

A Modest Proposal?: Diversity and the Challenge of Governance in Northern Alberta

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“It’s very interesting to see the disposable camera pictures of Chukotka in Russia and from northern Alberta because it looks like exactly the same landscape, and in some ways it is. The peoples are also the same in many ways. And we also have the sleds, the dogs—all of this are shared [sic]. It’s life at its northern limits.”

– Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, 5 March 2000.

As a novice to Northern Studies, I am struck by how often people speak of the North in terms of similarities and shared experiences. The drive from Edmonton to Fairbanks, for example, confirms at least some of the Governor General’s sentiments. As you head north, it is often impossible to tell from looking at the surrounding countryside whether the closest settlement is Whitecourt, Fort Nelson, or Tok. The boreal forest carpeting much of your journey’s landscape is not distinctively Albertan, British Columbian, or Alaskan; it is, instead, distinctively northern. It is not difficult to imagine that this shared physical geography might provide an important bond and perhaps the beginning of mutual understandings between the peoples who live in this northern setting. Climatic similarities join these similarities in landscape. Coates and Morrison argue that winter is the main determinant of social development in Canada’s North; winter assumes “a fundamental role in determining the nature, the extent, and the character of northern Canadian life.”¹ Responses to winter by Indigenous peoples, the non-Indigenous, and other categories of northerners may vary but all must respond.

Pointing out similarities makes a second type of appearance in writing about the North. Here the comparisons are not between northern locales but rather between the North and rural Canada more generally. The challenges facing a region such as northern British Columbia, for example, are said to be similar to those facing rural and resource-dependent areas in the South.² The spectres of depopulation, less-prosperous livelihoods, and the loss of local control haunt much of the North just as they haunt the back roads of eastern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan.³ Such circumstances,

especially when considered alongside the neglect they have received from southern politicians, demand new visions, visions imagined by northern citizens themselves.⁴

While there is value in pointing to these and other similarities, the exercise is also risky. On occasion we may over-generalize. We must check this tendency by realizing that our historical knowledge of northern Canadian communities and settlements is "appallingly small."⁵ One of the highlights of this seminar on northern governance is the opportunity it provides to hear from several people who have served as the political representatives of northern residents. Their experiences may assist the search for the North's nuances and subtleties, features that may well need to be incorporated into our thinking about future visions and possibilities for the North.

My contribution to this seminar hopes to underline the importance of insuring that the generalizations we may make about the North are sensitive to the region's diversity. I will try to establish the relevance of this point by presenting a thumbnail sketch of local communities in northern Alberta, a sketch showing that some, but not all, of the northern-rural similarities are helpful to understanding life in this particular provincial North. From there I argue that this diversity has important implications for thinking about the types of political institutions, programs, and changes that should be considered to help foster healthy, prosperous livelihoods throughout the North.

The Demography of Alberta's North: Population and Income Profiles

For the purposes of this paper, Alberta's provincial North falls within the boundaries of the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), a regional development organization created by the provincial government to promote northern economic development. Beginning at the British Columbia border, the southern boundary of the Council stretches roughly eastward to Saskatchewan along Grande Cache's line of latitude (53° 53' N).⁶ The territory covered by the Council comprises approximately sixty percent of the province. The Council's website highlights the resource riches of the region: it contains ninety percent of Alberta's forests, all of its oil sands, close to forty percent of its conventional oil and gas activity, and twenty percent of the province's agricultural lands.⁷

To probe the demography of Alberta's North, I reconciled the territory covered by the NADC with Statistics Canada's census divisions. All of Census Divisions 16, 17, 18 and 19 are captured by the NADC's boundaries; as well, portions of Census Divisions 12 and 13 fall within the boundaries set by this definition of the provincial North. According to the 2001 census, 9.4 percent of Albertans (279,944) lived in the Provincial North.⁸ This percentage is identical to that of 1991. As this similarity suggests, the North shared

equally in the province's population increase during the 1990s, a decade of strong growth. Between the 1991 and 2001 censuses the provincial population increased by 16.9 percent; the province's northern population grew by an equally impressive 17.4 percent over those years. A similar picture arises from considering population growth in the last half of the decade. Then the overall provincial population growth rate was slightly higher than growth in the North (10.3 percent overall versus 9.1 percent in the North). Table 1 shows that, while the northern population's growth rate was markedly slower than metropolitan Calgary's, the North's growth was significantly stronger than metropolitan Edmonton's. It is also noteworthy that the growth rate of Grande Prairie, the service centre of northwestern Alberta, was even stronger than Calgary's over this decade.

