



**Initiative on the New Economy**

**Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Places:  
A Report for Benito, Manitoba**

**March 2006**



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

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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.

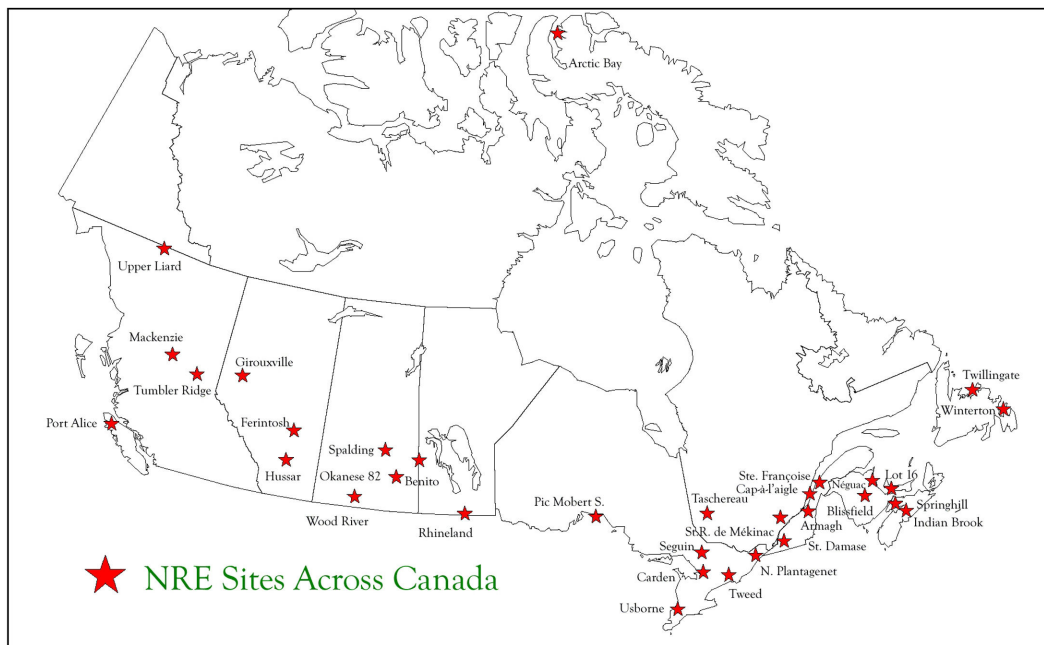
Second, services provide opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust. Together, these can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. For example, schools or seniors' centres can act as multi-functional facilities for 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 Benito, Manitoba 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 Benito 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 Benito by: Alison Moss, Lori Gould, and Doug Ramsey.

## ABOUT THE SERVICE INVENTORY

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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
<b>Western Canada</b>	
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
<b>Ontario</b>	
Seguin, Ontario	3,698
Tweed, Ontario	1,540
North Plantagenet, Ontario	3,848
Carden, Ontario	888
Usborne, Ontario	1,490
<b>Québec</b>	
Taschereau, Québec	534
Cap-à-l'aigle, Québec	720
St. Damase, Québec	1,327
St. Françoise, Québec	453
<b>Atlantic Canada</b>	
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

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Copies of all service availability reports were distributed within the participating sites. Additionally, copies have been posted on the INE website ([nre.concordia.ca](http://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](http://nre.concordia.ca).

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

Geography Program  
University of Northern British Columbia  
3333 University Way  
Prince George, B.C.  
V2N 4Z9  
Telephone: (250) 960-5826  
E-mail: [halseth@unbc.ca](mailto:halseth@unbc.ca)

For further information about other INE reports, please contact:

Bill Reimer  
Initiative on the New Economy  
Dep't of Sociology and Anthropology  
1455 boul. de Maisonneuve O.  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec  
H3G 1M8

Telephone: (514) 848-2424  
E-mail: [reimer@vax2.concordia.ca](mailto:reimer@vax2.concordia.ca)

Doug Ramsey  
Department of Rural Development  
Brandon University  
Brandon, Manitoba  
R7A 6A9

Telephone: (204) 571-8514  
E-mail: [ramsey@brandonu.ca](mailto:ramsey@brandonu.ca)

**Booklet Contributors:** Greg Halseth, Laura Ryser, Chelan Hoffman, Regine Halseth, Alison Moss, Lori Gould, and Doug Ramsey.

