



Initiative on the New Economy

**Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Places:
A Report for Wood River, Saskatchewan**

March 2006



A project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
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INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY - ABOUT THE PROJECT

The *Initiative on the New Economy* project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation works closely with residents, service providers, voluntary organizations, business members, and decision makers to identify factors that contribute to building capacity in rural and small town places across Canada. Capacity is the ability of people residing in a place to mobilize their assets and resources to cope with stress and transition, or to capitalize on opportunities. Such capacity is built from trust and relationships grounded in institutions, organizations, businesses, and services alike. The Initiative on the New Economy is built on four key themes to explore capacity including *local governance, communications, services, and the environment*. This report explores the relationship between services and capacity.

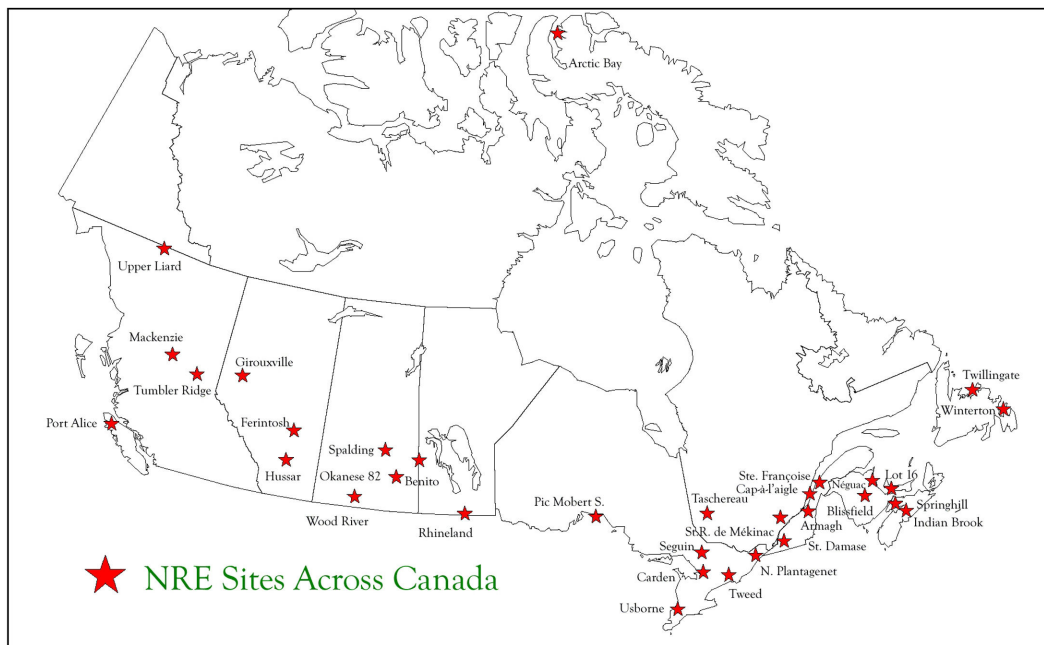
The Services Research theme conducted site profile surveys in the summer of 2005. This is the fourth survey conducted since 1998 with a goal to track services over time. Services play two key functions in building capacity. First, services help rural and small town places to cope with restructuring and transition as a result of economic downturns or plant closures. Job losses stemming from industrial restructuring or closure can place increased demands on local services for education and training, business development, counselling, health care, and other support services. Without such services, residents would have to cope with the additional burden of having to leave their town to access assistance. Job and service losses present a significant challenge to rural and small town places.

Second, services provide opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust. Together, these can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. For example, schools or seniors' centres can act as multi-functional facilities for the community where local volunteer groups, sporting clubs, local theatre, and others can do their work. Another example might be the way that post offices can act as a one stop shop for a range of government services. This report focuses on the current service provision levels in rural and small town Canada. In particular, this report will compare the availability of services in Wood River, Saskatchewan with services available in other research sites across Canada, as well as with services available in other study sites within Western Canada. In each of the tables in this report, the availability of services in Wood River is compared to the 24 sites surveyed across Canada and to the 9 study sites in Western Canada.

Information for this report was collected in Wood River by: Ingrid Brueckner, Karmen VanderZwan, and Diane Martz.

