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HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT ATTRACTING NEWCOMERS

Latest report reveals smaller to mid-sized communities in the Island Coastal region drawing intra-migrating Canadians

COURTENAY, 15 October 2020 – Quality of life rankings among Canadian communities always attract wide media and popular attention and a latest report, released by the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET), suggests more Canadians are voting with their feet as they relocate to smaller to mid-sized communities on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

The report uses the most recent 2016 Census data and is based on people who lived in one of Canada's 152 urban centres as of the Census, compared to where they lived in the 2011 Census. Employment, amenities and climate are among the key factors drawing newcomers to the Island and Coastal area. The new data suggests that while the country's largest urban centres are net winners for drawing international migrants, smaller to mid-sized communities are progressively attracting Canadians of prime working age (25-54 years).

"A younger demographic is increasingly drawn into our region and bringing with them new ideas, businesses and investment prospects that align well with the economic opportunities available here," says ICET Vice-Chair Aaron Stone. "Our communities have historically shown themselves to be adaptable and resilient (particularly more recently with COVID) and for many Canadians, living in this type of environment is highly attractive."

All seven of the ICET region urban centres (Nanaimo, Campbell River, Courtenay, Parksville, Duncan, Powell River and Port Alberni) have had a positive net inflow of residents from the rest of Canada – five of which were in the top 40 (Nanaimo, Parksville, Courtenay, Campbell River and Duncan). Edmonton moved to top spot, overtaking Ottawa-Gatineau (using the 2011 Census), as Calgary moved into second position, followed by Kelowna, who remained in third.

In terms of prime working age Canadian migrants (25-54 years), three Island and Coastal region communities rank in the top 15 in Canada – Nanaimo (#11), Campbell River (#14) and Courtenay (#15). In the previous Census, Courtenay was ranked 14th, followed by Nanaimo (#16) and Campbell River (#25). The big winners in this latest Census were Calgary and Edmonton, both moving up from 3rd and 4th position in the last survey. They were followed by Oshawa (#3). All other ICET region communities rank in the top half of the 152 areas including, Parksville (#34), Duncan (#38), Powell River (#42) and Port Alberni (#57). Parksville made the greatest leap forward moving up from 74th position (2011 Census) to 34th (2016 Census).

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“Relocation decisions at this (working) age are more likely to be guided by job prospects, access to quality schools, proximity to family, milder climate, outdoor recreation activities and affordable housing,” says ICET CEO Line Robert. “Our region is very competitive across these areas and, now, with improved connectivity, home-based knowledge workers, tech entrepreneurs and other creative sector types are considering this region as a viable option.”

While the positive migration inflows for working age demographics may come as a surprise to some, the statistics for the 55+ categories (retirement age) continue to reflect the Island’s reputation as a prime retirement destination. Motivations driving this demographic include the availability of amenities, housing and weather (among others). In the ICET region, all seven urban centres continued to rank in the top half: Parksville (#5), Nanaimo (#10), Courtenay (#14), Duncan (#20), Campbell River (#35), Port Alberni (#62) and Powell River (#66). Top spots nationwide include St. Catherines - Niagara (#1), Kelowna (#2) and Chilliwack (#3), followed closely by Victoria (#4).

As a pro-rated share of the population, all of the ICET region communities fared higher nation-wide, with Parksville (#2), Campbell River (#8) and Courtenay (#13) coming in the top 15.

“While these statistics are from the last Census, housing stats and other community-based information confirm our expectation that this trend will continue to rise into the next 2021 Census,” says Robert. “Having more working age migrants relocate here is creating a more diverse region, which is exactly what we need to help build a more innovative and sustainable economy.”

Download the Migration Report, [*Voting with their Feet*](#).

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About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

Created and capitalized by the Province of BC in 2006, the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) mission is to create a more diverse and globally competitive Island and Coastal economy. In partnership with local and regional government, non-profits and indigenous communities, ICET serves nearly half a million residents. Funding and support for economic infrastructure and other economic diversification initiatives is delivered through a unique community centered decision-making process. Since inception, ICET has approved more than \$53.8 million in funding for over 225 initiatives. These investments have leveraged over \$270 million in new investment into the region creating more than 2500 construction phase jobs and 2650 long term permanent jobs. To learn more, visit www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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