

For Immediate Release

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Nelson bucks small community trend and continues to be a mecca for those under 45

Alberta migrants down by a third

NELSON, BC

According to the Nelson and Area New Resident Survey, 255 new families (representing 571 new people) relocated to Nelson in the year ending May 31, 2009 – down about 5% from last year.

Each year Nelson's Welcome Wagon distributes the survey to new households, and the data gets collected and analyzed by Community Futures Central Kootenay, a community economic development agency.

Nelson gets disproportionate number of younger adults (see graph on attachment)

The survey found that Nelson continues to attract a disproportionate number of younger new residents (0-4, 20-24, 25-44 age groups), a trend first discovered last year when age was asked for the first time on the survey. In fact, those between 20-44 made up 57% of new residents compared to these age groups representing just over a one third of Nelson's population in the 2006 Census. Seventeen percent of new residents were 45-64 (vs. 28% of the Nelson population in the 2006 Census) while only 3.7% were over 65 years of age (vs. 15% of the 2006 Nelson population).

These numbers defy the trend seen in most Canadian rural communities that are seeing few young migrants and many older ones. Forty-nine children under four moved to the community in the year, another encouraging trend. This represents 8.7% of new migrants, almost double the 4.7% representing that age in the general population.

Where are they coming from? BC first, Alberta drops, Ontario Up.

Fifty-two percent of newcomers moved from other parts of BC. The number of families coming from Alberta dropped a third from 61 to 40, representing about 16% of new residents. Meanwhile, 30 families (12%) moved to the area from Ontario, up from 23 last year.

The other top sources of families were the US with 14 (6%) and Saskatchewan with 9 families (4%). Five families moved from various parts of continental Europe while another five moved from the United Kingdom. Several families moved from sunnier climates to brave Nelson's snowy conditions, with two families each arriving from South Africa and Australia. For the first time on record, a family moved here from the Bahamas.

Heard it from a friend

Almost half of new residents learned of the area through family and friends while 23% discovered the area while driving through or vacationing here, both trends consistent with previous years.

Thirty-three families (13%) had lived here before, 27 (11%) had lived nearby, while another 23 families (9%) came for a job opportunity.

Lifestyle, be near family top motivators¹

Almost two-thirds of new residents cited a lifestyle change as a reason to move to Nelson, followed by one-third wanting to be closer to family.

A job opportunity or transfer was a motivator for 71 families (28%) while another 60 families (23%) listed the scenery and weather of the Kootenays. Thirty-six families (14%) came here for school. Only 14 families (5%) admitted to coming here to retire or semi-retire, down from an all-time high of 24 families last year. Only 10 families (4%) moved to the area to start or buy a business. A further 9 families moved to the area for the hospital or specialized medical services.

Internet big – 55% look at promotional material before coming

When asked about promotional material prior to moving to the Nelson area, 55% of respondents said that they had seen some prior to moving, down from two-thirds last year.

Almost 80% of those looking at promotional material checked out Nelson and area websites. Further down the list were magazines/newspapers (12%), TV/radio (7%), travel brochures (5%) and real estate ads (2%). Sadly, the movie *Roxanne*, seems to have lost its luster with only 6% listing it, this following last year's brief resurgence (17%).

Very satisfied

Like previous years, most people moving to Nelson are more than satisfied with the experience. Nearly all (96%) of the new Nelson residents said that the Central Kootenays had lived up to their expectations, while only one person said that it had not. Nine felt it too early to make a judgment.

Affordable housing, more rentals cited as improvements needed

New Nelson residents offered more than 100 suggestions on how to improve the region.

Twenty-six respondents felt there needed to be more rental or affordable housing. Twenty thought the cost of living was high (food, shelter, etc.). Seven felt bus service needed to be improved. Other recurring themes were on improving recycling, changing dog bylaws, providing snow removal, more jobs and child care.

Sixty-two respondents liked things as they are.

¹ Numbers can be higher than 100% as participants can list multiple factors.

TD Bank and Tim Hortons Most Requested Missing Businesses

A TD Bank was the business most missed by new residents, 14 of whom wanted to see a full-service branch. Twelve respondents wanted their timbits (Tim Hortons) while four requested The Bay or another department store. Costco, Canadian Tire, Home Depot, and a moderately priced clothing shop were cited by three respondents each.

The New Resident Survey has been sponsored by Community Futures Central Kootenay and distributed by the Nelson & District Welcome Wagon Committee for more than 15 years. People who move into the Nelson area (includes Proctor, Balfour, 10 miles south of Nelson, and South Slokan) each year are contacted. The results of these surveys are compiled yearly by Community Futures and circulated to other agencies and Municipal and Regional governments.

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Age of New Residents to Nelson for 2008-09 Comparing to Overall Nelson and BC Populations (from 2006 Census)

