was created, it attracted many young families. This youth out-migration may represent the first generation of youth from these couples that had grown up in Kitimat. While the gender gap between men and women continued to disappear, the local population became older. This is likely attributed to the loss of an estimated 680 jobs at Alcan and Eurocan between 1980 and 1985. In 2001, the population in Kitimat declined by an additional 9.1% to 10,295. These population pressures stemmed from restructuring taking place in industries such as Alcan, Eurocan, and Methanex, as well as in public sector services such as schools and health care.

Population of Kitimat - 1991



Source: Statistics Canada 1991

Population of Kitimat - 2001



Source: Statistics Canada 2001

In place of a younger, family-oriented population, Kitimat now appears to have an older family-oriented population with a growing number of seniors. Youth out-migration continues to be notable as individuals between 20 and 24 years of age may leave to seek education and employment opportunities elsewhere. Again, this shift in population demographics and increase in the number of older residents will have important implications for the planning and delivery of services such as housing, recreational services, health services, and shopping.

ISSUES IN SHOPPING, COMMUTING, AND ECONOMIC LEAKAGE

The vitality of a town's retail sector, including access to a variety of goods and services and the ability to maintain a viable consumer base, is not only a gauge of the economic health of a community, but one that helps to contribute to the quality of life in rural and small town places. Within this context, the retail sector is influenced by shifting patterns of consumption behaviour such as where people live and work, community satisfaction with goods and services, and local socio-demographic characteristics.

The issues of size, location, and accessibility are important when analyzing economic leakage from the retail sector. This leakage of local retail dollars happens as consumers commute to larger regional centres to access a greater variety of goods and services. The regionalization of economic and trade activities, and improvements in transportation, have created the possibility for increased 'extra-community' commuting from rural and small town places. Consumers are also visiting larger centres for multiple reasons, such as for work, leisure, or to access services unavailable in their home communities. This separation can diminish attachment to their local community. As such, community satisfaction and quality of life play an important role in determining one's satisfaction with local retail opportunities.

Consumer behaviour is also influenced by the level of overall satisfaction with local shopping opportunities. In rural and small town retail centres, the number of shopping alternatives can be limited in terms of the actual number of establishments and the selection of goods and services. As well, some prices may be higher compared to urban centres.

Income, age, gender, education levels, and access to transportation may influence who is most likely to engage in out-of-town shopping. Different socio-economic variables can be positively or negatively related to in-shopping. For example, the older a consumer is, the more likely they are to spend a greater proportion of their resources in the local community. Many of these people are likely long-term residents with social and business relationships that affect their shopping patterns. As well, the issue of mobility, or lack of mobility, plays an important role in where the older population shops. Access to income can influence shopping patterns. Individuals with lower incomes and limited transportation options may be more likely to make purchases closer to home in multi-purpose shopping trips. Residents with higher incomes may out-shop more than those with lower incomes. Understanding the socio-economic characteristics of a place, and hence the shopping patterns and behaviours of its members, can permit rural and small town merchants to determine which retail methods are most appropriate.

It is important to develop measures that identify areas of economic leakage within a place. In the summer of 2003, a survey was conducted to explore shopping and commuting patterns in the Northwest region of BC. This report focuses on the shopping and commuting patterns of Kitimat residents and compares these patterns to the overall regional results. The study's methodology to explore the shopping and commuting patterns of each community is outlined. The first section briefly describes the historical development of Kitimat. The second section examines where people live versus where they purchase goods and services. This is followed by exploring how

the accessibility of goods and services has changed over the past five years. Our study also explores alternative methods of shopping in which consumers may engage. As well, consumer satisfaction with business, community, health, and government services is examined. Finally, we identify some challenges and opportunities for the retail sector as well as for community development in Kitimat.

METHODOLOGY

In the spring of 2003, our research team visited Kitimat, Prince Rupert, and Terrace to conduct focus groups for the shopping and commuting project, as well as to create inventories of the services that exist in each place. The focus groups were conducted with women, seniors, baby-boomers, and business members in these communities and identified a range of important topics associated with shopping. We then conducted a random household survey to further explore issues identified by focus group participants. A total of 987 surveys were sent (230 surveys in Kitimat, 344 surveys in Prince Rupert, and 413 surveys in Terrace) (Table 1).