ABOUT THE SERVICE INVENTORY

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation has been conducting research in 32 rural and small town sites from across Canada. These sites form a type of “rural observatory” in which aspects of the *Initiative on the New Economy* project may be examined. The sites participating in this project reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape, and include forestry and mining towns, farming and fishing communities, and tourism towns. Furthermore, some of these places are located adjacent to metropolitan areas, while others are more isolated.



In the summer of 2005, researchers visited 24 sites across Canada to update a service provision inventory. This included 9 sites in Western Canada, 5 sites in Ontario, 4 sites in Québec, and 6 sites in Atlantic Canada. The population of these rural and small town places varies from 150 to 5,205 people.

Distribution and size of INE participating sites

SITES	POPULATION SIZE – 2001
Western Canada	
Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia	1,851
Mackenzie, British Columbia	5,205
Port Alice, British Columbia	1,126
Hussar, Alberta	181
Ferintosh, Alberta	150
Spalding, Saskatchewan	261
Wood River, Saskatchewan	370
Benito, Manitoba	415
Rhineland, Manitoba	4,183
Ontario	
Seguin, Ontario	3,698
Tweed, Ontario	1,540
North Plantagenet, Ontario	3,848
Carden, Ontario	888
Usborne, Ontario	1,490
Québec	
Taschereau, Québec	534
Cap-à-l'aigle, Québec	720
St. Damase, Québec	1,327
St. Françoise, Québec	453
Atlantic Canada	
Blissfield, New Brunswick	674
Neguac, New Brunswick	1,697
Lot 16, Prince Edward Island	688
Springhill, Nova Scotia	4,091
Twillingate, Newfoundland and Labrador	2,615
Winterton, Newfoundland and Labrador	560

Source: CRRF NRE 2005; Statistics Canada 2001.

Data were collected to examine the availability of a range of services including:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| education | community |
| health | transportation |
| protection services | recreational |
| legal | basic Shopping |
| business services | commercial shopping |
| communication | economic development organizations |
| elderly and childcare | housing |
| government | |

AVAILABILITY

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

Copies of the larger *Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Canada* report are available in a number of locations. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Weller Library or can be accessed on Greg Halseth's website: <http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>. Copies are also available on the Initiative of the New Economy website at: nre.concordia.ca.

For further information about this report or other available reports on services, please contact Greg Halseth at:

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**INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY
SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES: A REPORT FOR WOOD RIVER,
SASKATCHEWAN**

Site Description - Wood River, Saskatchewan

The Rural Municipality (RM) of Wood River is located in south-central Saskatchewan approximately 140 kilometres southwest of Moose Jaw and 80 km north of the Canada-United States border. The RM includes the two communities of Woodrow and Melaval, and a smaller population in Thomson Lake Regional Park. The town of Lafleche is located inside the rural municipality, but is not part of the census division we are working in and as a result is not counted as part of Wood River. Although this community is excluded, the majority of services are located here. Two provincial highways pass through the RM crossing each other at the southeast corner of Lafleche. Highway 58 runs north and south and Highway 13 runs east and west.

Farmland represents the topography of the Wood River area. The land is hilly with small clusters of trees. The Wood River winds its way through the rural municipality. Thomson Lake Regional Park is 8 kilometres north of the town of Lafleche, and is the first human-made lake and park in Saskatchewan. There is a small community of cabins and houses, over 200 camping sites, a marina, swimming pool and a golf course. In 2003, the Flying Goose Inn was constructed to accommodate the increase in hunters to the area. The rest of the economy of Wood River is predominantly based on agriculture. In the northern part of the Rural Municipality agriculture largely consists of grain and oilseed production. The southern part of the Rural Municipality is mostly ranching and mixed farming.



POPULATION PROFILE - WOOD RIVER, SASKATCHEWAN

The population of the R.M. of Wood River, Saskatchewan declined from 437 residents in 1996 to 370 residents in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001). Wood River has faced challenges more recently with the demolition of the Wheat Pool elevator in 2001. Overall, it has an older family oriented population that includes a substantial population of seniors. This has important implications when planning the delivery of a range of services, such as recreational, educational, health, and senior services. A major challenge facing this community is the out-migration of youth, particularly when examining individuals between 20 - 24 years of age.

Population	Site: Wood River		
	Total	Male	Female
Population in 2001	370	195	170
Population in 1996	437	245	195
1996 to 2001 population change (%)	-15.3	-20.4	-12.8
Total - All persons	370	195	170
Age 0-4	10	0	5
Age 5-14	35	20	15
Age 15-19	40	20	20
Age 20-24	15	15	5
Age 25-44	65	35	35
Age 45-54	80	40	35
Age 55-64	45	25	20
Age 65-74	45	20	25
Age 75-84	25	15	10
Age 85 and over	5	0	5
Median age of the population	47.3	48.0	47.2

Source: Statistics Canada 2001.

SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES

Services play an important role in retaining and attracting residents and businesses. However, rural and small town places across Canada are experiencing tremendous change stemming from economic and social restructuring in an increasingly global economy. As a result, some small towns have been experiencing population declines. At the same time, federal and provincial government policies have been withdrawing some of the service infrastructure that can provide a foundation for revitalizing rural and small town places and assist residents to cope with stress. Some rural and small town places adjusted to transition through establishing innovative services or diversifying their local economies. These types of innovation suggest one way by which services help to build capacity within a place.

Services also help to build capacity by providing opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust, which subsequently can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. Together, services can help to enhance local quality of life and mitigate out-migration.

Educational Services

Educational institutions are playing a changing role in maintaining quality of life in rural and small town places. Schools have provided other amenities through their libraries, theatres, and art galleries in places that would otherwise not have access to such services. They have also played a larger economic development role. Community colleges can provide skilled and professional workers, act as a broker of services, and act as a repository of information. They can also design programs and services that are relevant and respond to the changing labour market conditions of small places.

Table 1: Availability of Education Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Pre-school/kindergarten	50.0	62.5	62.5	66.7	X	✓
Elementary school	63.6	66.7	62.5	66.7	X	✓
High school	27.3	37.5	37.5	44.4	X	✓
CEGEP/college	18.2	16.7	25.0	22.2	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

With the exception of community colleges, educational services are available in more sites across Canada in 2005 compared to two years ago. A greater proportion of sites in Western Canada offer a range of educational services when compared to the sites across Canada (Table 1). With the exception of community colleges, the Western Canada region has experienced a growth in the availability of educational services since 2003. Young families in Wood River can access public education for their children in Lafleche. There are also post-secondary opportunities within 30

minutes. Cypress Hill Regional College has a learning centre in Gravelbourg that provides adult educational needs. The college has also partnered with the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and four campuses of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. They also offer Saskatchewan Communication Network classes for correspondence courses. There is also a community college located within 30 minutes in Assiniboia at the Southeast Regional College. As many rural regions across Canada cope with restructuring, a challenge may be to maintain these educational services. A new school division amalgamation will become effective with a new board in January 2006.

Health Services

Health services play an important role in attracting new labour and retaining residents. During times of economic and social restructuring, closures in hospitals and the centralization of physical and mental health services can be difficult on the elderly and the poor who do not have access to a vehicle or who live in a place with limited transportation services. However, it is not just the utility of health services that is of concern, but also the potential loss of health care jobs that can lead to a further decline in the local economy and population.

Table 2: Availability of Health Infrastructure - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Hospital	18.2	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Health centre/CLSC	27.3	37.5	25.0	44.4	X	✓
Medical clinic	40.9	37.5	50.0	55.6	X	✓
Blood/urine testing facility	36.4	41.7	37.5	44.4	X	✓
X-ray facility	22.7	20.8	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Baby delivery facility	4.5	4.2	12.5	11.1	X	X
CT scan facility	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	X
Nursing home	13.6	16.7	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Pharmacy	40.9	37.5	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Ambulance	36.4	41.7	37.5	44.4	X	✓
Emergency services	18.2	16.7	25.0	22.2	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Health facilities are limited in most of the rural and small town places examined (Table 2). This has changed very little over the last two years. Of particular interest is that fewer than 40% of sites across Canada in 2005 have a health centre, hospital, or pharmacy. This carries important implications for residents commuting for medical emergencies or health care reasons. Sites in Western Canada are better equipped with health care facilities when compared with the national sample. At least half of the sites in Western Canada have a medical clinic. There have been few changes to other health care facilities across Western Canada over the last two years. While health care facilities are not available within the site boundaries of Wood River, most of these facilities are located within 30 minutes in Lafleche. The close proximity of these services provides an important foundation to retain residents in an aging population. The closest baby

delivery facility is located 140 kilometres away in Moose Jaw. However, in an emergency, a baby can be delivered in Gravelbourg. The closest CT scan facility is located 211 kilometres away in Regina.