Table 1. Population Growth Rates, Northern Alberta and Selected Municipalities⁹

	1991-1996	1996-2001	1991-2001
Northern Alberta	6.7%	9.1%	17.4%
Metro. Calgary	9	15.8	26.2
Metro. Edmonton	2.6	8.7	11.5
Red Deer	3.3	12.7	16.4
Lethbridge	3.4	6.9	10.5
Medicine Hat	7.4	9.1	17.2
Wood Buffalo	-4.2	17.8	12.8
Grande Prairie	10.1	15.2	30.8

The different directions taken by the populations of Grande Prairie and Wood Buffalo (a sprawling municipality in northeastern Alberta containing Fort McMurray) in the first half of the 1990s illustrate the regional variations within northern population trends that occurred during this decade. While some northern locales grew explosively, others suffered population losses. Athabasca, Beaverlodge, High Level, Lesser Slave River, Slave Lake, and Whitecourt join Grande Prairie and Wood Buffalo in experiencing impressive population increases over the 1990s.¹⁰ Grande Cache, Swan Hills, and, to a lesser extent, Peace River lost residents during this decade.¹¹ Much of this pattern is likely accounted for by the uneven pace and reach of northern resource development. Athabasca, Grande Prairie, High Level, Lesser Slave River, Slave Lake and Whitecourt all had their futures brightened by the encouragement the provincial government gave to forestry projects in the latter years of the 1980s. Wood Buffalo's roller coaster ride may be attributed to the stimulation oil sands development received from

the federal and Alberta governments after 1996.

Turning to consider economic circumstances in the North, the picture we see there resembles that drawn of northern population trends. Economic hardship similar to what we might expect in much of rural Canada may certainly be found in northern Alberta. What are at least as striking, however, are the pockets of prosperity dotting the map of Alberta's North. Unfortunately this opinion is more impressionistic than the previous discussion of population. The Statistics Canada community profiles used in this study do not enable us to make comparisons between 1991 and 2001. Income data are, at the time of writing, available for the 1996 census but not for the 2001 census.

In 1996, the average individual income in Alberta was \$26,138 (see Table 2). Other than Calgary, the only medium-to-large centres to boast incomes above the provincial average were found in Alberta's North (Grande Prairie and Wood Buffalo). Twelve other census subdivisions in the North also reported average incomes higher than the provincial average. These fourteen subdivisions represent only ten percent of the total number of northern census subdivisions.¹³ But, more than forty-six percent

of the people living in Alberta's North called these places home in 1996. If we relax our threshold criterion from "exceeding the average provincial income" to "falling within ten percent of the provincial average" (\$23,524) another fifteen percent of the population would fall into this category. In other words, two-thirds of northern Albertans lived in census subdivisions where the average income reported in 1996 either exceeded the provincial average or was within ten percent of that average. Relative prosperity, at least as approximated by average per capita income, could be seen throughout much of Alberta's North in 1996. Approximately two-thirds of northern Albertans lived in communities enjoying average incomes at least as high as those reported in Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat.

Some people will argue that this picture of northern economic welfare is too rosy because cost-of-living data are not taken into consideration. This argument actually may not be as powerful as conventional wisdom suggests. An April 2001 place-to-place price comparison survey for selected

Table 2. Average Per Capita Income, Alberta and Selected Municipalities, 1996¹²

Edmonton	\$25,728
Red Deer	\$24,748
Lethbridge	\$23,754
Medicine Hat	\$23,538
Wood Buffalo	\$36,237
Grande Prairie	\$26,947

Alberta communities found that the cost of living in the northern communities of Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray certainly was higher than that reported for virtually all of the other cities listed in Table 2.¹⁴ It is not clear, however, whether the negative cost-of-living differences for northern towns and cities necessarily outweigh the greater average per capita incomes they report. The survey used a weighted basket of goods and services similar to that used by Statistics Canada for the Consumer Price Indices for Edmonton and Calgary. Using Edmonton prices as its reference point, the survey found that prices in Grande Prairie were 4.2 percent higher than prices in Edmonton. According to the 2001 census, average earnings in Grande Prairie (\$32,788) were 2.5 percent higher than those recorded in Edmonton (\$31,999).¹⁵ The earnings difference made up virtually all of the cost-of-living difference.

