

Population Growth in Rural and Small Town Ontario: Metropolitan Decentralization or Deconcentration?

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Introduction

Population decline characterized many of Canada's non-metropolitan municipalities during the latter half of the 20th century. Between 1971 and 2001, for example, the percentage of the population residing in rural areas and small towns declined by about one fifth, to only 20.3% (Mendelson and Bollman 1998; Statistics Canada 2001a). In fact, during the last census period of the millennium (1996 – 2001), more than 50% of the country's smallest settlements lost residents (Statistics Canada 2001a). Despite this general trend, non-metropolitan populations grew in Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta. The purpose of this paper is to assess the contribution of various types of migration to the growth of rural and small town settlements in the province of Ontario.

Ontario is, unarguable, Canada's most urban region. In 2001 it was home to 11,410,046 residents with the majority (73.6%) located in its largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (Statistics Canada 2001a). In addition, a further 12% could be found within its smaller urban settings, designated by Statistics Canada as "Census Agglomerations (CAs)".¹ Although the majority of the population did, therefore, live within large urban centres, about 14% (1,484,097 residents) could be found in the province's rural areas and small towns, an increase of 1.5% since 1996 (Statistics Canada 2001a). Given the very urban nature of Ontario, it is assumed that this favourable state is largely the result of "intra-provincial metropolitan decentralization"; that is, the migration of residents from Ontario's

1. A CA includes an urban core of 10,000 residents and adjacent municipalities that are integrated with the core through commuting flows (Statistics Canada 2001c).

largest urban centres (Census Metropolitan Areas) into the city's countryside. This paper seeks to determine if, indeed, this is the case.

Metropolitan decentralization is not a novel occurrence in Ontario, or indeed in any part of the developed world (Coombes et al 1989). Its presence was first inferred during the second half of the 20th century, when higher growth rates were recorded outside, rather than within, metropolitan cores. In the United States (Butler and Fuguitt 1970), Great Britain (Kennett 1979) and Japan (Glickman 1979), this shift in growth was first acknowledged during the 1960s. A decade later, comparable trends were found to be taking place both within Australia (Rowland 1979; Burnley and Murphy 1995) and around the fringes of Toronto, Canada (Hodge 1973). Before long, similar scenarios were being recorded in other parts of this country (Bourne and Simmons 1979; Troughton 1981; Yeates 1984; Stabler 1987; Brierly and Todd 1990; Davies 1990; Stabler and Rounds 1997; Bruce et al 1999 and Millward 2000, 2002). In many cases, growth was attributed to the decision of urban residents to combine an urban workplace with the benefits of "rural" living. As greater numbers of these "ex-urbanites" (Spectorsky 1955; Beesley 1991; Vandermissen et al 2003) relocated to the countryside, municipalities formerly classified as "rural" and "small town" soon became engulfed by the expanding sphere of urban influence.

At the same time as cities were spilling into the adjacent countryside, a second, although less pervasive, movement was recognized. Coined "deconcentration" (Robert and Randolph 1983), this migratory path is one that leads metropolitan residents to destinations that lie beyond the sphere of immediate urban influence (i.e. commuting distance). International recognition of this trend (Vining and Kontuly 1978) prompted many to question why metropolitan residents were being lured to these more isolated settings.

Through survey research it was revealed that the decision to migrate frequently is driven by a desire to replace the disamenities of urban living, with the perceived benefits of residence in a bucolic setting (Crump 2003; Chipeniuk 2004). While some "anti-urbanites" (Mitchell 2004) have been found to adopt this new lifestyle upon retirement, others are able to enjoy the amenities of rural living by seeking out, or creating, employment in their new place of residence (Dahms 1996, 1998; Dahms and McCoomb 1999; Mitchell et al 2004).

