



Initiative on the New Economy

Communication Tools and Resources in Rural Canada:
A Report for Tweed, Ontario

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Highlights

This report compares the presence of various communication tools and resources in Tweed, Ontario with those in the other research sites of the New Rural Economy Project across Canada.

Although Tweed is classified as a “lagging” site due to its situation regarding residents’ lower incomes and lower levels of employment, it appears to be much more like a “leading” site in terms of several communications features. For instance Tweed, like leading sites, has access to the majority of internet service providers (ISP) - companies selling Internet service. Tweed, however, does not have Broadband internet service as high speed cable service is not equally accessible to all site residents.

Tweed has two separate public internet access sites (the public library and the CAP centre), both are open all year round. With a total of eight public computers, Tweed residents are in a good position to have access to computers and internet access, especially when compared to what is available in other provincial and national sites.

Tweed also has its own local paper—the *Tweed News*. In addition, there are several regional and national newspapers widely available. *Tweed News* produces the newsletter ‘*Discover...The Land O’Lakes Region*’ on an annual basis. Information focuses mostly on local attractions and tourism throughout the Municipality of Tweed.

Tweed has seven bulletin boards within the site boundaries—more than the average for all Canadian sites (including the others in Ontario). There are significantly more postings for community events, informal economy, and commercial exchanges in Tweed, compared to other sites, thus suggesting that Tweed residents, groups, and organizations are very active in making use of this type of communication resource. They rely on bulletin boards and postings in shop windows as a supplement to the more formal forms of communications. The high number of community event postings demonstrates that service organizations and volunteer associations are actively engaged in promoting Tweed, while plentiful informal economy postings may indicate that some residents rely on odd jobs to sustain livelihoods.

Tweed’s capacity to provide spaces and places for people to gather appears to be much higher on average than most other sites. Tweed does have several areas available within the site boundaries that are ideal for informal outdoor recreation. For example Lake Stoco, Tweed Memorial Park, the Trans Canada Trail, and the fair grounds are used for leisure activity. Others, just outside the site boundaries (for example Trudeau Park), also provide potential recreational spots.

Tweed has many different communication tools and resources available to its residents, local government, service organizations, and business. There is a great deal for residents to use in building Tweed’s future.

Initiative on the New Economy- About the Project

The **Initiative on the New Economy** (INE) project of the Canadian Rural and Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) works closely with residents, service providers, voluntary organizations, business organizations, 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 INE project is built on four key themes to explore capacity including *local governance, communications, services, and the environment*. This report explores the relationship between communications and capacity.

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) has been conducting research in 32 rural and small town sites from across Canada since 1997. These sites form a type of “rural observatory” in which aspects of the INE project may be examined. The sites participating in this project reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape, and include forestry and mining towns, farming communities, and tourism towns. Furthermore, some of these places are located adjacent to metropolitan areas, while others are more isolated.

A map showing the location of the sites is attached to the end of this report. Five dimensions relevant for rural communities were used in selecting the sites:

- the extent of exposure to the global economy;
- the relative stability of the local economy;
- the adjacency to large metropolitan centres;
- the level of social and institutional infrastructure (high or low capabilities); and
- the extent to which the site is lagging or leading on a number of socio-economic variables (including incomes and employment).

About the Communications Inventory

In the summer of 2003, researchers visited 22 INE sites across Canada to collect data on the various communication resources, tools and technologies present in each site (a communication inventory).

This extensive exercise has resulted in an inventory of the various communication resources, tools, and technologies in each site, as well as information about the site's identity and images used to represent itself. This inventory will be repeated again in the summer of 2005 to determine if there have been changes in the availability of these resources.

Data were collected on the following items:

- Cable television and community programming
- Direct broadcast satellite
- Internet service provision and access
- Public Internet access (CAP sites) and usage
- Community websites
- Local, regional, provincial and national newspapers
- Community newsletters
- Community radio

- Community bulletin boards
- Interpersonal communication (gathering places, events, meetings)
- Community identifiers (symbols, slogans)

In this report we provide a comparison of the presence of various communication tools and resources in Tweed, Ontario with those present in the other research sites across Canada. Specifically, each table includes a comparison with:

- the 22 sites across Canada;
- the 4 sites in Ontario;
- the 9 sites which have leading economic outcomes;
- the 13 sites which have lagging economic outcomes;
- the 15 sites which have high levels of capacity for taking action;
- the 7 sites which have low levels of capacity for taking action.

