

# **Attracting Growth 'Back' to an Amenity Rich Fringe: Rural-urban fringe dynamics around metropolitan Vancouver, Canada**

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## **Introduction**

For most of the past 50 years, population growth across British Columbia (BC) was strongly driven by expanding natural resource development. This both reinforced urban growth in metropolitan Vancouver and Victoria, and supported extensive population growth in hinterland resource communities. The 2001 Census, however, highlighted the fact that population growth across most of non-metropolitan BC had been replaced by population declines. New growth had contracted 'back' into the Vancouver-Victoria metropolitan region. In particular, growth was now active along the amenity rich frontiers of that region. This paper documents some of the characteristics of rural-urban fringe growth around metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria in the 1991-2001 period. Particular attention will be given to the emerging fringe areas such as Pemberton and Qualicum Beach, areas where amenity developments are driving extensive local change. While population growth in these leading edge amenity locations may not always be numerically large, they are proportionally disruptive and point to key characteristics of contemporary fringe development.

The Fraser Valley, located in the rich agricultural area along the Fraser River between Vancouver and Hope, has traditionally been considered metropolitan Vancouver's rural-urban fringe. At least three actions require a re-spatialisation of this notion. The first is the emergence of a metropolitan region surrounding the lower Gulf of Georgia basin (Figure 1). Along with the reorientation of BC's urban heartland from Vancouver to the metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria region, comes a need to rethink and expand the rural-urban fringe. Suburban growth continues to push into the agricultural areas of the Fraser Valley and a set of amenity rich rural and small town locations are developing to the north of Vancouver (Whistler

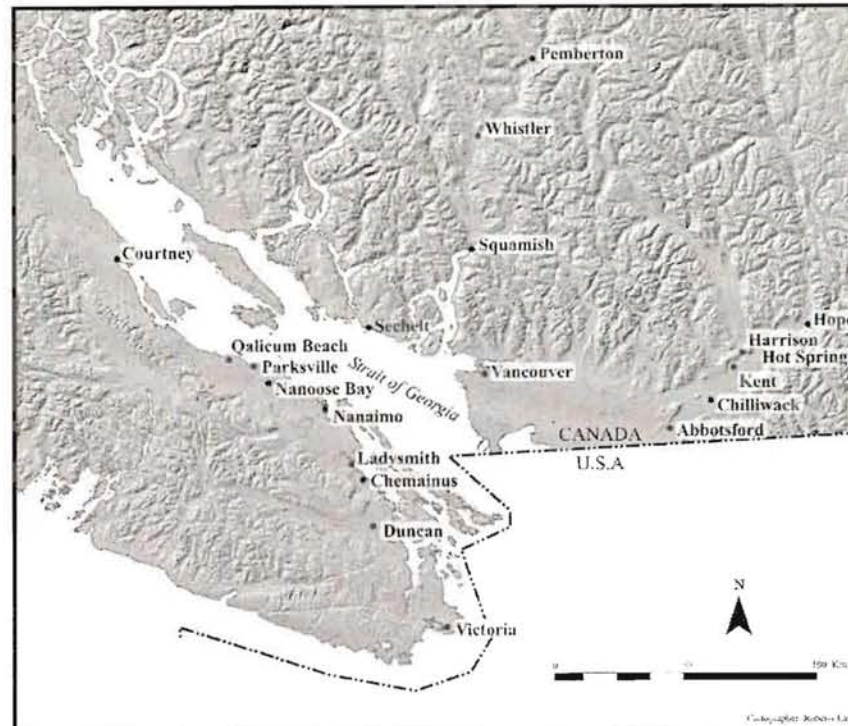


FIGURE 1 Metro Vancouver-Victoria Urban Region

and Pemberton) and along the east coast of Vancouver Island. Together, these changes to the organization and extent of 'Vancouver's rural-urban fringe' highlight an opportune time to re-examine its geography.

The paper begins by setting a context for recent rural-urban fringe growth, including the suburbanization of previous rural fringe areas. It then examines some of the parameters of growth, including in-migration rates and changing population age structures. The third section of the paper adds to several key themes associated with the rural-urban fringe literature by discussing conflicts over spillover externalities, rural community commodification, and house price pressures. Each of these conflict topics is reviewed with respect to a specific rural-urban fringe location.

### A New Context

As a rich resource province, BC was often characterized as a heartland-hinterland in microcosm (Bradbury 1987; Davis and Hutton 1989). Historically, BC's resource industries had supported extensive population growth, but by the 1980s researchers were identifying that resource industry restructuring, particularly in forestry, was changing the pattern of employment and associated community population levels (Hayter 1979, 2000; Barnes and Hayter 1994; Marchak 1983,

TABLE 1 Settlement Rank Size Changes, 1976-2001

Gain: 6-10 places	Gain: 11-15 places	Gain: more than 15 places
*Campbell River (10)	Fort St. John (15)	*Abbotsford (1)
Salmon Arm (17)	*Comox (21)	*Courtenay (12)
*Squamish (18)	Williams Lake (22)	*Parksville (27)
*Coldstream (30)	*Hope (40)	*Whistler (28)
Revelstoke (33)	*Kent (44)	*Sechelt (32)
Mackenzie (41)	Vanderhoof (49)	*Qualicum Beach (35)
Spallumcheen (43)	Port McNeil (64)	Oliver (54)
Peachland (48)	Logan Lake (73)	Invermere (66)
Fort Nelson (50)	Ucluelet (80)	*Pemberton (83)
Osoyoos (52)	Lumby (82)	Tofino (86)
Lillooet (65)	Telkwa (88)	
Chetwynd (67)	*Harrison Hot Springs (99)	
Chase (72)		
Valemount (89)		

Note: 1. Current 2001 rank size among all municipalities outside of the Capital Regional District, Greater Vancouver Regional District, and City of Nanaimo is listed in parentheses.  
2. \* = Denotes settlements within the metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria rural-urban fringe.