The household survey included questions on four topic areas. Data were collected on the following items:

- location of where people lived and where people worked,
- shopping patterns for goods and services,
- community satisfaction with goods and services, and
- socio-demographic questions.

As required by UNBC, the methodology and questions for both the focus groups and survey were reviewed and approved by the UNBC Research Ethics Board.

Table 1: Response Rates

	Northwest Total	Kitimat
Total Mailouts	987	230
Total Completed	384	94
Response Rate	39%*	41%

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

*The response rate yields an error between 3.0 and 5.0%

SHOPPING PATTERNS IN KITIMAT

Shopping services play an important role in retaining residents and improving local quality of life in small towns. Satisfaction with one's living situation and location may decrease if access to consumer goods and services is difficult. One way to explore economic leakage in Kitimat is to examine where people live versus where they purchase goods and services. This provides a better understanding of demand, and provides an important context when examining the relationship between these services, where they are available, as well as where they are most frequently purchased or obtained. Table 2 lists the percent of Kitimat respondents who purchase goods and services in the following places.

Table 2: Where do you purchase the following goods and services? - % of Kitimat Respondents

Service	Kitimat	Prince Rupert	Terrace	Prince George	Other	N=
<i>Financial/Professional Services</i>						
ATM	98.7	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	77
Banking	98.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	94
Legal Services	73.5	2.4	18.1	1.2	4.8	83
Professionals	88.0	0.0	7.2	0.0	4.8	83
Travel Agency	87.1	0.0	3.5	1.2	8.2	85
<i>Clothing</i>						
Children's clothes	32.2	0.0	52.5	3.4	11.9	59
Men's clothing	26.5	1.2	47.0	4.8	20.5	83
Women's clothing	29.1	0.0	44.2	5.8	20.9	86
Shoe stores	16.7	0.0	61.1	2.2	20.0	90
<i>Automotive, Appliances, & Equipment</i>						
Automotive	40.7	0.0	59.3	0.0	0.0	91
Camera Store	56.1	0.0	34.1	2.4	7.3	82
Construction	60.5	0.0	38.4	0.0	1.2	86
Furniture	28.7	0.0	60.9	1.1	9.2	87
Hardware	75.3	0.0	22.5	1.1	1.1	93
Home furnishings	34.1	0.0	55.7	1.1	9.1	88
Lawn & garden	35.6	0.0	64.4	0.0	0.0	90
Major appliances	55.8	0.0	34.9	0.0	9.3	86
Motor vehicles	31.4	0.0	47.7	2.3	18.6	86
Radio/T.V. store	38.6	0.0	50.6	2.4	8.4	83
<i>Convenience & Specialty</i>						
Books	57.8	0.0	37.3	0.0	4.9	83
Convenience goods	92.6	0.0	7.4	0.0	0.0	94
Drug store	94.6	0.0	5.4	0.0	0.0	93
Dry cleaners	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	77
Florists	94.1	0.0	3.5	0.0	2.4	85
Gas station	91.5	0.0	7.4	0.0	1.1	94
Groceries	86.2	0.0	13.8	0.0	0.0	94
Hairdresser	96.7	0.0	3.2	0.0	0.0	91
Music store	40.6	0.0	43.5	2.9	13.0	69
Paper/art supplies	68.4	0.0	28.9	0.0	2.6	76
Specialty food	86.0	0.0	14.1	0.0	0.0	78

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Overall, there appears to be a relationship between the frequency in which goods and services are purchased and out-of-town shopping. Financial and professional services, as well as frequently needed convenience goods and groceries, were largely purchased in town. Items more likely to be purchased out-of-town by Kitimat respondents include shoes, women's and men's clothing, furniture, radio and televisions, motor vehicles, lawn and garden supplies, home furnishings, children's clothing, music, automotive services, and children's clothing. As noted in a number of instances more than half of the respondents purchased these goods or services in Terrace. Such purchases are made less frequently and respondents purchase these goods in larger centres, including, Prince George, Vancouver, and Victoria. Larger centres such as these draw upon a greater market area and are able to provide a wider selection of products and choice of stores for specialized goods and services.