Table 3: Availability of Health Professionals - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada		West		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	% Yes		% Yes			
2003	2005	2003	2005			
Doctors	36.4	41.7	50.0	44.4	X	✓
Nurses	36.4	41.7	37.5	55.6	X	✓
Dentists	27.3	25.0	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Dental surgeons	9.1	8.3	0.0	0.0	X	X
Optometrists	18.2	16.7	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Home care visits	54.5	70.8	75.0	88.9	X	✓
VON	13.6	20.8	0.0	0.0	X	X
Social workers	22.7	29.2	12.5	11.1	X	X
Public health nurse	31.8	37.5	50.0	66.7	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

The availability of health care professionals is also limited in small places. In fact, only home care visits are available in more than half of the sites across Canada in 2005 (Table 3). Even those services considered as essential, such as doctors, are only available in just over 41% of the sites across Canada. While health care professionals are generally more available in a higher proportion of Western Canada sites, dentists, dental surgeons, VONs, and social workers are more limited.

While none of the listed health care professionals are in Wood River, some health care professionals, such as doctors, nurses, and respite care, are located immediately adjacent to the site in Lafleche. Furthermore, a dentist, optometrist, home care visits, and a public health nurse are accessible just 10 kilometres away in Gravelbourg. Again, these health care professionals will play an important role in retaining residents within the community who may otherwise be concerned about commuting longer distances to access these services. The closest social worker is located in Moose Jaw, while the closest dental surgeon is available in Regina.

The availability of health care programs and services is also low in the sites examined across Canada. However, new services being tracked in 2005, including prenatal care programs, are more widely available (Table 4). Health care services and programs are less widely available in sites across Western Canada compared to the national sample. In particular, while half of the sites in Western Canada had respite care in 2003, just 25% of these sites are still able to offer this service in 2005. Wood River residents may access physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and prenatal care programs in Gravelbourg. Respite care is accessible in both Lafleche and Gravelbourg. The closest speech therapist is located in Moose Jaw.

Table 4: Availability of Health Programs / Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Physiotherapy	22.7	25.0	25.0	11.1	X	✓
Speech therapy	31.8	25.0	50.0	33.3	X	X
Occupational therapy	13.6	17.4	12.5	0.0	X	✓
Respite care	22.7	21.7	50.0	25.0	X	✓
Prenatal care programs	*	39.1	*	33.3	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

* Information was not collected for this service that year.

Protection Services

Protection services contribute to community capacity in a number of ways. For example, volunteer fire departments and various crime watch programs provide opportunities for community involvement and interaction, both of which can build trust and leadership.

Table 5: Availability of Protection Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Police (local/RCMP)	22.7	33.3	25.0	33.3	X	✓
Fire department	68.2	79.2	87.5	100.0	✓	
911 emergency line	86.4	83.3	100.0	100.0	✓	
Security services	4.5	12.5	0.0	22.2	✓	
Alarm services	22.7	37.5	37.5	44.4	✓	
Neighbourhood watch	31.8	29.2	37.5	33.3	X	X
Rural crime watch	13.6	16.7	25.0	33.3	✓	
Victim's services – police based	*	16.7	*	33.3	X	X

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

* Information was not collected for this service that year.

Protection services are more available than most other services (Table 5). Most notably, fire departments and the 911 telephone number are available in more than half the sites across Canada. Since 2003, some sites across Canada appear to have recovered policing and fire department services. Most protection services are more available in Western Canada sites compared to the national sample. Wood River residents and businesses are served by a volunteer fire department, 911 emergency line, security and alarm services, as well as a rural crime watch program. While there is no police detachment in the Wood River Rural Municipality, police from Gravelbourg, ten kilometres away, do police the area. Wood River also has the First Responders unit, a volunteer group that responds to emergency situations in the Wood River and Lafleche area. The closest police-based victim's services is located in Moose Jaw.

Legal Services

Legal services are another example of specialized services that are often not found in rural areas. The absence of legal services has important implications as residents must commute to go to court, to access legal services such as preparation of wills or for purchasing real estate, or to have passports or affidavits signed.

Table 6: Availability of Legal Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
Lawyer	18.2	16.7	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Notary	40.9	45.8	50.0	55.6	X	✓
Court	18.2	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Overall, legal services are very limited in the study sites across Canada (Table 6). The availability of legal services in Western Canada sites is above the national sample. However, while more sites in Western Canada have a notary public, fewer of these sites have a lawyer or a court when compared to 2003 results. A notary is accessible in Lafleche, while lawyers and the court are located in Gravelbourg.