1989). Analysis of the 2001 Census data shows that this restructuring had indeed changed the pattern of population growth across the province. Growth had contracted 'back' to the metropolitan heartland. A context for interpreting that change and current rural-urban fringe growth pressures is now provided.

### Provincial

One way to examine the changing relative organisation of the provincial population is to look at changes in the rank size order of settlements. In 1976, there were 118 incorporated settlements in BC. By 2001, this number had grown to 123. Table 1 includes a list of incorporated places which have increased their rank size placement in the province by 6 or more places between 1976 and 2001.

A number of these communities are very small and grew considerably during the early part of this period as a result of resource industry expansion. These include Revelstoke, Mackenzie, Fort Nelson, Chetwynd, Lillooet, Valemount, Logan Lake, Vanderhoof, Williams Lake, Fort St. John, Telkwa, and Port McNeil. Nearly all of these resource hinterland communities lost population between 1996 and 2001. A second group of communities are associated with the recent development of a provincial growth pole in the Okanagan Valley. Salmon Arm, Spallumcheen, Peachland, Osoyoos, Chase, Lumby, and Oliver were all small communities at the beginning of this period and have benefited from recent amenity-driven growth. Both their small original size and the intensity of amenity development pressures in the Okanagan explains their rise in relative rank sizes.

Almost all of the remaining communities in Table 1 are associated with the Vancouver-Victoria rural-urban fringe. The former fringe areas of Abbotsford and Chilliwack in BC's Fraser Valley have been largely transformed since 1990 into suburban landscapes. The adjacent rural fringe now includes the communities of



TABLE 2 Population Growth: Metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Victoria					
City	66,149	68,973	73,275	76,831	78,389
Capital RD	255,879	275,043	307,643	331,761	341,564
Nanaimo					
City	48,268	50,687	61,708	72,950	76,383
Nanaimo RD	78,994	84,888	104,296	126,483	132,456
Vancouver					
City	429,445	454,087	485,645	537,587	577,256
Greater Vancouver RD	1,208,236	1,324,375	1,585,880	1,910,314	2,091,080

Note: RD = regional district.

Source: BC Stats <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/>.

Hope, Kent, and Harrison Hot Springs. The most significant upward shifts in rank size have been associated with about 10 communities which are: 1) within the urban field of metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria; and 2) are high value amenity locations attractive to recreational or retirement in-migration. Included in these communities are Squamish, Sechelt, Whistler, and Pemberton to the north of Vancouver, and Campbell River, Coldstream, Comox, Courtney, Parksville, and Qualicum Beach along the east coast of Vancouver Island.<sup>1</sup> Of the ten communities experiencing the greatest rank size shift, six are in this amenity edge of the urban fringe.

### Metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria

The metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria region involves a triangle of urban centres including Victoria, the emerging centre of Nanaimo, and the anchor of Vancouver (Table 2). For each of these centres, suburban growth is such that their urbanised zone can be thought of as including most of the surrounding territory in their respective regional districts.<sup>2</sup> In 1981, the three regional districts of Capital, Nanaimo, and Greater Vancouver accounted for 54.6 % of the provincial population. By 2001, they accounted for 62.5 %.

1. There are two additional communities on Vancouver Island (Ucluelet and Tofino) which have increased their relative settlement size rankings due to a combination of resource and amenity driven growth. However, these are on the west coast of Vancouver Island and are separated from the development pressures of the Gulf of Georgia basin.
2. Regional districts were introduced in British Columbia beginning in 1968. In urban areas their purpose was to group together incorporated municipalities in order to coordinate regional land use and development planning and joint service delivery. Since 1968 most regional district boundaries have remained unchanged, with the exception of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) which expanded its boundaries in 1996 to better capture the contemporary urbanized area.

TABLE 3 Population Growth - Rural-Urban Fringe

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Abbotsford <sup>1</sup>	53,538	68,386	89,262	109,758	121,263
Chilliwack	41,650	42,770	50,832	62,591	65,850
Kent	3,489	3,884	4,442	5,049	5,170
Mission	19,441	22,744	26,902	31,747	32,793
Harrison Hot Springs	585	675	672	932	1,399

Note: 1. Includes the municipalities of Abbotsford and Matsqui, which amalgamated in 1995.

Source: BC Stats <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/>.

### Some Parameters of Urban Fringe Growth in BC

Some of the growth parameters for communities within metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria's rural-urban fringe are now examined. Two aspects, in-migration rates and changing age structure, are highlighted. To examine this rural-urban fringe growth, the region is divided into four components. The first involves the suburbanising eastern end of the Fraser Valley. The second involves the Whistler development corridor north of Vancouver. The third involves the east coast of Vancouver Island from Nanaimo south towards Victoria. The fourth involves the east coast of Vancouver Island north of Nanaimo to Courtenay.

