

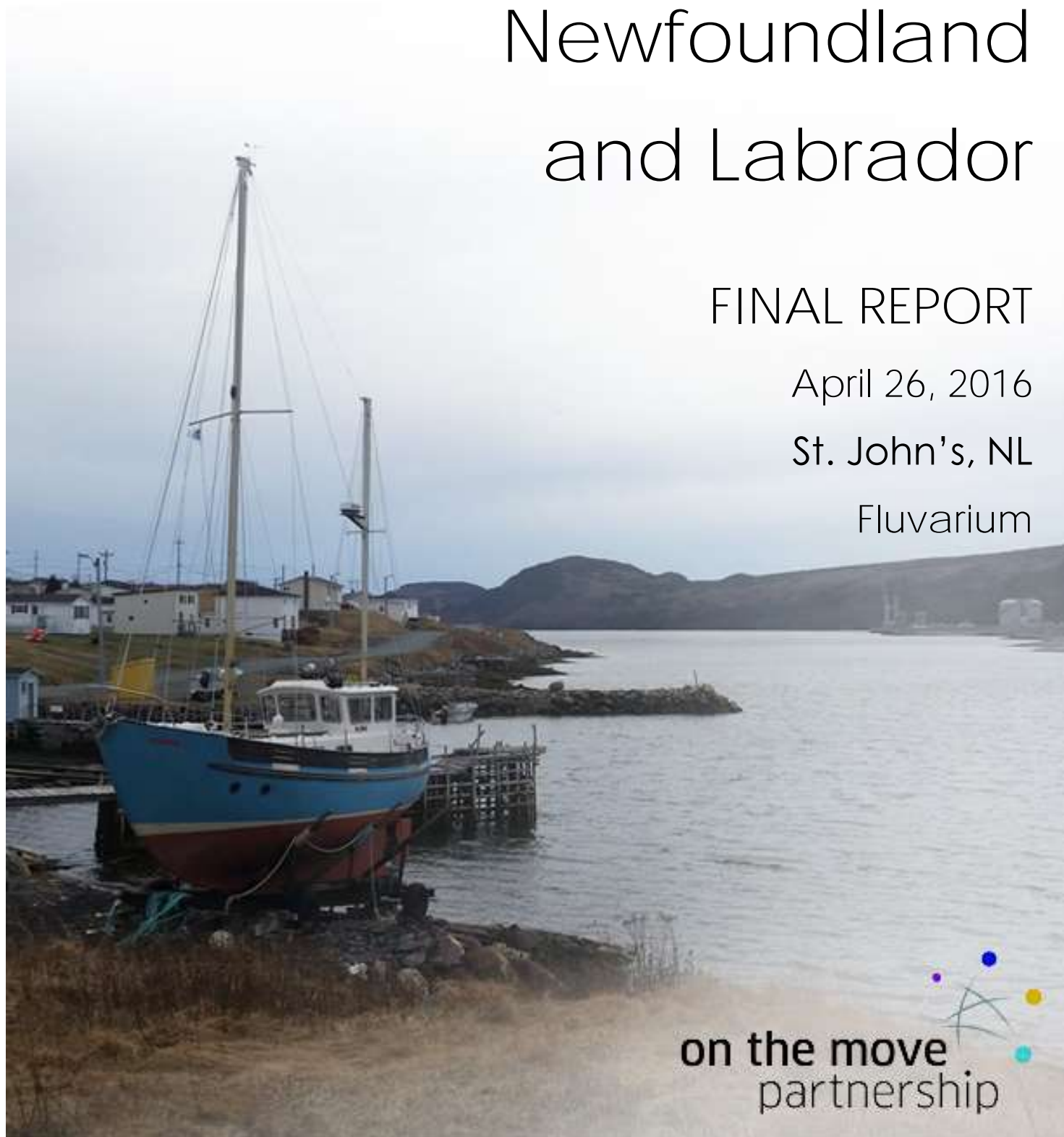
# Forum on Housing and the Mobile Workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador

FINAL REPORT

April 26, 2016

St. John's, NL

Fluvarium



on the move  
partnership 

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# PARTNERS

## ***On the Move Partnership***

The *On the Move Partnership: Employment-Related Geographical Mobility in the Canadian Context* is a 7-year national scale research study with international links, which is investigating the spectrum of Employment-related Geographical Mobility (E-RGM) and its consequences for workers, families, employers, communities, and Canadian municipal, provincial and federal governments. It is a project of the SafetyNet Center for Occupational Health and Safety Research at Memorial University. *On the Move* is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through its Partnership Grants funding opportunity, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Research and Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial University, Dalhousie University and numerous other university and community partners in Canada and elsewhere.

## ***Canadian Home Builders' Association – Newfoundland and Labrador (CHBA-NL)***

The Canadian Home Builders' Association-Newfoundland and Labrador (CHBA-NL) is the voice of the Province's residential construction industry. The CHBA-NL membership includes new home builders, renovators, developers, trade contractors, manufacturers, suppliers, lenders, and other professionals – the companies and people who provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with quality housing. The CHBA-NL's volunteer driven committees oversee the work of the Association in areas such as technical and economic research, education and training, renovation, land development, the environment, and marketing. Through the voluntary efforts of its members, the CHBA-NL serves both consumers and producers of housing by promoting quality, affordability, and choice in housing for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

## ***Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)***

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been Canada's authority on housing for more than 70 years. CMHC helps Canadians meet their housing needs. As Canada's authority on housing, we contribute to the stability of the housing market and financial system, provide support for Canadians in housing need, and offer objective housing research and advice to Canadian governments, consumers and the housing industry. Prudent risk management, strong corporate governance and transparency are cornerstones of our operations.

## ***Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL)***

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) was formed in 1951 to represent the interests of the growing number of municipal councils in the province. The purpose of MNL is to assist communities in their endeavor to achieve and sustain strong and effective local government, thereby improving the quality of life for all the people of this province. Our mandate is to provide programs and services of common interest to members, provide a united approach on issues affecting local governance, to advance the ambitions and goals of its member communities by developing a shared common vision of the future, to effectively serve as local government spokesperson, to represent its members in matters affecting them or the welfare of their communities, and to further the establishment of responsible government and the local level.

## ***The Harris Centre of Memorial University***

The Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development is Memorial University's hub for public policy and regional development issues. The Centre links Memorial researchers with groups all over Newfoundland and Labrador, supporting active community engagement throughout the research process. Working with all units at Memorial, we build connections, encourage informed debate, and support collaboration, enhancing the University and the Province through mutually beneficial partnerships. The Harris Centre has two primary goals: to assist in the responsible development of the economy and society of Newfoundland and Labrador, and to stimulate informed discussion of important provincial issues.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

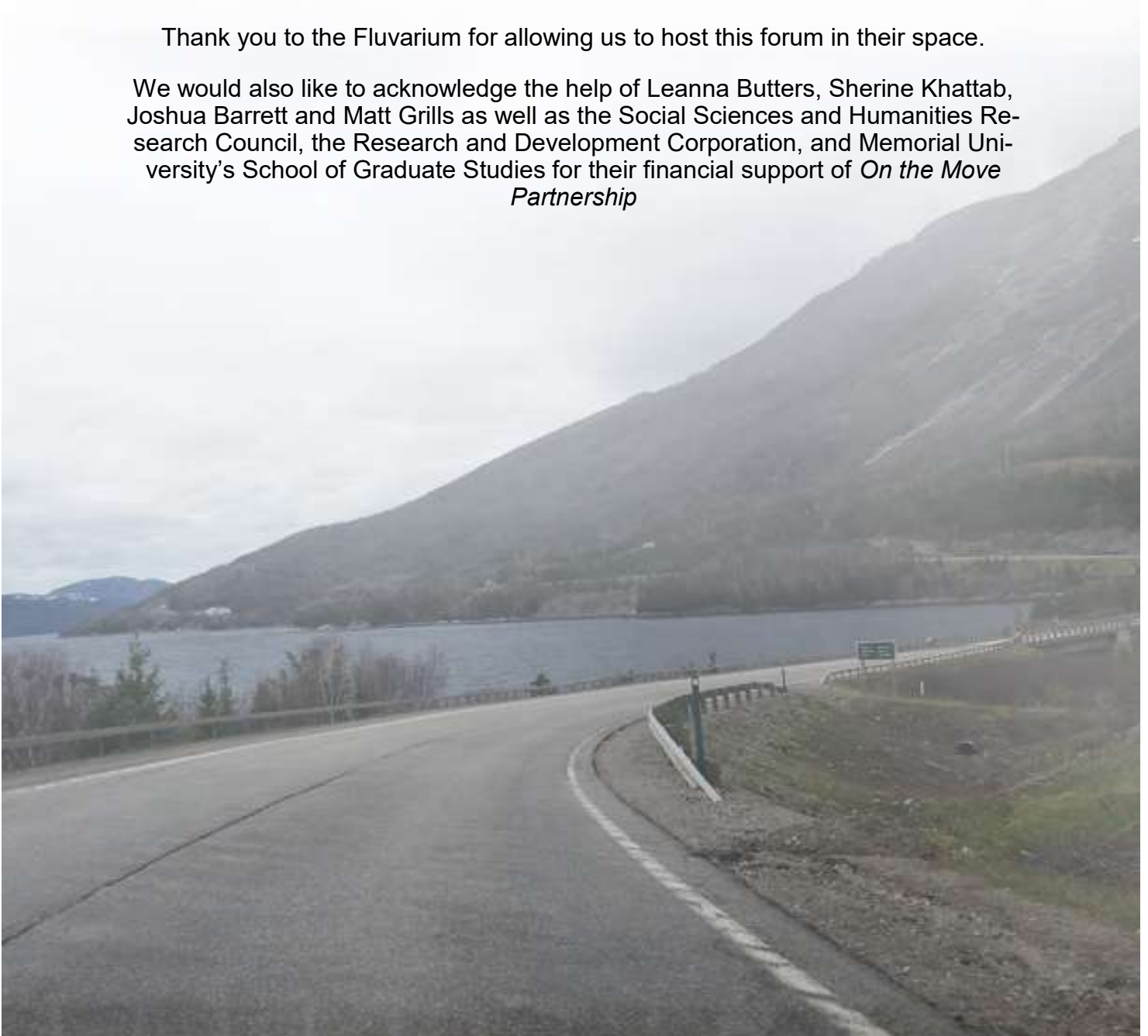
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# INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

The Housing Forum, which took place on April 26, 2016, emerged as an idea with the acknowledgement that the topic of housing was a gap in research being undertaken by the *On the Move Partnership* and, more generally, in the literature related to Employment-related Geographical Mobility (E-RGM). Preliminary *On the Move* findings suggested that housing availability and affordability in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) was being impacted by E-RGM; however, the extent of these impacts was not clear. The Housing Forum was planned with industry and community partners to provide an opportunity for housing industry representatives, policy makers, community representatives, and researchers to meet and dis-

cuss the current and potential impacts of E-RGM on housing in NL.

This document represents the culmination of thoughts and findings expressed prior to and during the Housing Forum. Section A offers a background to the forum. It includes literature and media reviews of E-RGM and housing-related impacts within and outside of Canada and NL. It also includes preliminary findings from the *On the Move Partnership* as justification for the need to better understand the impact of E-RGM on housing in the context of NL. Section B offers a summary of findings from the housing forum itself. Presentations have been summarized and organized into three key themes: 1) Housing market trends: construction, real

estate, rentals and renovations; 2) Affordable housing and housing affordability for mobile workers and in communities affected by employment-related geographical mobility; and 3) Community impacts, implications for planning and policy, solutions. Summaries of discussions occurring over the course of the day are also found in this report.

Overall, this report aims to present past dialogues and current findings related to the intersection of housing and E-RGM. It seeks to shed light on the current and potential impacts of E-RGM on housing, and of housing on patterns of E-RGM, with the goal of understanding how E-RGM has and may impact individuals, communities, businesses, and policies in NL.