Availability

Copies of all site reports on the communications inventory are available for participating sites. Additionally, copies have been posted on the INE website (<http://nre.concordia.ca>) and on the Communications Theme Group website (<http://www.mta.ca/rstp/nre.html>).

Copies of various presentations and working papers resulting from the information collected in the communication inventory are also available on these websites.

For further information about this report or other information about the communications inventory please contact David Bruce, Communications Theme Leader, or one of our theme team members:

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Site Description – Tweed, ON



Tweed is a village with a population of 1,540 in 2001. It is located in Hastings County, 38 km north of Belleville, on a route between Toronto and Ottawa. Tweed acts as a service centre for the surrounding farm and rural non-farm area. Tweed's manufacturing industry and public service sectors have declined in an economy that is mixed, based on tourism and retirement functions, as well as retail and agricultural services. Recent changes related to loss of services have created some stress for the site.

In 2001, Tweed had a relatively large percentage (23%) of its population over 65 years of age, which contributes to the fact that employment income constitutes only 54.8% of the village's total income while government transfer payments and other income made up approximately 43%. There was no employment in the primary sector;

trade, manufacturing, and other categories represent main areas of employment. Statistics also reveal that 38% of Tweed's labour force commutes out of the village for employment. For those that remain, self-employment, especially for males, is relatively high compared to national standards. Numerous opportunities for employment appear to exist in the village's private and public service establishments. Given that 122 of these have been identified, it appears that Tweed enjoys an important role in its economic and social maintenance.

In terms of the rural observatory and for the purposes of comparison to other sites, Tweed has relatively lagging economic outcomes (such as lower incomes and lower levels of employment) and relatively higher capabilities for taking action.

The Importance of Communication in Rural Sites

Communication is an important element when we think about a community's development trajectory. It is not "just" talk; rather, effective communication can mobilize people to take action. For example, many rural communities have difficulty getting people involved in local politics, in serving on councils, in taking an active role in the public operation of their region. However, by using the right methods of communication and delivering effective messages, residents can become more engaged citizens. They learn about local issues and opportunities for participation.

Communication Metaphors

But what is communication? There are some metaphors we can use to help us understand the role of communication. We can think of communication as the **glue** that holds a community together. Communication within a site can bind the people to each other. A community can "talk to itself", although this does not mean that it will find consensus on all issues. However, in order to facilitate this important process, a site needs to have access to the right mix of communication tools that encourage and allow for interaction.

We can also think of communication as **oil** that acts as a lubricant for developing site togetherness, or social cohesion. Just as patterns of trust and cooperation are important for economic trade, patterns of communication may help social relations run more smoothly.

Communication can also be thought of as a **web** – interconnected lines of influence and interaction. One purpose for communication is to build and maintain the connections of

trust that link members of the site. The web is the relationships that exist in the site, and the web facilitates an exchange of information. If there is no web, there can be no exchange. The web also depends on the types of communication tools available in the site—these can influence the communications content. For example, a community television program will create a different kind of web from a school newsletter or a community website or a bulletin board at the local post office. But they are all webs.

Communication in Action

There are many ways to see communication in action. The transfer of messages or programs (the content) through the use of some type of communication medium is important. This is dependent upon the type of medium used (the local newspaper versus a website), who is sending the message, to whom, and so on.

Seeing communication as "ritual" suggests that communication is about the maintenance of a site over time. Through communication, communities are created, maintained, and transformed. Communication is a way of reminding us of who we are, of "where is here," of working out problems, of celebrating identity. Think about the ritual of reading your local newspaper every week, and how that reaffirms the images you have of your community.