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**INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY  
SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES: A REPORT FOR BENITO,  
MANITOBA**

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**Site Description - Benito, Manitoba**

The Village of Benito is a quiet, rural community located on Highway 83 along the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, 475 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg. There are currently approximately 415 residents living within Benito. The community was formally established in 1905 after the arrival of the Canadian National Railway (CNR). It grew and was incorporated in 1941. The economic livelihood of the community revolves primarily around the agricultural and logging sectors. As such, Benito, with its 415 residents, also serves as an agricultural service centre with a variety of retail shops and services to meet most daily needs. The community is also considered to be the ‘gateway to the Swan Valley’, a nature lovers paradise. It thus offers a number of tourism and recreation activities centered on outdoor recreation.

A number of changes have occurred in Benito over the last few years. The last grain elevator and the old Benito school were torn down in 2003. Tony and Joe’s Restaurant and Archery, a relatively new business, burned down on April 18, 2004. The following year, a cafe emerged in response to the fire that destroyed the restaurant. A bakery, coffee shop and hardware/general store replaced what had been the McLeod’s. Benito commemorated its Centennial anniversary during 2005.



## POPULATION PROFILE - BENITO, MANITOBA

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The population of Benito, Manitoba declined by 9.8% from 460 residents in 1996 to 415 residents in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001). Overall, it still has an older family oriented population. This has important implications when planning the delivery of a range of services, such as recreational, educational, health, and senior services. The town, however, faces a challenge of youth out-migration, particularly for individuals between the ages of 20 and 24.

Population	Site: Benito		
	Total	Male	Female
Population in 2001	415	205	210
Population in 1996	460	----	----
1996 to 2001 population change (%)	-9.8	----	----
Total - All persons	415	205	210
Age 0-4	20	10	5
Age 5-14	40	20	15
Age 15-19	25	10	10
Age 20-24	5	10	5
Age 25-44	85	50	40
Age 45-54	45	25	20
Age 55-64	30	15	15
Age 65-74	50	25	25
Age 75-84	75	30	45
Age 85 and over	30	15	20
Median age of the population	50.3	47.3	57.0

Source: Statistics Canada 2001.



## SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES

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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:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
Pre-school/kindergarten	50.0	62.5	62.5	66.7	✓	
Elementary school	63.6	66.7	62.5	66.7	✓	
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. Benito is similar to other Western sites in that it offers access to a pre-school/kindergarten and an elementary school within the site. The Better

Beginnings initiative coordinated by the Swan Valley School Division provides programs geared towards pre-school age children and their parents. Elementary school children may choose to either attend the Benito School or may be bused to one of the elementary schools located in Swan River, 37 kilometres from Benito. However, a concern for the community may be that youth must leave to access high school or post-secondary education, especially youth between 20 and 24 years of age.

## 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:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
Hospital	18.2	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	✓
Health centre/CLSC	27.3	37.5	25.0	44.4	✓	
Medical clinic	40.9	37.5	50.0	55.6	✓	
Blood/urine testing facility	36.4	41.7	37.5	44.4	✓	
X-ray facility	22.7	20.8	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Baby delivery facility	4.5	4.2	12.5	11.1	X	✓
CT scan facility	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	✓
Nursing home	13.6	16.7	12.5	11.1	✓	
Pharmacy	40.9	37.5	37.5	33.3	✓	
Ambulance	36.4	41.7	37.5	44.4	✓	
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. Benito has many of these health care facilities, including a health centre, medical clinic, blood/urine testing facility, nursing home, pharmacy, and ambulance services. The Thunderhill Court nursing home, attached to the Benito Health Center, employs a full-time nurse and has arrangements for bringing in doctors, dentists or other required personnel as needed. The medical clinic and blood/urine testing facility operate part-time, with a doctor being available in the medical clinic

two mornings per week. While the ambulance service must be deployed from Swan River (20 minutes away), Benito does have access to a First Responders unit which can be on the scene within 5 minutes. Other emergency services are located relatively nearby in Swan River.

