

POLICY SPEAKING PODCAST

## **Ep.15: Leveraging Immigration & Mobility for Economic Growth Post-COVID-19**

### **With Catrina Tapley and Francis McGuire**

**Edward Greenspon-** I'm Edward Greenspon, welcome to Policy Speaking. We're continuing to innovate here at PPF in response to the pandemic and that means moving some of our major conferences online, as we did today with the Atlantic Summit 2020 Pivot to Prosperity. The silver lining to the current situation is that everywhere in the country, you can tune in and participate so everyone has access to the talented Atlantic Canadians who spoke at our conference and those will appear in part two on June 9. This episode of Policy Speaking consists of my interview with two deputy ministers responsible for promoting immigration and retention to the Atlantic Canadian region. I also invite you to register a [www.ppforum.ca](http://www.ppforum.ca) for the June 9 lightning round of the conference, which features some great speakers full of insights that are applicable right across Canada. We're joined by Catrina Tapley, Deputy Minister of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and Francis McGuire, President of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Welcome, Catrina and Francis. I'm going give you a slight bio; I can't touch on everything in your careers but for those who aren't familiar with you, Catrina Tapley, was appointed Deputy Minister of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada in August 2019. Prior to that, she was the Deputy Secretary to the cabinet for Operations and the Privy Council Office. Before joining PTO, Ms. Copley served Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada from 2010 to 2016, a Senior Assistant Deputy Minister for Strategic and Program Policy and associated system Deputy Minister. She's also held positions at the Treasury Board of Canada and served in executive jobs at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada at Fisheries and Oceans Canada so she should come to this discussion well prepared. Francis McGuire assumed his current position as President of Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency in June 2017. Prior to that, he served as President and CEO of Major Drilling Group International Inc. from 2000 to 2015, after which he provided advice to companies and individuals on strategy, leadership and organizational design, until assuming the reins at ACOA in the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, McGuire worked in Premier Frank McKenna's government as Deputy Minister of Economic Development and tourism and as leader of the provinces Information Highway Secretariat. Welcome to both of you and I'm looking forward to the conversation this morning. Let's start with where we find ourselves today. I'll go to each of you in turn starting Francis. How do each of you expect the progress on the Atlantic Growth Strategy, and

particularly its immigration thrusts to be impacted by the COVID-19 crisis? What has changed and what hasn't changed process?

**Francis McGuire-** What hasn't changed is the demographics. We're still going to lose 220,000 people out of the labor force in the next 10 years, something might be moved a little bit to the right, but that just doesn't go away. The latest job forecast that was done before COVID, which changed a bit, said they had 86,000 jobs to be filled this year in Atlantic Canada. 40% of those were going to require high school or less, 40% are going to require a technical trade or degree, and 20% we're going to require a university education. When you look at these separately, you get different pictures, particularly when you get to that 40% technical side, I don't forecast any slowdown. You're looking at things like truck drivers, forestry workers, ICT workers, health workers, etc., those parts of our economy today are going very well. They're the type of jobs that people in Atlantic Canada either don't want or not qualified for, and employers are going to keep on driving that. Now, I would suspect that on the jobs requiring high schools, you will see a shortage; less jobs in the coffee shops less and the hotels, so that's probably going to slow down for a while. Nevertheless, with time those jobs are going to come back, maybe next year, a year and a half or six months from now, but the demand will come back because those jobs must be filled. On the university side, it's the same. There is a mismatch between our graduates, we need more engineers and more ICT people. When you need them today, you just can't wait four or five years for these people to graduate, so that will continue. Last year, we had just over 15,000 immigrants. Given that the 40% is going to be strong, and I don't expect any change or see any change with the employers we work with, you might see in 2020, half that number come through because particularly those areas that don't require a high school education are slowing, obviously tourism's very slow, and coffee shops are slowed down. If you disaggregate it, you see one element, that's going to be as active as it was last year, and the economy needs those people just as much as it always did. By 2021, you'll see the other two categories pick up. So those are what I think will we're looking at.

