

# Charlotte County: 20 Years into the Future

This is a scenario matrix. It is a graph that visually represents the four future scenarios for Charlotte County in the next twenty years. Each scenario is given a name, such as “Education Destination.” The statements along the x and y axes, “Migration To/From Region” and “Age of Population” are two factors that will shape the future in big ways. These are two critical uncertainties for Charlotte County and they both relate to demographics. One critical uncertainty is whether the local population will continue decreasing, stabilize, or even increase through migration. The other critical uncertainty is whether the local population will continue to age or become younger.



# Why Future Scenarios?

This document explores what the future of Charlotte County might be like in the mid-2030's. The future scenarios presented here are open to critique, revisions and evolution; this is a 1st draft. They were created with the input of 50 stakeholders from across Charlotte County in three meetings. They are supported by trends research, stakeholder interviews, and other projections of this region's future/potential. This document and scenarios are not about making predictions. They are best understood as a set of plausible alternatives for the future. This is a future that all Charlotte County residents can help shape. The real future might actually look like a combination of the scenarios being presented here or it might only contain certain traces of it. Vibrant Communities Charlotte County's (VCCC) purpose in creating this document is to encourage all to have a pro-active stance towards the future. This is summarized by a Mahatma Gandhi quote: "The future depends on what you do today." Though these scenarios may have wide applicability, our particular interest lies in a future where poverty is significantly reduced in Charlotte County. VCCC has a plan to reduce poverty in Charlotte County. This plan guides important funding decisions and poverty reduction work for us and our partners. **We are seeking input into this plan and asking all readers to think about and respond to the questions listed below:**

- What do you think of the scenarios? Did you agree that any of these four scenarios are possible 20 years from now? If not, what future(s) do you envision?

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- What are some steps that you (as an individual), the community, or the government can take today to help **reduce poverty** in the years to come?

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# Retirement Community Year: 2036



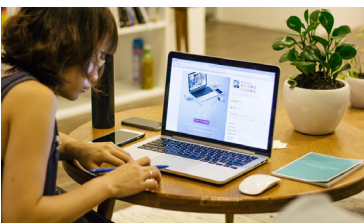
Retirement Community is a scenario where Charlotte County is attracting retiring older adults and the seniors from the Baby Boom generation. Seniors of advanced-ages are significantly more independent and mobile than they were 20 years ago due to widespread advancements in robotic implements and driverless cars. Across Canada, retirees no longer seek after a snow bird retirement home in the southern United States. This is due to growing security threats of terrorism/ gun violence, more restrictive visa requirements placed on Canadians by US visitor policies, and long periods of a weak Loonie. The popular trend is for retirees to sell their homes in expensive, heavily-populated urban areas to move to more serene environments. The coasts of Atlantic Canada have become a favourite retirement destination for many retirees from Eastern and Central Canada. Charlotte County recognized these trends early and worked to become more attractive to these retirees. For a start, the community worked closely with the Province to secure public transit funding for the region. The community advocated tirelessly to ensure that more clinical services were made available at the Charlotte County Hospital and geriatric services at the Grand Manan Hospital. Local entrepreneurs in Charlotte County focused on developing a wider array of wellness services. Real estate developers built numerous adult living and seniors' multi-story housing. Municipalities worked on age-friendly plans to make their towns or villages more walkable and buildings more accessible. Overall, Charlotte County's population is growing and aging but the economy is expanding.

The substantial influx to the region of retirees with disposable incomes has had an enormous impact. Real estate has seen a relatively large increase in prices and residential construction has revived. Younger area residents are having an easy time finding work as there is a growing demand for home-care, wellness services, farmers markets, food services, and property maintenance/renovations. The influx of older adults is also having a positive effect on the membership in service clubs. Volunteerism has become a more powerful force in the region. One popular mentorship program which invites Charlotte County retirees to 'adopt' a student has had huge successes in reducing the drop-out rate and youth crime.

## **Implications for Poverty Reduction:**

In Retirement Community, poverty levels are much-reduced. Public transit is available and volunteerism is a strong force in the community. Employment can be found in many different parts of the lower paid service sector but there is some higher-paid skilled labour too. Mentorship and volunteer programs are having a positive effect. The increase in real estate prices makes housing costs more expensive for residents even if it is still comparably low to other regions in Canada. It is a concern for poverty reduction in this scenario. Responding to this issue, municipalities in Charlotte County could implement policies to encourage including affordable units in new multi-unit housing developments being built.

# Education Destination Year: 2036



Education Destination is a scenario where Charlotte County is attracting post-secondary students to settle here to establish small businesses, build communities, or find work. Trends across Canada show that the young adults of the mid-2030's have once again started idealizing small towns, rural lifestyles, and owning property. It has become a tired notion that in order to succeed young people must move to big cities like Toronto or Vancouver, cities which are now so prohibitively expensive that home ownership is not even entertained. Unlike other regions of New Brunswick, the leaders in Charlotte County have been actively pursuing a student immigration strategy for decades. The region has worked to develop cultural venues, businesses, and services that are geared especially to young adults. These venues, businesses, and services have a distinctly rural flavour: farmers markets, outdoor folk festivals, and adventure sports. The result is a strong community of young people living in Charlotte County who come from outside of New Brunswick or other parts of the province and have chosen to settle here. Hundreds of student settlers came to the area via one of Charlotte County's two post-secondary institutions. Others made connections to this area by accepting job opportunities – decisions often aided by a strong online promotion of the region's attractive lifestyle. Overall, the population is growing modestly, the population is not aging as quickly, and the local economy is improving.