Financial Services

Businesses also play a role in providing a range of activities that enhance the quality of life of a place, as well as the viability and stability of the local economy. Business members also play an important role in community development as they can provide leadership in, and support for, local volunteer groups. Small local businesses are also an important source for fundraising and sponsorship of specific local organizations or events.

In general, credit unions, ATMs, insurance offices, and accounting services are found in half the rural and small town sites across Canada (Table 7). The availability of these services has remained fairly stable over the last two years. In 2005, more Western Canada sites have ATMs, micro-financing, and industrial parks compared to the national sample. Fewer sites in Western Canada have an accounting office. Micro-financing is available within Wood River through the Wood River Economic Loans Co-operative. Many other financial services are also located immediately adjacent to Wood River in Lafleche. A real estate agent is available in Gravelbourg. The closest industrial park is located in Moose Jaw.

Table 7: Availability of Financial / Business Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Banks	36.4	33.3	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Credit union/caisse populaire	50.0	50.0	62.5	55.6	X	✓
ATM	50.0	54.2	62.5	66.7	X	✓
Micro-financing	9.1	16.7	25.0	44.4	✓	
Insurance office	50.0	50.0	62.5	55.6	X	✓
Industrial park	22.7	20.8	37.5	33.3	X	X
Real estate office	18.2	20.8	12.5	22.2	X	✓
Accounting	50.0	50.0	50.0	44.4	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Communications

Connectivity is crucial in the new economy. Communication services also allow residents to maintain contact with family and friends. With improved communication infrastructure, rural and small town places can improve local employment opportunities, and support business networks.

Table 8: Availability of Communication Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Cell phone – analog	86.4	91.7	87.5	77.8	✓	
Cell phone – digital	40.9	83.3	25.0	77.8	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Wood River residents and businesses benefit from the availability of both analog and digital cell phone service (Table 8). Digital cell phone services arrived in Wood River in September 2003. This allows customers to receive text messaging, browse the Internet, perform banking transactions, and access real time information. Overall, analog cell phone service is widely available across the study sites in Canada. Approximately 83% of the sites in the national sample also enjoy digital cell phone service. While fewer sites in Western Canada offer cell phone services compared to the national sample, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of Western Canada sites that offer digital cell phone service compared to two years ago.

Elderly and Childcare Services

Childcare services provide an important part of the educational and care services in rural and small town places. Childcare also provides men and women with children an opportunity to participate in the labour force. Other services of importance are seniors' services including nursing homes and retirement homes. These services are particularly important given the aging of the Canadian population.

An inventory of 24 sites across Canada indicates that while many are equipped to meet the needs of young families, others are not yet well equipped with seniors' care facilities (Table 9). In contrast to the national sample, sites in Western Canada are less equipped to offer daycare and elderly services. However, while elderly facilities are not available in Wood River, these facilities are located in Lafleche. Families can access licensed daycare services 10 kilometres away in Gravelbourg.

Table 9: Availability of Elderly and Daycare Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada		West		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	% Yes		% Yes			
2003	2005	2003	2005			
Daycare	45.5	54.2	37.5	44.4	X	✓
Senior citizen's nursing home	18.2	20.8	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Senior citizen's retirement home	33.3	37.5	25.0	33.3	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Government Services

Town halls and post offices are the most frequently available government services in rural and small town places. Post offices not only provide a service and identity, but also opportunities for routine social interaction to build relationships. Other government services play an important role in community capacity by providing a local source of expertise and knowledge upon which the community can draw.

The rural and small town sites examined across Canada do not have access to many government services (Table 10). Of particular concern to sites experiencing social and economic restructuring is that few of the sites have Employment Insurance or social assistance offices. Consequently, during restructuring or plant closures, households experiencing stress will have to go outside the site for information and assistance.

Table 10: Availability of Government Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Employment Insurance	4.5	4.2	0.0	0.0	X	✓
Provincial auto license office	18.2	16.7	50.0	44.4	X	✓
Social assistance office	22.7	16.7	37.5	22.2	X	X
Town hall	68.2	70.8	87.5	88.9	X	✓
Post office	81.8	83.3	100.0	100.0	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

With the exception of Employment Insurance, more sites in Western Canada offer a range of government services to households experiencing economic and social restructuring compared to the national sample. However, fewer sites in Western Canada have a social assistance office compared to two years ago. Wood River is equipped with two post offices, one in Woodrow and one in Melaval. There is no town hall for the Wood River Rural Municipality, however, people use the halls in Lafleche. A provincial auto license office is also available in Lafleche. However, other government services are only accessible in larger regional centres, most notably Assiniboia and Moose Jaw.