#### Fraser Valley

One consequence of Vancouver's urban growth, and the concomitant expansion of the urban area captured by the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), has involved the suburbanisation of the former rural-urban fringe communities in the Fraser Valley. Over the past 25 years, there has been a veritable 'tide' of urbanisation pressures flowing into the Fraser Valley. Rapid population growth is one of the primary markers of urbanisation pressure on rural-urban fringe communities, a process which puts pressure on both agricultural lands and the communities receiving this growth (Walker 1987; Champion and Watkins 1991). As shown in Table 3, Abbotsford and Chilliwack have been reached by the 'bow-wave' of urban development. Historically, these were agricultural communities which had experienced little or no growth during the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1990s, however, this had changed. Both Abbotsford and Chilliwack experienced tremendous population growth and the development pressures associated with that growth (Halseth 1999b). Such development pressures included new commercial and retail centres, expansive suburban tract housing, and all of the many indirect land use effects of urbanization (Pond and Yeates 1994). While vestiges of an agricultural landscape and community remain around both Abbotsford and Chilliwack, largely as a result of public policies that have slowed the urbanisation of high quality agricultural lands, they have declined in relative importance (Bunce 1998). This transition mirrors what Epps (2002) describes as a shift from a productivist countryside to a consumptivist landscape.



TABLE 4 Population In-Migration, Whistler Corridor

Town	Total Population	# of migrants previous 5 years	% migrants in previous 5 years	% intra-provincial migrants previous 5 years
Pemberton				
1981	282	90	31.91	30.14
1991	502	310	61.75	46.81
2001	1,637	905	55.28	45.51
Squamish				
1981	10,272	3,285	31.98	21.71
1991	11,709	3,510	29.97	22.38
2001	14,247	2,830	19.86	14.10
Whistler				
1981	1,365	900	65.93	32.60
1991	4,459	2,200	49.33	25.57
2001	8,896	3,885	52.09	20.85
Sechelt				
1981	1,096	400	36.49	32.39
1991	6,123	2,445	29.93	30.46
2001	7,775	1,660	21.35	17.04

Source: BC Stats <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/>>.

### Whistler Corridor

To explore population change in the 'Whistler Corridor', 'Nanaimo South', and 'Nanaimo North' areas, population count data is combined with migration data. In each of Tables 4, 5, and 6, the third column contains a count of the number of residents who moved into each community during the previous 5 year period. The fourth column indicates the percent of the total population who moved into the community during that previous 5 year period. While these data do not represent net migration (that is partially captured in the total population column together with the effects of natural increase/decrease), it does provide an indicator of 'attractiveness' and situates this relative to both time and place. The fifth column indicates the percent of the total population who moved into the community during the previous 5 year period from another location within the province. While it is not possible with published Census data to determine whether population growth pressure originated from the metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria urban region, the 'intra-provincial' migrant share is employed as a surrogate indicator.

In the Whistler growth corridor north of Vancouver, Squamish was by far the largest community in 1981 (Table 4). Significant population growth in both Whistler and Sechelt between 1981 and 2001 has brought them to more than 50 % of Squamish's size. As noted, population growth in amenity areas may not be numerically large but can be very disruptive. In this case, the town of Pemberton had a population of 282 in 1981. By 2001, it had a population of over 1,600 and received more than 900 in-migrants in the 5 year period immediately before 2001 alone. In both Whistler and Pemberton, more than one-half of the population in both 1991 and 2001 had moved to the communities during the preceding 5 year period. This is a tremendous degree of disruption. In Pemberton, most of those