**Edward Greenspon-** Thank you for that; Catrina, what has changed and what hasn't changed?

**Catrina Tapley-** What hasn't changed, and I'll agree with Francis on this one, are the demographics. Because of COVID, we didn't suddenly have a baby boom, not yet, although there was this Facebook meme that said, if there's a baby boom, the prediction will be it will be only a firstborn child, I'll just let you think about that. But the reliance on immigration for labor force growth, the reliance on immigration to offset Canada's demographics, hasn't changed. What has changed is the relative unemployment rate in the country, my friend Graham Black would say, "We've gone from the best labor market in Canadian history to the worst labor market in Canadian history in less than two months", so that's been a big change. Where most of the job losses have been felt, are in lower-wage occupations in the service sector and lower wage

occupations. What didn't change? We didn't magically create a bunch of new software engineers, though those things for permanent immigration are imperative, and I think will continue to be important. What I think we're going to have to do, from an immigration perspective, is look carefully at certain sectors and where immigration is helpful in terms of supporting economic growth. I think it's going to make us look a little differently; what we focused on for a long time is a high school's model of permanent immigration; higher human capital, the best and the brightest. I think we may have to put another overlay on that, and that's meeting regional labor markets and I think we've started to do some of that, but it's going to be even more important as we look at levels planning as we go forward. The government announced early in March, its levels plan for 2020. We have a requirement to be back in Parliament by November with the immigration levels plan for 2021 by November 1 and we'll see where the government wants to adjust and what it wants to look at. For now, the government's commitment is to a million permanent immigrants to Canada over three years, and that hasn't changed. Spoiler alert, we may not make our levels plan for this year given events in the world and travel restrictions that are still there. Other issues in host countries as well, and in sending countries, so we'll have to see how we adjust over the next three years in terms of meeting our targets and meeting those needs.

**Edward Greenspon-** Do you expect the flow of immigrants to begin again in the late fall?

**Catrina Tapley-** The quick answer, I think would be yes, and it will depend on a whole bunch of factors. One is, we've never shut down business and yet we've continued to process applications. What the government agreed in terms of travel restrictions is that, anybody's permanent residence application who had been approved before March 18 was still eligible to travel through this period and can still arrive. We have several people who are already in Canada, either as temporary foreign workers, or students who will land this year. By September, we may see things pick up but that will depend on a number of factors and on how things are in host countries, as well whether people can vacate their apartment, whether they can deal with their family affairs, whether they can get themselves to Canada. We'll see, but yes, we sure do expect it to pick up by the fall.

**Edward Greenspon-** Okay, so before all this happened, what were you seeing from the Atlantic Immigration Pilot? Is there evidence that skills gaps were narrowing? Was the labor market truly evolving? I'll start with you and then Francis to weigh in on that, particularly from a business point of view, as well for Francis. Let me just start with Katrina on what we were seeing.

**Catrina Tapley-** What we saw with the Atlantic Pilot over the last over the couple of years since its inception was about 60 to 100. People come to Atlantic Canada through the pilots of user skilled immigrants. It's a great pilot, in terms of how it combines employer needs, and both employer support and

community support to make a welcoming environment for people who aren't familiar with it. One of the things that we tried to do with this pilot was to deal with the question of retention, and people were coming to the Atlantic region under the Provincial Nominee Program, but in many cases weren't staying and were leaving for other parts of Canada. We wanted to focus on, in Atlantic Canada and work in Atlantic Canada, how to retain immigrants and how to create a welcoming community, but also to create that link between the employer and what was happening. We saw, and we did an evaluation, what retention rates were in the 90s, so from our perspective we're successful on this program.

**Edward Greenspon-** Francis, same question to you. Perhaps from an employer point of view, to some extent, were our employers having an easier time matching the skills that they need, given that the Atlantic Pilot Project has been in place for several years now?

**Francis McGuire-** Yes, and you must understand that for employers that have never been in the immigration business before, have never understood the rules and how you go about it, there was a sharp learning curve. It took at least a year, and I would say when about a third of them thoroughly understand it and are very supportive, and the other two thirds are coming along and need to learn. It is a voyage that's continuing. In terms of the labor market, in the 15,000 immigrants that came, there's only about 7000 workers because there's families and others who came which is exactly what we want, because that gives that stickiness. But, if you come back to the point, we need 20,000 people a year, if we can get 8 or 10,000 from immigration, that's great, but it still leaves a gap. So, this is a part of labor market and employers in the way they act, see that. They are modernizing, they're trying to automate, they're trying to do all those things, while they're bringing in new workers, while they're trying to bring in young people etc. From an employer's point of view, this is a piece of the puzzle that they've had to learn just like an automation, I'd say most of our companies just didn't know how to digitize and automate. There's a huge cultural change occurring and as Catrina pointed out, and what's special about the pilot, is that employers must show how they're going to work on retention. We keep saying that you may not have understood that you're in the retention business, but that's a new business skill that you must adopt. You must keep care that you can't have a spouse, stay at home, locked in an apartment and expect somebody to stay here. You've got to integrate those people, maybe find them a job, but certainly integrate the spouse and the family, if the kids play soccer etc. If you don't do that, as an employer not social agency, you as an employer need to take that responsibility. That's probably the biggest change in mentalities that the pilot brought, and it's for a lot of employers, it's successful. A lot of our employers still have to learn.