## Section A: Background to the Forum

### A1. Perspectives from the Literature: An Introduction

Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006) write that “proximity and connectivity are imagined in new ways” (2) as a result of the growth of complex mobility systems globally. This includes a reimagining of the relationship between mobility, in this case mobility to and from work, and concepts of housing and home. We focus here on employment-related geographical mobility (referred to here as E-RGM or “mobile work”) and its relationship with housing in both home/

source and host/work communities. Based on Temple Newhook et al. (2011), E-RGM includes “situations where workers regularly and repeatedly cross municipal, provincial or national boundaries to get to and from their place of employment (sometimes working in multiple or transient worksites as with construction workers and home care workers), and work involving mobile workplaces such as cruise and cargo ships, planes, trains, trucks, and fishing vessels” (122-3). The wide range of E-RGM includes “daily, overnight and prolonged regular, sporadic and sometimes even permanent movement away

from one’s usual place of residence” to single, multiple or mobile work sites and “from relatively short commutes to nearby communities to the lengthy distances associated with international migrant work” (Temple Newhook et al. 2011, 122-3).

The rise in E-RGM nationally and internationally (Haan, Walsh, and Neis 2014 ) and, more specifically, within NL, seems to have had significant implications for housing, including changes in housing cost, consumption (purchases, construction and renovation), affordability, and ownership. A review of academic literature of-

fers insight into the complex ways in which housing and labour markets intersect in the context of E-RGM. For instance, the literature suggests that labour and housing markets can affect the decision and/or ability of workers to commute or permanently migrate. This, in turn, may impact sense of place and/or place attachments and, subsequently, levels of participation and volunteerism undertaken by mobile workers in their communities, among other community impacts. The following literature review explores the ways in which the relationship between housing and E-RGM have been framed in scholarly works. More specifically, it looks at how this intersection may impact the decision of workers to commute or migrate/relocate, their housing-related place attachments, the special circumstances of resource-driven communities or 'boom towns', and both impacts on and strategies for planning and land-use in relation to housing in the context of E-RGM.

### **a. Community Types Associated with Employment-related Geographical Mobility**

Literature on E-RGM has identified two main community types. The first of these is the host community, or work community. Being geographically close to one or more worksites to which mobile workers commute, host communities may 'host' mobile workers by providing services, amenities, and accommodations for mobile workers while they are at their place of work (Haslam McKenzie 2011). The literature seems to indicate that

E-RGM presents some economic and social opportunities but also challenges in host communities. It has been suggested, for instance, that host communities can benefit from an influx of workers with skills the community may have lacked otherwise (Keough 2013, Storey 2001); however, Haslam McKenzie (2011) argue that such benefits are often compromised by challenges such as the undermining of local workforces and a lack of engagement in the community on the part of mobile workers and corporations.

The second community type identified in the literature is the 'source' community or 'home' community. These communities are the permanent place of residence for individuals engaged with E-RGM. Often the families of mobile workers also reside in their source community. The literature on source communities seems to suggest that source communities typically benefit economically from E-RGM. For instance, Haslam McKenzie (2011) and McKenzie et al. (2014) suggest that funds from host communities flow into source communities following the commuting patterns of mobile workers. However, there may also be social repercussions in these communities such as the loss of local talent, volunteers, and community leaders because of engagement with E-RGM (Storey 2010, Haslam McKenzie 2011).

As is suggested above, the community-level impacts of E-RGM are likely to vary based on whether a community is a host

or source community for mobile workers. This dynamic is further complicated as impacts may be influenced by the type of E-RGM with which workers engage. For example, source communities associated with modes of interprovincial E-RGM, such as Fly-in/Fly-out (FIFO), often have their residents leave for several weeks at a time; conversely, source communities with residents who engage with Drive-in/Drive-out (DIDO)\* commuting may see their residents return home each night after an eight-hour work day. The ability of resident mobile workers (and of spouses who are left to attend to household duties) to engage in their home communities may vary based on the length of time workers spend at their place of work as well as the time and other demands involved in the travel to and from work.

### **b. The Decision to Commute versus Migrate**

According to Chrysanthou (2002), the concept of 'commuting' was born out of the era of industrialization, when transport technologies and infrastructures were being developed and made travel more widely available. Technological advancements into the present time have allowed for the practice of commuting, as well as other forms of technology-enabled mobility, to continue and evolve – so much so that the 'mobility paradigm' has been acknowledged as a new and significant facet of social science research (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006). The availability of technologies in the present,

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\* We note that the term Drive-in/Drive-out (DIDO) is used in different ways by different authors in the literature on E-RGM. Perkins (2012), for example, suggests that DIDO involves a remote work location, with food and accommodations provided outside of the source or home community and a rostered-based work schedule while Rolfe and Kinnear (2013) suggest that the DIDO workforce may commute to their worksite within their local area or a nearby region. The key, agreed upon distinction is the mode of travel (DIDO by automobile vs. planes used for FIFO).



such as airplanes and automobiles, has provided working individuals with the option to commute to work as an alternative to moving permanently, or migrating/relocating, to a location within close proximity of their place of employment (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006). For instance, in resource extraction sectors, the development of towns near the work site was the prevailing method for attracting employees to remote locations in both Australia and Canada until recent decades; however, some mining companies in Australia now rely on FIFO or DIDO operations instead. These operations allow employees to commute to the region in which they are employed rather than migrate/relocate permanently (Storey 2010). Existing literature suggests that the decision of individuals to commute instead of migrate/relocate can be influenced by a range of economic and social factors, including:

### 1) *Housing Affordability*

Most authors tend to agree that housing affordability is a key factor in the decision of an individual to migrate or commute (Moss, Jack and Wallace 2004, Hoath and Haslam McKenzie 2013). This is because housing represents a major portion of household expenditures and, for homeowners, equity (Haas and Osland 2014). Head and Huw (2011) argue that workers accept jobs in different locations based on the offered wage, their current employment status, house and/or rental prices in the new location, and the market value of their current home when they are homeowners. Housing-related indebtedness and/or limited access to credit may also limit the ability of a

worker to move. Low or falling house prices in the source communities, especially during a recession, can reduce the likelihood of migration due to an inability to recoup housing investments. Sandow and Westin (2010) and Westin (2016) observe that affordability of housing in host communities may also impact workers' willingness to migrate out of source communities, with high housing prices discouraging some people from moving to another community despite employment and income earning opportunities (Cameron and Muellerbauer 1998, Schmidt 2014). This may in turn encourage commuting as an alternative way of accessing employment. Chandler (2014), for instance, observes that many workers opted to commute rather than move to Alberta during the resource boom because of the housing shortage as well as the high housing cost, particularly in Fort McMurray.

There is some debate about the impact of home ownership/tenure may have on the decision of an individual to migrate or commute. Doogan (1996) states that home ownership is not a main factor in the willingness to move; however, some authors, like Hughes and McCormick (1990) argue that home ownership can and does impact willingness to move for some individuals. As noted above, this may depend in part on the ability to recoup housing investments or, as discussed further below, workers' socio-economic status, commuting costs, and housing-related place attachments.

### 2) *Socio-economic Status*

Previous research suggests that the ability of an individual to mi-

grate or commute may be impacted by their socio-economic status. As worker's earnings increase, their ability to afford a home in a preferred location, such as closer to their place of work, is also expected to increase (Hämäläinen and Böckerman 2004). In line with this, Harris and Clausen (1967) suggest that households with high socio-economic status tend to move more (e.g. as their jobs change). It has been suggested more recently that medium-skilled workers tend to commute while the least-educated residents live and work in the suburbs and the most-educated workers tend to work and live in urban areas (Sorek 2009). Richard Florida (2002: 8, 2005) further argues that the "the creative class" (those in occupations that "generate new ideas, new technologies and/or creative output") are attracted to places offering diversity, tolerance and amenities, typically in the core of large metropolitan areas, and are increasingly mobile, migrating within countries and internationally (Hall and Donald 2010). Studies on the creative class in NL shed light on the province's unique characteristics, however, including strong social networks and loyalty to place (reducing propensity to migrate) despite perceived greater economic opportunities elsewhere (Lepawsky et al. 2010).

Literature on public-sector housing highlights mobility challenges faced by low income residents. Fletcher (2009), for instance, suggests that social housing tenants in England faced challenges when they considered moving for work due to a lack of available social housing in high-demand areas. Lack of transportation options

can also make it difficult for low income workers to choose to commute rather than move, further marginalizing these individuals from available employment opportunities (Haas and Osland 2014). This pattern of disadvantage (and, in contrast, advantage for others) has been described as ‘mobility privilege’, patterns of spatial segregation that can be observed in both rural regions (Moss, Jack and Wallace 2004) and within cities (Bartling 2006).

### 3) *Commuting Costs*

The costs incurred in commuting are also an important factor in workers’ decisions to commute or migrate, including both transportation and time costs (Schmidt 2014). Commuting costs are not only financial but also include stresses that affect worker health (physical and mental) and even family relationships (Temple Newhook et al. 2011). Traffic congestion and pollution are added social (and ecological) costs of commuting. If these social costs were added to the actual driving costs, Small (1994) argues that, in the USA, the total cost of commuting would be 50% of the gross wage rate. In some cases, transportation and time costs may not be well-calculated by workers in terms of maximizing utility. For instance, workers may opt to commute longer distances rather than move due to market failures such as imperfect information and transaction costs (Hamilton 1982, White 1988, Ma and Banister, 2006). This has been described in the literature as “excess commuting” and Stutzer and Frey (2008) suggest that this can affect a worker’s job and even life satisfaction.

### 4) *Place Attachments*

Individuals’ propensity to move (or not to move), or to engage in excess commuting, is not always well explained by models and theories found in the migration and mobility literature; it appears that in some cases, particularly those involving excess commuting, the decision to commute rather than migrate has been attributed to housing-related place attachments. Barcus and Brunn (2009) find that non-economic migration incentives, such as place attachment – which is the emotional bond that occurs between individuals and places – and ties to a home location, can have a decisive impact on migration decisions. They stress the importance of amenities and location-specific capital, such as place familiarity, or social networks, presence – and proximity – of friends or family members, in migrants’ choice of destination or in the decision to commute long distances (Fletcher 2009, Sandow, Westin 2010, Westin 2016). In the same vein, Hunter and Reid (1968) argue that area attachment, as well as other social and institutional factors, such as employers’ policy and pension considerations, may also play a role in the commute versus migration decision.

Complementing these findings, Van der Klis and Karsten (2009) suggest that place attachments can be difficult to develop for long distance commuters in their host communities. Their Netherlands-based study shows that workers frequently used material objects to create a sense of home while at the work residence (e.g. using personal items to make the home a familiar place). Social life, however, re-

mains strongly tied to their source community and communal/family dwelling. In addition, only very few experience the commuter/work dwelling as a home away from home. Work or commuter residences were seen as more temporary and more likely to be rented than owned while the opposite was true for the source or communal home. Work residences were also more likely to be urban apartments, while their communal homes were more likely to be rural or suburban single family dwellings, suggesting that E-RGM may also influence chosen housing form and differ in home versus host communities.

Despite Van der Klis and Karsten’s findings, a growing body of evidence suggests that highly mobile individuals can develop strong place bonds that can involve multiple places, with differing levels and types of attachments (Scannell, Gifford 2013; Gustafson 2013). Such attachments can be important for the life satisfaction of mobile workers. Mobile workers may even create a sense of home in places of travel such as hotel rooms, automobiles, airports or train cars and/or with larger places and territories (Gustafson 2013). Clifford (1997) develops the notion of “dwelling-in-travel” to unravel how workers dwell in and through commuting, in addition to feeling rooted at home at work and all the places in between.