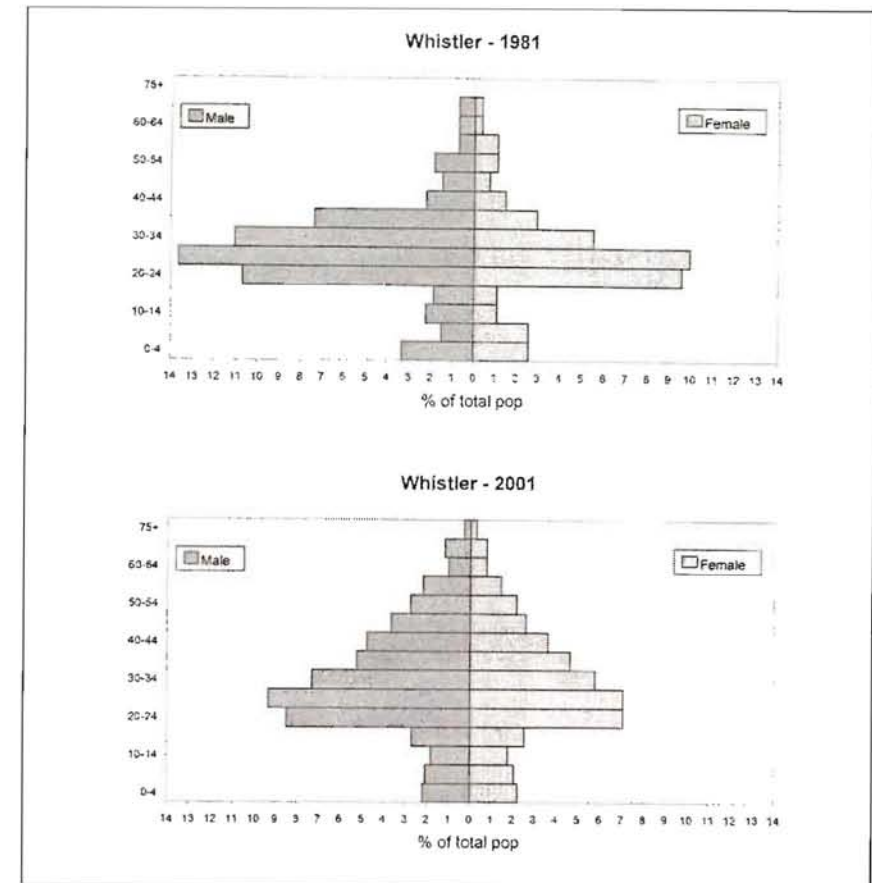


FIGURE 2 Whistler Corridor: Age-Sex Structure 1981 and 2001

migrants appear to have relocated from elsewhere in the province, while for Whistler, only about one-quarter appear to have relocated from within the province. The growing international popularity of the Whistler ski resorts was a key driving factor. As observed by Gill (1998: 140), new developments are "aimed at the non-local market and prices reflected the over-heated nature of the resort housing market".

Gill (1998: 139) also noted that Whistler's "resident population growth has kept pace with tourism development, with growth of the permanent population, the second home population and the seasonal worker sector". The population pyramid for Whistler highlights the unique nature of this ski resort/recreation driven amenity development (Figure 2). In 1981, the population in Whistler was overwhelmingly comprised of people aged 20 to 40. By 2001, this population pattern had changed. While there was still a large group of young adults, there was now a larger share of older residents. The costs associated with property in Whistler may be important in this population age shift.

TABLE 5 Population In-Migration, Nanaimo South

Town	Total Population	# of migrants previous 5 years	% migrants in previous 5 years	% intra-prov. migrants previous 5 years
Ladysmith				
1981	4,558	1,180	25.89	19.53
1991	4,875	1,430	29.33	21.13
2001	6,587	1,545	23.81	18.52
Duncan				
1981	4,228	1,655	39.14	24.95
1991	4,301	1,055	24.53	16.27
2001	4,588	885	19.29	16.78
Nanaimo				
1981	47,069	14,475	30.75	19.79
1991	60,129	17,335	28.83	17.43
2001	73,000	14,290	19.57	13.37

Source: BC Stats <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/>>.

### 'Nanaimo South'

Table 5 includes population information for the area between Nanaimo and Victoria. As shown, Nanaimo has emerged as an important regional centre. As argued above, it is the anchor point of a triangle of urban centres including Vancouver and Victoria. Between Nanaimo and Victoria area are a number of former forestry and resource industry towns which have been experiencing tourism and urban fringe development pressures since the 1970s (Barnes and Hayter 1992). Ladysmith and Duncan are two small town centres along this south-eastern coast of Vancouver Island. As Halseth (1999a) showed elsewhere, population losses as resource industries restructure are quite typical of late 20<sup>th</sup> century BC. In this area, population losses via economic change are countered by a large in-migration stream.

The community of Ladysmith is used as an example of the population change pressures in the urbanizing corridor between Nanaimo and Victoria (Figure 3). In 1981, there was a large proportion of young families and retirees in Ladysmith. The loss of long-time forest industry jobs may have played a role in the smaller share of the population between 35 and 60. By 2001, the characteristics of young families had changed to older family households (adults 35-45, children 10-20). In addition, the share of retirement age households had also increased.

### 'Nanaimo North'

The east coast of Vancouver Island, from Nanaimo north to Courtenay has emerged as an important amenity retirement and development region.<sup>3</sup> Qualicum

3. Long-time hockey fans will recall that Howie Meeker 'retired' to Parksville in the late 1970s and for some time after that continued his Hockey Night in Canada and Hockey Tips television segments commuting from this location.