The most striking picture is found in the comparison between Edmonton and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. The place-to-place price survey found that prices in Fort McMurray were 12.5 percent higher than those in Edmonton. This considerable difference pales though in comparison with the differences in average earnings. Average earnings in the Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality (\$44,863) were forty percent higher than the average earnings reported in Edmonton (\$31,999). Where earnings differentials favour northerners, they may enjoy similar levels of financial well-being as their southern cousins despite cost-of-living differences.¹⁶ While the cost of living in Alberta's North generally may be higher than that found in central or southern Alberta, the presence of earnings differentials favourable to northerners tempers this disparity.

But not all notes from the North are as pleasing as these. Just over ten percent of northern Albertans (26,360) inhabited places where the average per capita income was at least twenty-five percent below the provincial average. Not surprisingly to anyone familiar with the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, this latter circumstance is one that afflicted virtually all of the Aboriginal people who lived on reserves or on First Nations settlements in the North. Figure 1 shows that none of the twenty Indian reserve-settlement subdivisions with enough residents to report average income data crossed this minus twenty-five percent threshold; measured by average per capita income, the "wealthiest" Aboriginal community in the North was Fort Mackay.¹⁷ Its average per capita income, however, was only \$16,325, thirty-eight percent below the provincial average. As Table 1 shows, fifteen of these twenty settlements could not claim average per capita incomes that were fifty percent of the provincial average. I believe it is reasonable to infer from these data that it is very unlikely that any of the other Indian reserves-settlements in northern Alberta met or bettered Fort Mackay's average income level of \$16,325.

Taken together, these data on population and income offer a small beginning to detailing contemporary circumstances in Alberta's North. Some of the messages they deliver may confound some of our expectations. Northern population growth overall was quite healthy throughout the 1990s. Stagnation and depopulation certainly may be found but it would be a mistake to extend generalizations about rural decline to all of northern Alberta. Similarly, when it comes to personal income, this first regional take suggests that nearly half of the people in northern Alberta live in quite prosperous communities. Other messages

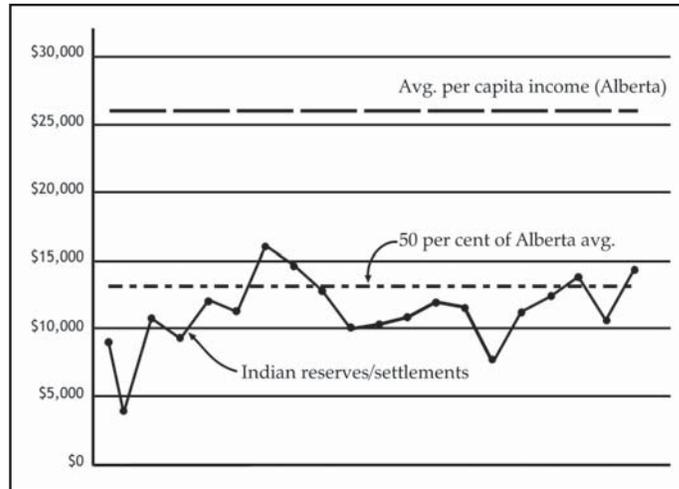


Figure 1. Per capita average incomes, Northern Alberta Indian reserves and settlements, 1996.

that may be taken from these data confirm some of the expectations we may have if we see Alberta's North as just an extension of the rural Prairies. This is certainly the case in respect to the average incomes found on Indian reserves and settlements. The composite picture is a diverse one; the challenges facing booming Grande Prairie are far different from those facing stagnant, less well-off communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

Views From the Trenches

The diverse challenges confronting different parts of northern Alberta are confirmed by the responses several local government officials gave to questions concerning the nature of the challenges they faced. One official from a rural municipal government with a strong tax base identified some of the challenges that are to be found in the wake of strong economic and population growth. He remarked that a version of the NIMBY¹⁸ syndrome had appeared in his region, a version that might be described as being suspicious of resource jobs other than the ones today's residents have taken to improve their circumstances. Consequently, people who enjoyed good livings through their employment in some combination of energy, forestry, and traditional agriculture were reluctant to welcome intensive livestock operations, such as large hog barns, into their counties or municipal districts. Given the perceived threats to their quality of life posed by intensive livestock operations, they did not share the municipal government's enthusiasm for these types of economic development opportunities.