### c. **The Particular Case of Housing in Resource-Driven ‘Boom Towns’**

A boom town is a community or region experiencing sudden, rapid growth in terms of its population and its economy (Ennis,

Finlayson, Speering 2013). Boom towns often emerge in remote regions as a result of major resource developments, like oil and mining (Ennis et al, 2013). As recently as the mid-twentieth century, resource-extraction companies would develop company towns to attract workers and their families to these remote regions for employment, as labour in the numbers and skill levels required were not available locally (Storey 2001, Whalen 2013). Increasingly, resource-extraction companies operating in Australia and Canada are relying on long-distance commuting (LDC) operations such as drive-in/drive-out (DIDO) and fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) to bring employees to those regions for work (often with the use of financial incentives such as flights paid for by the company).

Ennis, Finlayson and Speering (2013) argue that housing is a key area of impact in the context of booming resource economies, particularly with regards to vulnerable populations, because of increased demand for housing by incoming workers and their families. As such, the accommodation of workers in 'boom towns' can significantly impact housing affordability and availability (Ennis, Finlayson, Speering 2013). In particular, there is an important literature on how seniors, low-income workers, and international migrant workers may be negatively impacted by changes in housing affordability and accessibility in boom towns (Ryser, Halseth 2011, Rosenberg, Everitt 2001, Tolbert 2006, Goldenberg, Shoveller, Koehoorn, Ostry 2010, McLeod, Hovorka 2008, Storey, Jones 2003, Ennis, Finlayson, Speering 2013, Williams

1981; Barrett 1994, Halseth 1999).

With regards to housing for FIFO and DIDO workers in resource sectors, accommodations are diverse. In some cases, accommodations are taken up by FIFO or DIDO workers in residential communities in proximity to the worksite (Ruddell, Oritz 2014). More often, on-site accommodations for FIFO workers are provided by their corporate employer. These are known as accommodation villages, or work camps and are often located within proximity to the worksite but not within regional communities (Haslam McKenzie 2011, Everingham et al. 2013). Some companies also offer a 'living out allowance' (LOA), usually providing daily cash contributions for travel, accommodations, as well as meals for workers living outside a specified travel zone (Hall 2014).

The presence and mobility of FIFO/DIDO workers in today's boom town context, and the housing arrangements they require, have posed some challenges in host communities. For example, Keough (2015) observes that in Fort McMurray new residents and low-wage workers appear to be concentrated in Lower Townsite where the oldest and cheapest rental housing could be found as opposed to more 'high-end' neighbourhoods like Thickwood and Timberlea, which are located at the margin of the city. Demand for housing in particular areas impact the cost and availability of housing in Fort McMurray in such a way that it creates spatial divisions within the city based on socio-economic standing. This was discussed as a potential planning concern because

unequal access to services and amenities in the Lower Townsite area may impact the quality of life for low-wage and service workers living there.

Worker camps, or worker villages, are also a topic of discussion with regards to housing arrangements in boom towns. It has been acknowledged that the design and protocols in worksites can impact worker satisfaction, including feelings of safety (Ryser, Markey, Halseth 2016). Many housing complexes developed to accommodate mobile workers in host communities are 'closed', meaning that workers are socially and physically isolated from surrounding communities. As such, the literature suggests that closed work camps operate as separate villages in host communities, contributing little to local economies and not encouraging engagement of workers with regional host communities (Everingham et al. 2013, Sibel 2010, Australian Institute of Management 2013). While the closed work-camp model is still being used in the present, some companies in Australia have opted to better integrate worker housing and service facilities in order to improve FIFO worker lifestyles and contribute to host communities (Everingham et al. 2013).

The remote nature of many resource boom towns can exacerbate challenges for access to and availability of affordable housing in these areas. In Arctic regions, for instance, where housing is often precarious, housing challenges can include: higher costs for construction as well as declining government funding for housing, higher operating/maintenance costs, limited social housing, and inadequate

shelter for the homeless (Young 2016). Influxes of workers from outside these remote communities can severely affect housing affordability and availability, leaving local residents vulnerable. As a result, housing shortages and increased housing costs have come to be associated with boom cycles in remote regions associated with resource extraction industries (Young 2016).

#### **d. Policy, Planning and Land-use Strategies**

In the literature, planning and land use strategies are often described either as a barrier to mobility and/or housing access or as a means for improving the mobility-housing relationship. In this way, housing policies and programs have been noted as influencing commuting and migration decisions. Looking at planning and land-use as a barrier, authors have argued that conventional planning, such as the development of suburbs on urban peripheries, can further mismatches between the locations of places of employment and places of residence, thereby requiring commuting (Keough 2013). This, for instance, has been identified in urban areas where rising housing prices have the ability to effectively 'screen out' low wage workers from accessing housing well-situated with regards to their place of work. As such, it is suggested that planning approaches can encourage spatial segregation and socioeconomic inequalities, particularly in urban areas, with regards to housing and E-RGM (Gibb, Osland and Pryce 2013).

Alternatively, planning and land-use strategies are also present-

ed in the literature as an avenue for alleviating housing stressors. For instance, some authors argue that changes in policy considerations with regards to density, concentration and location of housing may encourage mobility and more equitable population distribution (Banister 2008). Some academics have also advocated for the introduction of planning policies that acknowledge the increased flexibility of modern housing markets (Hincks and Wong 2010, Scheiner and Kasper 2003). For instance, Keough (2015), argues that flexible and innovative planning and/or policy strategies, such as the incorporation of new housing types into planned developments, may help increase access to affordable housing in Fort McMurray as well as address significant quality of life issues. Housing options include micro-apartments, varied townhouse styles, and lane housing, providing less expensive alternatives to single-detached homes.

Sandell (1977), Cervero (1989) and others further argue that the mismatch between jobs and housing can be minimized by introducing programs such as a tax base sharing, inclusionary zoning, and fair share housing programs. Inclusionary zoning, for instance, may be used to encourage the joint development of economic projects (e.g. shop districts) and large residential developments in order to provide affordable housing units nearby to employment opportunities. The use of tax base sharing may also reduce the need for different areas within a region to compete for the tax base thereby improving housing affordability and accessibility. In addition, the use of a fair share

housing may help ensure that communities are providing and provisioning for affordable housing. The above policies may help reduce the gaps which exist between job and housing availability and accessibility, taking into account both economic (income) and spatial (job-housing distances) circumstances, with consequences for E-RGM.

#### **e. Summary and Gaps in the Literature**

Based on existing literature, it appears that the relationship between housing and mobility is complex and dependent on community/regional characteristics (such as attractiveness of camp facilities, availability of amenities and services or housing affordability), corporate and municipal policies (such as planning and land use), as well as mobility contexts (such as the schedule and type of mobile workers – short or long, returning daily or not – are engaged in). While some trends exist after (e.g. pressures in boom towns), housing stress and socio-economic impacts at the community level seem to be dependent on each community's specific relationship to E-RGM. For instance, host communities may experience unavailability of affordable housing for vulnerable populations if long-distance commuters are renting accommodations in these communities. Mobile workers may also engage very little with host communities if they have access to camp accommodations near the worksite, which can in turn limit socio-economic contributions by mobile workers in those communities.

While research that connects

mobile work and housing exists, as is demonstrated above, the complexity of the subject necessitates more in-depth study of the multiple interactions and relationships that exist between housing and labour markets in specific contexts, as in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). In general, the relationships between housing stress and E-RGM and between E-RGM and sense of place are two areas that appear to be under-represented in the literature. In addition, existing literature seems to focus primarily on the relationship between planning/land-use and housing in urban contexts. Less emphasis, in this regard, has been placed on small to mid-sized cities and rural communities, particularly in the Canadian context. This may undermine the applicability of much of the literature discussed above to the NL context, as much of the province is comprised of small towns.

The section which follows identifies perceptions of housing and labour mobility in NL. In particular, it explores how the relationship between housing and E-RGM in NL has been presented to date in scholarly works, statistical reports, as well as by local, provincial and national media bodies.

## **A2. Housing and Labour Mobility in Newfoundland and Labrador**

E-RGM is particularly important in the context of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Interprovincial employment, for example, represented 8.5% of the total wages and salaries earned of all employees residing in NL 2011 (Morissette and Qiu 2015).

Since the 2000s, the recent offshore petroleum boom has provided a fruitful juncture for demographic growth, urbanisation, and economic development along with intraprovincial E-RGM within this sector. Before the recent oil price drops, the economy of NL was flourishing at a never-seen rate (Locke 2007). According to the latest 2011 Census Data (Statistics Canada 2012), St. John's was one of Canada's fastest growing metropolitan areas. Communities in the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) such as the Town of Paradise (40.6%), Flatrock (20%), and Bay Bulls (19%) in the Southern Shore, captured a major part of the demographic increases and related economic impacts. Despite upward economic and demographic indicators, 11% of the paid workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2011 was still working outside of the province, out of which more than half worked in Alberta (Morissette, Qiu 2015).

The Avalon Peninsula, especially St. John's CMA, and Avalon Isthmus/Clareville regions have benefited from much of this growth, but have also been faced with associated challenges (Porter, Vodden 2012). One of the sectors that has been most impacted is housing. High housing prices, booming residential construction, decreases in housing affordability and possible rapid devaluation are among the many reported pressures in the housing market (CMHC 2008). Employment opportunities and rising wages are impacting workers' mobility, and more broadly, both the labour and housing markets. These changes in turn seem to affect the housing choices and options of individuals and their families

and communities. The following sections summarize existing literature and perceptions presented in reports and print media on how E-RGM has impacted housing in the province.

### **a. Methods**

A number of steps were taken in investigating current evidence and perceptions of the relationship between housing and E-RGM in NL. Statistics and reports available at Statistics Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the Canadian Home Builders Association (CHBA), as well as Newfoundland and Labrador Outlook Reports were reviewed. All the above were scanned for data with regard to the relationship that exists between the labour market and the housing market in NL. The authors also searched the Memorial University Library online system to access articles on E-RGM related specifically to the NL context. Media articles were also consulted, including those made available through the *On the Move Partnership* reworks database and several Canadian newspapers available online from October 2015 to March 2016. Newspapers available online in each of Canada's provinces were searched using the following keywords (both individually and in combination): housing, mobility, mobile, work. Newspapers that were found to include relevant articles are: CBC News, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, The Tyee, The Packet, and The Western Star.

### **b. Employment-related Geographical Mobility in NL**

Newfoundland and Labrador has historically been associated

with a mobile resident workforce. Throughout much of the last century, residents of NL have periodically left the province for employment while either maintaining permanent residence in NL or migrating to a new location for work and returning to the island after several years (Newfoundland and Labrador 2007). Other resident workers within the province would travel to logging camps, construction projects, or fishing grounds for work (Freshwater and Simms 2008, White 2007).

Despite its history with interprovincial employment, the 2000s marked a mobility shift in NL as interprovincial employment grew dramatically. The number of inter-provincial employees from Atlantic Canada working in Alberta increased almost three-fold between 2004 and 2008, with 26.3% of inter-provincial employees in Alberta being from Canada's east coast (Laporte, Lu 2013). The largest portion of these workers came from NL. In 2008, there were over 14,000 employees from NL working in Alberta, compared to approximately 7000 from New Brunswick and 2000 employees from Prince Edward Island (see figure

1; Lionais 2016). This represented more than 6% of the total employed labour force in NL in 2008 (see figure 2; Lionais 2016). After 2008, the total number of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working out of province is not clear. For instance, according to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Outlook 2020, the number of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working in Alberta continued to increase between 2008 to 2010, totalling 23,507 individuals in March 2010 (up from 13,127 in January 2008). In contrast, Lionais (2016) reports that approximately 10,000 individuals from NL were working in Alberta by 2011 (see figure 1). Taken together, these reports suggest that, at minimum, more than 4% of the employed labour force in NL was employed in Alberta in 2011. Overall that year, Lionais (2016) reports that the total employment income from mobile work in Alberta earned by workers from NL was \$474, 318, 378 (see table 1).