**Table 3: Availability of Health Professionals - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
Doctors	36.4	41.7	50.0	44.4	✓	
Nurses	36.4	41.7	37.5	55.6	✓	
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	✓	
VON	13.6	20.8	0.0	0.0	X	X
Social workers	22.7	29.2	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Public health nurse	31.8	37.5	50.0	66.7	✓	

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. This is the case for Benito as well, which has a doctor two mornings a week, a full-time community health nurse, a part-time LPN nurse through the Benito Primary Health Care Centre, and home care visits. In addition, a dentist, optometrist, and social worker can be accessed in Swan River. However, the nearest dental surgeon is located in Brandon, Manitoba (318 kilometres away) and the nearest Victorian Order of Nurses is located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (440 kilometres away).

**Table 4: Availability of Health Programs / Services - 2005**

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

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

\* Information was not collected for this service that year.

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 were still able to offer this service in 2005. Benito is fortunate to have access to respite care, while other listed programs and services are available in nearby Swan River. Also, a physiotherapist, speech therapist, and occupational therapist, although based in Swan River, will make visits to the personal care home in Benito upon referral, thus reducing the need for some residents to travel out of town. Other residents may access these services in Swan River. There are also hopes that a vehicle will soon be made available through the community Health Centre for out-patient transportation services to eliminate the reliance on family and friends, or on expensive handi van or taxi service from Swan River.

## 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:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
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	X	X
Alarm services	22.7	37.5	37.5	44.4	X	✓
Neighbourhood watch	31.8	29.2	37.5	33.3	X	X
Rural crime watch	13.6	16.7	25.0	33.3	X	✓
Victim's services – police based	*	16.7	*	33.3	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. Like other rural sites across Canada and the west, Benito has access to a 911 emergency line and a 13 member volunteer fire department. With the exception of security services (the nearest of which is located in Brandon, Manitoba, 318 kilometres away) and a neighbourhood watch program, other protection services are available in Swan River.

## 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:				Benito:	
	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	✓	
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. This is the case with Benito as well, which has access to a notary on site, but residents must travel to Swan River for a lawyer or court services. There has been a slight decline in the level of legal services now available in Benito. In the past, a lawyer would provide local legal services one day per week. However, this service became unavailable in Benito approximately 2 years ago.

## 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. Benito residents and business members benefit from the availability of a credit union, ATM, micro-financing, and insurance office within the community. However, there has been a slight decline in the level of services provided within the community with the closure of the Benito branch of the Toronto Dominion bank in 2003 (the Credit Union moved assumed the bank's old space), and the loss of local real estate services, formerly

provided by W.F. Schneider & Sons. Other financial services are available nearby in Swan River.

**Table 7: Availability of Financial / Business Services - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito: 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	✓	
ATM	50.0	54.2	62.5	66.7	✓	
Micro-financing	9.1	16.7	25.0	44.4	✓	
Insurance office	50.0	50.0	62.5	55.6	✓	
Industrial park	22.7	20.8	37.5	33.3	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:				Benito: 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	X	✓

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

Overall, analog cell phone service is widely available across the study sites in Canada (Table 8). 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. Benito residents and businesses benefit from the availability of analog cell phone service.

## 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. Unlike other sites across Canada and the west, Benito is very fortunate to have all three listed services available within the community. A daycare opened in the Benito school, December 1, 2003, which has the capacity to care for 16 children. The Thunderhill Court, which is attached to the Benito Health Center, is an elderly persons housing complex.

**Table 9: Availability of Elderly and Daycare Services - 2005**

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

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.

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. As with other sites in Western Canada, Benito is fairly well served

by government services. Residents have access to a provincial auto license office, town hall, and post office within the community. The closest Employment Insurance and social assistance offices are located within 30 minutes in Swan River.

**Table 10: Availability of Government Services - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito: 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	✓	
Social assistance office	22.7	16.7	37.5	22.2	X	✓
Town hall	68.2	70.8	87.5	88.9	✓	
Post office	81.8	83.3	100.0	100.0	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

## 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.

**Table 11: Availability of Community Services - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito: 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	✓
Clothing exchange/depot	18.2	29.2	0.0	33.3	X	✓
Second hand stores	40.9	29.2	37.5	33.3	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	✓	
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	✓
Women's safe house	*	8.3	*	22.2	X	✓
Personal aid services	31.8	37.5	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Victim's services						
– comm. based	*	25.0	*	44.4	X	✓
Churches	*	95.8	*	100.0	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

\* Information was not collected for this service that year.



