CANADA is moving toward a creative economy. This trajectory was convincingly illustrated most recently in *Ontario in the Creative Age*, a report written by the Martin Prosperity Institute for the government of Ontario. In many ways, it builds upon ideas previously set forth by one of the report’s co-authors, Richard Florida (author of *Who’s Your City?* and *The Rise of the Creative Class)*.

The creative economy thesis is this: successful 21st-century economies require diverse clusters of tolerant individuals who possess high levels of analytical and social skill, and are supported by a high speed physical and technological infrastructure. Geographic corridors that do not have the foresight to enable, attract and replenish skilful workers will not prosper.

Florida argues that the world is not flat — as Thomas Friedman famously hypothesized — but rather that it is spiky. He draws this conclusion from the observation that global opportunities for prosperity are not levelling off, but rather are concentrating in major corridors such as Vancouver-Seattle or Bangalore-Hyderabad. As megalopolises surge, outlying areas languish. The prosperity gap is thus increasingly exacerbated by a simple geographic divide: urban versus rural.

Where will this leave rural and remote Canada? The Martin Prosperity Institute tells the roughly 1.5 million Ontarians who live in rural places that their slower, non-metropolitan way of life does not offer benefit to enough creative workers to allow for rural sustainability.

I disagree. Rural communities are sustainable. That is because creative people already live there. The people who are born in, work in and retire in rural communities have an abundance of creativity to market. What is required is creative public policy that supports 21st-century rural economies. Rural communities can be sustainable, not in spite of the creative economy, but because of the creative economy.

There is a catch. Rural prosperity can happen only in regions where tolerance and talent are found. If residents are tolerant and talented, then economic potential can be maximized by designing public policies that support not only resource exports, the traditional generator of rural progress, but also strengthened markets for local exchange. In the course of exploring these policy options, I propose a leading contender for rural prosperity in the creative age: the Mackenzie Corridor of the Northwest Territories.

The Martin Prosperity Institute tells the roughly 1.5 million Ontarians who live in rural places that their slower, non-metropolitan way of life does not offer benefit to enough creative workers to allow for rural sustainability.

I disagree. Rural communities are sustainable. That is because creative people already live there. The people who are born in, work in and retire in rural communities have an abundance of creativity to market. What is required is creative public policy that supports 21st-century rural economies. Rural communities can be sustainable, not in spite of the creative economy, but because of the creative economy.

There is a catch. Rural prosperity can happen only in regions where tolerance and talent are found. If residents are tolerant and talented, then economic potential can be maximized by designing public policies that support not only resource exports, the traditional generator of rural progress, but also strengthened markets for local exchange. In the course of exploring these policy options, I propose a leading contender for rural prosperity in the creative age: the Mackenzie Corridor of the Northwest Territories.

First, it
may be necessary to remind readers why rural regions still matter.

Approximately six million Canadians live in rural Canada. This figure has remained stable for nearly three decades. However, the relative population of rural Canadians is in decline. Urban inhabitants are increasing at a rate greater than five times that of non-urban residents. This relative population decline is being caused by the migration of young Canadians toward dynamic urban centres and the almost exclusive choice of new Canadians to live in major cities.

Given that young people and new immigrants often bring much of the creativity that inspires modern economic growth, rural demographic trends may seem irreversible. Some now dismiss rural living and economic prosperity as mutually exclusive options. Such a dismissal would be lamentable. There are sound political and economic reasons to examine the potential for rural Canada to thrive.

Michael Ignatieff, leader of the Liberal Party, has called the widening urban-rural schism “a matter of national unity.” One-fifth of the Canadian population lives in rural communities. This is a segment of society too large to dismiss. Moreover, the structure of Canada’s single-member-plurality electoral system provides enhanced representation for rural citizens. The principle of one person, one vote is subservient to the deeply rooted three Rs of Canadian politics: region, race and religion. Regional balance, historical compromise and geography — or, to use the phrase of the Supreme Court of Canada, communities of interest — take precedence when electoral maps are (re)drawn. As a result, rural Canadians are well represented in the federal Parliament as well as in provincial and territorial legislatures. And political parties know this.

Electoral influence is not the only reason why rural Canada matters. When Prime Minister Harper speaks of this country as an energy superpower, he is not talking about the motivation of millions of city-dwelling lawyers, massage therapists and radiologists to get up each morning and innovate. He is talking about staples. Canada’s urban core — no matter how creative — is still dependent upon raw materials: hydrocarbons, wood, grain, iron ore and hydro-electricity. These are resources found in the hinterland, where rural Canadians live.