For some, however, the appeal of the country stems only from the economic advantages that it provides. In these cases, residence in a non-metropolitan setting is not a preferred option, but an economic necessity (van Dam et al 2002). While many "displaced urbanites" (Mitchell 2004) chose a rural residence for its lower cost of living and inexpensive housing (Hugo and Bell 1998), others are lured by the availability of employment (Halseth 1999). Whatever the motive, the inevitable result is urban out-migration and the subsequent growth of select non-metropolitan spaces located beyond the city's immediate sphere of influence.

The growth of more distant rural municipalities was first recognized in the United States (Beale 1977) but, before long, was soon found to be taking place across Western Europe (Vining and Kontuly 1978). Although a limited amount of small town resurgence has been documented in Canada periodically since the 1970s, it has generally been concluded that growth is largely a function of population decentralization, rather than deconcentration (Kuz and James 1998;

Joseph et al 1988; Keddie and Joseph 1991; Mitchell 2005). Several localized Ontario case studies have found that metropolitan residents seek out distant RST municipalities (Dahms and McCoomb 1999; Mitchell et al 2004). However, we have yet to uncover the extent to which metropolitan deconcentration was responsible for the growth of Ontario's rural and small town municipalities between 1996 and 2001. This paper seeks to address this gap by describing the migration paths that led rural residents to non-metropolitan settlements experiencing growth in the province of Ontario during this five-year period.

Methodology

To meet this objective, information is extracted from a custom run of census data on internal migrants, five years and older, who moved from somewhere in Canada to a "rural and small town" (RST) municipality between 1996 and 2001. These are defined by Statistics Canada as census subdivisions located beyond the defined boundaries of urban areas (Census Agglomerations and Census Metropolitan Areas). In-migration data were included for Ontario RSTs that met three criteria.

First, a positive rate of growth must have occurred between 1996 and 2001 ($n = 177$). Second, CSDs experiencing growth must not be designated as a "Reserve" or "Indian Settlement" ($n = 122$), and third, complete population and migration data must be available ($n = 122$). In total, therefore, the sample is comprised of 122 rural and small town census subdivisions. This represents 27.5% of Ontario's non-Aboriginal rural and small town municipalities, and 100 % of non-Aboriginal CSDs reporting growth during the 1996-2001 census period.

The importance of metropolitan decentralization and deconcentration is assessed in three steps. Each rural migrant is first assigned to one of six origin classes, as identified by Statistics Canada: CMA (within and outside Ontario), CA (within and outside Ontario) and RST municipality (within and outside Ontario). The provincial origin of migrants is identified to potentially permit the separation of moves taken within one labour market, from those taken between.

Next, the destination of each migrant is classified according to the degree to which it is under urban influence. This is defined by Statistics Canada as the strength of commuting ties between a RST municipality and a neighbouring urban area (CMA or CA). Four types of influence zones have been identified: strong, moderate, weak or no influence, based on the strength of this association². Using this classification allows one to determine if movement to a rural area takes the form of decentralization or deconcentration. For the purpose of this study, if a move is taken to a municipality under strong or moderate influence, then it is defined as decentralization. In contrast, the move is viewed as deconcentration if migrants elect to locate in a municipality under weak or no influence. These

2. In those CSDs designated as high influence, between 30 and 50 % of the population commute to a CMA or CA. In a moderate influence zone, the percentage is between 5 and 30 with zones under weak influence with less than 5 %.

definitions assume, therefore, that people who decentralize desire the ability to maintain a regular tie to an urban core. In contrast, those engaging in deconcentration choose to relinquish this connection, in favour of a more isolated setting.

In the final step, data on origins and destinations are combined to reveal a number of different migration streams. Eight general streams are identified (Table 1). When the provincial origin of migrants is considered, this gives rise to 16 different migration paths. Four of these reflect population decentralization. Six are an indication of population deconcentration, and six others involve movement within the rural settlement system. Given the distribution of Ontario's population, it is assumed that the majority of moves taken to smaller municipalities will originate from its Census Metropolitan Areas. Whether these relocations reflect decentralization or deconcentration, remains to be seen.