With regards to intra-provincial commuting for employment, commuting occurs within NL across a number of sectors. For

instance, commuting patterns for workers have been studied in NL in the context of nickel processing (Hall 2014, Barrett forthcoming), fish processing (Freshwater, Simms 2008), and off-shore oil (Storey 2008). The type of commuting undertaken by individuals within the province tends to vary by sector. For instance, commuting for work in off-shore oil may be considered long-distance commuting and involve transportation by car, boat, plane and/or helicopter (Storey 2008) while commuting for work in fish processing is often undertaken daily by automobile (Freshwater, Simms 2008). According to Freshwater & Simms (2008), 75 km may be considered a one-hour commute. Based on this assumption, they find in their study of commuters that fish-plant workers and non-fish-plant workers in rural Newfoundland commute between 5 and 135 kilometres daily (see figure 3), representing commutes of approximately 2 hours or less a day for work (Freshwater, Simms 2008).

In the context of urban NL, particularly the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), Statistics Canada suggests that, in

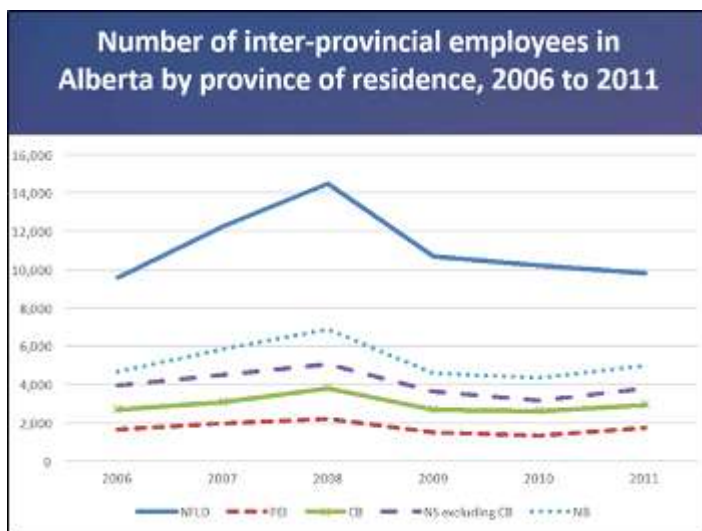


Figure 1: Number of interprovincial employees in Alberta by province of residence, 2006 to 2011 (source: Lionais 2016, citing Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database, Statistics Canada)

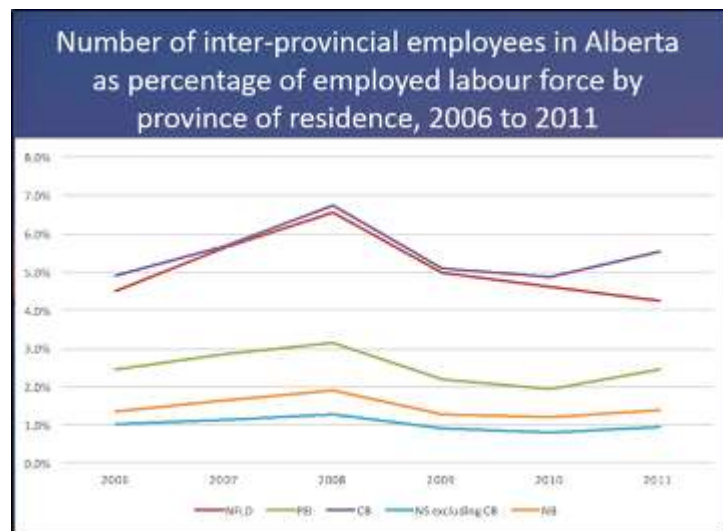


Figure 2: Number of interprovincial employees in Alberta as percentage of employed labour force by province of residence, 2006 to 2011 (source: Lionais 2016, citing Canadian Employer Employee Dynamics Database, Statistics Canada)

	From AB (\$)	Total (\$)	%
<b>NFLD</b>	474,318,378	838,441,623	56.6
<b>PEI</b>	63,196,176	139,476,859	45.3
<b>CB</b>	130,649,117	202,576,225	64.5
<b>NS excluding CB</b>	147,057,150	510,193,958	28.8
<b>NB</b>	226,625,186	613,355,882	36.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,041,846,007</b>	<b>2,304,044,547</b>	<b>45.2</b>

Table 1: Total employment income from mobile work, 2011 (source: Lionais 2016, citing Canadian Employee Employer Dynamics Database, Statistics Canada)

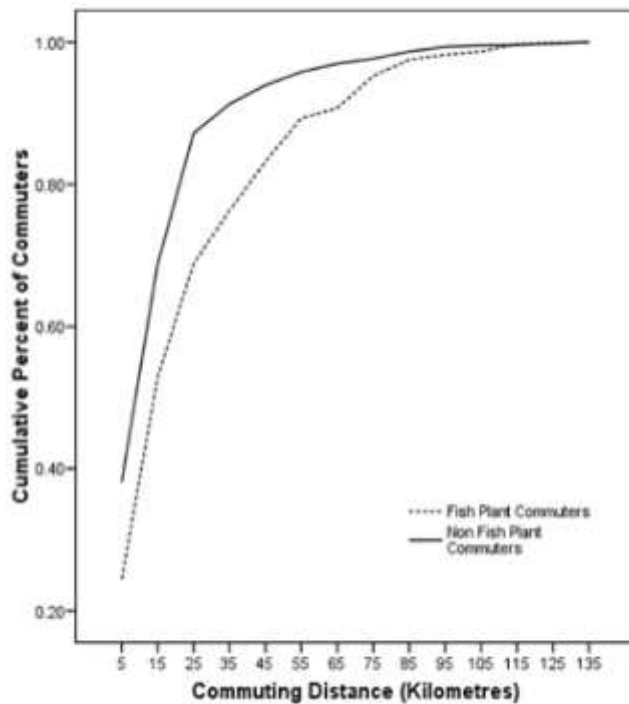


Figure 3: Cumulative commuting distance functions for fish plant and non-fish plant workers in NL in 2006 (Source: Freshwater and Simms, 2008)

2011, the average commute time to work was 17.9 minutes, with 46.8 percent of respondents travelling between 15 to 29 minutes daily for work (see table 2; Statistics Canada 2011). East of Toronto, St. John's had the highest percentage of workers commuting 15 to 29 minutes to work; however, in terms of average commute time, commute times in St. John's are lower than in the majority of CMAs east of Toronto and lower than the national average commute time of 25.4 minutes.

### c. Housing Affordability in NL

Housing affordability is measured by comparing housing costs with the household's ability to meet these costs, based on the shelter cost to income ratio. For instance, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) defines housing as affordable when households are spending not more than 30% of household income before taxes on housing costs (CMHC 2008). Statistics Canada suggests that 17.9% of households in NL were

## Usual commuting time to work, census metropolitan areas, 2011

Census metropolitan area	Average time					60 minutes or more
	0 to 14 minutes	15 to 29 minutes	30 to 44 minutes	45 to 59 minutes	percentage	
	minutes					
St. John's (Newfoundland and Labrador)	17.9	38.9	46.8	10.2	1.3	2.8
Halifax (Nova Scotia)	23.7	25.8	40.0	22.2	7.1	5.0
Moncton (New Brunswick)	17.2	44.4	40.2	10.9	2.2	2.3
Saint John (New Brunswick)	20.9	32.7	42.9	15.2	5.7	3.6
Saguenay (Quebec)	18.9	48.5	36.6	9.7	3.3	1.9
Québec (Quebec)	22.0	28.0	42.3	20.1	5.9	3.7
Sherbrooke (Quebec)	18.8	39.3	41.4	13.0	3.2	3.0
Trois-Rivières (Quebec)	18.6	44.3	37.5	12.0	2.7	3.6
Montréal (Quebec)	29.7	19.0	31.5	25.6	12.0	11.9
Ottawa - Gatineau (Ontario/Quebec)	26.3	20.9	36.4	26.0	10.4	6.3
Ottawa - Gatineau (Quebec side)	26.7	21.2	34.8	26.7	10.8	6.6
Ottawa - Gatineau (Ontario side)	26.2	20.7	37.0	25.8	10.3	6.1
Kingston (Ontario)	20.4	33.0	43.5	16.4	3.5	3.6
Peterborough (Ontario)	22.2	40.2	33.5	13.4	5.6	7.3
Oshawa (Ontario)	31.8	25.5	29.4	15.3	10.6	19.3
Toronto (Ontario)	32.8	15.4	29.0	27.2	12.7	15.8

Table 2: Usual commuting time to work, census metropolitan areas east of Toronto, 2011 (Source: Statistics Canada—Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011008)

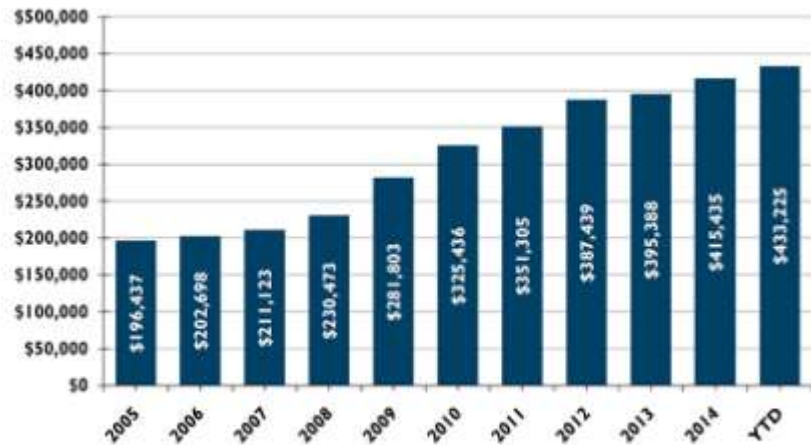
spending 30% or more of their total income on shelter costs in 2010 (see table 3). As such, it seems that many homeowners as well as renters in NL have been faced with housing stress linked specifically to unaffordable housing (albeit at rates below the Canadian average). This issue is more pronounced in the rental market in NL where 39.3% of renters spent more than 30% of their income on shelter costs versus 11.8% of homeowners in 2010.

The trend of housing stress can be linked to rising housing prices. According to the CMHC, a single detached new home in the province of NL saw an increase in the average price by 91% over the period from 2006-2012. Moreover, the median price almost doubled during the same period. In the context of NL, St. John's has seen one of the fastest growing average prices for existing homes in Canada (CMHC, 2008). According to the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Realtors (NLAR), the average price of a home in the St. John's metro was approximately \$306,400 in 2014, an increase of 1.7% from 2013. Despite an economic slowdown, prices for the average new build continued to increase in 2015, rising from \$415,435 to \$433,225 (a 4.3% increase) (See Figure 4 CMHC).

The increase in the cost of homes in St. John's is therefore outpacing growth in the average family income, which rose 2.9% to \$1,036/ week in December 2015 when compared with December 2014 (Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 281-0063).

Turning to rental prices, CMHC (2014) suggests that the average two-bedroom rent in Canada increased to \$785 per month across urban centers in 2013 compared to \$751 in 2012. NL's CMA exceeds this Canadian average where the average two-bedroom rent was \$857 in 2013. In comparison, the average rental cost in Gander for a two-bedroom was \$629, \$713 in Corner Brook, \$714 in Grand Falls-Windsor, \$698 in Clarenville, and \$649 in Bay Roberts

(CMHC 2014, Holisko and Vodden, 2014). The data presented in table 2 suggest that the cost of rentals in NL has continued to strain the rental market, putting almost 40% of rental households in a position where they are spending more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs. This housing stress appears to have impacted vulnerable populations in the province, including low-income earners and seniors; however, workers earning wages below those employed in booming resource industries have reportedly also been affected (Bailey 2013). To increase housing affordability, the Canadian Home Builders Association (CHBA) has recommended a 2% rebate on new homes for first time home buyers (CHBA, 2015; Janes 2015).