Political power and resource abundance may be convincing reasons as to why Canada’s rural economy deserves attention, but one should not rely too heavily or for too long upon these arguments. If rural populations continue in relative decline, inevitably, political power will erode. At the same time, rural economies that are too deeply dependent upon natural resources inescapably risk exposure to commodity price fluctuations and non-renewable resource limits.

To avoid being overwhelmed by the creative age, policy leaders in rural regions must shift the economic policy balance so that import substitutes, purchased using resource revenues, are less of a requirement for smaller communities. Residents of rural and remote communities will be less dependent upon barge shipments, trucked-in goods and plane loads if policy is designed to promote local goods that are produced using existing knowledge and creativity. Undertaking a deeper examination of a single rural region might better help us understand why and how this balance is possible.

Choose your place of residence very carefully, advises Richard Florida, in his book Who’s Your City? He argues that location is one of the most crucial determinants of well-being. This is especially true, so he tells us, for young people who have just completed their studies and are looking for a community where they might begin a career and family.

I have just finished my studies. My fiancée and I have chosen to settle in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. We made this choice with the creative economy in mind.

Economic forecasts for the Northwest Territories mostly focus upon natural resource potential. Diamond mines, oil and gas reserves, hydro-electricity, minerals such as tungsten and uranium, and forestry products, are all staples that attract major investments and migrant workers. Less attention is paid to the territory’s social capital and creative potential.

The Northwest Territories may be both rural and remote, but here exists a cluster of communities heaving with creative talent. Let’s call this cluster the Mackenzie Corridor. Starting with the communities around Great Slave Lake, including Yellowknife, the Mackenzie Corridor runs north along the Mackenzie River and its delta, passing through towns such as Norman Wells, and arriving at Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk on the Beaufort Sea.

In order for the Mackenzie Corridor to prosper, two broad condi-
tions must be satisfied. First, prosperity in the creative age is preconditioned upon the existence of tolerance and talent. Second, rural prosperity in the creative age will be enabled by public policy that promotes local markets for the exchange of goods and services produced using existing creativity.

All agree that tolerance is a precondition for prosperity. One signal of tolerance is a welcoming atmosphere for newcomers. We have experienced the welcoming atmosphere of the Mackenzie Corridor first-hand. We have been invited to dinner tables, offered advice and stories, and consistently asked how we like our new community. This welcoming spirit extends beyond colloquial gestures. Attracting newcomers is frequently emphasized by NWT political leaders as a policy objective. Michael Miltenberger, the territorial minister of finance, again emphasized the importance of attracting new residents during his 2009 territorial budget speech.

Tolerance also requires people of different cultures to accept one another. Northern people are often described as being either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, but this dichotomy fails to reflect the true diversity of the North. The Mackenzie Corridor is home to Inuvialuit and various Dene and Métis peoples (e.g., Gwich’in, Sahtu, Dehcho), as well as those with cultural roots that are, among others, French, English, Chinese, Filipino and Caribbean. Further still, there may be no better representation of Canadians from all provinces and territories than is found in the Mackenzie Corridor.

The Mackenzie Corridor is a place where people of diverse cultures must work together. The success of co-management boards, safety in the mines and cooperation in our consensus-style legislature depend upon high levels of tolerance. The Mackenzie Corridor may not be as multicultural as Toronto, but that does not diminish the exceptional tolerance found here.

Tolerance of other people and trust between diverse groups is enhanced where communities feel secure and confident. The security of Aboriginal peoples is enhanced where land claims negotiations are complete and implementation obligations are met. Although the implementation of Aboriginal-state agreements could be improved, the number of settled land claims in the Mackenzie Corridor is a signal of progress. As a result of these historic developments, some refer to territorial politics as balkanized. This is inaccurate. Diversity does not necessarily mean disruption and conflict.

When groups are confident that their rights will be protected, they are more comfortable investing in the talent of their people. Meanwhile, individuals who are confident in their cultural heritage are more likely to pursue their talents. The Mackenzie Corridor is home to 11 official languages. Language diversity automatically increases the creativity quotient. With each language comes a distinct way of viewing the world and solving problems.

As a result of such diversity, the Mackenzie Corridor is rich with people who possess talents in art, musical expression, theology, food preparation, harvesting, land management, navigation, design, leadership, negotiation, social support and decision-making.