Overall, sites in Western Canada were 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. Benito does not have access to a wide range of community services locally. Residents have access to only a part-time senior's drop-in centre and two churches (the United Church and the Living Word Assembly). With the exception of a woman's drop-in centre and a half-way house, the nearest of which are located in Brandon (318 km away), the remainder of the listed community services are accessible in Swan River.

## 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.

**Table 12: Availability of Transport Services - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
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	✓	
Train – passenger	4.5	4.2	0.0	0.0	X	X
Train – freight	36.4	29.2	87.5	55.6	X	✓
Airport	18.2	16.7	37.5	33.3	X	✓
Helicopter port	22.7	25.0	37.5	33.3	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.

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 services compared to the 2003 results. Benito residents benefit from the availability of an inter-community bus station, gas station, and automobile repair shop. The nearest airport and helicopter port is a small private air strip located in Durban (10 km away), while freight train and taxi service is available in Swan River. There is no need for boat/ferry terminal service in Benito and as such, the nearest service is located in Hague, Saskatchewan. However, neither local bus transit nor passenger train service is available within close proximity to Benito. There has been a decline in the level of transportation services within Benito resulting from the loss of the last grain elevator in 2003, which has eliminated the need for freight train service. This may pose a challenge for Benito as such forms of transportation infrastructure can be important in successfully attracting new economic development opportunities.

### **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.

Benito offers its residents and visitors a range of recreation services, including a number that involve physical infrastructure such as a curling rink, indoor municipal skating rink, community centre, live performance theatre, and library. The library is very active in the community and houses the village's CAP site. Other local facilities provide multiple recreation functions. For example, the school gym is sometimes used for community events and a stage in the recreation centre is available for live performances. As well, residents of all ages are provided with the opportunity to join a variety of sporting teams and clubs year round, with the Recreation Director coming one day per week or more from Swan River to coordinate these clubs and teams. Other key recreation services such as an outdoor municipal swimming pool, outdoor municipal skating rink, private athletic club, museum, cinema, and tennis courts can be accessed from nearby Swan River. As well, hiking, cross-country skiing trails, and a downhill skiing facility are relatively accessible from nearby Thunderhill (11 km away), while a popular golf course is located in Duck Mountain Provincial Park (20 km away).

**Table 13: Availability of Recreation Services - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito: 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	✓	
Bowling lanes	22.7	20.8	25.0	22.2	X	X
Indoor municipal swimming pool	13.6	12.5	25.0	22.2	X	X
Outdoor municipal swimming pool	18.2	8.3	25.0	11.1	X	✓
Indoor municipal skating rink	50.0	54.2	75.0	77.8	✓	
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	✓	
Community centre	81.8	75.0	87.5	77.8	✓	
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	✓	
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	✓	
Municipal parks	77.3	79.2	100.0	100.0	✓	
Provincial parks	22.7	16.7	25.0	0.0	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	X	✓
Golf courses	36.4	37.5	50.0	55.6	X	✓
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.

**Table 14: Availability of Basic Shopping Services - 2005**

Services	NRE Sites:				Benito: 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	✓	
Farmer's market	13.6	25.0	12.5	11.1	X	✓
Liquor store	54.5	62.5	75.0	88.9	✓	
Bakery	27.3	37.5	25.0	44.4	✓	

Source: CRRF NRE 2003, 2005 Site Profiles.

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 a liquor store. Again, Benito has good access to basic shopping services with a grocery store, liquor store, and bakery all located on site. The nearest farmer's market is located in Swan River, however, there are bi-monthly visits to Benito by a man from British Columbia selling fresh fruits and vegetables. Benito residents may also access other basic shopping services within their community, including a travel agent, Sears catalogue outlet, hair salons, craft supplies store, hardware store, ceramic shop, and a butcher shop. For more specialized shopping, Benito residents must travel to Dauphin or Brandon.