The primary development model being employed is 'buy local,' and because of it, there has been a renaissance in the region's once-comatose agricultural and value-added sea food processing sectors. The Province has been highly supportive of this development by shifting financial incentives towards local-based businesses, encouraging food production/distribution infrastructure, and creating food regulations that suit small farmers and small food processors. About twenty years ago, the Province made concerted efforts to make French immersion more available in Charlotte County schools. This investment is now paying off in dividends. The political tension surrounding language has all but evaporated. Most people in Charlotte County value bilingualism as an important component of New Brunswick life. There is also a much greater flow of tourists and immigrants coming from French-speaking regions than ever before.

## Implications for Poverty Reduction:

In Education Destination, poverty levels are not as bad as they are today. More people are employed than ever before, though most of these new positions are in small businesses that do not necessarily pay very large wages. This is partly offset by a relatively low cost of living. The influx of higher educated residents means that literacy rates are improving. With the resurgence of local agriculture there is a greater availability of healthy food. Inequality is decreasing modestly. Poverty reduction in this scenario requires the region to continue focusing on fostering the spirit of entrepreneurship.



Status Quo is a scenario where trends started a couple of decades ago continue to take precedence in Charlotte County. Provincial budgets continue to have what are seemingly uncontrollable deficits. The financial situation of the Province has been exacerbated by the combined forces of a continually aging population and the out-migration of young people. An under-investment in child education and job training in earlier decades has resulted in an overall less skilled workforce and less competitiveness. Many rural public services have been completely centralized in larger urban centers by the mid-2030's due to a continual decline in enrollment or usage. Automation has helped Charlotte County in one small way; it has allowed for Service NB offices to be converted into ATM-style kiosks. Bus commutes of up to two and half hours a day are normal for high school students. Homeschooling in Charlotte County has skyrocketed. The inauthentic provision of French immersion for Charlotte County children means bilingualism has become negatively associated as a mark of class distinction and it stirs political tensions. Many smaller rural roads are being undesignated as public rights-of-way as the Province decides it cannot provide maintenance for them. Overall, property values across Charlotte County have stagnated

While the Province continues to focus on attracting and retaining multi-national companies through incentives it has become difficult to compete in an intensely globalized world. Charlotte County still has tourism, manufacturing, forestry, and fishing, though climate change has negatively impacted the latter two. Jobs in these industries are being automated and many people have been let go. New Brunswick's capital, land, and commodities rights continue to shift into the hands of a few monopolizing companies. A general loss of work has exacerbated the out-migration crisis. Local businesses have suffered improved as an ever-increasing ratio of goods and services that are purchased by Charlotte County residents come from retailers based in other regions, provinces, or countries. The result is that inequality has increased in the past 20 years.

### Implications for Poverty Reduction:

In Status Quo, poverty is worse than it is today and the new problems are the loss of educational and employment opportunities, increased inequality, and overall rural decline. There is a significant demand for homeless shelters and food banks across the region. Those who can afford to leave do and those who cannot afford to leave stay; this means poverty is increasing overall. There is little that is positive about this scenario. Poverty reduction in this scenario requires that the remaining residents take political action to make sure that public investment in rural services and redevelopment is a top government priority. Economic development must be repurposed to become a tool to increase equality and not perpetuate inequality. This means creating regulatory business advantages and incentives for individuals, small local businesses, and cooperatives, at the expense of multinational companies and monopolies.

# Tourist Haven Year: 2036



Tourism Haven is a scenario where tourism takes the driver seat in this region. Due to the increasing popularity of Atlantic tourism, shifts are being made away from heavily populated regions and cities towards the quaint towns and villages that preserve the east-coast heritage and rustic natural beauty. This is related to mass urbanization. Local efforts at environmental preservation are fuelled by a deeply-felt morality and historical preservation is abetted by the flourishing tourism industry. The global consciousness regarding the sacredness of the environment has advanced under the serious pressure from climate change and local consciousness has evolved as our traditional resources have been put at risk. There is no longer a political debate or polarization between the economic development or the environmental preservation camps – sustainability is the absolute baseline. Towns and villages in Atlantic Canada that preserve and celebrate their art, history, and culture prosper. Those communities that valued modern buildings and demolished historical ones missed the boat. The towns and villages of Charlotte County, however, did not follow in this direction. Led by regional cooperation with forward-thinking municipal governments, business associations, and other non-government groups, the general populace's interest in local art, nature, history, and culture, is at an all-time high. We now place great emphasis on the art and artefacts of indigenous Passamaquoddy people. Property values have increased significantly across Charlotte County in the last twenty years though new development is limited with land use regulations aimed at environmental preservation. Waterfront properties have especially increased in value as new ocean front lots in low-lying areas will be restricted due to rising sea levels and past flooding damage. This leads to somewhat fewer older out-of-province adults retiring to this region. Jobs in the service industry are plentiful, especially in the lower skilled tourism sector, but there are well-paying management and high-skilled service sector opportunities too. Young people have plenty of opportunities to stay and work in this area in the non-winter months. More are settling in this area than in past decades. Some still migrate elsewhere in search of better-paying, year-round positions. This population loss is partly mitigated by a transient population of young people coming from other provinces and countries for seasonal work.

## **Implications for poverty reduction:**

In Tourism Haven, poverty looks somewhat similar to today and some of the new problems are the rising costs of housing due to the influx of seasonal residents/workers, and a growing number of struggling self-employed artisans. On a positive note, there is a general sense of optimism and more job opportunities in the tourism industry which helps to reduce poverty. Poverty reduction in this scenario requires investing in long-term affordable housing projects and small business training, especially in the arts and culture industries. Poverty reduction efforts still need to be coupled with an investment in early childhood/adult education, youth mentorship, transportation, and non-profit capacity building.