Community Services

Community services can provide an important foundation from which to build relationships, and can be important sources to draw upon during times of economic and social stress. The availability of community services in rural and small town places varies considerably (Table 11). While fewer sites across Canada have a second hand stores compared to two years ago, more sites in the national sample offer clothing depots and senior drop-in centres.

Overall, sites in Western Canada are able to offer more community services when compared to all the sites across Canada. In fact, the availability of clothing depots has increased in the Western Canada sites since 2003. At least half of these sites continue to have a senior's drop-in centre or a church. A concern may stem from the decline in Western Canada sites of drop-in centres for seniors since 2003. These centres provide opportunities for interaction and help to foster a sense of community. With two churches, Wood River has a more limited range of community services compared to other sites across Western Canada. A senior's drop-in centre is within close proximity to Wood River residents as there is one located in Lafleche. This is particularly important given the substantial population of seniors living in Wood River. A youth drop-in centre for the Wood River region was located in Lafleche. However, due to a declining youth population in the Rural Municipality, the program shut down. The nearest youth drop-in centre is located within 30 minutes in the regional centre in Assiniboia. Personal-aid services are available in Gravelbourg. Other community services are available in Moose Jaw.

Table 11: Availability of Community Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Food bank	31.8	25.0	25.0	33.3	X	X
Clothing exchange/depot	18.2	29.2	0.0	33.3	X	X
Second hand stores	40.9	29.2	37.5	33.3	X	X
Youth drop-in centre	22.7	25.0	50.0	44.4	X	✓
Women's drop-in centre	22.7	16.7	50.0	44.4	X	X
Senior's drop-in centre	31.8	41.7	75.0	55.6	X	✓
Half-way house	4.5	4.2	12.5	0.0	X	X
Women's resource centre	9.1	8.3	0.0	11.1	X	X
Women's safe house	*	8.3	*	22.2	X	X
Personal aid services	31.8	37.5	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Victim's services						
– comm. based	*	25.0	*	44.4	X	X
Churches	*	95.8	*	100.0	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

* Information was not collected for this service that year.

Transportation

Transportation infrastructure can have important implications not only for attracting economic activity to a place, but also for enhancing the quality of life of vulnerable groups in rural and small town places. Transportation services, especially freight services, can play an important role in attracting industry by providing additional options to export products. However, without adequate, affordable transportation options, mobility can be difficult for women, seniors, or those with disabilities to move within the community and to access services in adjacent centres. Being mobile enables citizens to have access to services, to be involved in the community, to develop local friendship ties and support networks, and to experience social activities.

The higher availability of gas stations and automobile repair services in these places reflects Canada's general reliance on the automobile (Table 12). Other transportation services are less frequently available, most notably local transit service, passenger rail service, and airport service.

When compared to sites across Canada, more Western Canada sites have an inter-community bus station, freight train service, an airport, helicopter port, taxi, and automobile repair shops. However, fewer Western sites have a boat or ferry terminal. While local automobile services remain stable in these communities, fewer sites in Western Canada offer freight train services compared to the 2003 results. Freight train service passes through the Rural Municipality of Wood River to pick up the rail cars from the Producer Car Co-operative. A gas station and automobile repair services are available in Woodrow at the Woodrow Co-op Gas and Service station. Jason's Agri-motive also opened in 2003. Other transportation services are more limited within the area. However, Wood River residents can access inter-community bus service through the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) in Lafleche.

Table 12: Availability of Transport Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Local bus transit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	X
Inter-community bus station	31.8	29.2	62.5	55.6	X	✓
Train – passenger	4.5	4.2	0.0	0.0	X	X
Train – freight	36.4	29.2	87.5	55.6	✓	
Airport	18.2	16.7	37.5	33.3	✓	
Helicopter port	22.7	25.0	37.5	33.3	X	X
Boat/ferry terminal	18.2	25.0	12.5	11.1	X	X
Taxi	27.3	25.0	25.0	33.3	X	✓
Gas station	86.4	87.5	87.5	88.9	✓	
Automobile repair	63.6	70.8	87.5	88.9	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Recreation Services