Source: CMHC

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION - 16

Figure 4: Average new build price, St. John's area 2005-2015 (Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)

Housing Indicator	Housing Tenure	St. John's (CMA)	Newfoundland and Labrador	Canada
Percentage of households spending 30% or more of 2010 total income on shelter costs	Total	21.6	17.9	25.2
	Owner	13.9	11.8	18.5
	Renter	39.9	39.3	40.1

Table 3: Housing affordability for non-farm, non-reserve households, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada (Source: NHS, 2011; Statistics Canada H=NHS focus on geography series)



#### d. Impacts of Labour Mobility on Housing in NL

The impacts of housing stress in NL appear to be felt differently across the province. Factors such as geographical and socio-economic context and level of engagement with E-RGM seem to alter housing pressures at the community and individual levels. For instance, as mentioned above, it appears that workers earning wages that are less than those employed in booming resource industries are being impacted disproportionately by housing stress with regards to affordability and availability of rental accommodations. It is believed that interprovincial E-RGM has impacted housing in the province through spending of wages earned outside of the province on purchases and renovations in the province. Reports of earnings from jobs acquired by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in Alberta have suggested wages can range. While a CBC article from 2007 suggested that salaries started at \$100,000, not including overtime (CBC 2007), Lionais (2016) suggests average T4 earnings of interprovincial employees were approximately \$51,884 in 2011 (see Table 4). In either case, these figures exceed the median earnings in the province (\$27,170 in 2011). These earnings from outside NL appear to have contributed to an economic boom in St. John's and other parts of the province, one outcome of which has been an increase in new home construction (CHBA, 2013). Little data is available, however, to link new home construction (or other housing indicators) directly to the mobile workforce in NL outside of camp accommodations.

Source Region	IPEs work solely in Alberta		Median Earnings
	2009	2011	2011
NFLD	33,864	51,884	27,170
PEI	31,947	44,959	28,160
CB	32,952	44,333	25,200*
NS excluding CB	32,575	45,417	28,330*
NB	40,609	60,396	27,330

\* CB median is for CB CMA only, not the entire island; NS median includes CB earnings.

Table 4: T4 Earnings from Alberta, interprovincial employees working solely in Alberta (Source: Lionais, 2016)

Housing pressures can be experienced in communities where residents are employed in booming resource industries but also in the communities where resource workers live permanently. Porter (2012) identified housing issues as a priority for possible future research in Labrador West, particularly the lack of housing for newcomers, rising housing costs, and a lack of affordable housing for lower-income residents. A media scan of 54 articles related to industry development in NL revealed that housing issues appears more times than any other theme, the other themes being gender equity, individual/family health, infrastructure stress, public services, labour force demands, and economic diversity or boom/bust economy (Porter 2012). Several studies in the Clarenville-Bonavista-Isthmus region have reported concerns about housing pressures in the Isthmus and Clarenville areas related to resource-based industrial projects and incoming mobile workers, mainly drive-in/drive-out (DIDO), from within the province and beyond. (Holisko, Parril, White and Vodden 2014, Holisko and Vodden 2015). Holisko and Vodden (2015), found that, in 2011, 12.4% of homeowners in the Clarenville area were spending more than 30% of total household expenditure on housing while 41.2% of renters were spending the same, represent-

ing a housing crunch (Holisko and Vodden 2015). In this area, it was found that some people were renting basement accommodations and renters were being evicted as part of this crunch (Holisko, Vodden 2015). Of survey respondents included in their study, 54% indicated affordable housing as a major concern in the region. Hall (2014) also noted that in Long Harbour, concerns were expressed about increased demand for housing because of several megaprojects being undertaken simultaneously in the wider region. Earnings from workers commuting to job sites within the province such as Hibernia, and now Muskrat Falls, also appear to be contributing to housing stress.

#### e. In the Media

The housing impacts of E-RGM in NL have received considerable attention in public media in recent years, with housing accessibility and affordability in the province, especially following the recent economic downturn, being areas of particular concern. According to media reports, natural resource-related industry employment has attracted workers to boom towns such as Fort McMurray and to a lesser extent areas in NL, such as Clarenville, Sunnyside, Bull Arm and Long Harbour areas, for work. For instance, with in-

creases in offshore construction and work in the Come by Chance refinery, an inward mobility of individuals from smaller communities led to a need for affordable housing in the town of Clarenville NL in 2012 (Mair 15 March 2012). Having experienced a population growth of 14 per cent between 2006-2011, community stakeholders in Clarenville voiced concerns that rental houses and apartments were largely occupied by high-earning tradespeople, leaving limited affordable housing for low-income workers (Curley, 26 June 2014).

As discussed above, some residents of NL have been among the mobile workers across Canada travelling to work in the oil fields of Alberta, spending fixed periods of time on the worksite but investing their wages in purchases in their source communities (Ormiston, 6 Oct 2015). This prosperity has resulted in significant housing affordability pressures, particularly over the last decade according to media reports (Ball, 2 July 2015). More recently, however, with the decline in oil prices and consequent job losses in Alberta, there is some evidence of a reversal in this situation. The Business News Network has stated that one of the biggest risks to the housing market is a rise in unemployment as it can make it difficult for homeowners to keep their current mortgage payments and may force them to sell (Gray & Bonnell, 4 December 2015). Since late 2015, it has been projected that unemployment rates would increase in NL while housing prices would fall by approximately 1% and housing sales would fall by 4.5% as a consequence of declining prices of oil

(Gray & Bonnell, 4 December 2015; Babad, 1 March 2016). More recently, it has been projected that NL will suffer Canada's highest unemployment rate, 14% over the next two years (Babad, 7 April 2016).

The impact of these job losses/bankruptcies on housing markets in NL has begun to emerge in a very tangible way. In St. John's, for instance, demand for short-term and luxury rentals has dropped (N.A., 6 January 2016). Planned condominium developments are also being transformed into apartment complexes due to a lack of buyers/renters and new condo construction has slowed to an almost halt (N.A. 14 January 2016). The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA, 15 March 2016) forecasted that the sales activities would ease in NL by 4.5% in 2016. Overall, media reports suggest that while some investment has been promised for the provisioning of affordable housing in the province (e.g. by Vale – N.A. 15 October 2015), current and projected unemployment rates and housing instability will prove a challenge for the

economic sustainability of the province in years to come.

## f. Summary and Gaps in the Literature

With regards to NL, research on the impacts of E-RGM on housing in the province is quite limited. As is demonstrated above, literature and statistical studies suggest that housing affordability has become a significant issue in the province. However, the intersection between housing and E-RGM, in particular, has yet to be studied in a comprehensive manner. Housing stress in NL has been noted in media reports and often is linked to E-RGM in host or work communities; however, housing considerations in source communities remain largely underexplored to date. It is also unclear in the literature whether planning and land-use strategies in the context of NL are viewed as barriers and/or a means of reducing housing-related stress. A small but growing body of literature, including this report, and ongoing *On the Move* research is beginning to address these gaps.



St. John's NL, 2015 (Photo credit: Leanna Butters)

### **A3. Emerging Findings from the *On the Move Partnership***

Despite recent changes in employment opportunities and workers' mobility and evidence of related strain in housing markets and community planning, as has been suggested above, there has been little research or shared dialogue in NL on these issues. Research being undertaken by the *On the Move Partnership* in NL is among the first to look at the impacts of increased job-mobility has on housing, families and communities. These topics are of significant importance for community sustainability and for social, cultural, and economic developments in the province. Looking at mobile workers, not only through the lens of their mobility patterns, but also of their housing choices, can give us insights into several challenges our province and municipalities are and will be facing in the coming years and, if how, also better inform the planning and the development of rural and urban communities. The following paragraphs will discuss emerging *On the Move* findings with regards to E-RGM and housing in NL.

#### **a. Preliminary Findings: Housing impacts in source communities and the case of the Southern Shore in NL**

In 2015-2016, Sandrine Jean conducted interviews with residents and mobile workers living in the Southern Shore of the Island of Newfoundland (Bay Bulls, Witless Bay, Tors Cove Region). Follow-up interviews were also conducted in Fort McMurray, Alberta with work camp staff and workers

(tradespeople) in the oil sands. Her findings shed light on several components of the relationship between E-RGM and housing including: 1) the decision to commute versus relocate, 2) the impact of place-related attachments and social connections, and 3) types of housing arrangements/accommodations used by mobile workers.

#### *i. Where to live when "on the move"?*

The presence of support networks made up largely of extended family and friends was the main reason given by almost all the interviewees to explain their choice of housing location and why they are not planning to relocate closer to their place of work (either to Alberta or close to work sites in NL such as Long Harbour, Bull Arm, Arnold's Cove or St. John's). Support from friends/family strongly influences housing location, even if it results in longer commuting. A construction worker in Bull Arm who was previously working in Fort McMurray, for example, strongly stresses the importance of proximity to family: "It doesn't matter where you live if you have to fly... I rather be to where I'm from and my whole family is". Jean also found that several houses are built on family-owned land, purchased under the market price when it is not passed down for free. Family support also arose in the form of help from family members in trades who assisted with home construction, significantly reducing construction costs.

Housing affordability plays a large role in the decision-making process around housing choices. Many young families interviewed are from "up the Shore".

Interviewees from as far as Trepassy have moved to the growing communities in the Southern Shore because houses are still affordable compared to what they can find in the city, as this quote from a mother who's partner works off-shore exemplifies: "We wouldn't have been able to afford a big house like this one in town. Plus, we bought land in 2003, pre-boom, and built a house there. We sold the house for double what we built it for and built a second larger house". Housing affordability can shed light not only on rural-urban migration, but also on inter-provincial return migration. The case of this mother, from Alberta and her husband, originally from Newfoundland provides an illustration: "In Calgary, in the area I was living \$750,000 wouldn't even get you a shed [...] A friend of my husband bought a house in Fort McMurray for \$800-\$900,000 and were "house poor". We bought a house in the Goulds for \$144,000!". Newfoundland's affordable housing market compared to Alberta was an incentive to relocate to the province despite reduced employment options and lower wages. This woman now lives within a 5-minute drive from her husband's family.

The Southern Shore is presented as being the "best of both worlds", between rural and urban life, meaning that greater services and amenities can be found compared to more rural communities where the majority of respondents are originally from. Many respondents mentioned that their housing strategies have favored a location that would allow both spouses to commute to St. John's for work opportunities but also to be close-

er to the city's services and amenities.

ii. *Sense of community and attachment to place: Why commuting rather than relocating?*

Jean suggests that her results are in line with the literature that has highlighted place familiarity and local social networks as key factors in housing strategies (Fletcher 2009). In this regard, sense of community and attachment to place need to be taken into account when analysing households' housing choices. It also helps to explain why a large proportion of the respondents interviewed do not envision relocating closer to the workplace to reduce the lengthy commute. Attachment to place and to the community, which seem particularly strong in the Southern Shore, are seen as making up for having to travel long distance for work as this quote highlights it: "I would think that the communities around here are probably a little bit closer togetherness than what [northeast Avalon]... I don't know for sure. But there's a lot of, like if there was a death in the family, everybody comes together. If there's a sick child, everybody comes together and they have fundraisers and bottle drives. Whatever you need to

get that family through. That goes right through of the Southern Shore." Several women also mentioned not wanting to uproot their children by moving elsewhere, even if it would mean that their partner/husband would be home more regularly. Some of the difficulties associated with long-distance commuting seem to be offset by having a home base with a support network of family and friends as well as strong community ties.

iii. *A complex combination of housing arrangements while on the move*

Analysing the mobile workforce in Newfoundland through the lens of their housing choices means looking at housing options of mobile workers while on the move. Sandrine's results show a complex combination of housing arrangements made by short-to-long distance commuters, including FIFO workers, that ranges from informal trailers to "luxurious" work camps. Complexity exists in the types of housing arrangements and the need for flexibility in accommodations when dealing with changing work shifts, turnarounds and shut downs. For example, one of the interviewees travels to Bull Arm from Bay

Bulls but stays in an apartment in Arnold's Cove on weekdays. He comes home to Bay Bulls on the weekends. He's splitting the apartment with his dad, who also works in Bull Arm. In the summer, he stays at the family cabin or in a friend's trailer (motor home). This example is only one of multiple combinations of housing arrangements mobile workers have to make. Informal housing arrangements (e.g. trailers) seem to be on the rise as a result of housing unaffordability, especially close to major extraction sites that employ several thousand workers.