How Shopping Services Changed Over the Last 5 Years

Commuting for services, such as health care or government offices, can lead to multi-purpose trips that may include shopping, and subsequently, may lead to economic leakage. Therefore, the health of the retail sector will also be impacted by the accessibility and availability of a range of services. Kitimat respondents were asked to rate whether a range of professional and retail services became easier or more difficult to access in their local community over the past five years (Table 3).

Table 3: Change in Accessibility of Services
 Rating: 1=easier; 2=same; 3=more difficult

Service	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
<i>Financial/Professional Services</i>				
ATM	1.65	322	1.71	79
Banking	1.85	362	1.90	92
Legal Services	2.06	249	2.17	72
Professionals	2.00	274	2.12	76
Travel Agency	2.02	303	2.05	83
<i>Clothing</i>				
Children's clothes	2.23	227	2.46	59
Men's clothing	2.25	312	2.35	84
Women's clothing	2.35	315	2.63	84
Shoe stores	2.36	342	2.71	89
<i>Automotive, Appliances, & Equipment</i>				
Automotive	2.00	324	2.22	88
Camera Store	2.11	281	2.52	79
Construction	2.15	300	2.42	83
Furniture	2.48	309	2.32	81
Hardware	2.10	340	2.24	89
Home furnishings	2.18	316	2.33	82
Lawn & garden	2.02	327	2.43	86
Major appliances	2.18	296	2.28	78
Radio/T.V. store	2.23	300	2.65	81
<i>Convenience & Specialty</i>				
Books	2.01	311	2.02	82
Drug store	2.04	356	2.46	91
Dry cleaners	1.97	271	2.03	67
Florists	1.98	304	2.05	79
Gas station	1.87	346	1.92	90
Hairdresser	1.95	349	1.97	89
Music store	2.23	268	2.57	70
Paper/art supplies	2.07	268	2.22	74

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Overall, Northwest respondents (including all respondents from Kitimat, Prince Rupert and Terrace) indicated that service accessibility has remained generally the same. There were some notable exceptions with ATM and banking services becoming easier to access. Certain larger items and specialty goods, such as furniture, radio/TV equipment, and clothing, were cited as more difficult to access across the region. The Kitimat findings generally follow the regional results, but they also revealed that music, lawn and garden supplies, camera and construction supplies, and major appliances were thought to be more difficult to access in the community.

Reasons Products/ Services Are Not Purchased Locally

Kitimat respondents were then asked to identify reasons why certain goods and services are purchased in other places (Table 4). Respondents were also asked to rate which reason was most important for purchasing products and services out-of-town.

Table 4: Reasons Products / Services Not Purchased Locally

Rating on 7 point scale:

1 = most important

4 = neutral

7 = least important

Reason	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
Selection	1.93	263	1.99	79
Price	2.19	265	2.21	80
Quality	2.81	257	3.22	79
Service	3.43	250	3.32	76
Hours of operation	4.95	243	5.15	75
Like to travel out-of-town	4.93	244	4.85	79

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Notably, limited selection, prices, and the quality of services were cited as reasons why shoppers in Kitimat, and throughout the Northwest, purchase goods or services in other communities. The implications of the out-of-town multi-purpose shopping trip, whether it be for recreational purposes, price comparison, or to access a wider variety of goods and services, decreases demand for local retail settings and contributes to a cycle that can perpetuate stagnation or decline in small town retail services.

Technology

The potential for technology to change the rural and small town landscape permeates all facets of life, including consumer shopping habits. This can have a major impact on the services designed to meet consumers' needs. The advent of cyber-shopping via the Internet, along with other methods of direct home shopping, such as mail and TV ordering, has created another means of out-shopping. As such, respondents were asked to identify if, and how often, they use alternative methods of shopping (Table 5).

