

## FINAL THOUGHTS ON USING THIS REPORT

There are many factors that affect the health, vitality, and sustainability of Nova Scotia's rural communities. We have presented a selection of information in this report to "paint the rural landscape" of the province and to illustrate some of the trends that affect our rural communities. In examining each of these trends, it is important to bear in mind that they do not operate independently of one another. For example, the aging of the rural population is related to the out-migration of younger people and their families from rural Nova Scotia to other areas in search of educational and employment opportunities. As well, changes in the resource-based economy have had significant impacts on our natural environment. Recognizing these inter-relationships, the conditions that support health are reflected in all five chapters of this report.

Some of the trends reported here give cause for optimism about the future of rural communities, but there is also a downside to these trends. For example, the increasing value of fish landings and the rising salaries and wages paid in the oil-and-gas industry are good news, though there are fewer people involved in these sectors of the economy than was once the case. In the long run, the growing gap in incomes between urban and rural Nova Scotians will have a significant effect on the sustainability of rural communities.

This report is intended to be a starting point for discussions among people in rural communities about how these various trends are affecting them. We hope it will help rural Nova Scotians identify what they can do to improve the future prospects of their communities. We also hope it will serve as a reference point for governments at the local, provincial, and national levels to develop public policies that will help sustain rural communities.

This brings us back to the purpose of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project – to help people and organizations in rural communities use research to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of their communities. This report is one of the strategies that will help to accomplish this goal. We have also developed a "Rural Tackle Box" of tools and resources to assist people, and a website – [www.ruralnovascotia.ca](http://www.ruralnovascotia.ca) – to provide easy access to these tools. The RCIP Project has also launched a community training strategy that will offer free workshops to rural community organizations to help people learn how to use these resources most effectively to influence the policies that affect their communities.

The co-sponsors of the RCIP Project – the Coastal Communities Network and the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre – are committed to working together with rural organizations in an ongoing effort to improve the health, sustainability, and quality of life of Nova Scotia's rural communities.