**b. Preliminary Findings: The Case of Long Harbour**

Building on work completed by Heather Hall (2014), Joshua Barrett conducted surveys and interviews with workers at the Vale nickel processing plant in Long Harbour on the island of Newfoundland in 2015-2016. Their combined findings also highlight several components of the E-RGM and housing relationship including: 1) the decision to commute versus migrate, 2) types of accommodations used by DIDO workers, 3) housing accessibility, and 4) related socio-economic impacts in both host and source communities.



View of the nickel processing plant at Long Harbour (Photo credit: Kelly Vodden and Leanna Butters)

### *i. Why commute to Long Harbour?*

Interviews with mobile workers associated with Vale's nickel processing facility in Long Harbour, NL offer insights into the housing decisions of employees that commute in this context. The majority of employees interviewed as part of this study maintained a permanent residence outside of the community of Long Harbour – as such, these employees chose to reside outside of their host, or work, community. Justification offered by interviewees for living outside their work community varied considerably; however, key considerations include proximity to the city of St. John's, which was described as offering considerably more services and amenities than Long Harbour and area, proximity to the place of employment of partners, and presence of family and 'blood' ties in home communities. When comparing Long Harbour to St. John's CMA, housing affordability/accessibility was not discussed.

### *ii. Accommodation arrangements*

Only one interviewee and four questionnaire respondents retained rental accommodations within proximity of Long Harbour while maintaining a permanent residence elsewhere in the province. These employees typically sourced these temporary accommodations themselves in communities close to Long Harbour. It was also noted that a lodge was maintained by Vale in Long Harbour for employees to stay overnight at no extra cost should they be in need of temporary accommodations. These accommodations, however, were normally used by management staff and not for more than

one night at a time. For instance, one participant would work full-day shifts on Monday and Thursday; as such, they would stay overnight at the lodge on Monday and Thursday evenings and commute back home only three days a week. In the case of processing plant technicians, though they were aware of and able to use the lodge accommodations, it was found that many did not even do so when bad weather made commuting less appealing. In these instances, interviewees stated that they did not stay at the lodge because they had household duties to take care of at their permanent place of residence, such as clearing snow off of their driveways.

### *iii. Housing accessibility*

Accessibility of permanent and/or temporary housing in the Long Harbour region was not noted as a challenge for prospective home-owners – in fact, in several interviews it was mentioned that subdivisions were being developed in Long Harbour as well as in nearby communities to attract residents. Rather, it was suggested by interviewees that a lack of services and amenities in Long Harbour and area made it difficult to consider residing in the community for the long-term. Many interviewees mentioned that their places of permanent residence were a reasonable distance from towns and cities (particularly St. John's) with key services/amenities such as community centers and grocery stores.

### *iv. Community-level impacts*

Analysis of these interviews also suggests a correlation between places of residence and volun-

teerism and/or community participation and sense of belonging. Interviewees who identified as having been active in community groups, organizations, and/or events often noted that they were active primarily in their home communities and not in the Long Harbour community. It was noted that Vale was active in organizing events for workers and their families to attend; however, most interviewees did not mention having attended these functions.

## **Conclusion**

Preliminary findings from the On the Move Partnership seem to complement existing literature on housing and E-RGM in that several common themes have emerged, including the role of attachments to place as well as housing availability and affordability in the decision to commute or migrate/relocate. In the context of NL, it also appears that housing-related impacts of the mobile workforce in turn influence housing markets and form. These impacts depend on several factors including the types of commuting being undertaken (LDC, DIDO, FIFO), distance and frequency of commutes, and access to amenities/services of both source and host communities. However, as studies on housing-related impacts specifically have not been conducted in NL, it was hoped that the Housing Forum would help give further insight into the E-RGM and housing dynamic. In particular, the Forum was designed to bring representatives across sectors and from communities across NL to highlight similarities and differences from current literature and findings in NL.

# Section B: The Housing Forum

## B1. Introduction to the Day

The Housing Forum took place on April 26, 2016 and was held at the Suncor Fluvarium in St. John's, NL. It was facilitated by Rob Greenwood, Executive Director of the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, with the third session on the impacts E-RGM in communities across Newfoundland and Labrador chaired by Kathleen Parewick, Community Collaboration and Development Coordinator of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL).



The Housing Forum, April 26 (Photo credit: Leanna Butters)

The idea to host a forum first emerged when several of the 40 researchers and 35 community partners of the *On the Move Partnership* came together to discuss preliminary findings. At this meeting, housing was acknowledged as a gap in the research project overall. Preliminary results and ongoing research were consistent reminders of the importance of studying housing when dealing with workers, communities and policies around job-related mobility, including both housing in home or source communities and housing arrangements for workers in host or work communities. As such, housing was identified as a cross-cutting theme that both impacts and is impacted by E-RGM, especially in NL.

A proposal was then drafted for a forum that would not only bring researchers together but that would engage housing industry representatives, policy makers and community partners, all of whom know well what is happening “on the ground” – knowledge that is especially strategic today in the

wake of an economic downturn following a boom associated largely with the oil and gas industry. Recently, the economic downturn and the low price of crude oil have affected employment opportunities for Newfoundlanders working here and ‘out West’. Little is known, however, about the current and potential impacts of these trends on the housing market.

The purpose of this forum was to encourage discussion on housing issues related to the province’s mobile workforce, to establish a portrait of ongoing projects and potential future research, and to gather input from research that has already been done or is underway in NL. In particular, it was hoped that the intersection between the province’s mobile workforce and housing would be addressed and discussed and that research, policies and actions with potential to address these issues would be raised.

The forum was divided into three theme-based sessions: 1) Housing market trends: con-

struction, real estate, rentals and renovations; 2) Affordable housing and housing affordability for mobile workers and in communities affected by E-RGM; and 3) Community experiences, implications for planning and policy. Presenters were organized into one of the above three themes and were asked to discuss their perspective or the perspective of the organization they were representing in relation to E-RGM and housing in NL. Presentations on each of the three themes were followed by a discussion to allow forum participants to ask questions or raise concerns. Following the third theme-based session, a wrap-up panel was organized to allow for discussing key take-away messages from the day as well as potential recommendations, or next steps, for researchers, policy makers, community members and industry partners. Copies of the presentations along with this report are available at: <http://www.onthemovepartnership.ca/research/forum-on-housing-and-mobile-workforce-in-nl/>.

## Theme 1: Housing market trends: Construction, real estate, rentals and renovations

It is clear that interprovincial and intraprovincial E-RGM in NL has changed housing affordability and accessibility in communities across the province; however, the way in which changes in demand for housing linked to E-RGM has impacted housing market trends/prices and individual purchasing patterns and activities has remained unclear. It was hoped that this session would help shed light on the way in which incomes gained through E-RGM and practices necessitated by long-distance commuting (LDC), such as second home ownership, have translated into purchasing and/or rental activities and patterns and whether these have changed as a result of the recent economic downturn.

Rob Greenwood chaired this session. Three speakers presented: Chris Janes, Senior Market Analyst at the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC); Victoria Belbin, CEO of the Canadian Home Builders Association – Newfoundland and Labrador (CHBA-NL); and Jim Burton, Sales Representative/Owner of ReMax Infinity in St. John's, NL.

The following questions for consideration were distributed to presenters to help guide their presentations: **How is mobile work/job-related mobility affecting the housing market?** What are the recent trends in real estate? Housing prices? Construction? Vacancies? Renovations? Are renting and home ownership rates changing? Are the types of housing in NL changing (size, style, form – e.g.

basement apartment)? If and how are the trends related to a mobile workforce? How have these trends been changing in the light on the economic downturn and the low price of oil? Are we witnessing regional disparities?

### I. Presentations

**Chris Janes**, as part of his presentation “NL Market Overview”, identified three key drivers of the housing market in NL: population, income, and employment. He suggested that growth in these drivers leads to growth in the market; however, based on these three characteristics, this explained partly why the Newfoundland market was not growing in 2016. To support this, Janes presented a series of graphs which showed that unemployment in NL is rising, after having been locked in a downward trend since 2006. Janes also demonstrated that wage growth in NL has increased (down from 2.7% to 2.5% since 2014), and that population growth since 2014 has displayed a flat and slightly downward trend. Together, these factors have negatively impacted the provincial housing market – unabsorbed new home inventory has increased significantly, housing starts are down about 53% from their peak in 2012, new home construction is taking longer with sales declining overall, and new builds are expected to pull down for their current \$430,000 on average.

**Victoria Belbin**, as part of her presentation “Housing our Future”, suggested that housing plays a significant role in the NL economy as it directly and indirectly supports 13,000 jobs and generates \$1.7 billion in eco-

nomical activities in the province. She noted that there has been a significant rise in housing prices in NL, with St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) experiencing significant growth when compared to other municipalities nationally. This increase in price has been significant in making homeownership out of reach for many first-time home buyers – new home growth has outpaced income growth, meaning that it takes longer for first-time home buyers to save for the purchase of their first home. Increasingly, first time home buyers are reliant on their parents for assisting in down payments and this has put pressure on both generations (first time home buyers and their parents). In addition, renting has become an alternative to buying as the cost of land has tripled, an international phenomenon, at least in part, as a result of government costs, taxes and levies on new home developments. She suggested that there are a number of challenges in the current housing context: 1) there is population growth in some areas and population decline in others, especially in rural communities and remote areas, 2) housing costs remain high and will likely remain that way because of the rise in HST, 3) first time home buyers are having trouble entering the market, and 4) there is a lack of a provincial housing strategy. Belbin suggested that working together would be key in addressing the current housing challenge, particularly the following: 1) need for municipal and provincial integrated housing strategies, 2) improvement to transit and infrastructure, and 3) improvement of land use planning and planning for infrastructure. She also noted that in the current economic climate

and with the resulting return/ layoffs of construction trades workers from other provinces and major projects, renovations, many conducted by off workers, are overtaking new home construction with the underground market estimated at approximately \$100,000 in NL.

**Jim Burton**, as part of his presentation, suggested that the St. John's CMA is experiencing historic low purchase rates. He attributed seven consecutive months of increases in inventory in the MLS system to the lower price of oil and consequences for employment and incomes in the province. Burton also noted that the average first-quarter MLS price was down 4% in the first quarter of 2016 to \$282,054. That being said, he pointed to Conception Bay South (CBS) as the current most popular area for purchases. Burton suggested that CBS is growing for several reasons: 1) new schools, 2) new facilities, 3) its location within a 10 to 15-minute

drive to St. John's, and 4) highway infrastructure. Noting that today's buyers-market is 60% millennial and looking for both price and location and/or price and infrastructure, he suggested CBS offers detached bungalows for \$244,900 and can be departed from in several ways directly to the highway (e.g. for commuting workers and access to shopping and amenities). Sales are up 1% in CBS, there is a low rental stock, and low interest rates have made it attractive to home buyers. Infrastructure and housing starts in CBS made up 25% of housing starts in the CMA, only St. John's being higher at 29% in the first quarter of 2016. In addition, the average MLS price in CBS was up in the first quarter of 2016. As such, he concluded that good infrastructure and attractive pricing are what communities need to generate home purchases. He argued real estate remains a good investment and that housing values will increase in the long term.

might be a solution to help the housing market in the context of limited resources. In addition, the increase in renovations as opposed to new home developments was mentioned. With regards to **Burton's** presentation, his idea of 'good infrastructure' was questioned. **Burton** identified good infrastructure as "things that make a community, that bring friends together such as parks, facilities, schools, highways and recreational facilities". He also suggested that a new major development might not be the answer to addressing the current market in the long term, pointing to investment in infrastructure as key. He suggests the government may need to look at creating and being innovative with regards to infrastructure.