Table 5: Alternative Methods of Shopping
 Rating: 1=daily; 2=weekly; 3=monthly; 4=seasonally; 5=rarely.

Service	Northwest	User %	Kitimat	User %
Catalogue	4.22	89.1	4.04	90.4
Craft sales	4.42	58.9	4.38	66.0
Farmer's market	4.01	63.5	4.21	56.4
Garage sales	4.15	57.8	4.09	51.1
Home parties	4.74	47.7	4.71	50.0
Internet	4.18	57.8	3.90	67.0
Newspapers	4.19	54.9	4.11	57.4
Pawn shops	4.79	32.0	4.90	34.0
Teleshopping	4.87	33.3	4.78	39.3

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Across the Northwest region, at least half of all respondents have at some point used catalogues, craft sales, the Internet, garage sales, farmer's markets, and newspapers as alternative methods of shopping. Overall, Kitimat respondents rarely used alternative methods to purchase goods and services. However, findings indicated that the Internet was an alternative method used most frequently by Kitimat respondents.

Summary

Shopping services play an important role in local quality of life. Shopping is also a form of recreational and social activity that helps to build community relationships through routine social interaction. As such, shopping services may help to retain and attract residents and support business development. However, satisfaction with shopping services can be influenced by a range of socio-economic factors, transportation changes, and new technology, as well as by the selection, price, and quality of goods and services.

In Kitimat, most respondents purchased financial, professional, and convenience goods and services locally. However, there were important exceptions, such as clothing, shoes, music, automobile parts, lawn and garden supplies, electronics, and vehicles. They were more likely to in-shop for items used or purchased on a more frequent basis. Price, selection, and quality were all listed as important factors in resident's decisions to shop in centres such as Terrace, Vancouver, or Victoria. Out-of-town shopping is not the only way economic leakage can occur. Respondents were also asked how often they used alternative methods for shopping such as the Internet or catalogues. Findings indicate, however, that such alternative methods of shopping were not as yet used frequently. These questions are important because the consequences of spending local dollars in another place, or by other methods, can lead to a decreased local customer base and the decline of retailing in rural and small town places.

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES

When consumers are not bound by trade areas, then socio-demographic factors and community satisfaction become more important in explaining the location of shopping patterns. Specifically, out-of-town shopping trips may be facilitated by dissatisfaction with local services or the need to access services outside of the community.

Business Services

Small businesses provide a range of activities within a place that can enhance local quality of life, as well as its viability and stability. Business members also play a key role in the community through membership or leadership roles in volunteer organizations, as well as through the sponsorship of local events. Respondents were asked to rate whether they were very satisfied with local businesses (Table 6).

Table 6: Satisfaction of Business Services

Rating on 5 point scale:

1 = very dissatisfied

3 = neutral

5 = very satisfied

Business Services	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
Accountants/Bookkeeper	3.82	209	3.58	48
ATM	4.11	337	4.16	83
Banks	3.90	366	3.84	90
Clothing Store	2.61	359	2.16	88
Credit Unions	3.92	251	3.81	68
Drug Store	3.75	369	3.22	90
Entertainment	2.95	347	2.49	85
Financial Advice/Services	3.46	277	3.09	74
Gas Station	3.99	359	3.31	89
Grocery Store	3.95	370	3.71	90
Furniture Store	3.02	322	2.52	75
Inter-Community Bus Service	3.35	233	2.59	70
Legal Services	3.51	241	3.18	66
Passenger Rail	2.88	212	2.10	50
Second-Hand Clothing Store	3.51	236	3.34	62
Sit Down/Dining Restaurants	3.21	372	2.26	90
Take-Out/Fast Food	3.17	353	2.11	87
Vegetarian Dining	2.59	144	1.98	46