Findings

Migrant Origins

The extent of rural in-migration between 1996 and 2001 is described in Table 2. Approaching one half (42.8%) of the Ontario population (five years and older), changed residence during the five-year period. Approximately one-third (34.5%) of these movers relocated to a municipality somewhere in Canada. Of these "internal migrants", more than 10% elected to settle in rural Ontario (167,010). This represents nearly one-third of all moves taken to a Canadian RST municipality during the 1996-2001 census period.

Table 3 reveals the provincial origin of Ontario's rural in-migrants. The majority of residents who chose a rural residence came from the province of Ontario (92.5%), followed by Quebec (3755), British Columbia (2645) and Alberta (2590). Considerably fewer made the move from eastern Canada, with Manitoba and Saskatchewan also contributing very small numbers.

Rural in-migrants are drawn from a variety of settlement types (Table 4). CMAs are the prime source region, with approaching one-half (46.7%) originating from within the province. This percentage is somewhat less than anticipated, given that the majority of Ontario's population resided in its CMAs in 1996. The city of Toronto was the main source for rural Ontario's in-migrants. During this brief 5-year period, nearly 13 000 residents relocated from Toronto to the countryside (16% of all moves from CMA municipalities). Halifax, Nova Scotia, was the primary source region for all inter-provincial migrants, adding 730 residents to Ontario's RST population by 2001.

Moves from smaller urban agglomerations represent 21.4% of the total, with the bulk of these again coming from within the province (19.8%). This percentage is higher than expected, based on the distribution of Ontario's population in 1996. Barrie was the most important source region for these migrants, contributing upwards of 3000 residents to rural Ontario (about 8% of all moves taken from CAs). The departure of more than 200 residents from Cold Lake, Alberta (the site of a military base) makes this municipality the most important source region for inter-provincial migrants of this type.

TABLE 1 Rural and Small Town (RST) In-migration Streams

Migration types	Migrant origin	Migrant destination
1. Metropolitan Decentralization		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	CMA either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under strong or moderate urban influence
2. Metropolitan Deconcentration		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	CMA either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under weak or no influence
3. Sub-metropolitan Decentralization		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	CA either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under strong or moderate urban influence
4. Sub-metropolitan Deconcentration		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	CA either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under weak or no urban influence
5. RST Countryside Migration		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	RST under strong or moderate influence either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under strong or moderate urban influence
6. RST Deconcentration		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	RST under strong or moderate influence either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under weak or no urban influence
7. RST Concentration		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	RST under weak or no influence either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under strong or moderate influence
8. RST Remote Migration		
Intra-provincial Inter-provincial	RST under weak or no influence either within or outside Ontario	Ontario RST under weak or no urban influence

TABLE 2 Mobility Status of Residents of Ontario and Canada (5 years and over), 2001

	Ontario	Canada
Number of movers	4 542 005	11 710 325
% of all residents who moved	42.8	41.9
Number of internal migrants	1 566 365	4 482 775
% of all movers who were internal migrants	34.5	38.3
% of residents who were internal migrants	14.8	16.0
Total number of internal migrants going to growing RSTs	167 010	517 135
% of internal migrants who moved to a growing RST	10.7	11.5
Number of origin CSDs	758	4 558

Note: Residents are identified as “movers” or “non-movers”, depending on their place of residence five years previous. Movers are classified into two categories: non-migrants (those who live at a different address but in the same census subdivision) and migrants. Migrants also are divided into two groups: internal (those who resided in a different census subdivision within Canada) and external (those who moved from a location outside Canada five years earlier).

Source: Statistics Canada (2001a).