The participants for communication may be internal or external. This relates to the intended receivers of the messages and information. Sometimes we are communicating with people in our own site,

and sometimes we are communicating with people in other places. The choice of communication technologies may be different for each case, and there may be different intentions (perhaps the local paper for reaching local people, and a website for reaching potential external investors).

Communication can also be inclusive or exclusive. This refers primarily to **who** participates in the communication process and the development of the content. Many forms of mass communication tend to be exclusive, as there are significant barriers to participation in the dialogue.

There are different levels of interaction in communication as well. At one extreme, we see many examples of one-way communication - radio, television,

newspapers. At the other extreme might be a public meeting where interaction is high.

The number of participants in communications can also vary. It can be one-to-one (a chat at the water cooler), one-to-many (a municipal politician speaking to a Rotary luncheon), many-to-one (watching television at home) or many-to-many (a healthy town meeting, whether it is in-person or through a webcast, where all participants shift between sender and receiver roles).

Communications is at the heart of community identity, attachment and vitality. Future prosperity is enhanced with greater ease of communicating through better opportunities and resources for residents.



Communication Tools and Resources Analysis

Internet Service

One communication tool available to sites is the Internet, which can be used for a variety of communication purposes and functions, such as e-mail communication with others outside the site, posting local or business information on websites aimed at an external audience (such as information about property for sale, festivals, etc.), and posting information for use within the site (such as copies of council minutes and agenda, community events schedules, etc.) The speed of the Internet connection available in a site can affect the kinds of information that can be posted, and transactions that can occur. In addition, having a variety of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) - the companies who sell Internet service - to choose from can help to keep the cost of access lower.

In most INE research sites, residents, businesses, and institutions have a choice of at least two ISPs when considering Internet connection. Those with “leading” and “high capabilities” status appear to have more choice (Table 1).

Table 1: Internet Service Provision in Sites

	Canada					Ontario Sites
	Total	Leading Sites	Lagging Sites	High Capability Sites	Low Capability Sites	
Avg # ISP's per site	2	3	2	3	1	4
% with Broadband	45	56	38	47	43	25
% with DSL	36	44	31	27	57	75
% with Cable	32	56	23	47	14	50
% with Modem	100	100	100	100	100	100
% With Part of Site Excluded from Highest Speed	32	33	31	33	29	50

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003. N=22 sites.

Broadband, defined as high-capacity Internet service (capable of transferring large amounts of data including audio and video), is available to ten of the INE sites surveyed(45%). One quarter of the Ontario sites have broadband access, and more of the leading and high capability sites have broadband access. This suggests that the sites which could benefit from high-speed access

to improve their economic situation by taking advantage of education and training opportunities over the Internet, currently have limited access, placing them at a further disadvantage. About one-third of the sites rely on digital switching of lines (DSL) or cable modem service. About one-third of the sites have some portion of their site excluded from access to the highest available speed of Internet service.

Although Tweed is classified as “lagging, it (unlike other lagging sites) has access to the majority of internet service providers and appears to be “leading” in terms of its ISP availability. Similar to the other lagging site however, Tweed does not have Broadband internet service and the highest speed of internet service (cable) is not equally accessible to all Tweed residents.

Public Internet Access

Several years ago the federal government launched the Community Access Program (CAP) to provide funding assistance to help rural communities develop some form of public Internet access. Over time, provinces and territories became funding and delivery partners. Most CAP sites have been located in libraries or schools, and there is a wide variety of programs, services, hours of availability, and fee structures for use, from site to site.

Most INE research sites surveyed (82%) have a least one CAP location, and several have more than one. However, relatively few (only 43%) of the sites with low capabilities have instituted a CAP (Table 2). This lack of access creates a disadvantage for residents and others in the sites who are unable to afford access at home, or who do not have access through school or work. It limits their choice of communication tools and therefore opportunities to reach out to others either to gain or provide desirable information.