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Respondents in both Kitimat, and throughout the Northwest, were generally neutral with respect to business services. Kitimat respondents were the most satisfied with ATMs, banking services, and grocery stores. These services were also used most frequently by respondents. However,

there were some important sources of dissatisfaction, especially with clothing services, passenger rail service, and vegetarian dining. Kitimat respondents also cited their dissatisfaction with furniture store services, entertainment, inter-community bus service (none exists), restaurants, and take-out/fast food. In recent years, Kitimat has faced store closures in some of these areas. The Hudson's Bay closed in 1985, the Do-It Centre closed in 1995, and the Sears/Radio Shack closed in 2002. Sears previously had two outlets - one outlet in the downtown and another outlet in the service centres. Radio Shack re-opened in the City Centre mall in February 2003. More recently, Reitman's and the North Coast Lawn and Garden store closed in 2003, while the Sight and Sound store downsized. These closures may increase out-of-town trips in search of a wider selection of goods and services. They may also create opportunities for new businesses to develop. The loss of shopping services also affects the social fabric of a community as shopping plays an important role in fostering daily social interaction. This places additional pressures on local businesses to support the community.

Health Services

Health services, including long term residential care, home support, meals-on-wheels, and doctors, have experienced new pressures and demands from a growing seniors' population in Northwest BC. Kitimat has experienced a loss of young families and a proportional increase in retirees, as well as residents who are close to retirement. This will have important implications for a range of health and social services. In order to gauge satisfaction with local health services, respondents were asked to rate these services from very dissatisfied to very satisfied (Table 7).

Table 7: Satisfaction of Health Services

Rating on 5 point scale:

1 = very dissatisfied

3 = neutral

5 = very satisfied

Health Services	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
<i>General Health Services</i>				
Ambulance Services	3.56	252	3.71	73
Dentist	4.05	356	4.07	90
Emergency Room	3.44	321	3.46	80
Family Doctor	3.98	375	3.76	91
Public Health Nurse	3.85	192	3.72	58
Social Services	2.77	159	2.47	45
Therapy Services	3.02	119	2.63	38
<i>Specialized Health Services</i>				
Chiropractor	3.79	212	3.63	56
Dietician	3.41	163	3.42	55
Homemaking Services	3.18	116	2.98	40
Home Support Services	3.92	143	2.87	45
Long Term Res. Care	2.95	141	2.91	46
Massage Therapist	3.64	163	3.45	49
Meal Programs	3.06	96	2.75	32
Occupational Therapist	3.30	132	3.19	47
Optometrist	3.76	332	3.29	85
Orthodontist	3.43	183	3.33	49
Physiotherapist	3.58	192	3.28	60
Pre/Post Natal	3.56	124	3.49	43
Respiratory Therapist	2.97	78	2.80	25
Respite Care	2.97	93	2.55	29
Speech Therapist	3.06	108	2.77	35

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Across the Northwest, respondents were generally satisfied with dentist and family doctor services. Overall, satisfaction levels with general health services in Kitimat were higher than with specialized health services. Kitimat respondents expressed some dissatisfaction with home support services, meal programs, respite care, social services, speech therapy, and therapy services. It is important to note that some of these services also received dissatisfactory scores on a regional level. In recent years, a number of these health services have closed, been downsized, or regionalized such that Kitimat residents must leave town in order to access certain health services. A new hospital and health centre opened in Kitimat in 2002 with the hospital gaining some multi-level care beds for extended care patients. As well, residents from Smithers, Terrace, and Hazelton come to Kitimat for bone scans. The closure of health and social services has important implications for economic leakage. With service closures, residents may shop during out-of-town trips to access these health and social services. An increase in out-of-town trips for a variety of purposes may lead to community dissatisfaction and even out-migration.

Community Services

Community services are an important local foundation, especially during times of economic and social stress. Recreational amenities and support can also enhance the quality of life of the population and special interest groups such as seniors and youth. Such services provide an opportunity for engagement and interaction to build community development relationships. Respondents rated their satisfaction levels with the following community services (Table 8).