Further discussion revolved around emerging housing trends including the 'tiny house' movement, 'vertical construction', instances of home-sharing and Air BnB among millennials. Whether these types of arrangements would continue to be a trend moving forward was debated. It was suggested that there may be a disconnect between the kinds of homes developers are developing and demand (e.g. for smaller accommodations) that is contributing to this trend. As a point of debate, it was also suggested that for developers to build smaller homes, municipal policies must change to allow for smaller homes on smaller properties. Related to this, the location of residence for mobile workers was discussed. It was suggested that demand for housing by the mobile workforce in rural communities might boost (and have been boosting) these rural economies.



Theme 1 Panel (from left to right): Victoria Belbin, Jim Burton, Chris Janes

## II. Discussion

Following on **Janes'** presentation, members of the audience questioned expectations for housing markets in the future. It was suggested by presenters that, though a growth trend had been present until 2014, a downward trend was now being expected as a result of population decline. Participants asked whether these trends varied by region in NL, though **Janes** suggested all regions are experiencing the current downward trend. With regards to **Belbin's** presentation, it was commented that regional planning



## **Theme 2: Affordable housing and housing affordability for mobile workers and in communities affected by employment-related geographical mobility**

Building on the discussion of housing market trends and purchasing patterns, the second session of the forum sought to identify the way in which trends and activities reflect individual responses to changes in housing accessibility and affordability. In this way, it was hoped that this session would highlight the socio-economic impacts of changes in housing affordability and, in turn, how these changes might be attributed/related to E-RGM. It was also hoped that impacts or changes in affordability and/or perceptions of affordability following the recent economic downturn would be identified. Rob Greenwood facilitated and three speakers presented as part of this session: Sinikka Okkola of the Department of Geography, Memorial University; Robin Whitaker of the Department of Anthropology, Memorial University; and Maria Callahan, Housing & Development Facilitator of the City of St. John's.

The following questions were offered to presenters to help guide their presentations: **How is mobile work/job-related mobility affecting housing affordability?** Has the availability of affordable housing changed? Have there been changes in household debt, financing? Have there been changes in property assessments and/or municipal taxes? Have tensions been noted between workers with higher wages and workers with low incomes? Which demographic groups are more squeezed by housing pres-

ures? What about first time home buyers? Seniors? What are the impacts of the economic downturn and the low price of oil on housing affordability.

### I. Presentations

**Sinikka Okkola**, as part of her presentation "Housing Affordability – Comparative Study St. John's and Fort McMurray" identified housing affordability as a negotiation between housing costs and non-housing expenditures within the constraints of a household budget. Dynamics of housing affordability in resource-driven urban areas are of particular interest because of the importance of resource industries for the Canadian economy, and because communities with resource industries frequently exhibit rapidly rising housing costs. Establishment of resource-industries attracts population to the region, and surging demand for housing makes housing prices soar. She suggested that this leads to increasing housing affordability problems for low and moderate income earners in these regions. She offered a comparison of St. John's and Fort McMurray since both had experienced significant economic growth, mainly due to their oil industries. As a result, low and moderate income earners gained the largest income increases in Fort McMurray. Meanwhile increases were more modest in St. John's and those with already high incomes benefited most. At the same time, housing costs increased generally most for home owners with low to moderate incomes. Renters with low to moderate incomes experienced the largest increases in housing costs in Fort McMurray, while rental cost increases were low in St. John's.

Housing debt provides an additional dimension to housing affordability. An increasing share of low and moderate income earners are mortgaged homeowners. 31% of the bottom income quintile homeowners in Canada have mortgages; however, the same is true of 41% of homeowners in St. John's and 68% in Fort McMurray. At the same time, 70% of renter households in the bottom income quintile use 30% or more of their incomes on housing. For mortgage owners, 90% of households use more than 30% of their incomes for housing. Her research suggested that low-income earners are experiencing the largest housing stress, because their incomes do not keep pace with rising housing costs. Also, the gap between housing costs for households in the top and bottom quintiles is shrinking. She suggested that this may also indicate a lack of affordable housing in these cities. She concluded that rising housing costs, in combination with indebtedness, create increasing housing housing-related vulnerabilities, in both locations. This is particularly significant in volatile resource-driven economies where oil price drop can bring economic decline, public spending cuts and rising unemployment, with important implications for housing values and households' ability to pay for their mortgages.

**Robin Whitaker**, as part of her presentation on 'everyday debts' and how the boom was making housing unaffordable, offered three vignettes based on her research to illustrate possible scenarios for individuals facing housing unaffordability in St. John's. The first vignette described the experience of a cou-

ple in their mid to late-thirties with one young child. In this scenario, the couple both have multiple university degrees and multiple jobs with a household income of approximately \$100,000 per year. After making several offers which fell through, the couple eventually bought a home in west St. John's; however, the debt from this purchase coupled with student loans have been very stressful, so much so that it keeps them awake at night. The second vignette was of a single woman in her early thirties. She bought a home in St. John's with a down payment loaned to her by her father. She lives in another home outside of the province for professional reasons, which she rents, and then she rents out the home in St. John's to others; however, the rental payments she gets in the St. John's house are not enough to cover the mortgage payments. She feels that homeownership is a great responsibility and that she lacks control as a homeowner. She has no intention of moving back to St. John's, but she also doesn't want to sell the St. John's house because she fears she won't get back her initial investment. She wishes she had not bought the house and worries she may have to sell it to the highest bidder. The final vignette was of a highly educated woman in her early thirties. She has been employed contingently or been on Employment Insurance (EI) since completing university. The scope of her job search is North America and she often works on short-term contracts. She feels buying a house is 'unthinkable' in her situation because of her precarious employment and she does not have a parent able to help with her down payment. She has expressed frustration

with a lack of inter-generational understanding – baby boomers suggesting her generation is lazy – in the face of increased living and housing costs. Overall, Whitaker suggested that single people feel they cannot afford homes, that there is a fear of 'failure' expressed when people who work hard can't get to a place they feel they should be economically, and that there is a need for conversations to be had that better place housing within a greater socio-economic scope.

**Maria Callahan**, as part of her presentation, discussed the goals of the City of St. John's with regards to housing affordability in the city. She noted that housing affordability is a priority issue impacting citizens in St. John's and that the *Affordable Housing Business Plan 2014-2017* was developed with a focus on getting more affordable housing – 500 affordable homes will be created as part of this plan. She suggested that major demographic changes in NL have presented challenges for housing affordability including: residents with complex needs, working families, new Canadians, new talents, seniors who have very low to median incomes, and students. The City of St. John's partnered with federal, provincial, private sector, community sector and residents as part of this plan. Callahan noted that a range of housing choices and housing opportunities need to be promoted in order to address the diverse housing needs of residents. Some projects currently underway as part of this plan include networking sessions, revitalizing of existing policies, re-aligning of housing waitlists, development of new social housing and sup-

portive housing provider networks as well as a housing catalyst fund. In addition, 20 homes are to be built and added to the current housing portfolio. Overall, she suggested that there is a push for mixed-income development on city-owned land, for an annual forum to bring together different interest groups, and the improvement of access to affordable housing for seniors.

## II. Discussion

With regards to **Okkola's** presentation, audience members built on her presented findings with their own experiences. For instance, one individual suggested that challenges to housing affordability as a result of resource-driven growth were also being experienced in Clarenville NL, where Alberta money has contributed to new, large housing developments and driven up housing prices and demand. It was also suggested that vulnerability in the lower quintiles, as presented by Okkola, might 'lock' individuals into locations reducing their ability and opportunities to move. In addition, it was raised that being locked into a place can occur when individuals with large homes are reluctant to move (because of debt they incurred purchasing the home, for example) – in this way, housing can impact the ability or willingness of labourers to relocate and/or engage in mobile work. With regards to **Whitaker's** presentation, interest was expressed in the concept of a generational divide. Part of the housing market appears to have remained strong because of parental support in home purchases. It was suggested that individuals who cannot rely on parental financial support are therefore more vul-

nerable in terms of housing affordability, and young people often feel a lack of support by older generations in this regard. It was also noted that first time home-buyers tend to buy homes based on whether or not they can afford the monthly mortgage payments as opposed to the total price of the home, as was the norm in the past. In addition to this, it was observed that the presentation suggests a gap in the market for individuals who don't make 'bad lifestyle choices' but still find themselves in the situation where they can't afford things. In response to this, it was suggested that mixed-market tenure housing options being used in some European cities may need to be considered. With regards to Callahan's presentation, the history of engagement with housing affordability issues in the City of St. John's was questioned. It was stated that the first affordable housing plan by the City was developed in 2014 but that that it had been preceded by an affordable housing charter in 2011. Given the current economic climate, more attention has been given to affordable housing as an issue; however, it was always a consideration. It was also added that partnerships between governments, developers, and communities have been significant in raising the affordable housing question and that a change in perspective has occurred as a result of collaboration.

### Theme 3: Community experiences, implications for planning and policy

The third session was designed to identify the impacts E-RGM has had 'on the ground' in com-

munities and their housing situations across NL. While literature has suggested that policy and planning may be seen as a barrier to and/or a strategy for addressing E-RGM-related housing concerns, whether this was the case in NL was not clear. It was hoped that this session would highlight the experiences of E-RGM at the community scale. In particular, it was hoped that the way in which communities and/or community groups may have had to adjust or respond to changes in mobility patterns and housing needs and/or demands would emerge through the course of the session and subsequent discussion.

Kathleen Parewick chaired this session. Four speakers presented: Sébastien Després, Mayor of Witless Bay; Damon Clarke, Economic Development Officer/Town Planner of Deer Lake; Harold Murphy, Mayor of Parker's Cove; and Karen Oldford, Mayor of Labrador City.

The following questions for consideration were offered to presenters to help guide their presentations: **How are housing trends and mobile work/job related mobility impacting communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and how have local organizations and governments responded to**

**these impacts?** What kinds of housing pressures are you experiencing in your communities? Local challenges and opportunities related to housing? How prevalent is mobile work/job-related mobility in your community? If and how are housing challenges and/or opportunities related to the mobile workforce? Are there changes in housing design and/or demand related to the mobile workforce in your community? Have changes in housing design and/or demand had any significant spatial implications in your community (e.g. town boundaries, service boundaries, neighbourhood changes and/or development, residential segregation-disparities, etc.)? Are there impacts of the mobile workforce and/or these housing trends on sense of place and/or on the character of your community? Are there related land use pressures? Implications for sewage, water, other services? For property taxation? What steps if any have your town council and/or other community groups taken to address the above challenges and/or opportunities? What role have provincial or federal governments played, or what roles could they play?

