Telework and rural communities

- Bob Fortier
  - President, Canadian Telework Association
  - President, InnoVisions Canada

- October, 2009
What is telework

- Many names
- Away from main office
- Usually, with technology, computers etc.
- Some of the time, or all of the time

Bob Fortier, President, InnoVisions Canada, www.ivc.ca
Various studies

- Over 40% of organizations have mobile staff, expected to grow to 1 billion worldwide by 2011
- 40% of US workforce could telework
- 17M US ‘corporate’ teleworkers
- 13 million Japanese twkrs by 2010
- Over 3.5M UK teleworkers (46% of employers)
Australia

– Offered by 23% of enterprises
– Royal commission mid 2000s – gov’t study and action plan
– Market, promote, online resources
– Investments: broadband, work centres
Canada

- 1.5 million, growing
- Slower than most countries
- 46% of companies
- 1-2 days a week / mostly informal
- 70% of CDN execs expect increase (World at Work)
### Some Canadian programs

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<th>Governments</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
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<td>• Federal Gov’t</td>
<td>• Royal Bank</td>
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Calgary Economic Development

- ‘WORKshift‘ telework program
- Promote economic benefits of telework
- For Calgary-area biz community
- Tools, best practices and resources
- workshiftcalgary.com
US programs

- Sun Microsystems
- AT&T
- US Government
- Virginia
Case studies

Wash Dental Service
– Cost, space, turnover
– 280 employees
– Established rural area virtual call centre

Cisco
– 2,000 teleworkers resolved corporate woes

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Why the growth?

- Because we can, thanks to IT
- More info workers / jobs / home offices
- Global economy dependent on IT
- Employee & corporate demand
- Benefits for employees, employers and communities

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## Impact on communities

### Reduced
- Congestion, accidents
- Pollution & emissions

### Economic stimulation
- Company prosperity = regional prosperity
- Attract recruits
- Teleworkers spend locally
- COOP

*Bob Fortier, President, InnoVisions Canada, www.ivc.ca*
Some recent local research

Medicine Hat News

– 12th straight month of rising unemployment
– Decline of the oil and gas industry
– Alberta must diversify before next bust

Canwest news story, Oct 10th

Bob Fortier, President, InnoVisions Canada, www.ivc.ca
Goodbye, Small Town, North America

Canwest News Service  October 10, 2009  5:07 AM

Story  Photos (1)

Experts say rural communities are feeding their own demise by encouraging their best and brightest to leave while not nurturing those young people who choose to stay behind. Shannon Proudfoot explains.

Small towns across North America, such as the hamlet of Cayley, Alta., above, are experiencing brain drains into big cities that make life harder for those who stay behind.

Photograph by: Lorraine Hjalte, Canwest News Service, Canwest News Service

An exodus of young people seeking education, adventure and success in bigger cities, combined with economic upheaval that has left little opportunity for those who stayed behind, has resulted in a
Rural areas: a ‘perfect storm’

Many problems
- Fewer agriculture, oil/gas, manufacturing jobs
- Fewer rural decent paying jobs
- Youth leaving
- Withering economies

Realize it’s not business as usual
- Look at all viable solutions

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How can telework help?

Telework can be part of solution

- Link people to jobs
- Link companies with people
- Attract industry to rural areas
- Rebalance ‘industrial age’ migration trends

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How can telework help?

A rural employee magnet
  – Massive supply of tech savvy workers from urban and far-away places
  – Looking for peace, beauty, quality of life

Links youth & future employees to good jobs
  – Demand, expect flexibility

Bob Fortier, President, InnoVisions Canada, www.ivc.ca
- How telework can help -  
A rural corporate magnet

Attract big-city biz

- Struggling for cost reduction
  - Rural biz often 40% less overhead
  - Low real estate prices
- Address R&R issues
  - Expand labour pool
  - Retain and attract BoB
  - Stronger work ethic, higher education level
  - Far less turnover than urban counterparts

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Other Benefits: cost reduction

Significant savings are possible

- ROI – corporate and personal
- Office-space reduction
- Absenteeism for all reasons
- Productivity
- Recruitment and retention

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Other benefits: business continuity

- Emergencies & disasters can, and do, happen
  - e.g., snow storms, floods, strikes, pandemic scares, etc.
- Employees might not come to work
- Include twk in BCP strategy
Barriers

- Newness
- Corporate time, effort, cost
- Informal telework
- Resistance
- Broadband ‘spotty’
- Government indifference

Bob Fortier, President, InnoVisions Canada, www.ivc.ca
Tips for rural governments

• Learn about and embrace telework
• Understand how it can improve prosperity of rural communities and business
• Develop telework economic strategy
• Use telework to fill local jobs that locals can’t
• Market benefits
Thanks

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