Frictions with Aboriginal governments are also an emerging concern. Local government officials generally fear that Aboriginal governments will affect off-reserve development in ways that will harm their jurisdictions and tax bases. This fear has been fuelled by memoranda of understanding signed between the provincial government and First Nations. The claim is made that these memoranda, although intended to involve Aboriginal peoples in off-reserve renewable resource use, instead are being used by First Nations to control off-reserve forestry and energy development.¹⁹ The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties' (AAMDC) Spring 2001 Convention agreed to create a Member Advisory Committee on First Nations Issues to develop policy recommendations to insure that these and other agreements with First Nations "do not create undue hardship for local municipal governments and affected communities."²⁰

A second official, from a district with a strong tax base and a large Aboriginal population, was most concerned about rural depopulation and wanted strategies to stem the flow of people leaving his region. Although his circumstances were very different from those confronting the first official, he likewise worried that his government might be losing the mechanisms needed to govern well in his part of the North. The complexity of national and provincial regulations combined with the downloading of responsibilities onto the local government level was exposing the latter's lack of expertise. Good local governance may require more resources than he currently could draw on. The lack of local expertise also has proven problematic when the provincial government has been slow to regulate controversial activities. Intensive livestock operations were such an issue. While the provincial government struggled with the question of how these operations were to be regulated, a regulatory vacuum existed. Local governments were thus left to wrestle with an issue for which their local planners did not have sufficient technical expertise.²¹

Provincial political representation was another significant issue to this second official. He worried that the North could lose seats if the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission called for the redistribution of seats after completing its review of the fit between the existing boundaries and the 2001 census data. He felt that, too often, provincial legislation and regulations were insensitive to the circumstances found in the North. Any reduction in the North's political representation would aggravate this situation. These concerns about provincial political representation were echoed by the NADC and the AAMDC in presentations to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The NADC wanted to maintain the existing number of northern constituencies while the AAMDC complained that "it seems that every few years, we're back trying to defend the right of rural citizens to have a meaningful voice in provincial decision-making."²² Neither organi-

zation could be happy with the recommendations made in the Commission's interim report. The Commission proposed to reduce the number of rural constituencies by one, to nineteen. This reduction, if retained in the Commission's Final Report and implemented by the government, would come at the expense of northeastern Alberta where three ridings would be amalgamated into two.

Implications for Northern Governance

If there is a common thread joining these views, it is spun from the idea of governance. Local government officials, whether from relatively well-off or struggling regions in the North, raise questions about the suitability of existing decision-making institutions, processes, and resources. They are concerned about whether political institutions have the capacity to help northern residents enjoy healthy livelihoods. The representation issues raised by both the NADC and the AAMDC are qualitatively similar.

Several steps could be taken to address these governance concerns. First, provincial downloading of service-delivery responsibilities to the local level of government, coming as it has without the new dollars needed to carry them out, must stop. As part of its budget-cutting strategy during its first term, the Klein government demanded that Municipal Districts and Counties pay twenty-five percent of the costs of maintaining the province's secondary road system, funds that traditionally had been spent on local roads. Local roads crumbled as a result.²³ Poorer municipalities were hit especially hard by the elimination of Municipal Assistance Grants in 1994.²⁴ This pattern in provincial-municipal finance has been a concern for municipal officials, not just in the North, but throughout Alberta. For districts with strong tax bases courtesy of either or both forestry and oil and gas, these cuts may just have been irritating; for communities lacking such healthy tax bases they have proved crippling. This situation is compounded when the flow from other traditional revenue streams, such as tax assessments on abandoned pipelines, is threatened or cut off.²⁵ But, as someone with years of experience in rural Alberta politics told me, rural municipalities often are reluctant to criticize the provincial government on these revenue and spending issues. They fear their criticisms will reap punishment from the government in the form of more cuts in provincial transfers and services.²⁶

