

Sucking the Maritimes dry



ELIZABETH
MCMILLAN

According to Statistics Canada, migration to Alberta almost doubled from 2005–06, up to 16.1 people per thousand. There are an estimated 100 new arrivals in Calgary each day. Estimates project that in order to maintain Alberta's current growth rate, 250 000 more people will be needed in the next five years. And where are all these people going to come from? The Atlantic provinces, largely.

For an increasing number of young workers on the East Coast, all roads lead to Alberta. In the past year, the Atlantic provinces have seen an exodus to Alberta of roughly 7000 people between the ages of 19–35. Forget the brain-drain southwards to the United States: people are moving "out west" at a staggering rate. And the shift west isn't expected to end anytime soon either.

Maritime transplants are bringing with them a lot more than distinctive accents or a taste for Alexander Keith's; they're helping support Alberta's booming economy—often at great personal expense. Take for instance the number of families who are split up when parents—men especially—leave to work for months at a time. When I flew home to Charlottetown at Christmas, the flight that arrived from Fort McMurray was full of Maritime voices. All anxious for familiar faces, they com-

pared stories from the frontlines of the oil and gas industry. The man sitting next to me was going home for two weeks to meet his three-month-old daughter.

This heartbreaking reality is all too common for families on the East Coast. There's a human cost that is hard to account for in Alberta, where all you see is growth and healthy paycheques.

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The economic contrast between east and west is overwhelming. After moving here last September, what I noticed most about the landscape wasn't the absence of picturesque ocean views, but rather the alarming amount of "Help Wanted" signs. While fast-food chains around Alberta announce double-digit wages for would-be burger-flippers, recent university graduates in Atlantic Canada can feel lucky to scrape by with the minimum wage—under \$8 per hour in each province—but to many, that's the best they can hope for.

It's little wonder, then, that they're leaving home and building their lives elsewhere. Fort McMurray, home to 20 000 Newfoundlanders, is a prime example of the cultural displacement that's occurring. Dubbed "Little Newfoundland," this northern burg is the third-largest Newfoundland community in the world.

Laying down roots "back home" is

risky when the stability of the local economy doesn't offer guarantees for future job prospects. An entire generation of Canadians is growing up realizing that home can't be home forever. Unfortunately, without motivated people to stick around and build opportunities, the demographic trend continues—there's no end in sight to the damaging cycle.

While Atlantic Canada is pumping out thousands of university and college graduates each year—Nova Scotia alone has 23 postsecondary institutions—many students pack up and leave right after graduation. As a result, there are few specialized workers, a higher rate of unemployment and a shrinking pool of labourers—specifically tradesmen—and everything from construction to health care is affected.

This isn't to say that people aren't interested in moving back, either. When an advertising insert entitled "Coming Home" ran in CanWest papers last December, advisor Jean Nadeau received over 3000 inquiries about the 2600 advertised jobs in Nova Scotia alone. However, nostalgia doesn't pay the bills. With the cheaper cost of living comes a considerable wage decrease in many areas. Often, young professionals aren't willing to put up with the cut to their paycheque, even in exchange for an arguably higher quality of life.

In the future, I wouldn't mind settling down in an area where no one invests in condos because \$500 000 gets you a four bedroom house on the waterfront, where you can buy lobsters off the wharf—and of course, let's not forget the fiddle music. Unfortunately for me, I might have to settle for two weeks vacation at the cottage instead.

Newfies: they're people too

It's time we gave Alberta's stepchildren a chance



KIRK
ZEMBAL

With the consummation of another school year fast approaching, most of us are getting ready to trade sleeping in and the stress that comes with being a student for the early mornings and long blissful days of summer work. Most of us are relatively poor and therefore willing to take whatever job is highest paying—career goals be damned—and since most of us will be looking for work here in oil-rich Alberta, many of us will end up on a collision course that will put us in contact with that not-so-rare of breeds: the Newfie.

Known as Newfoundlanders officially, they represent the most persistent and easily identifiable Canadian regional stereotype by far. But don't get me wrong, I don't consider myself to be anti-Newfie by any stretch. On the contrary, there's far too much Newfie-bashing in Alberta. Especially in the oil patch or up Highway 63 in Little Newfoundland.

It's common out in the bush to hear phrases like, "Ah, we'll just get a Newfie to do it," or, "Looks like a Newf-job to me." The word "Newfie" is becoming synonymous with unskilled labourer—which, I'll concede, isn't helped by the continuous exodus of unskilled labourers from Newfoundland.

Seriously, anti-Newfism is no

laughing matter. Think about it: substitute any ethnic or religious in place of the Newfie and imagine the outrage that would ensue. We all laughed when last year an EPS cop was disciplined for using the N-word during an arrest, but such situations are only going to become even more of an issue in future years with the Newfie Diaspora likely continuing unabated.

Already, letters to Edmonton's major dailies often refer to Newfoundland simply as "that province," while local television stations invariably run human-interest stories of Newfoundlanders trying to "adapt" to Albertan life, as if they were from some other continent altogether. They may not have joined Canada until 1949—and I'm as puzzled as the next guy as to how they can work a reference to codfish into every conversation—but that doesn't make them any less Canadian than you and me.

The point is, it's considered politically incorrect—and in most cases illegal—to discriminate based on, well, pretty much anything—but with Newfies it's okay, because hey, they're Newfies. This is becoming an outright epidemic, and is slowly entrenching itself into the rest of Canada's cultural consciousness. Travellers to this country seeking the Canadian experience will often even have "meet a Newfie" on their to-do lists—right after "kiss a moose."

So if you do end up working with Newfies this summer, I urge you to stop with the all crude and insensitive jokes. If you're unable to restrain from indulging yourself—which, as I've just demonstrated, is damn near impossible—please do so with cod tongue firmly in cheek.

Students' Union Employment and Volunteer Opportunities



SPEAKER OF STUDENTS' COUNCIL

Reports to Students' Council. Chairs all meetings of Students' Council in accordance with Roberts' Rules of Order and the Standing Orders of Students' Council.

Remuneration: \$150.00/meeting

All candidates will be interviewed by Students' Council.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY APRIL 18, 2007 at 4:30 pm.

Please submit cover letter to 2-900 SUB or to ea@su.ualberta.ca

For further information please contact Catherine at 492-4241

CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER

Reports to Students' Council and oversees all electoral logistics. Must be familiar with election process and bylaws. Excellent project management skills are required to succeed in this position.

Remuneration: \$6032 flat fee

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS FRIDAY APRIL 13 AT 4:30 PM. PLEASE SUBMIT COVER LETTER AND RESUME TO 2-900 SUB.

For further information contact Catherine at ea@su.ualberta.ca or 492-4241

* Applicants for the Speaker of Students' Council and Chief Returning Officer must be undergrad students and have paid full time fees.

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WWW.SU.UALBERTA.CA/JOBS