Atlantic Canada lost 66,396 people to the rest of the country since 2000

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HALIFAX—Atlantic Canada experienced a net outmigration of 66,396 people between 2000/01 and 2019/20, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“People leaving Atlantic Canada is not only a symptom of the region’s economic weakness, but a potential threat to its future well-being,” said Alex Whalen, policy analyst at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Voting with their feet: Migration in Atlantic Canada*.

The study finds that between 2000/01 and 2019/20, 66,396 more residents left Atlantic Canada for provinces outside the region compared to people outside of the region moving to Atlantic Canada. In addition, young, working-aged people disproportionately left the region during this period.

A total of 74.3 per cent of Atlantic Canada’s interprovincial outmigrants during this period moved to Alberta and Ontario.


The study also found, however, that Atlantic Canada experienced in-migration in four of the past five years, as more people moved to the region than left. However, the quantity of in-migration has not been enough to offset the outmigration experienced in the years leading up to 2016/17. Moreover, it appears that people were leaving the struggling provinces of Alberta and Ontario rather than moving to opportunities in Atlantic Canada.

Newfoundland & Labrador has the highest rate of net outmigration in the region at 1.9 people per thousand, and the third highest in the country. New Brunswick is the second highest at 1.5, followed by Prince Edward Island at 1.3, and Nova Scotia at 1.1.

“International evidence shows that people tend to move where they are likely to find higher paying jobs and opportunities,” said Whalen.

“It’s imperative that Atlantic Canada focus on these issues to keep younger, working-aged people in the region.”

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