Table 8: Satisfaction with Community Services

Rating on 5 point scale:

1 = very dissatisfied

3 = neutral

5 = very satisfied

Community Services	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
<i>Community Support</i>				
Adult Education Services	3.16	263	2.81	67
Animal Welfare/Services	3.64	274	3.34	73
Counseling Services	3.12	187	3.00	50
Public Transportation	3.58	297	3.79	85
Senior Services	3.42	172	3.31	49
Support Groups	3.35	156	3.48	44
<i>Community Recreation</i>				
Bowling	3.35	263	2.74	70
Golf Course	4.11	265	4.03	75
Movie Theatre	3.16	339	3.62	90
Municipal Parks	3.61	358	3.74	91
Museum/Archives	3.62	325	3.71	85
Public Library	4.01	359	4.00	91
Indoor Recreation Facilities	3.72	336	4.22	87
Outdoor Recreation Facilities	3.65	329	3.99	86
Recreation Programs	3.67	310	3.99	86
Stage Theatre	3.71	256	3.51	68
Swimming Pool	3.90	338	4.05	86

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Northwest respondents indicated they were generally satisfied with community services. The results also indicated high satisfaction rates with public library services, counseling and support group services, and municipal parks. These are positive findings as recreational activities and facilities have been positively associated with community satisfaction, and therefore, play an important role in attracting and retaining residents and businesses. Overall, Kitimat respondents were most satisfied with community support and recreation services. More recently, the community opened a new skate park that was spearheaded by the Kitimat Youth Development Society. While Kitimat respondents noted that they were dissatisfied with bowling in their town, it was recently announced that the local lanes are getting renovated.

Provincial Services

Kitimat has faced some closures and downsizing of provincial services over the past few years. We asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with provincial services in their community (Table 9).

Table 9: Satisfaction with Provincial Services

Rating on 5 point scale:

1 = very dissatisfied

3 = neutral

5 = very satisfied

Provincial Services	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
Court Services	2.77	209	1.84	64
Elementary Education	2.92	264	2.40	73
Secondary Education	2.88	256	2.26	70
Post Secondary Education	2.77	255	2.24	71
Employment and Benefits Centre	2.73	197	2.40	55
Liquor Store	3.90	327	4.00	86
Ministry of Forests	2.88	208	2.66	47
Ministry of Highways	2.56	263	2.12	67
Skills and Labour	2.70	203	2.49	57
Social Worker	2.79	161	2.72	46
WCB Assistant	2.56	205	2.53	57

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Across the Northwest, respondents were generally dissatisfied with cuts to services by the Ministry of Children and Family and the Ministry of Highways. Kitimat respondents were particularly dissatisfied with court services, the Ministry of Highways, and post-secondary education. This is most likely a reflection of the service closures. However, the District of Kitimat recently purchased the courthouse from the B.C. Building Corporation and has since established a circuit court. Kitimat respondents also showed lower levels of satisfaction with elementary and secondary education. In 1998, cutbacks meant the closure of the Kitimat school board office. Since then, however, the school board building has been transformed into the Family Resource Centre which offers child development services. In 2003, the Coast Mountain School Board, which serves both Kitimat and Terrace, announced a four day school week to begin in September. Consequently, support staff services are not required on Fridays.

Federal Services

In recent years, Kitimat has faced closures and downsizing of federal services, which may place additional strain on the local retail sector as residents have to leave town to access these services. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the following federal services (Table 10).

Table 10: Satisfaction with Federal Services

Rating on 5 point scale:

1 = very dissatisfied

3 = neutral

5 = very satisfied

Federal Services	Northwest		Kitimat	
	Rating	N=	Rating	N=
Employment Insurance	2.89	215	2.30	53
HRDC Office	2.99	172	2.36	39
Port/Harbour Commission	2.97	137	2.41	34
Post Office	3.71	365	3.98	91
RCMP	3.81	350	3.87	89
Revenue Canada	3.07	290	2.81	72

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

Throughout the Northwest region, respondents were generally neutral with respect to federal services. However, respondents were more satisfied with RCMP and post office services. Kitimat residents were generally more dissatisfied with federal services, particularly Employment Insurance and HRDC. In 1995, Kitimat's Canada Employment Centre was designated to close with the nearest service available in Terrace. Such a closure was particularly difficult with subsequent layoffs by Eurocan in 1998 and Alcan in 1999.