Some people may question the wisdom of strengthening local institutions that may lack essential expertise and may not have the desire to offer the combination of infrastructure, social welfare, and environmental services their citizens will demand. This perspective ignores local community success stories from other northern jurisdictions. Alaska's North Slope Borough, for example, became a good steward of community interests on Alaska's northern coast once its legislative authority and ability to tax oil

and gas development were confirmed.²⁷

The province also should build on a promising institutional change made through its recent creation of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.²⁸ In respect to Aboriginal peoples, the ministry does not deliver programs; rather the department's objective is to be "a catalyst, coordinator and facilitator" in developing and implementing government-wide Aboriginal policies.²⁹ Some initial success could be claimed through the incorporation of an Aboriginal Policy Initiative in Alberta's 2002-2005 business plan and the introduction of Aboriginal strategies in eighty percent of departmental business plans. However, it remains to be seen whether a junior ministry without any significant program responsibilities and a very small budget is able to insure that these good intentions are implemented. The same thoughts apply to the ministry's northern development responsibilities. Here, NADC's objective "is to advance northern development through regional initiatives in partnership with the private sector and community-based organizations and other government agencies."³⁰ The current membership of the NADC appears well-suited to the diverse circumstances in the North identified earlier. The nine public members of the Council are drawn from all parts of the North. Significantly, two of those members are from the Aboriginal community.³¹

Despite the best efforts of the NADC and its staff, there are grounds for concern that the provincial government's commitment to taking a proactive position on northern development issues is more symbolic than substantive. By any measure, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is one of the smallest, most junior departments in the government. With 61 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions in the 2002-03 fiscal year, only International and Intergovernmental Affairs (53 FTEs) and Gaming (32 FTEs) had fewer personnel; only International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Executive Council had smaller 2002-03 budgets than Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.³² Of the Ministry's \$30.182 million 2002-03 budget only a miniscule \$1.954 million is devoted to northern development.³³

Also, although the inclusion of Aboriginal people on the NADC is necessary and welcome, there is arguably a need in the North to develop formal mechanisms for consultation and dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments. The Minister responsible for AAND wrote optimistically in her first annual report about the opportunities she saw "to capitalize on synergies between Northern and Aboriginal goals."³⁴ The suspicions or hostility that northern municipalities sometimes show towards Aboriginal governments will have to be addressed and reduced for this cooperation to emerge. The above-mentioned resolution, requesting the creation of an AAMDC task force on First Nations issues, appears to

have been sired by this outlook towards Aboriginal governments. It views the ambitions of First Nations antagonistically, as a threat to the health of non-Aboriginal communities in northern Alberta.³⁵ Progress for both communities in their shared geography may hinge upon the development of new regional institutions that bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments.

What might such new regional institutions look like? One alternative I have advocated elsewhere would be the reincarnation of the regional planning commissions the provincial government eliminated in 1995 when it withdrew its funding for them.³⁶ The Chairman of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission regretfully said when he marked the passing of the commissions:

Regional planning commissions are designed to collect and consider a broad range of demographic and geographic information in order to assist governments in making those key decisions that affect where and how people live, where business can best be located to capitalize on human and natural resources, and how best to plan economic development in the interest of preserving a sustainable environment.³⁷

These commissions would represent a step towards addressing the “expertise gap” in the North. Involving representatives from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments in the governing structures of these commissions also would create the opportunity for needed dialogue between the local political leadership of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. These planning commissions should not be regarded as the leading edge or the vanguard of a “top-down” plan to regionalize local government in the North. The members of the AAMDC made it quite clear at their Fall 2001 convention that any move to offer services regionally, rather than locally, should originate voluntarily from local municipalities themselves.³⁸

The reincarnation of regional planning commissions also would offer an opportunity to reconsider whether traditional political boundaries are the best ones to use when we set out to identify the regions that these commissions might serve. As considerations of environmental quality have begun to demand attention from policy makers, there have been calls to adopt ecosystems as appropriate policy-making units. McAllister has argued that this approach is needed to produce effective environmental decision making in rural Canada.³⁹ More radically, Kemmis follows the logic of John Wesley Powell and argues in favour of redrawing political boundaries in the American West to conform to major ecological features, such as drainage basins.⁴⁰ On a smaller, less provocative, scale this type of approach may be found in the recommendations of some government agencies and task forces. Both Alberta’s Natural Resources Conservation Board and the federal Banff-Bow Valley Task Force concluded that a better

approach to addressing development issues in the Bow Valley lay in substituting ecosystem boundaries for political ones. In the case of the Northern East Slopes of the Rockies, the provincial government is trying to develop a regional sustainable development strategy.⁴¹ The Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA) is an example of a non-profit organization that, although not using the ecosystem concept, is trying to improve the air quality for Albertans by taking a novel approach to the idea of region. Instead of trying to develop a province-wide standard, CASA has adopted the concept of regional airsheds, airsheds that do not conform exactly to conventional political boundaries.⁴² Northerners should consider whether these or other types of regional planning institutions might not give them some of the resources they need to meet the challenges they face today.