When examining all of the sites, recreational services show the greatest range of availability compared to any other service category (Table 13). This bodes well for the retention and attraction of residents, as well as the overall quality of life of these places. More notable recreational services available include community playing fields, community centres, libraries, municipal parks, hiking trails, and campgrounds. Many of these services can be important places where events can foster a sense of community. Across Canada, most sites are also able to offer either an indoor skating rink or a community gym. Recreational services less frequently available across Canada include fitness facilities, such as athletic clubs and swimming pools, as well as entertainment features such as cinemas. Since 2003, live theatre and tennis courts are found in more sites in the national sample. Declines in recreational services between 2003 and 2005 in the national sample include outdoor municipal swimming pools and skiing trails.

In 2005, a greater proportion of sites in Western Canada offer recreational amenities such as curling rinks, indoor municipal skating rinks, community gym, municipal athletic club, live theatre, municipal parks, golf courses, and campgrounds. However, the availability of other amenities, such as public libraries, outdoor municipal skating rinks, and provincial parks are more limited compared to the national sample.

Wood River residents enjoy a variety of recreational services both within the site and within close proximity to Wood River. Locally, there is an outdoor municipal swimming pool, baseball diamonds, hiking trails, a golf course, and campgrounds at Thomson Lake Regional Park. In fact, there have been many improvements made to these campgrounds and to the recreational facilities in the area over the last decade. In 1994, natural gas was made available to the cottage areas. In this same year, water and sewer lines were installed. Improvement have been done to the campgrounds over the past decade including the construction of a sheltered kitchen area and pumphouse, and the replacement of a shower building. Currently, there are 104 electrified

campsites at Thomson Lake and 120 seasonal sites. Other recreational facilities, notably a community gym, a community centre, private athletic club, and a library, are located in Lafleche and are within close proximity. Wood River residents may also access bowling lanes, an indoor municipal swimming pool, an outdoor skating rink, a municipal athletic club, and a cinema in Gravelbourg.

Table 13: Availability of Recreation Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Curling rink	31.8	37.5	75.0	77.8	X	✓
Bowling lanes	22.7	20.8	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Indoor municipal swimming pool	13.6	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Outdoor municipal swimming pool	18.2	8.3	25.0	11.1	✓	
Indoor municipal skating rink	50.0	54.2	75.0	77.8	X	✓
Outdoor municipal skating rink	31.8	33.3	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Community playing field	81.8	79.2	87.5	88.9	✓	
Community gym	50.0	50.0	62.5	77.8	X	✓
Community centre	81.8	75.0	87.5	77.8	X	✓
Private athletic club	13.6	15.0	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Municipal athletic club	18.2	16.7	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Theatre (live performance)	13.6	33.3	12.5	55.6	X	X
Cinema (movie theatre)	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	✓
Museum	36.4	41.7	37.5	44.4	X	✓
Library	77.3	79.2	62.5	66.7	X	✓
Municipal parks	77.3	79.2	100.0	100.0	✓	
Provincial parks	22.7	16.7	25.0	0.0	X	X
Tennis courts	31.8	45.8	37.5	44.4	X	✓
Skiing trails	50.0	37.5	62.5	33.3	X	✓
Hiking trails	63.6	62.5	62.5	55.6	✓	
Golf courses	36.4	37.5	50.0	55.6	✓	
Campgrounds	68.2	66.7	100.0	100.0	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Shopping

Shopping services contribute to the success of the local economy and are considered to be an important gauge of economic health of rural and small town places. Shopping is also an important recreational activity and provides opportunities for social interaction. Low levels of shopping services can lead to out-of-town shopping and perhaps even out-migration.

The service inventory indicates that most sites across Canada are able to offer shopping services that residents would need to access on a more frequent basis, such as grocery stores (Table 14). In fact, basic shopping services have been increasing in the 24 sites examined in the national inventory. While a lower proportion of sites in Western Canada have a farmer's market, a greater proportion of these sites have a grocery store and liquor store. Wood River residents may shop at a grocery store or liquor store in Lafleche, while goods at a farmer's market or a bakery

may be obtained nearby in Gravelbourg. For more specialized shopping, residents may travel within 30 minutes to Gravelbourg or Assiniboia, or beyond 30 minutes to Moose Jaw or Regina.