TABLE 3 Origin of Migrants to Ontario’s Growing (Non-Aboriginal) Rural and Small Town (RST) Municipalities, 1996-2001

Origin region	Number of Ontario RST in-migrants	% of Ontario’s RST in-migrants
NFLD	720	0.5
PEI	130	0.07
NS	1 695	1.0
NB	830	0.5
QUE	3 755	2.2
ONT	154 640	92.5
MAN	910	0.5
SASK	555	0.3
ALTA	2 590	1.5
BC	2 645	1.7
TERR	195	0.1
Total	167 010	100

Source: Statistics Canada (2001b).

TABLE 4 Origin of In-migrants to Ontario's Growing (Non-Aboriginal) Rural and Small Town (RST) Municipalities, 1996-2001

Migrant Origin	Number of migrants	% of all RST in-migrants	Main source municipality	# of migrants to RST Ontario
Total			Name	
Census Metropolitan Area	84 565	50.6	Toronto	12 795
Census Agglomeration	35 870	21.4	Barrie	2 770
Rural and Small Town Census Subdivision	46 575	28.0	Wellington North	945
Total	167 010	100		
Intra-provincial				
Census Metropolitan Area	78 035	46.7	Toronto	12 795
Census Agglomeration	33 120	19.8	Barrie	2 770
Rural and Small Town Census Subdivision	41 830	25.1	Wellington North	945
Total	152 985	91.6		
Inter-provincial				
Census Metropolitan Area	6 530	3.9	Halifax, Nova Scotia	730
Census Agglomeration	2 750	1.6	Cold Lake, Alberta	210
Rural and Small Town Census Subdivision	4 745	2.9	Kings, Subd. A, Nova Scotia	100
Total	14 025	8.4		

Note: Classification is based on 1996 population. Source: Statistics Canada (2001b).

Although the majority of moves to rural municipalities did originate in an urban setting, more than one-quarter of all RST residents who migrated between 1996 and 2001 were former residents of Ontario's non-metropolitan communities (28%). Growth of individual townships or small towns, therefore, is a function not only of "counterurbanization" (i.e. moves from larger to smaller municipalities: Mitchell 2004), but is also a result of moves taken within the RST settlement system (as found by Beasley and Walker 1990). The Township of Wellington North (located west of Toronto) was the most important source region for these migrants, sending more than 900 residents to another RST municipality (about 6% of all moves from an RST CSD). A rural municipality in Nova Scotia (Kings, Subd. A) was the most significant locale outside Ontario, contributing 100 residents to the province's rural settlement system.

TABLE 5 Distribution of Ontario's Growing (Non-Aboriginal) RST Municipalities by Influence Zone

Zone	# of destination census subdivisions	% of destination census subdivisions	# of in-migrants	% of in-migrants	Average growth rate (%)	Municipality in zone experiencing highest growth rate (%)
Strong influence	65	53.3	115 255	69.0	5.9	Wasaga Beach 42.8
Moderate influence	40	32.8	36 470	21.8	3.1	Greater Madawaska 12.6
Weak influence	17	13.9	15 285	9.2	3.9	Huntsville 8.9
No influence	0	0	0	0	--	--
Total	122	100	167 010	100	5.1	

Source: Statistics Canada (2001b).

Migrant Destinations

As described in the methodology, four types of destination zones are identified based on the influence exerted by a neighbouring urban core. Growth is distributed unevenly amongst these four zones (Table 5). Most municipalities that experienced growth are under strong urban influence (53.3%). In total, more than 115,000 residents moved to these municipalities, representing nearly 70% of the migrant pool. This influx of migrants generated an average growth rate of about 6% in these communities between 1996 and 2001. Far exceeding this average, however, is the town of Wasaga Beach, the fastest growing rural and small town municipality in Ontario. This status is not surprising, considering the wealth of environmental amenity that this recreational haven has to offer (Wasaga Beach 2009).

Zones of moderate influence, although attracting about 36,000 migrants, represent a smaller percentage of the destinations studied. Growth rates here are somewhat less (about 3%) than in zones of greater influence. Several townships, however, including Greater Madawaska, demonstrate more impressive levels. Like Wasaga Beach, this municipality of the Ottawa Valley is replete with myriad amenities (The Township of Greater Madawaska 2009), which undoubtedly played a role in boosting this township's population by more than 12% between 1996 and 2001.