On average, most CAP locations in INE sites surveyed have four computers available for public use. But those in high capability sites have an average of five computers while, in low capability sites there is an average of only three computers. Another measure of access is “persons per public computer”. There is some variation across different types of sites. CAP locations in both lagging and low capability sites that were surveyed have a smaller number of persons per public computer, suggesting that they would be able to provide greater frequency of access for interested residents. However, when we look at average number of users per week, we see that the greatest demands on CAP usage are found in sites with leading economic outcomes and those with higher capabilities. This suggests that more needs to be done in other sites to attract potential learners and users to make use of the communication resources offered by the CAP site.

CAP locations in Ontario sites surveyed have a higher number of computers than the national average, a larger persons per public computer ratio, and a lower number of average users per week in both the summer and winter months.

Table 2: Public Internet Access

	Canada					Ontario Sites	Tweed
	Total	Leading Sites	Lagging Sites	High Capability Sites	Low Capability Sites		
% with Public Access	82	78	85	100	43	100	Yes
Avg # of Public Computers in Site	4	4	4	5	3	6	8
Avg # Persons per Public Computer	435	604	317	444	391	558	192
Avg # Users per Week, Summer	53	71	43	63	17	47	90
Avg # Users per Week, Winter	43	40	44	50	13	36	90

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003. N=22 sites.

Tweed has two separate public internet access sites (the public library and the CAP centre), both are open all year round. With a total of eight public computers, Tweed residents are in a good position to have access to computer and internet access, especially when compared to what is available in other provincial and national sites taking part in this communications survey. The number of users per week in Tweed's CAP locations is higher in both summer and winter than the other sites' averages, and more than double that of other sites with lagging economic outcomes.

Newspapers

The presence of a local newspaper (usually a weekly publication) is an important communication tool in a small site. In most cases, such newspapers are important media for sharing local news, social events, results of sports and school activities, and advertising for local businesses. When a local weekly paper does not exist, sites may be dependent on other weekly newspapers as a communication tool - a column or a page about the site may appear in a neighbouring community's newspaper, for example.

Only 27% of the INE research sites surveyed have a local newspaper, and these are more likely to be found in sites with leading and with high capabilities status (Table 3). In most cases these sites also have larger populations which can sustain or support the needed circulation to pay for the costs of producing the paper. Residents in most INE sites have access to at least one regional newspaper.

Table 3: Presence of Local and Regional Newspapers

	Canada					Ontario Sites
	Total	Leading Sites	Lagging Sites	High Capability Sites	Low Capability Sites	
% with at Least One Local Paper	27	44	15	33	14	50
% with at Least One Regional Paper	96	89	100	93	100	75

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003. N=22 sites.

The residents of Tweed enjoy very good access to newspapers— Unlike most other lagging sites, Tweed has its own local paper—*Tweed News*. In addition, there are several regional dailies and weeklies available, as well as a selection of provincial and national newspapers. Some newspapers not available on local newsstands can be delivered to residents of Tweed if there is interest.

Newsletters

Community newsletters can also play an important role as a communication tool, especially in the absence of a local newspaper. These are often produced infrequently, often by a volunteer group, and usually free of charge. Two-thirds of the INE sites surveyed for communications research have at least one newsletter. These appear to be more common in sites with lagging economic outcomes (Table 4). In fact, nine sites which do not have a local newspaper, report having at least one community newsletter (and eight of these were sites with lagging economic outcomes). In addition, about three-quarters of sites with high capabilities report at least one community newsletter, suggesting that they have managed to find the resources and interest from within to develop a forum for sharing local news and information.

Some sites also benefit from the availability of community newsletters which originate in a neighbouring area but which also contain local items. This is the case for 27 per cent of the sites surveyed, and for many of the low capability sites. This outlet thus becomes important if the resources to produce a newsletter locally are not present.

Table 4: Presence of Community Newsletters

	Canada					Ontario Sites
	Total	Leading Sites	Lagging Sites	High Capability Sites	Low Capability Sites	
% with at Least One Newsletter	68	56	68	73	57	75
% with Newsletters From Other Communities	27	22	31	13	57	50

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003. N=22 sites.