Table 14: Availability of Basic Shopping Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Grocery store	68.2	70.8	87.5	88.9	X	✓
Farmer's market	13.6	25.0	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Liquor store	54.5	62.5	75.0	88.9	X	✓
Bakery	27.3	37.5	25.0	44.4	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Economic Development Organizations

Economic development organizations can play an important role in promoting the community to attract not only additional businesses, but also to attract a wider population base. While there is not a wide range of economic development organizations in these sites, it is particularly critical to note that only approximately 20% of the sites across Canada have a Chamber of Commerce (Table 15). As these organizations are comprised of local business individuals, they are important sources to draw upon during economic and social change. On the other hand, more sites in the national sample offer financial and business consulting services compared to two years ago.

Table 15: Availability of Economic / Development Organizations - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Business Dev. Bank of Canada	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	X
Community Futures Dev. Corp.	0.0	8.3	0.0	22.2	X	✓
Chamber of Commerce	18.2	20.8	25.0	33.3	X	✓
Local bus. dev. corp.	18.2	8.3	37.5	22.2	✓	
Economic/community trust	4.5	4.2	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Career training/placmt. program	13.6	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Financial/business consulting	27.3	37.5	37.5	55.6	X	✓
Real estate boards	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	✓
Tourism associations	27.3	12.5	25.0	0.0	X	✓
Rotary clubs	18.2	12.5	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Retraining programs – general	*	8.3	*	0.0	X	✓
Retraining programs – women	*	0.0	*	0.0	X	X
Women's leadership groups	*	41.7	*	44.4	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

* Information was not collected for this service that year.

Economic development organizations are more widely available in the Western Canada sites compared to the national sample. In fact, there has been an increase in the proportion of Western Canada sites that have a Community Futures or financial or business consulting group since 2003. More notable declines occurred, though, with the availability of local business development corporations and tourism associations in these sites.

Of particular interest, almost all of the economic development organizations are located within 30 minutes of Wood River. Furthermore, Wood River residents and business members are served by the Economic Loans Cooperative. The Merchants Associations in Lafleche functions as a Chamber of Commerce. Other economic development organizations are located within 30 minutes in Gravelbourg or Assiniboia. Notably, the Red Coat REDA is responsible for economic development in the region and has an office in Gravelbourg. The closest Business Development Bank of Canada is located in Regina, while there are retraining programs for women in Moose Jaw.

Housing

Housing has been used as an incentive to attract residents to rural and small town places. However, lack of housing options as a population changes, or ages, can be a problem and can lead to out-migration. Housing options can improve the quality of life of residents, especially the more vulnerable citizens, including senior citizens or those with disabilities.

Table 16: Availability of Social Housing Services - 2005

Services	NRE Sites:				Wood River: 2005	
	Canada % Yes		West % Yes		Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
	2003	2005	2003	2005		
Co-op housing	13.6	8.3	25.0	11.1	X	✓
Rent supplement units	22.7	20.8	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Asstd./sub. housing – seniors	31.8	50.0	50.0	66.7	X	✓
Asstd./sub. housing – families	31.8	29.2	37.5	44.4	X	✓
Asstd./sub. housing – singles	9.1	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Asstd./sub. housing - Disabled/special needs	13.6	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Although, social housing does not appear to be widely available in sites across Canada, there have been some important changes (Table 16). Most notably, there has been an increase in the availability of assisted or subsidized housing for seniors from approximately 32% of the sites across Canada in 2003 to 50% in 2005. In Western Canada, more sites have all types of social housing compared to the national sample. In this context, while there has been a decline in Western Canada sites that have co-op housing, a greater proportion of these sites have assisted or subsidized housing for seniors compared to two years ago. These forms of social housing are available within 30 minutes in Lafleche.

Challenges and Opportunities for Wood River, Saskatchewan

There are many services within close proximity to Wood River to help residents cope with social and economic restructuring. Many educational, health, financial, and recreational services, for example, are located adjacent to the site in Lafleche or within 30 minutes away in Gravelbourg. To cope with changes to the economy, Wood River residents access government services, such as Employment Insurance in Assiniboia. A challenge for Wood River, however, will be to diversify its local economy. Potential local entrepreneurs can access loans from the Economic Loans Co-operative in Lafleche. Wood River is also continuing to promote its recreational assets. In particular, it has been promoting its outdoor tourism assets at Thomson Lake Regional Park, including camping, swimming, and hiking. The number of year round residents is also increasing at Thomson Lake. These assets will go a long way, not just in attracting tourists and economic activity, but also for retaining residents.

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