Only 14% of the sample municipalities are under weak influence. Together, these 17 communities attracted 9% of the migrant pool. Huntsville, as the fastest growing municipality under this influence level, stands out in that it grew by nearly 9% between 1996 and 2001. In contrast, municipalities under no urban influence did not attract a migrant pool. Although it is likely that some individuals are drawn

to these areas; their numbers are insufficient to produce a positive rate of growth. This suggests that while migrants may wish to live in an isolated rural setting, the ability to connect, even irregularly, with an urban core, is a requisite condition.

Migration Streams

Thus far, it has been shown that the majority of migrants who chose to settle in rural Ontario were drawn from CMAs (50.6%). Furthermore, it has been concluded that most migrants appear to favour a rural destination that is under strong or moderate, rather than weak, or no, urban influence (90.8% versus 9.2%). To determine if these choices are a reflection of intra-provincial metropolitan decentralization or deconcentration necessitates that one combine the origin and destination data presented in the previous tables. The results of this amalgamation are presented in Tables 6 and 7, and are described below.

People arrive in rural and small town Ontario via a number of different paths (Table 6). As expected, intra-provincial metropolitan decentralization is a dominant stream taking residents into the city's countryside (43.3% of all moves). When inter and intra-provincial moves are combined (Table 7), we may identify municipalities that benefited most from this type of migration. In a relative sense, the Township of Assiginack, located on the eastern side of Manitoulin Island, attracted the greatest proportion of its migrants from Ontario's largest settlement areas (with most coming from nearby Sudbury). In an absolute sense, the municipality of Haldimand benefited more than any other from the out-migration of metropolitan residents. The main source area for this community was the adjacent city of Hamilton, which contributed nearly half of all in-migrants.

Metropolitan deconcentration, in contrast, was of minor importance, accounting for approximately 3% of all moves to growing RST municipalities. In some isolated areas, however, it was responsible for more than three-quarters of all migrations. This was the case in Central Manitoulin Township, where 280 of 330 in-migrants came from a CMA (e.g. Sudbury). Although of less relative importance, metropolitan out-migration brought more than 1,200 residents (of 3160) into the town of Huntsville. This municipality in Ontario's "cottage country" was the most important centre for metropolitan deconcentration in the province between 1996 and 2001 (Town of Huntsville 2009).

It is apparent, therefore, that the migration of Ontario's metropolitan residents did account for a significant proportion of all moves taken into the RST settlement system (46.7%). However, evidence provided here reveals that other migratory moves also promote growth outside the urban realm. Migration from the provinces' smaller urban areas (Census Agglomerations) to RSTs under strong or moderate influence, accounted for nearly 20% of all migrations taken to smaller municipalities.

This finding suggests that the same centrifugal forces that operate in large metropolitan regions, are also at work in Ontario's smaller urban centres. A case in point is the city of Barrie, which sent approaching 3000 residents into RST Ontario between 1996 and 2001, with the adjacent Township of Oro-Medonte being the main beneficiary. This influx, and that from eighteen other CA

TABLE 6 Types of Migration to Ontario's Growing (Non-Aboriginal) Rural and Small Town Municipalities (RSTs), 1996-2001

Migration Types	Number	Percent of all RST in-migration
1. Metropolitan Decentralization		
Intra-provincial	72 310	43.3
Inter-provincial	5 985	3.6
2. Metropolitan Deconcentration		
Intra-provincial	5 725	3.4
Inter-provincial	545	0.3
3. Sub-metropolitan Decentralization		
Intra-provincial	30 970	18.5
Inter-provincial	1 860	1.1
4. Sub-metropolitan Deconcentration		
Intra-provincial	2 150	1.3
Inter-provincial	890	0.3
5. Countryside Migration		
Intra-provincial RST	30 390	18.2
Inter-provincial RST	2 720	1.6
6. RST Deconcentration		
Intra-provincial	3 335	2.0
Inter-provincial	155	0.1
7. RST Concentration		
Intra-provincial	5 905	3.5
Inter-provincial	1 585	0.9
8. RST Remote migration		
Intra-provincial	2 200	1.3
Inter-provincial	285	0.2
Total	167 010	100