Conclusion

The recommendation that the peoples in Alberta's North push for the rebirth of regional planning commissions may not strike some as a particularly sexy contribution to the debates over governance in the North. But, in light of the diverse circumstances found in Alberta's North, it has several strengths. It does not presume that a one-size-fits-all approach would be useful in helping northerners grapple with their futures; it respects the principle that visions of the North's future should spring from the North itself; and, it strives to offer the peoples of the North some of the additional expertise, information, and decision-making structures needed to realize the healthy livelihoods they aspire to.

About the Author

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Endnotes

1. Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, "Winter and the Shaping of Northern History: Reflections from the Canadian North," in Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, eds., *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 25.
2. Ken Coates, "Northland: The Past, Present and Future of Northern British

- Columbia in an Age of Globalization," in Roger Epp and Dave Whitson, eds., *Writing Off the Rural West: Globalization, Governments, and the Transformation of Rural Communities* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 110.
3. On the loss of local control in rural Alberta see Roger Epp, "The Political De-skilling of Rural Communities," in Epp and Whitson, eds., *Writing Off the Rural West*.
 4. Coates develops this argument in the context of northern British Columbia. See Coates, "Northland," 124.
 5. Charlene Porsild, "Creating New Angles of Repose: Northern Canadian Communities in a National Context," in Abel and Coates, eds., *Northern Visions*, 118.
 6. A map of the Northern Alberta Development Council's boundaries may be found at <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/nadc/AboutNADC/regional_map.htm>.
 7. See <<http://www.gov.ab.ca/nadc/AboutNADC/links.htm>>.
 8. The publicly accessible population and dwelling count data from the 2001 census used in this analysis are available at <<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/popdwell/tables.cfm>>. Percentages of Albertans living in the Provincial North were calculated by first adding the populations of Census Divisions 16, 17, 18, and 19 with the populations of those Census Subdivisions (Municipalities) of Census Divisions 12 and 13 that resided in the provincial North. The northern population percentage is calculated by dividing this sum by Alberta's total population. In order to be in the position to make cross-time comparisons the same procedure was used in respect to the population and dwelling count data contained in the 1991 and 1996 censuses.
 9. The population growth rates in Table 1 are calculated using the population and dwelling count data from the 2001 and 1996 censuses. The community profiles prepared for the 1996 census contain data for 1991. See the Statistical Profile of Canadian Communities at <<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm>>.
 10. The growth rates of these locales from 1991 to 2001 were: 22.9 percent (Athabasca), 18.6 percent (Beaverlodge), 20.9 percent (High Level), 23.6 percent (Lesser Slave River), 17.7 percent (Slave Lake), and 20.1 percent (Whitcourt). These growth rates were calculated using Statistics Canada's population and dwelling count data.
 11. Swan Hills lost 23 percent of its population from 1991 to 2001, while Peace River lost 7.1 percent of its residents. Grande Cache's population in 2001 was 3,828, just fourteen fewer than the town recorded in 1991. The 2001 total is, however, 13.8 percent lower than the town's 1996 population. These population declines were calculated using Statistics Canada's population and dwelling count data.
 12. The figures in Table 2 are derived from the data found through the Statistical Profile of Canadian Communities link at <<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm>>.
 13. One hundred and forty-one census subdivisions are found in the area defined in this paper as Alberta's provincial North.
 14. Alberta Economic Development, Policy and Economic Analysis, 2001 Place-to-Place Price Comparison Survey for Selected Alberta Communities, (October