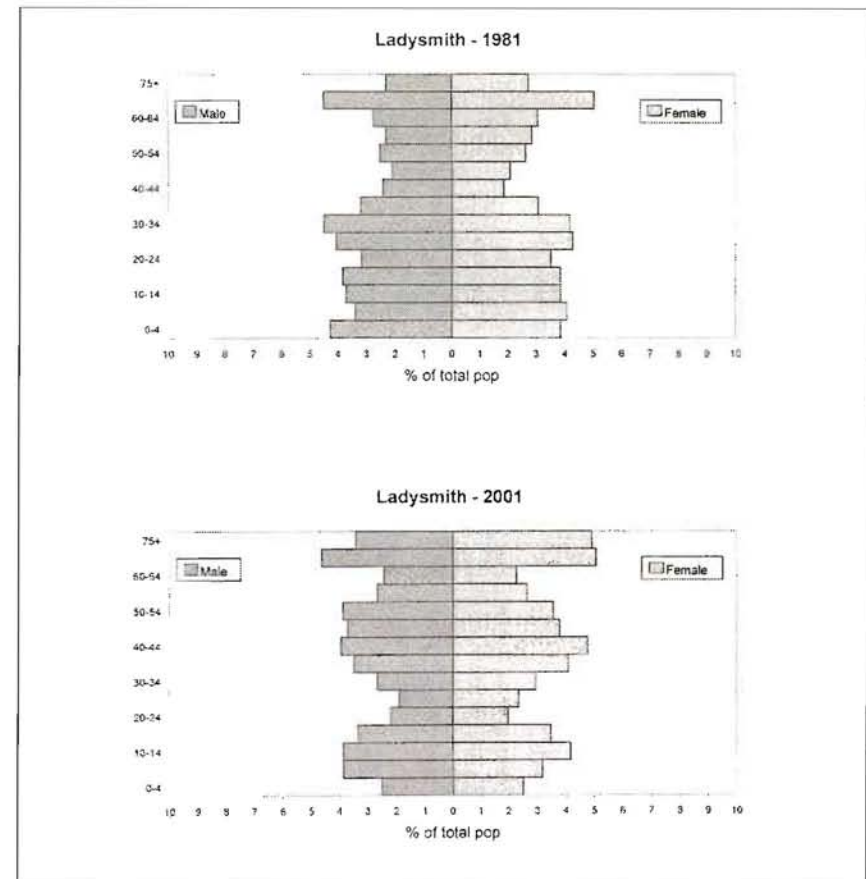


FIGURE 3 Vancouver Island - Nanaimo South: Age-Sex Structure 1981 and 2001

Beach, Parksville, and Courtenay have experienced steady growth and five year in-migration rates in the order of one-third the local population (Table 6). For each of these communities, about two-thirds of that in-migration derives from intra-provincial sources.

North of Nanaimo, the community of Parksville is used as the population pyramid example (Figure 4). In 1981, a pattern of young families and young retirees marked Parksville's population. By 2001, the proportion of families, though still present, had decreased considerably. Parksville was clearly developing into a retirement community with large shares of residents in the pre-retirement and retired age groups. Much of the in-migration noted in Table 6 must have been older people.



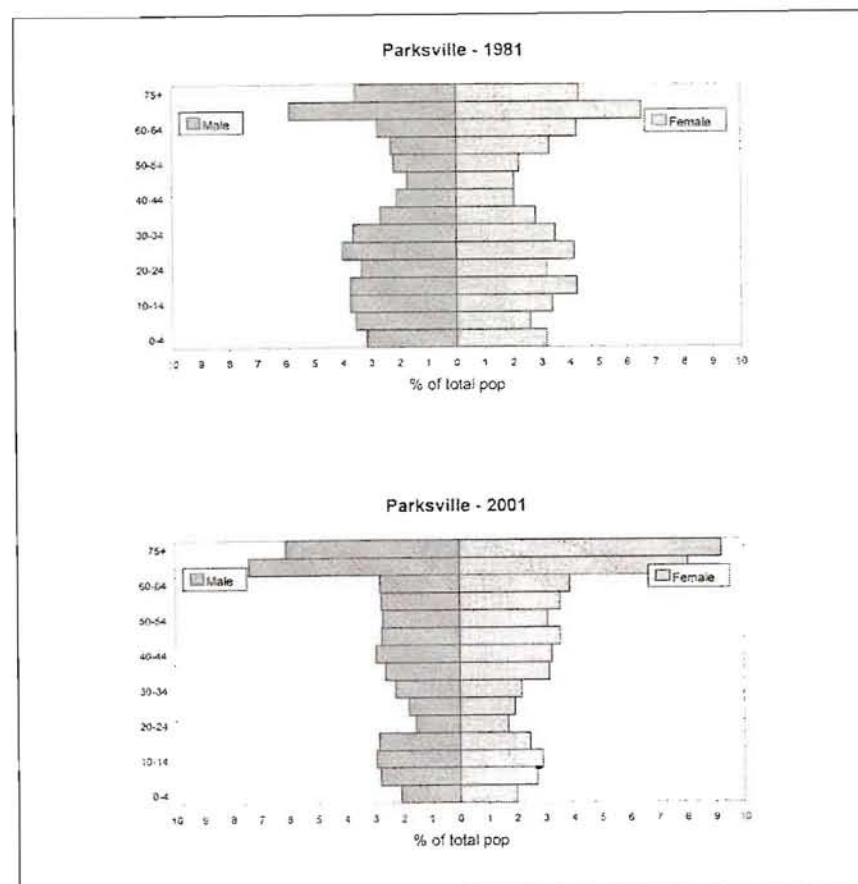


FIGURE 4 Vancouver Island - Nanaimo North: Age-Sex Structure 1981 and 2001

TABLE 6 Population In-Migration, Nanaimo North

Town	Total Population	# of migrants previous 5 years	% migrants in previous 5 years	% intra-prov. migrants in previous 5 years
Qualicum Beach				
1981	2844	1395	49.05	32.17
1991	4418	1955	44.25	26.03
2001	6734	2060	30.59	22.05
Parksville				
1981	5216	2480	47.54	36.23
1991	7306	2975	40.71	27.58
2001	10323	3455	33.46	25.91
Courtenay				
1981	8992	3350	37.26	21.96
1991	11652	4090	35.10	24.84
2001	17404	4690	26.95	17.46

Source: BC Stats <<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/>>.

## Conflicts and Dynamics of Fringe Growth

Attention is now turned to several issues connected with rural-urban fringe dynamics including conflicts over property prices, municipal boundaries, and service provision. These conflict issues are both developed out of the rural-urban fringe literature and are supported by data from newspaper searches. Each of these topics is discussed with respect to a specific section of the Vancouver-Victoria rural-urban fringe.