#### I. Presentations

**Sébastien Després**, as part of his presentation "Witless Bay's



Theme 3 Panel (from left to right): Karen Oldford, Damon Clarke, Sébastien Després, Harold Murphy



Areas of significant housing development in Deer Lake since 2001 (Photo credit: Damon Clarke and Leanna Butters, 2016)

Mobile Workforce”, stated that in the last 10 years, the town has experienced a growth of 40% with new, large-scale subdivisions being constructed – the most expensive house being priced around \$649,000. Many of these subdivisions have been taken up by mobile workers coming from the southern shore who want to be near the city but not in it (as discussed in the presentation earlier in the day by Sandrine Jean). Després suggested that Witless Bay is being built up based on the young women with young children model (with men often being away for work). This creates the need for socializing activities for children in order to help relieve the burden on mothers. Some impacts of mobile work in the community include the Regional Fire Department being short staffed as a result of workers commuting to places like Bull Arm and changing development patterns, particularly between old and new part of Witless Bay. Després pointed to the new development patterns, in particular, as a potential challenge to the sustainability of Wit-

less Bay. He indicated that older homes were located at a lower topography than many of the newer subdivisions and that newer subdivisions are being constructed closer together than the older homes in Witless Bay. Because of this, there is a worry that the scale and location of new developments might impact the wells the community relies on, especially since the installation of a sewer system in Witless Bay is cost-prohibitive and therefore homes are reliant on septic systems. He notes that the Town has worked to try and ensure Witless Bay can be sustainable in the future, for instance by requiring one acre lots for new developments; however, he also states that intervention of the province in the municipal planning process has challenged the ability of the Town to plan its own future.

**Damon Clarke**, as part of his presentation “Housing Mobile Workers – From Tents to Yurts and Everything in Between”, suggested that Deer Lake has come to be home for many mobile workers, including those

from other locations in NL (e.g. the Northern Peninsula) who have relocated to Deer Lake in order to access the airport. He estimated that 50-60% of development in Deer Lake over the past five years has been initiated by members of the mobile workforce. Since 2011, 201 new homes were completed. Immigration and increased housing demand has resulted in increased housing costs, including prices and assessed values. Empty nesters, retirees, and first-time home buyers have been having trouble finding affordable homes. As such, the Town is looking to diversify housing options by providing a variety of housing types for residents, with housing being front and center in the renewed 10-year plan that is currently being developed. With the recent economic downturn, Clarke noted that new trends were emerging. There had been a decrease in new home construction and a steady but slight increase in home repairs and maintenance efforts. He also noted that around 30 homes were for sale in Deer Lake. Another emerging trend

was that Alberta-based Newfoundlanders are returning home to retire; however, some are thinking about moving back to Alberta where they might live more affordably. In addition, an increase in informal housing had occurred, with people living in garages, renting trailers in their backyards, or living in trailers on beaches. Overall, he stated that the Town is looking to keep an open mind about alternative housing options, as long as they follow municipal guidelines. For instance, both a condominium development and a yurt had recently been approved for construction in Deer Lake.

**Harold Murphy**, as part of his presentation on Parker’s Cove NL, suggested that many residents had been employed in Alberta. He stated that in the 1990s, average incomes in the community were around \$10,000 a year; however, this number was closer to \$48,000 as of 2012. He noted that around 2001-2002, residents began working in Alberta. Most men and women in the community were employed in Alberta a few years later. These individu-

als had higher than local incomes though their jobs kept them away for months at a time; however, many did not build new homes like in Witless Bay but instead renovated what they already had. He observed that a few did build very large homes which might sell for a million dollars if they were located in St. John’s. He stated that mortgages had become more frequent among residents and used to buy four-wheelers and the like. Murphy suggested that since the downturn in oil, many workers have transferred their skills, like drilling, to get work now in Muskrat Falls. Overall, he stated that around 70% of the residents of Parker’s Cove are in the mobile workforce. This has impacted the availability of maintenance workers in the community since most of the tradespeople work away. He also noted that an aging population presents a challenge for the town moving forward and that when homes go up for sale in the community, people with higher wages often outbid younger residents.

**Karen Oldford**, as part of her presentation “Forum on Housing

and the Mobile Workforce – The Labrador West Experience” stated that Labrador West has been experiencing housing challenges associated with an initial housing boom to accommodate mobile work, particularly fly-in/fly-out (FIFO). A 20-year growth strategy is being developed currently to address issues the community will face as a result of an aging population and a need to diversify the economy, a challenge living in the North. From 2007 until 2014, Labrador West experienced ‘the new boom’ – new housing was developed using FIFO for the building and construction but with the understanding that permanent workers in the dominant mining industry were going to “live, work, and play” in the community. They developed a tool to evaluate temporary worker housing because the Town wanted to avoid the challenges FIFO had presented in other communities. As part of the new boom, Labrador West went from having no housing starts for 25 years (since the previous “big bust” in 1982) to over 350 new dwelling units between 2007 and 2014 and homes were sell-



New housing in Witless Bay NL  
(Photo credit: Sébastien Després)

ing for \$325-550,000. There was also a variety of housing types including mini-homes, duplexes, an apartment building, and approximately 1000 units of temporary worker housing. A water and sewer tax was charged for “heads and beds” in order to raise money for infrastructure – this was to help get around FIFO workers not paying taxes and not spending in the community. Currently, Labrador West is experiencing a downturn, however. Oldford stated that this had led to 42 foreclosed homes in the area and rental prices have decreased to between \$700 and 1200 a month for a house (compared to \$5000 in 2010). She noted that the need for more affordable housing was a relatively new phenomenon in the community and that re-zoning for smaller house sizes had been undertaken to address this; however, it seemed that developers made more money, but prices did not decrease. The municipality has worked with partners to develop affordable housing and actively participates in the Labrador West Housing and Homelessness Coalition. Habitat for Humanity is building a home in the community and funding has been secured for a housing support worker. Overall, Oldford suggests that there is a need to consider measures to thwart the free market as it has presented challenges in her community.

## II. Discussion

In response to **Després’** presentation, concern was expressed about the scale of un-serviced development occurring in the community of Witless Bay. When asked if the community has a strategy for dealing with this, Després noted that while the Town tried to revised the

municipal plan to avoid densification, Municipal Affairs has overturned the decision-making powers of the Town (enforcing the results of a plebiscite that opted for smaller sized lots despite water and septic-related pressures). As such, the Town has little authority in deciding the Witless Bay’s future sustainability. It was also noted by panelists that residents can pressure councils for development on un-serviced land. In particular, challenges arise when residents appeal those decisions to the provincial government and town council decisions are overturned. In response to **Clarke’s** presentation, one participant questioned why residents would choose to live in informal housing options, such as serviced garages. Clarke stated that by living in such an accommodation, that resident was able to access services, such as municipal water, without have to pay for those services. In response to **Murphy’s** presentation, an audience member asked where he thought Parker’s Cove would be in 15 years. Murphy suggested that he hoped more young people would be living in the community. At the moment being part of the mobile workforce has allowed for people have higher income jobs than most people with local jobs; however, a lack of housing in the community for young workers to purchase has emerged as a concern. In response to **Oldford’s** presentation, it was asked how she feels now about requiring that workers live in Labrador West if they wanted to work there. She responded that she still felt it was the right decision for her community, especially since she feels members of the community should be involved in the community. She suggested that resentment has been noted

towards long distance commuters involved in recent construction projects that they would not have wanted to last long term. Després also noted that the significant number long distance commuters in Witless Bay has resulted in the community being imagined as a bedroom community or ‘soulless’, though it has benefitted economically from these long distance commuters.

Whether resentment was felt between residents living in old and new developments of each community was also questioned. Each presenter agreed that resentment was not present; if anything, a ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ attitude exists. In most cases, presenters noted that mobile workers were families and friends of other community members and that there was a sense of pride in the community that went with their success and related new developments. Després noted that in the case of Witless Bay he could potentially foresee resentment. For instance, if the newer developments which are built physically above the older developments began to impact well water quality in the older developments, he suggested that might cause tension. Inter-municipal regional cooperation was also raised as a potential solution to some of the challenges communities are experiencing, such as access to volunteers in source communities or pressure on infrastructure in host communities. Presenters agreed that cooperation would allow for a more equitable approach to decision making at the regional scale and might address issues of service availability in their respective and surrounding communities (e.g. maintenance workers, volunteer firefighters, public water and sewers).

## B2. Recommendations and Next Steps

To offer insights into potential recommendations for future policy and research and next steps, a wrap-up panel was organized to conclude the Housing Forum. Members of the panel were: Dr. Keith Storey (Memorial University), John Baird (Baird Planning Associates), Steve Porter (S and L Porter Homes, Past President, CHBA-NL), and Morley Linstead (Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation). Reflecting on discussions at the forum, several key recommendations emerged from the panelists and from the day:

- There is a need for further comprehensive research on E-RGM, housing needs and the relationship between these two topics as little data currently exists on this relationship. Ideally this research will be longitudinal and inform and help foster discussion between different actors.
- There is a need to start thinking more about affordable development. This includes considerations such as a) density and size of developments, b) infrastructure needs, and c) developing options appropriate for different income levels and taking into account social disparities (including disparities between older and younger generations and noted challenges being faced by young people entering the housing market).
- There is a need to move from developing “affordable housing” (which

comes with particular connotations) to developing housing that is affordable. It was suggested that housing might be re-envisioned as a continuum based on needs of the entire population. Status quo development is not addressing current housing needs for all members of the population in NL.

- Infrastructure is becoming increasingly important as employees become more mobile. As such, there is a need to plan and develop different kinds of infrastructure for different kinds of commuting (e.g. DIDO, FIFO) and to consider related socio-economic impacts for local communities.
- Forum presenters also suggested that opportunities for further cooperation between surrounding communities be explored as a way to address planning, service and infrastructure challenges associated with the mobile workforce (e.g. land use planning or public water and sewer systems, need for maintenance workers, volunteer firefighters).
- Identify current and potential integrated housing strategies at municipal and/or provincial levels (e.g. housing plans and committees, mixed-income development on municipally owned land and other mixed market tenure options). Consider a comparative perspective examining examples from other countries, in Europe for

example, to inform potential flexible housing options that can better accommodate the ups and downs of a resource-driven economy.

- We need to develop projections on what housing needs and housing demand will look like in the future. For instance, how will patterns of aging and out-migration impact future housing needs?
- There is a need for a more integrated and cooperative approach to planning and development in the context of E-RGM at multiple levels (e.g. municipal, regional and provincial) as it is a phenomenon that occurs across sectors, jurisdictions, and geographical boundaries. This implies the collaboration of different levels of government in the elaboration of a provincial housing strategy that considers regional differences and the differentiated challenges faces by source and work communities.
- To begin/continue this process it was suggested that a follow-up forum be held that brings researchers together but also engages housing industry representatives, policy makers and community partners. The annual forum held in the City of St. John’s may provide an example at the local level for consideration.

# CONCLUSION

The need for housing that is accessible and affordable for mobile workers and other residents was a focus of discussion for much of the Forum. Links between housing pressures that have been experienced in NL until recently were linked to oil and gas, mining and construction sectors and their mobile workforces. There was a recurring message that a greater range of housing choices and housing opportunities are needed to address the diverse housing needs of residents in NL. Options ranging from single family dwellings of various sizes to condominiums, apartments, tiny homes, and even yurts were discussed. This will require appropriate planning and flexibility on behalf of municipal

and provincial decision makers as well as other housing stakeholders.

Regarding community experiences with the E-RGM-housing relationship and implications for planning and policy, overall, it is clear that the relationship between housing and E-RGM in NL is complex. Impacts of E-RGM appear to vary regionally and by types of E-RGM. While some experiences are shared, other opportunities and challenges associated with FIFO workers differ in Deer Lake, Witless Bay and Labrador West, for example, or for communities of the Isthmus of the Avalon/Clarenville region where DIDO was noted to differ. In many of these communities multiple forms of E-RGM occur simulta-

neously and in concert with other forces of demographic, economic and labour force change. These complexities, in turn, seem to have inspired a complex mix of community-level impacts that include socio-economic and built-space considerations. While it is not possible or even appropriate to draw a single conclusion about the impact of E-RGM on housing (and vice versa) in NL, it is clear that, as long as E-RGM remains an important component of the NL economy in the future, continued research is needed to enhance our understanding of this relationship and policies and practices must be developed that adapt to ensure housing accessibility and affordability for future generations of mobile workers and others.



St. John's NL, 2016 (Photo by Leanna Butters)



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