Where tolerance levels are high and individuals feel secure in exploring their talents, communities are well positioned to prosper in the creative age. Creative public policy is then required to enable prosperity.

In order for the Mackenzie Corridor to prosper, two broad conditions must be satisfied. First, prosperity in the creative age is preconditioned upon the existence of tolerance and talent. Second, rural prosperity in the creative age will be enabled by public policy that promotes local markets for the exchange of goods and services produced using existing creativity.

The Mackenzie Corridor is rich with people who possess talents that lend themselves well to creative markets. These talents need not necessarily be marketed for export. Talent can be sold locally. The Mackenzie Corridor can seize a creative advantage by striking an optimal balance between export base theory and consumption base theory.

Consumption base theory holds that regional economic growth
The Mackenzie Corridor already possesses the creativity to make succulent dishes. It is not difficult to imagine stores, restaurants and lodges up and down the Mackenzie Corridor selling nutritious local foods prepared by local people who already possess the creativity to make succulent dishes.

Along the Mackenzie Highway are lakes stocked with some of the freshest fish in the world, plains nourishing the lean meat of the bison and tundra thundering with caribou that provide tasty smoked ribs. It is not difficult to imagine stores, restaurants and lodges up and down the Mackenzie Corridor selling nutritious local foods prepared by local people who already possess the creativity to make succulent dishes.

Infrastructure and transportation policy must then be carefully designed to facilitate exports from the region as well as trade within the region. Government benefits by having more citizens marketing their talents and creativity, rather than waiting for the next mine to open or layoff to end.

The Mackenzie Corridor already benefits from some consumption base policies. For example, the NWT Entrepreneurs and Economic Development Policy supports micro-businesses pursuing traditional or creative endeavours, business intelligence and networking, product development and asset acquisition. It is no coincidence that a rise in the political autonomy of the Northwest Territories is leading toward a corresponding rise in economic policy that balances export generation with strengthened local markets. The people who live in the territory — and thus should hold jurisdiction over social policy as well as land and resource policy — view the Mackenzie Corridor as centre, not periphery.

Government can support rural economic success in the creative age by facilitating social networks, offering safe and secure public spaces for trade, loaning small businesses start-up funds, promoting communities as centres of creativity, welcoming as many newcomers as possible from a wide diversity of cultures and constructing innovative and competitive tax incentives for businesses in any sector that encourage their workers to be creative.

Canada’s rural and remote communities need not fear the creative economy — they should embrace it. Where policy leaders shift the economic balance from resource exports to vibrant local markets, the image of the rural worker begins to change from one who is physically robust to one who is creatively talented. A change in rural image may encourage creative workers — the ones who do not already reside in rural areas — to choose rural and remote communities as their homes. Witness the international success of Igloolik’s Artcirq or Dawson City’s music scene. After all, other benefits of rural living — access to nature, fewer adherences to formal rules, cheaper housing prices and respect for self-sufficiency — offer one element that all creative workers seek: freedom.

David M. Brock is a fellow of Action Canada, a national program in public policy and leadership. He lives in Yellowknife.
Rural poverty in Canada is part of rural poverty worldwide, albeit Canada is among the richer countries in the world. Nurses have been self-governing within the province of Ontario since 1963. The College of Nurses (CNO) assure that all nurses within the province are registered through the CNO and that all nurses meet the requirements established by them. Requirements are based on knowledge and expertise of practice and that all nurses work within their scope of practice. Self-governing occurs when Canada Launches New Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Northern Ontario WantsOwn Version Of Atlantic Immigration Pilot How New Immigrants AreStarting to Spread Out Across Canada How Canada Can Motivate Immigrants to Spread Out (Audio). Provinces and Territories Covered by The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot.

Interested employers: Kindly contact us here to receive further information. Interested candidates: Find out whether you qualify to Canada by completing our free on-line evaluation. We will provide you with our evaluation within 1-2 business days. Read more news about Canada Immigration by clicking here. Are you eligible to Immigrate to Canada? Frontier and Remote Area Codes (FAR). Additional Rural Definition Resources. Census Urban and Rural Classification. US Census Bureau. Click on the image to view a larger version of the map. Four levels are necessary because rural areas experience degrees of remoteness at higher or lower population levels that affect access to different types of goods and services. A relatively large number of people live far from cities providing high order goods and services, such as advanced medical procedures, stores selling major household appliances, regional airport hubs, or professional sports franchises. Level one FAR codes are meant to approximate this degree of remoteness.