### Fraser Valley

Over the past 25 years, urbanisation pressures have flowed into the Fraser Valley from metropolitan Vancouver (Evenden and Meligrana 1998). The foundational transportation and settlement systems through the rural Fraser Valley that bolstered the rise of Vancouver as a metropolitan core (Wynn 1992) have thus received the feedback impulse of growth pressures as that urban core became both affluent and congested. Rapid population growth is one of the primary markers of urbanisation pressures and such urban land conversion also puts pressure on agricultural land and rural communities (Walker 1987; Bowles and Beesley 1991; Bryant 1995).

Halseth (1999b) examined some of the implications of this urbanisation on the population and governance structures of the Fraser Valley. Continuing population growth is integrating rural-urban fringe areas into the suburban zone of the metropolitan core, and it is bringing smaller towns under the influence of rural-urban fringe pressures. One of the key mechanisms pushing the rural-urban fringe further into the Fraser Valley is the creation of amenity residential developments. In 1988, the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve regulations were amended by making golf course developments an outright permitted use on agricultural lands (British Columbia 1988). While short-lived, this change resulted in over 180 proposals for 'golf and country club' style developments (BC-ALC 1993). The rural and small town landscape was being commodified into a picturesque backdrop for these golf and residential developments.

Commodification refers to the valuing of rural landscapes, places, and lifestyles by urban residents (Coppack 1988; Cloke and Goodwin 1992, 1993; Phillips 1993). In-migrants moving from urban places in effect 'purchase' the experience of being in a rural or small town community and landscape. It is often an idealised image as much as the actual landscape that has been turned into a commodity for sale through the real estate market (Newby 1987; Bunce 1994). This is generally accompanied by the requirement of having the economic means to exercise that choice. This economic requirement underscores the emerging socio-economic gaps between residents in so many amenity driven rural-urban fringe locales (Fitchen 1991; Gober et al 1993; Halseth 1993; Martinez-Brawley 1990).

Evocative real estate advertisements use place imagery, and the idealisation of place (Lee 1982; Gold and Gold 1990), as central features of marketing campaigns for amenity rural-urban fringe developments. Halseth (1999b: 166) de-



scribes an advertisement for 'The Falls', a security gated recreational community "where the lots are selling fast and the rural urban fringe landscape is selling the lots". The Falls is 'Carved out of the Rosedale Hills above Chilliwack', with magnificent views across the Fraser Valley and membership in the development's own golf and country club. Such advertising is now common along Vancouver's rural-urban fringe. The evocative images, descriptions, and even the naming of the property developments themselves work to sell the product.

But commodification, and the changes it brings, does not go uncontested in the rural-urban fringe (see also Duncan and Epps (1992)). Debate in Vancouver's rural-urban fringe is involving local residents and they are active in trying to stop, or at least mitigate, disruptive changes and impacts. Halseth (1996) describes the local resistance of a rural community against two large development proposals. In 1991, and again in 1992, residents in the agricultural Columbia Valley opposed a large golf course and resort residential development. At a series of public hearings on the matter, at which most of the adult population of Columbia Valley attended, concerns were expressed about the scale of the development, increased traffic flows, the effect upon the rural character of the community, and the implications for the continued viability of farming.

While this development did not proceed, others did. In Pitt Meadows, a development company proposed to build 450 new homes, a golf course complex, and a 150 room hotel in what was to be known as 'Swan-e-set Bay'. While urbanisation pressures had been building in Pitt Meadows, much of the area surrounding the proposed site was prime agricultural land. This was a controversial and emotional issue in Pitt Meadows. A bridge to the development site was set ablaze in September 1997. Opponents argued that the development would damage the environment, encourage suburban sprawl, and create traffic congestion (Vancouver Sun 1997: B1). Such local debates and local concerns about development pressures, and the fundamental changes this will bring to rural communities, is widespread in Vancouver's rural-urban fringe. They echo the themes of contested change long represented in the Canadian rural-urban fringe literature.

### Whistler Corridor

As noted above, the Whistler corridor and the communities of Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton have experienced remarkable growth. Much of this growth has involved 'spillover', either from Vancouver (commuters relocating to Squamish) or from Whistler (Reed 1999). Such rapid growth creates a wide range of pressures on both existing services and amenities, and for the provision of new types of services (Reed 1997a).

Population growth and economic diversification in Squamish are capitalising on its location midway between Vancouver and Whistler, and on the spectacular local scenery to be found at the head of Howe Sound along BC's 'Sea-to-Sky' highway (Vancouver Sun 1999: B5). A new piece in this diversification effort is the development of a new university. David Strangway, former president of UBC, plans to build a \$250 million 'Sea to Sky private university' on a 97 hectare

property (Morton 2002b: B2). Plans include the university and a 'university village' with playing fields, theatre, 960 housing units, small stores, and an elementary school. This development may literally and figuratively change the face of this largely forestry-based town.

Local debate about change and diversification, however, is considerable in Squamish. Reed (1997b) highlights how such debates reflect not simply contending ideas about the role and value of tourism versus resource development versus suburbanisation versus university campus creation, but that they also reflect local power structures and the struggles between those structures. The pervasive role of conflict and community power struggles is a longstanding feature of rural-urban fringe dynamics (Bryant et al 1982; Halseth 1998).