- 2001). The study is available at <http://www.alberta-canada.com/statpub/pdf/placomsur_01.pdf>. The only exception came from comparing Calgary and Grande Prairie. Grande Prairie's cost of living was 2.5 percent less than Calgary's.
15. The average earnings data are accessible through the 2001 Community Profiles link at <<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm>>.
 16. The survey is notable for pointing out that northern urban residents may be better off financially than people living in smaller cities and towns in the central and southern parts of the province. Canmore and Jasper, for example, reported higher costs of living in the survey than Grande Prairie. The average earnings in these municipalities were lower than those reported in Grande Prairie. A similar message may be taken from comparing these two centres with Fort McMurray.
 17. The data used to prepare Figure 1 are found through the Statistical Profile of Canadian Communities link at <<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm>>.
 18. NIMBY is the acronym for "not in my backyard."
 19. See Municipal District of Mackenzie, "Resolution No. 1-015: First Nations Task Force" (introduced at the AAMDC Spring 2001 Convention). The resolution is available on the AAMDC website at <<http://www.aamdc.com/Policy/default.htm>>.
 20. Ibid.
 21. "Hogs Challenge Policymakers," *The Edmonton Journal*, 11 December 2000. Provincial regulations for confined feeding operations were not introduced until January 1, 2002. See Alberta, "Confined Feeding Operation Regulations and Standards Balance Industry Growth with Environmental and Health Protection" (news release), 20 December 2001, <<http://www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200112/11733.html>>.
 22. The AAMDC's comments are taken from The 2002/2003 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, Interim Report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: Proposed Electoral Division Areas, Boundaries and Names for Alberta (September 2002). The interim report is available at <<http://www.altaebc.ca/reports.html#popdist>>; The Northern Alberta Development Council, Submission to the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission (June 2002), 6. The NADC submission is available from the NADC's website at <<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/nadc>>.
 23. Bob Gilmour, "Rural Leaders Expecting Road Money from Klein," *The Edmonton Journal*, 3 April 1999.
 24. Bob Gilmour, "Rural Albertans Riled by 'Hardship'; Funding Inadequate, Politicians Say," *The Edmonton Journal*, 31 March 1999.
 25. The Fall 2002 Convention of the AAMDC approved a resolution on this subject introduced by Westlock County. The resolution was sparked by a Municipal Government Board decision to cut the assessment of pipelines attached to abandoned wells from 100 percent to 10 percent.
 26. Confidential interview, 11 July 2002.
 27. Gerald A. McBeath, "Changing Capabilities of Northern Communities:

- Environmental Protection," *The Northern Review*, No. 23 (Summer 2001), 164-179; the strengthening of local authorities also is recommended as a strategy to resolve conflicts over wilderness use in northern Finland. See James N. Gladden, "Wilderness Politics in Finnish Lapland: Core and Periphery Conflicts," *The Northern Review*, No. 23 (Summer 2001), 59-81.
28. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is an amalgamation of the Aboriginal Relations section of Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations, several organizations established by the Métis Settlements Act, and the Northern Alberta Development Council from Alberta Resource Development (Energy).
 29. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2001-2002 Annual Report, 5.
 30. *Ibid.*, 27.
 31. See the Council's website at <<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/nadc/>>.
 32. Alberta, "Budget Summary by Ministry," 19 March 2002, <<http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/whatsnew/newsrel/2002/n020319b.html>>.
 33. The estimates for the Ministry's 2002-03 budget are available at <<http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/business/budget/index.html>>.
 34. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2001-2002 Annual Report, v.
 35. This observation is not meant to suggest that suspicions may not exist within Aboriginal governments about the intentions and practices of non-Aboriginal governments.
 36. Ian Urquhart, "Blind Spots in the Rearview Mirrors: Livelihood and the Cheviot Debate," in Epp and Whitson, eds., *Writing Off the Rural West*, 139-140.
 37. Ken Allred, "Government Wiping out Planning Commissions," *The Edmonton Journal*, 23 February 1995.
 38. See Kneehill County, Resolution No. 22-01F, "Regional Approach Towards Governance," Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, Fall 2001 Convention. The resolution was passed.
 39. Mary Louise McAllister, "Grounding Environmental Policy: Rural and Remote Communities in Canada," in Debora L. VanNijnatten and Robert Boardman, eds., *Canadian Environmental Policy: Context and Cases*, second ed. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 234.
 40. Daniel Kemmis, *This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West* (Washington: Island Press, 2001).
 41. Urquhart, "Blind Spots in the Rearview Mirrors," 140.
 42. For information on CASA see the Alliance's website at <<http://www.casahome.org/index.asp>>.