Source: Statistics Canada (2001b).

municipalities, made this rural township the largest recipient of sub-metropolitan decentralization in the province. Although attracting far fewer in-migrants, this demographic movement was the most important stream bringing people to the northerly Township of Calvin. Here, 70% of all in-migrants originated in smaller urban centres. The majority of these came from North Bay (44 migrants), with a limited number also drawn from nearby Douro-Dummer and Barrie.

Although sub-metropolitan decentralization did occur in many parts of the province, the movement of former CA residents to more isolated regions was of less significance. Deconcentration from CAs was responsible for less than 2% of

TABLE 7 Ontario Census Subdivisions (CSD) Demonstrating the Highest Levels of Rural In-migration (by Type), 1996-2001

Migration Type (Inter & intra-prov streams combined)	CSD of Greatest Relative Importance		CSD of Greatest Absolute Importance	
	CSD Destination	Major in- migrant source	CSD Destination	Major in- migrant source
1. Metropolitan Decentralization	Assiginack	Greater Sudbury	Haldimand	Hamilton
2. Metropolitan Deconcentration	Central Manitoulin	Greater Sudbury	Huntsville	Toronto
3. Sub-metropolitan Decentralization	Calvin TP	North Bay	Oro-Medonte	Barrie
4. Sub-metropolitan Deconcentration	South Bruce Peninsula	Owen Sound	Huntsville	North Bay
5. RST Countryside Migration	Horton	Arnprior	Centre Wellington	Wellington North
6. RST Deconcentration	Howick	North Perth	Huntsville	Gravenhurst
7. RST Concentration	Hinton	Michipicoten	Gravenhurst	Bracebridge
8. RST Remote Migration	Howick	North Huron	Huntsville	Lake of Bays

Source: Statistics Canada (2001b).

all moves taken to RST Ontario. It was, however, of some significance to the municipality of South Bruce Peninsula (41.2% of all moves), located on Georgian Bay. Residents from 10 CA subdivisions were enticed to this area during the 5-year period, with Owen Sound contributing by far the greatest number (345 of 1,330 in-migrants). Likewise, nearly 600 (of 3,160) moves of this type were taken to Huntsville from 28 different CA municipalities.

Moves from larger municipalities, therefore, drive population change in many rural localities. However, migration within the RST settlement system also contributes to growth of individual communities. Of particular importance here is movement between municipalities under strong or moderate influence (i.e. countryside migration). This movement, which accounted for nearly one-fifth of all relocations, is likely a consequence of residents' desire to move deeper into the countryside in an effort to escape urban sprawl. In a relative sense, this type of movement was of importance to Horton, located one-hour west of Ottawa (120 of 215 moves). Similarly, moves from adjacent townships or small towns to Centre Wellington (near Guelph), increased its population by nearly 1000; the highest

number of rural countryside movers recorded anywhere in the province.

The three other types of movement through the rural settlement system are somewhat less important and represent 8% of all migrations. RST *concentration* is evident in Gravenhurst, where approaching 500 residents elected to move to this scenic Muskoka community, from less well-connected centres, such as Bracebridge. Although this type of migration accounted for only one-quarter of all in-migratory moves to this town (2,260), they were responsible for approaching one-half in the township of Hilton (35 of 75 moves), located off the north shore of Lake Huron.

Rural and small town *deconcentration* is another type of movement taking place to Ontario's rural and small town settlements. Although unimportant in most municipalities, it does account for more than two-thirds of all migrations taken to the Township of Howick, in southwestern Ontario (56.1%). In terms of absolute importance, the town of Huntsville received more migrants of this type than any other municipality (585 of 3,160), with Burk's Falls contributing the largest number of migrants (105).