### 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:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
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	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	X	✓
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	✓	
Real estate boards	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	X	X
Tourism associations	27.3	12.5	25.0	0.0	X	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	✓
Women's leadership groups	*	41.7	*	44.4	X	X

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 groups since 2003. More notable declines occurred, though, with the availability of local business development corporations and tourism associations in these sites. However, Benito is not well served with economic/development organizations, having only a financial/business consulting firm (W.F. Schneider & Sons) located on site. Although seven of the listed types of organizations are available in nearby Swan River, a number of other key economic/development organizations are not available within easy commuting range including a Business Development Bank of Canada, Community Futures Development Corporation, real estate board, tourism association, or women's leadership groups.

## 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:				Benito:	
	Canada		West		2005	
	% Yes		% Yes		Within	Within
	2003	2005	2003	2005	the Site	30 Minutes
Co-op housing	13.6	8.3	25.0	11.1	X	X
Rent supplement units	22.7	20.8	37.5	33.3	X	X
Asstd./sub. housing – seniors	31.8	50.0	50.0	66.7	✓	
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. Social housing services are somewhat lacking in Benito, although there are 30 elderly public housing units available through Thunderhill Court. Other assisted/subsidized social housing units are available in Swan River, 37 kilometres away. However, the nearest co-operative housing units are located in The Pas (271 kilometres away), while the nearest rental supplement units are located in Dauphin (180 kilometres away).

## **Challenges and Opportunities for Benito, Manitoba**

Despite the loss of Benito's last grain elevator in 2003, which has meant the loss of freight train service, Benito has remained relatively stable in terms of service provision. While some businesses have been lost, new ones have been established, offering a slightly greater level of services to residents. As a service center for the surrounding rural agricultural landscape, the community has access to most types of services that would be needed on a daily basis, including banking/financial services, recreation services, government services, basic shopping services, and health services. In addition, there is a strong sense of community that has allowed Benito to successfully provide alternative services to accommodate for previous deficiencies. For example, because ambulance service must travel from Swan River 20 minutes away, the community has a First Responders unit which can be on the scene within 5 minutes. In terms of services geared towards the young, the Better Beginnings initiative is bringing pre-school programs to children and their parents. In addition, a daycare opened in 2003 with the capacity to provide care for 16 children. This will provide residents with a greater opportunity to seek employment opportunities where this may not have been possible before.

Benito's level of infrastructure will assist in the retention of residents. For seniors, there is the Thunderhill Court and Benito Health Care facility which provide housing and health services. For the young of all ages, there are a number of recreational facilities located on site that include a curling rink, indoor skating rink, community playing field, community gym, community centre, live performance theatre, library, municipal parks, and campgrounds. In addition, the community of Swan River provides most other types of services and has made considerable efforts to eliminate the need for Benito residents to travel for some types of services. For example, specialized medical personnel including doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, naturopath health providers, and mental health workers will occasionally travel to Benito to provide their services on site. Swan River's Recreation Director will travel to Benito to coordinate sporting teams and clubs.

There are, however, a number of challenges facing Benito. A number of service sectors have seen a slight decline in the level of services provided. For example, in the recent past, the RCMP shared space on Main Street with a lawyer who spent one day per week in Benito. The RCMP are now located in Swan River, while the lawyer no longer provides this service. At one time, W.F. Schneider & Sons provided realty services but due to time constraints, they no longer do so. The Toronto Dominion Bank also closed its Benito branch in 2003 due to economic and building maintenance factors.

There are also challenges with regard to community services, transportation services, and economic/development organizations. Aside from a part-time seniors' drop-in centre, there are no other listed community services located directly in Benito. Transportation services are also lacking. While there is access to inter-community bus transit service, other transportation options are more costly or inconvenient. In terms of community services, those who can least afford it have few transportation options available to access food banks, clothing exchanges, or second-hand stores in Swan River, as taxis and handivans must be brought in from that community.

In terms of reversing the population decline trend through the promotion of economic development opportunities, only one of the listed economic/development organizations are located directly within Benito. Some organizations, such as the Business Development Bank of Canada, real estate board, tourism associations, and Community Futures Development Corporations, are a considerable distance away from Benito. The lack of transportation services may also play a role in limiting economic development opportunities as freight train service is no longer available within the community.

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