The population shifts to older age groups noted above for Whistler are occurring together with local efforts to provide year round recreational activities. In particular, Whistler has gone heavily into the golf course industry. In 1996, a promotional advertisement for a new golf course, 'Nicklaus North' (designed by Jack Nicklaus), boasted that the area now had three world class golf courses: Chateau Whistler, Big Sky (Pemberton), and Nicklaus North. The marketing of these three courses focused upon the Whistler area as one of the world's new golf destinations. When Big Sky was named runner-up as Canada's best new course of 1994 in *Golf Digest* magazine, the reviewer noted that "renowned for skiing, the spectacular countryside around Whistler blossoms into three of the finest golf destinations in North America when winter finally releases its icy grip and summer appears" (Quinn 1996: 39).

But this high end resort development has placed tremendous pressure on the housing market (Bramham 2002: B6). As a result, the provincial government agreed to give Whistler either 200 acres of land at the current boundary at Function Junction or 300 acres of land in the Callaghan Valley to build subsidised employee housing. This move is to avoid labour shortages when the service sector employees, who earn \$11 per hour, cannot find a place to live. Now that the Whistler 2010 Olympic bid has been successful, it is expected that these areas will be developed as athletes villages and later turned over for affordable housing.

Even without the Olympic pressure, Whistler is expensive for service sector employees. For those who work on the mountain, there are 1,200 mountain staff housing beds given to first-year employees or those continuing to work for the mountain (Ogilvie 2002: A32). Rent for these beds starts at \$250 a month while the open market puts rents at about \$700 a month for a room in a house. For other businesses, it is not unusual for the owners to rent out their own homes to ensure they have staff. At present, Whistler Council is already helping employees find affordable housing (Morton 2001: B3). Through their Whistler Housing Authority, the municipality has overseen the creation of 3,850 employee beds (Ogilvie 2002: A32). Their 'employee-restricted housing program' is designed to offer Whistler employees the opportunity to buy or rent suites and townhouses for much less than normal market value. The key condition is that homes must be sold to other resident employees. Other affordable housing initiatives include encouraging employers to provide accommodation for staff (e.g. the Westin Hotel has a whole floor set aside for dormitory accommodation). Roughly one-third of Whistler's



11,000 employees have subsidised housing of some sort (Morton 2002a: B1).

But the Olympics could be a mixed blessing on housing affordability in the Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton corridor. A survey for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation indicates that the average price of a single-family home in Whistler could more than triple to \$3 million by 2010 (Morton 2001: B3). With an average single family house price of \$945,000 Cdn (2001), Whistler is already the most expensive municipality in Canada. Housing market pressures are already forcing long-time residents to move to places like Pemberton or Squamish. A further Olympic impact could be explosive growth in Squamish and Pemberton, similar to what happened in Canmore after the Calgary Olympics (see Draper and McNicol 1997).

Only 25 minutes north of Whistler, the spillover growth to Pemberton has already started through a movement of service sector employees unable to afford Whistler's rents. However, property value differentials are also pushing developers to this 'greenfield' site. In 2001, a group of European and Asian investors announced that they proposed to develop a \$14 million resort hotel where they hope some Olympic sporting events will be staged (Chow 2001: C5). Their speculation about Whistler's 2010 Olympic bid appears to have paid off. Scheduled for completion in late 2002, development includes a 76 unit strata title hotel and neighbourhood pub.

The recreation and resort potential of Pemberton is also generating support industry development. For example, Prime Air has entered into a lease agreement with the Village of Pemberton to plan, develop, construct, manage and operate a terminal facility at the Pemberton Airport (Financial Post 1998: 36). Prime Air has constructed the basic terminal building with the aim of offering scheduled air service from Vancouver and Seattle to serve Pemberton and nearby Whistler. There are also plans to lease airport space to more air services and other industry. Confronting environmental concerns, Council argues that airport expansion will be of long-term economic benefit to the community (Thirkell 2000: A22).

### South-eastern Vancouver Island

On the south-eastern shores of Vancouver Island, necessity and opportunity have spurred a shift towards a more diversified economy. The resource industries have been shedding jobs while retirement communities have been creating new development and service opportunities. The "cool Mediterranean climate, beautiful environment and developing infrastructure have turned Vancouver Island into one of the most attractive places to live in North America" (Hume 2002: A5). While the "island has long been retirement haven for Canadians, with communities springing up around golf courses and beaches, the interest from U.S. buyers has escalated dramatically" in the post 9-11 period (Hume 2002: A5).

Both south and north of Nanaimo, growth is being driven by retirees. Headlines following the release of 2001 census numbers highlighted how Qualicum Beach was now the oldest town in Canada, with a median age of 58.1 years (Vancouver Sun 2002: A4). The result has been a hot retirement driven housing market.

Nutt (2002: E1, E4) surveys a set of recent property developments in the Parksville - Qualicum Beach areas. The 'Crown Isle Resort and Golf Community' is a new master-planned community, covering 831 acres around a 7,024-yard golf course. 'Craig Bay' involves 430 strata title homes ranging from \$250,000 to \$300,000 and geared towards active 50 plus adults. Amenities include a 15 acre heritage park, four km of walking trails and long stretch of sandy beach, a clubhouse with tennis courts, heated outdoor lap pool, library, arts and crafts studio, craftsman's workshop, and gourmet kitchen. 'Fairwinds Community and Resort' is an adult community of 1,350 acres and about 2,500 housing units. It includes a 6,200 yard par 71 golf course, 20 km of trails, sport fishing marina, year-round heated pool, health and fitness centre, tennis courts, and clubhouse. 'Saint Andrew's Lane on Morningstar' involves 250 town-homes ranging from \$220,000 to \$275,000 and features beaches, mini golf, and quilting and bridge clubs. This demographic driven growth is generating concerns both over typical development topics such as water supply and sewage disposal, as well as more age-specific service concerns around health facilities and ambulance service (Bell 2002: B3; McInnes 2002: B7).