**Edward Greenspon-** When you use the term cultural change for how employers have had to learn their way up this up this curve you described there; it also seems that this had happened in the context of a larger cultural change; one that was at one point, more resistant to immigration, and saw immigration as

competition for jobs. I think those attitudes have changed very markedly over recent years. I'm wondering what you think happens now when labor markets won't be as tight as they are, as Catrina has told us. We've gone from the tightest labor markets, to the highest levels of unemployment in an instant, and particularly youth unemployment, which is very high. Do you think that there might be some backsliding on the cultural change we've seen?

**Francis McGuire-** Personally, I think there is a danger. I don't think you'll see much of that because what really broke the back of public opinion is what happened in our elder care homes. When people realize that “my grandmother or my mother is stuck in hospital bed and I can't put her in an old age home- there's a bed and a room there, but there's nobody to change the sheets, nobody did the cleaning” when people understood that it became very personal. I don't think people cared much about the fish plant employer that can't get his processing done, but that came later. I think yes, there's been a real change. The danger though, that worries us at a ACOA, if there's a chance for a backlash; it will happen with youth. Youth always get hit hardest in a recession, they're the last in first out some of the entry level positions, tourism, etc. are gone and will be slower coming back. So, I think, in Atlantic Canada, at least, but probably Canada, that the immigration policy must be parallel, which with a much stronger youth employment thrust, so that will become the demographic challenge. Those will be two important polls that have to work together.

**Edward Greenspon-** For the sake of the audience, let me just cite a couple of figures to what you're saying. We will get a labor market force survey this week on Friday, that will be the third since the Coronavirus started. The last one in May told us from February to April, unemployment among youth declined by 34.2%. On top of that, an additional one in four who remained officially employed lost all or most of their usual hours, so we're talking quite a devastation there. Catrina, how do you expect as well, the play out on what has been a real growth in positive attitudes that immigration leads to economic growth and not to competition for jobs?

**Catrina Tapley-** Good question, to state the obvious, we're sensitive to public opinion with respect to immigration, it's our social license on our immigration levels and what we want to do. I'll come back to where Francis was, when we saw a bit of a backlash in New Brunswick over temporary foreign workers and fish plant workers who were coming in, and the premier made some fairly strong statements initially; we saw some polling shortly after that, and we really worried about the hit that was going to take on people's attitudes towards immigration. What we saw was there was a strong hit to people's attitudes towards immigration, particularly on the temporary side. What we didn't see, was from a permanent side, are people coming in, in terms of alleviating the things we talked about earlier, the demographic situation net growth in the labor market, the people are more sophisticated. They understood that there's a

difference between those two things and I think that's important for us in the immigration context, as well. There's a difference between permanent migration and what people expect about levels plan, and a difference between the temporary foreign worker side, which was something temporary, to fill jobs that Canadians didn't want to do. I think we're going to have to be deliberate in our thinking about those two things. The other thing I mentioned is that we're pretty concerned about immigrants themselves. So just as you've said about what figures are on youth unemployment, immigrants get hit disproportionately hard by those downturns as well. If we look at those same numbers you talked about from February to April 2020, recent immigrants got hit 23.2%. A 23.2% loss of jobs under recent immigrants is a scarring effect that occurs with immigration as well. I think it occurs in other parts of the labor market, but particularly in immigration. People who are coming into a recession, we saw this in the 90s and parts of the 2000s, where people aren't coming in and they're finding it more difficult to find a job. That scarring effect on how long it takes to catch up to be Canadian average is really exacerbated. That wasn't quite your question, so I'll come back to your question, which was, what do we do around attitudes and how do we want to promote this? I think it comes back to governments having to pay attention to both sides of this question. One is on reducing inequalities, protecting vulnerable sectors, and promoting fairness and access to opportunities. Those are only given. From an immigration point of view, it comes back to us to double down on our efforts around immigration matters. It's a campaign that we've launched with some success, but we could have more success at it. The stories of how immigration has contributed to communities in Canada are powerful. My favorite is the Charlottetown Figure Skating Club and I encourage you Google this, it talks about how the immigrant community in Charlottetown saved that figure skating club, so it's really how immigration and immigrants become a net benefit to the community. And I think that's important.