Tweed News produces the newsletter ‘*Discover...The Land O’Lakes Region*’ on an annual basis. Information focuses mostly on local attractions and tourism throughout the Municipality of Tweed. Ten thousand copies of the magazine/newsletter/information booklet are printed in English only and are available for pick up at the Tweed News and other local venues. It appears that Tweed does not receive regular newsletters from neighbouring communities.

Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards located throughout the sites are also an important communication tool. They serve as an option for reaching people with short quick notices in relatively high traffic areas, such as post offices, grocery and convenience stores, libraries and other locally appropriate locations. They are typically populated with notices about coming events, or have business cards from local businesses or notices about items in the “informal economy” (babysitting, items for sale, etc.). These bulletin boards are especially important communication tools when other tools (such as local newspapers) are not available in the site.

Sites surveyed for communications research have an average of six bulletin boards, with a similar average in Ontario sites, and a higher average in sites with lagging economic outcomes (these sites generally have fewer communication tools at their disposal) and in high capability sites (Table 5). Community event postings are most common and more prevalent in Ontario sites. There is very little difference in the average number of postings by type of posting, among different types of sites.

Table 5: Bulletin Boards and their Contents

	Canada					Ontario Sites	Tweed
	Total	Leading Sites	Lagging Sites	High Capability Sites	Low Capability Sites		
Avg # Site Bulletin Boards	6	5	7	7	6	6	7
Avg # Community Event Postings	35	23	43	32	42	76	193
Avg # Commercial Postings	29	16	37	28	32	30	22
Avg # Informal Economy Postings	24	23	26	25	21	23	53
Avg # Personal Postings	5	7	3	5	4	6	2
Avg # Voluntary Sector Postings	4	3	4	4	3	4	5
Avg # Fund Raiser Postings	3	2	3	3	3	2	4
Avg # Church Postings	2	1	2	2	1	2	1

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003. N=22 sites.

Note: Avg # Postings refers to the total number of postings (of that type) on all bulletin boards in the site.

Tweed has seven bulletin boards within the site boundaries —more than the average for all Canadian sites (including the others in Ontario). There are significantly more community events, informal economy, and commercial postings in Tweed, compared to other sites, thus suggesting that Tweed residents, group, and organizations are very active in making use of this type of communication resource. They rely on bulletin boards and postings in shop windows as a supplement to the more formal forms of communications. The high number of community event postings demonstrates that service organizations and volunteer associations are actively engaged in promoting Tweed, while plentiful informal economy postings may indicate that some residents rely on odd jobs to sustain livelihoods.

Meeting Spaces and Community Events

Places where people can gather to meet and talk formally and informally and to celebrate the life of the community, its citizens and organizations are extremely important as a communication tool. Without places for people to gather, there are limited opportunities for sharing. Such areas may be used for other purposes (such as restaurants, bars, the post office) but where people communicate with one another while doing something else. These may also be more formalized places like community or church halls designed for holding meetings or events. Also important are outdoor spaces. Their design and/or location facilitate communication.

Communication is enhanced with community events. During these get-togethers, residents are exposed to images of their community and what belonging means to them through an annual festival, a parade, church supper, etc. These provide ways for the community to express what it is.

Most sites surveyed have a variety of formal and informal meeting spaces - on average there appears to be slightly more places to meet in Ontario sites, in sites with lagging economic outcomes, and in sites with high capabilities (Table 6). On average, the sites surveyed have six annual events, with those in lagging and low capability sites reporting a slightly higher number of events.

Table 6: Meeting Spaces and Annual Community Events

	Canada					Ontario Sites	Tweed
	Total	Leading Sites	Lagging Sites	High Capability Sites	Low Capability Sites		
Avg # Informal Gathering Places	3	3	3	4	2	4	5
Avg # Outdoor Gathering Places	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Avg # Halls for Public Meetings	4	2	5	4	3	3	6
Avg # Halls for Social Events	3	2	4	4	2	5	12
Avg # Annual Events	6	6	7	5	9	4	9

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003. N=22 sites.