But not all of the growth is just connected with seniors. The combination of climate, scenery, and lower real estate costs has made the Vancouver Island coastal strip not just an enticing retirement destination (there are 19 golf courses within an hour's drive of Nanaimo) but also attractive to young families cashing out expensive real estate from greater Vancouver. Yet, this growth is occurring in an area where the infrastructure is unsuited to large populations. The coastal highway is considered one of the "busiest and most congested traffic systems in British Columbia. ... Its origins in a rural road developed piecemeal to service logging camps, isolated mining towns and a dispersed agricultural community, became an increasingly crowded, twisting nightmare of level crossings, hidden driveways and municipal bottlenecks" (Hume 1998: B1).

With all of this growth, and the increased demands for services and infrastructure, one of the key conflicts in the south-eastern Vancouver Island section of Vancouver-Victoria's fringe involves municipal boundaries. Meligrana (2000a) has examined the case of Parksville and its attempts to cope with significant retirement developments just beyond its municipal boundaries. One of these developments is Craig Bay, described above. Among the pressures which these new developments bring are increased pressure on built civic infrastructure such as roads, and more demands on 'soft infrastructure' including such local services as community centres, schools, policing, fire protection, and health care. Developments along municipal edges place pressures on municipal services without contributing to their maintenance via property taxes.

The need to control such edge developments has long been a feature of local governance in BC, and one of the reasons that regional districts were introduced (Collier 1972; Bryant et al 1982). These service and edge development debates, however, have been made especially difficult in rapidly growing areas such as south-eastern Vancouver Island due to the removal in 1983 of regional planning powers from the province's regional districts (Meligrana 2000b). This policy change has left a critical gap in coordination, as developers could both access



cheaper land and avoid 'development cost charges' by simply working along the outer edge of small town boundaries. This has happened all along south-eastern Vancouver Island. Despite several, sometimes quite contentious, boundary extensions, edge development around Parksville (and other communities along the coast) has continued as the pressures of retirement-driven amenity residential development proceed (Meligrana 2000c).

### Discussion

The rural-urban fringe surrounding Vancouver-Victoria's metropolitan core is undergoing a re-spatialisation. Former fringe areas are being incorporated as suburbs and new areas are falling under the metropolitan influence. Yet, the contemporary public policy issues remain similar to those which have been long understood within the rural-urban fringe literature. Such issues, and the pressures of change they engender, modify both land uses and the very nature of the rural community (Bunce and Walker 1992).

The Fraser Valley now has considerable experience with an urban tide flowing out of Vancouver. As is found elsewhere, this tide of "suburban growth and the increasing use of rural areas as retirement and recreation destinations has boosted demand for rural real estate" (Henderson 2002). Such commodification of the rural countryside for urban development does not go uncontested. In part, the development conflicts around golf resorts in the Fraser Valley reflect the types of 'pro-growth' versus 'anti-growth' debates described by Pacione (1991). One twist is that the debates are linked with geography as part of a contestation between local and non-local interests as to who will set the future directions for the community.

In the Whistler corridor, the pervasive role of conflict and community power struggles over change recurs as development pressures become more intense. Housing affordability is now a very serious issue in this heated market, something likely to be exacerbated by the coming Olympics. Already service sector employees have to be assisted in finding affordable housing and the spillover effects on both Squamish and Pemberton is not only to direct growth and development there, but also to push up property and house values. Affordability, and conflict over being 'forced out' of their community, is a longstanding problem in the Canadian rural-urban fringe (Bryant et al 1982; Halseth 1998).

Fringe development along south-eastern Vancouver Island is putting pressure on both general services and infrastructure. There are also pressures from the age-specific services needs of retirees, the dominant in-migrant group. As noted elsewhere by Dahms and McComb (1999), amenity driven retirement and recreational growth is occurring along with growth in employment. Such employment growth is both leading and following the rural-urban fringe population movements. Finally, management of rural-urban fringe development is creating additional municipal boundary conflicts, something made more urgent by the pace of growth. Such boundary debates, with their intertwined elements of land use coordination, jurisdictional responsibility for servicing, and governance have a wider import than just the BC municipal context (e.g. Razin and Hasson 1994; Goodwin 1998;

Daniels 1999).

In summary, this paper has sought to update rural-urban fringe issues in the metropolitan Vancouver-Victoria region. In particular, growth along the leading edge amenity rich frontiers has been highlighted. Some of the parameters of rural-urban fringe growth, including in-migration rates and changing population age structures, have been described for three separate areas: the Fraser Valley, the Whistler corridor, and south-eastern Vancouver Island. This was followed by discussions which touched upon key rural-urban fringe themes. These included rural community commodification (Fraser Valley), house price pressures (Whistler), and spillover externalities (Vancouver Island). These general topics show connections to the established rural-urban fringe debates and suggest common links to such phenomena outside of Canada.

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