**Edward Greenspon-** If there had been a Charlottetown Skating Club in 1929, and my grandparents might have found it I might be an Islander which would be great. I'm interested in the comparison in some ways of younger people their plight and immigrants because I suppose, in some ways it's the same principles, last in first out. I'm wondering if we're going to have to do some special programming around that if that's something that either one of you were thinking about?

**Francis McGuire-** We definitely are. We think its capital. It's funny, for an agency like ours, we work very closely to IRCC on this and working with the employers, etc. That was part of the secret, I think. Why would the ACOA be involved in immigration originally? Because we understood that it's absolutely key to development, the same way with you. We absolutely need to; we're thinking through it right now. We've done quite a bit, but we haven't done enough, so what do we do next? Like I said, it's a balance; we cannot do one without the other.

**Edward Greenspon-** Francis, let me talk about something that you said at our first Atlantic Summit a couple of years back in Fredericton, where you are today. You spoke about how you were seeing more and more employers turning heavily towards the application capital, or the application of AI; in part because this is the new trend of the world, but in part because they were having trouble finding skilled workers. Is this something that is expected to continue? It will be it's a matter of how steep the curve is, I suppose, but is capital going to be competing more with labor?

**Francis McGuire-** You must be looking at our planning documents because exactly, 20,000 we think automations have to replace a third of those jobs, then immigration got to do a third and then we have to find the other third with youth and indigenous, especially the indigenous youth so there's really three. Yes, we do. We've seen even through COVID in the short-term adjustments, that companies are coming through, we're surprised to see it's about looking to the future, "I have to have more space, therefore less people. How do I do that? I have to automate." but they fit together because we need these immigrants with those skills to come in. When I talk about ICT and about what we have to do to train our young people in these fields, how to work in automation. I keep on saying, the most advanced plant that we have is Megawatt, Beausoleil Oysters. Some people say, "how can they be so into data, data marketing, technology, etc.?", but what I would call our traditional industries have to use all three poles. These are interesting jobs and we've learned with a temporary worker; you're not going to get the kids in New Brunswick to go work in the fish plant or pick blueberries. However, you can automate, and you want to bring in these temporary workers, particularly because they are temporary. They're coming here to work for six months, and then they go home. They don't go on AI. This is what we need, and they're very productive. If we look at our agricultural industries, they are competing in a world market, they have to be productive. To Catrina's point, temporary workers are invisible. They work on farm; they're out in the woods, etc. We don't see them; unlike the other immigrants who live in our cities go to our schools. I think a lot of people, particularly because the agricultural community in the fishing community has been so vocal saying you have to understand this, but this is this is good. These are jobs that by their nature will never be 12 months a year. If people can come in, help us, be productive, make money, develop our economy, and then go home and take money back to their communities, everybody wins.

**Edward Greenspon-** Let me turn to the audience question for a moment. And I think I'll try to direct to Catrina I hope that's a nice thing that I'm doing. The question says, "Many Atlantic employers are taking on immigrant's support themselves to retain them for their workforce; that type of extra activity is not possible for many SME's and not for profits, especially now. What is the government doing to support them? Or what should it be doing to get the workers they need, particularly the SME's and the not for profits"?

**Catrina Tapley-** Maybe I'll disagree slightly with the premise of the question. I don't think it is that difficult for SME's and not for profits and I'm trying to remember the name of Doug Robertson's group in Monckton, that's doing a lot of venture capital work. He was telling me about the success they've had both using the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, but also using Express Entry, which is our flagship program to bring in skilled immigrants. So, I think the more we can simplify our processes, and one of the things that this crisis has taught us well is that radical simplification is not a bad thing; where do we come back to basics? How do we take that back and how do we work with communities? I'm not suggesting for a second, we can't do better, we can; but I think I think in this region that SME's and not for profits may have had some pretty good success with some of these programs.

**Edward Greenspon-** Francis, do you want to weigh in on that?

**Francis McGuire-** Yeah, again, this is a lot easier and it's a necessary business skill today, just like marketing is or sales. People have gone through the learning, and they start off absolutely petrified and then learn it and it's not all that bad once I start doing it. The thing holding back a lot of SME's, we go and visit them and take them through, is the fear of getting started. That's the number one issue, not the overall necessity or complexity.