Finally, remote migration is not an important migration stream (1.5%). However, it did bring more than 700 people to the town of Huntsville (of 3160 incomers). These newcomers were drawn from 21 comparable areas, including Lake of Bays, which contributed 200 of these new residents. While attracting fewer "remote" migrants, the township of Howick gained more than 30% of its newcomers from this migrant pool (200 of 660). Townships in Huron and Bruce Counties were the dominant source regions for those attracted to this municipality.

Discussion and Conclusions

Population loss is the norm in much of rural and small town Canada. In Ontario, however, this trend has been replaced by population gain. This paper has assessed the contribution of various types of migration to the growth that individual municipalities experienced during the 1996-2001 census period. Analysis of a custom run of migration data first revealed that during these five years, about 167,000 Canadians moved to an Ontario rural or small town municipality. As anticipated, many (50.6%) of these newcomers were drawn from large metropolitan regions (CMAs). However, it was also found that a comparatively large pool (21.4%) of migrants originated in smaller urban areas (CAs), and from within the rural settlement system (28%). The relative importance of these latter source regions was not anticipated, given that the majority of Ontario's residents live within its largest urban agglomerations.

An assessment of the destination of these migrants revealed that the majority selected a municipality that was under either strong or moderate urban influence. Relatively few migrants selected rural locales that were too isolated to allow for a regular connection to an urban core. If a more isolated region was selected, those with significant environmental and recreational amenity had the greatest drawing power. Places that are truly isolated, likely attract some in-migrants, but their numbers are insufficient to give rise to a positive rate of growth. Thus, although migrants do appear to seek out the amenities of rural living, these amenities must

be combined with an ability to connect relatively easily to an urban region, should the need arise.

When the origin and destination data were combined, it was concluded that intra-provincial population *decentralization* was a dominant migration stream, accounting for 43.3% of all in-migrant moves. In contrast, the *deconcentration* of population from Ontario's urban areas was of minor importance, accounting for only 3.4% of all moves taken. Places that are well known for their touristic appeal fared relatively well in their ability to attract migrants of this type (e.g. Huntsville). Although urban out-migrants dominate the sample, and are responsible for growth of the rural settlement system, the fate of individual communities also is influenced by the decision of rural residents to remain within the countryside. In fact, nearly one-fifth of the migrant pool was found to be engaging in "countryside migration". Other types of movement throughout the rural settlement system did take place during the five-year period, but their overall importance was negligible.

In sum, population growth in Ontario's RSTs is a consequence of both the decision of urban residents to choose a less concentrated setting, as I have argued elsewhere (Mitchell 2005), and also the decision of others to remain within the rural and small town settlement system. Communities located within the sphere of urban influence have benefited most from these migration decisions; a conclusion reached by others for earlier time periods (i.e. Joseph et al 1988). It is inevitable, however, that as these municipalities continue to grow they will become less "rural". Individuals seeking a less congested environment will be forced to relocate to more distant townships or small settlements. Although these locations may be too far removed to permit a daily physical connection to the metropolis, (particularly as gasoline prices escalate), the ability to connect virtually will enhance the appeal of municipalities that, according to Statistics Canada, are beyond the sphere of urban influence.

A limited number of more remote settlements, well known for their scenic amenities, also have reaped the benefits of various migration paths, confirming what has been documented through various local surveys (e.g. Dahms and McCoomb 1999). As these communities continue to lure growing numbers of tourists and migrants, it is likely that their attractivity will be compromised. Those who still wish to engage in a rural lifestyle may be forced to search more widely, both within and beyond provincial borders, for the amenities that they desire. Analyses of the 2006 census data will reveal if pressures of growth have caused a shift in the spatial distribution of migration both to, and within, Ontario's rural and small town settlement system.

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