Reasons for Out-of-Town Trips

Changing local access, improvements to transportation infrastructure, the development of other centres, and socio-economic factors can place pressure on smaller retail markets. Commuting to another city for services and other reasons can lead to out-shopping, thereby contributing to the leakage of local dollars. Respondents were asked to identify reasons for out-of-town trips (Table 11).

Table 11: What are some of your reasons for out-of-town trips?

Reason	Northwest	Kitimat
	Percent	Percent
Vacation/Entertainment	25.4	21.2
Social	26.4	23.1
Shopping	22.3	29.0
Medical Reasons	12.8	15.7
Business	6.2	2.7
Professional Services	4.6	5.5
Volunteering	1.2	1.2
Other	1.3	1.6
	n=955	n=255

Source: Random Household Survey 2003.

More prominent reasons for out-of-town trips by Northwest respondents included vacation and entertainment, social trips, and shopping. This was followed by respondents who made out-of-town trips for medical reasons, business trips, to access professional services, and volunteering. Again, the findings reinforce the role of non-shopping related trips as potentially contributing to out-of-town shopping opportunities. It is important to note that while shopping remains the number one reason why Kitimat residents make out-of-town trips, their reasons for making out-of-town trips are becoming more diversified. In 1985, a study revealed that almost 70% of respondents left Kitimat for shopping purposes. In the 2003 survey, shopping was noted as a reason by 29.0%.

Summary

Out-of-town shopping and economic leakage may occur as residents travel to access a range of services outside of their community. Large distances and low population densities create challenges to maintaining services due to high delivery costs in rural and small town places. At the same time, federal and provincial governments in Canada have been reducing government expenditures in rural and small town service delivery. In the Northwest region of BC, community services received the highest satisfaction levels, while concerns were expressed about provincial government and business services. In some cases, dissatisfaction with services were associated with downsizing or closures, and while there appeared to be a relationship between dissatisfaction with business services and out-of-town trips (specifically clothing services), there did not appear to be a strong relationship between the dissatisfaction with other services and out-of-town trips. The loss of government services can lead to not just a loss of jobs, but also a loss of skilled residents and leadership in the community.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR KITIMAT

The retail landscape is changing in the Northwest region of British Columbia. With transportation and communication improvements, access to a variety of goods and services outside one's community can have a profound affect on the health of a small town retail centre. Shopping services play an important role in retaining and attracting residents and businesses. The success of a retail centre not only helps to keep local dollars in the community, but also provides employment and a form of recreation, as well as facilitating local social interaction. This can be particularly important in rural and small town places, as a range of services can contribute to local quality of life. At present, many services are delivered through cost-effectiveness models, which too often ignore the context of rural and small town places, with the result that services become concentrated in larger centres. Unfortunately, if an exodus of services leads to a decline in the population of a place, this can place additional pressures on the remaining retail and service sectors.

Within this context, we wanted to explore the linkages between commuting and shopping patterns in three northwest communities and identify issues that affect the availability of services. This report identified issues that affect Kitimat's local retail economy and looked at comparisons between the community and the Northwest region generally.

Kitimat residents face some challenges accessing goods and services in the community. In particular, there is a limited selection of shopping services. To access these services, some Kitimat shoppers are purchasing items in larger centres such as Terrace, Prince George, and Vancouver. Residents are more likely to shop in larger urban centres for items such as clothing, shoes, lawn and garden supplies, furniture, and motor vehicles. Commuting for shopping has become a particular concern for Kitimat where a range of goods and services has become more difficult to access over the last five years.

Kitimat residents also face challenges in accessing provincial and federal services as a result of the closure or transferring of services to other communities. As such, difficulty in accessing services may lead to out-migration. Fortunately, Kitimat's diversified industrial base has helped to retain its population and continues to provide opportunity for additional economic development. Kitimat also has a wide range of community and recreation services, which have been positively associated with community satisfaction and the attraction and retention of residents and businesses. As well, with improved transportation and communications infrastructure, Kitimat may now attract a range of migrants, including families, outdoor enthusiasts, recreationalists, and retirees. This has important implications for rural and small town places that must then ensure sufficient services, such as health and shopping, are available to attract and retain these new residents.

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