Tweed’s capacity to provide spaces and places for people to gather appears to be much higher on average than most other sites. Tweed does have several areas available within the site boundaries that are ideal for informal outdoor recreations. For example Lake Stoco, Tweed Memorial Park, the Trans Canada Trail, and the fair grounds are used for leisure activity. Others, just outside the site boundaries (for example Trudeau Park), also provide potential recreational spots. The fact that Tweed has so many places for residents to gather means there are substantial opportunities for formal and informal socializing to occur.



Potential Communication Opportunities

Tweed has many different communication tools and resources available to its residents, local government, service organizations, and business. In addition to those summarized in the earlier sections of this report, Tweed also has access to resources located in neighbouring communities. For example there are five radio stations that will make free community announcements

A notable development is the creation of ‘*Comfort Country*’—a group of four communities (Tweed, Madoc, Marmora, & Sterling) working for the economic betterment of central Hastings. “The objective of the COMFORT COUNTRY Project is to help stabilize the existing business base while having the potential to also increase this base... The initiative, if successful, will label this area and could lead to permanent job creation just as other tourism and economic areas have developed”¹. Signage promoting ‘*Comfort Country*’ will be displayed throughout the area, local businesses and organizations will be encouraged to use the ‘*Comfort Country*’ logo on advertising and marketing initiatives, and a tourism directory will be created and distributed in the very near future. The ‘*Comfort Country*’ group will help host the CRRF fall conference workshop from October 14-16, 2004 in Tweed.



¹ Taken directly from the Comfort Country Press Release—E-mail from Ed Zak—March 1, 2004. www.tweed-chamber.ca

In order for Tweed to prosper and secure a viable future, each resident, community organization, and business should be asking themselves the following key questions:

- Are we making maximum use of all of the communication tools and resources available to us?
- Are we effective in developing the content of our messages?
- Are we reaching the right people with our message, or should we look at different communication tools and strategies?
- How can we maximize the opportunities available to us not just from new communication technologies (the Internet), but also from the informal gathering of people throughout the town?
- Are there opportunities to use new forms of communication in our site, such as establishing a community radio station?

There are many opportunities to enhance our communication practices. By assessing your answers to these questions, perhaps new ideas and solutions will become apparent, and provide improved economic and social outcomes for Tweed. There is a great deal for residents to use in building Tweed’s future.

Communications Theme Current and Upcoming Projects

Our theme team has a number of ongoing and upcoming projects that might be of interest to you. Please contact the project leaders identified below if you are interested in participating in some way.

Technology-Mediated Learning Project

This interactive learning project is designed to link people and organizations from across the active sites in a participatory learning activity on a wide range of rural and new economy issues. This includes web board discussions, chat rooms, video seminars, etc., on a regularly scheduled basis. A wide range of participants are involved from each site, including elected officials, municipal administration staff, environment groups, tourism groups, newspaper editors, economic development officers, volunteer groups, business organizations, and citizens. Our objective is to build the capacity of rural communities to use various forms of communication technology to learn from one another and to develop and implement new ideas. This project started in the summer of 2003 and runs to early 2006.

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Communication Strategies and Media Projects

How do organizations communicate with one another in the site? How does local government communicate with the community? In this project we assess how these are done, and are working with four sites to launch innovative communication

events. The media projects include things like virtual town hall meetings and special events broadcasts. Other media events and media use training are included. This project started in early 2004 and will finish in early 2006.

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Traditional Media in the New Economy

This project looks at the role of and use of community newspapers, radio, cable television, and much more. Focussing on six sites, this involves case study analysis and project development with local media outlets. A key focus is the "institutional evolution" of these media outlets, and how they are coping in the new economy. Also, some of the issues include how they deal with new economy content issues, the capacity to facilitate discussions about the new economy, and sources of information. This project started in 2003 and will finish in mid-2005.

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Use of the Internet in Rural Households

The purpose of this project is to examine Internet use among rural households in the active INE research study sites. It will be an Internet-based survey across all 22 sites and will examine a variety of issues, including: What do people use e-mail and the internet

for? How many and which rural households use the Internet? How many and which adults in those households use the Internet? For how long have they been using the Internet? Where do they use the Internet? And much more. This project began in early

2004.

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Sources of Interest

Books

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