**Edward Greenspon-** I have a question here that I'm going to embellish slightly because I'm quite interested in as well. It says, "Economic immigration is important, but can you also talk about how refugees fit into the puzzle? What special supports do they need?" There's a reference in the question to the 2016 Syrian resettlement and I will just add to that, it'd be interesting to know what longitudinal work that you have on how the 2016 resettlement has gone in terms of the labor market? Catrina, I'll start with you again.

**Catrina Tapley-** Okay, pop quiz on my stats on how integration has gone with respect to our Syrian refugee movement.

**Edward Greenspon-** At the same time, qualitatively how refugees fit into the picture.

**Catrina Tapley-** I'll start with the larger cohort on Syrians that came in. They're doing well, they're not without challenges. We've done some evaluation work on this so it's not without challenges and challenges that I think you'd expect. We took a lot of tough cases from a refugee perspective; people that came in with low literacy skills in Arabic never mind English, but it underscored some things for us. Those who came in under the private sponsorship model did better than those who came in into the government sponsored model. One of the reasons for that is under the government model, we will take tougher cases, higher needs tougher cases, tougher to integrate. For private sponsor, there tends to be a family connection, there's a better wraparound of support. I'll come back to what Francis just said about the Atlantic

immigration pilot; when you have that wraparound, the supports for employers, when you've got government working better together and both levels you get better results and better outcome. The government's commitment to refugees has not wavered. It's very difficult during COVID, we have almost stopped, not quite, and that's because of our key partners. The UN High Commission for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration have pretty much stopped business. It's very difficult to get people out of situations, it's very difficult to get people to Canada and there are higher needs when people get here. So, we have to have our service provider organizations ready to stand up some pretty intensive quarantine around where people are coming from and how it works. Having said that, we've still managed to sell about 100 original protection cases in the last two months and we're anxious to get back to kind of a regular footprint when it comes to refugees, and supporting refugees, and to be able to have those who are being privately sponsored land in Canada. I'm confident that we'll get back to that in the fall, but it's more resource intensive. It requires more settlement support and higher supports around upskilling around language training, and integration into the Canadian society into basic things like how to shop at a grocery store in many cases. It's a much tougher population, but I have to say it's pretty rewarding on the other side.

**Edward Greenspon-** Let me start wrapping up on this question. I go back to our first summit a couple of years back on this subject; we've put some real cases in front of the audience, and I was very impressed. There was a woman from a Russian-Jewish immigrant from Israel to St. John, and St. John was being very creative in finding these people and bringing them in and retaining them and giving them a sense of clarity in the way you guys just spoke of. Are there any examples from employers from communities, creative solutions that you've seen that you think other people in the region will want to know something about? You're nodding Katrina, so you get to go first.

**Katrina Tapley-** Alright, I think some good success around work and settlement at the same time. By that, I mean working with employers where we can set up language training in the workplace. Employers, particularly in the service industry, where hotels are looking for chambermaids and looking for other things, have been great entry level jobs for a lot of refugees who've come in. So, we've worked with employers to be able to set up language training in the workplace. You work for nine hours, but two hours of maybe working with a settlement agency at the workplace on that. So those have been positive experiences. I can also talk about exploiting our private sponsorship model, but maybe I'll park that and, and turn it over to Francis.

**Francis McGuire-** My favorite one is again, seeing the private sector mobilized. So Edmundston, New Brunswick had several hundred jobs that couldn't fill, they had to bring in some butchers from Belgium, to work in their processing plant. They all happen to be men and they were bringing their spouses over. They

realized, they needed to do something with the spouses. So, the Chamber of Commerce, usually that that's not what they do said, "We must take care of the spouses". There's an example of business getting it and questioning "How do we actually keep care of those people"?

**Catrina Tapley-** Happy wife happy life is universal.

**Edward Greenspon-** Let me go back to the audience for a moment. There's a question that says, "What are the panelists thoughts on moving seasonal industries to year-round work, through job sharing partnerships between employers etc., to try to get out of a seasonal work mentality and move to permanent immigration?"

**Francis McGuire-** The numbers just don't work. There's a great example of a potato farmer in Carrollton County that employs people, all Canadian by the way, for half the year and then the maple syrup company next door hires them for the other; so that's work but the numbers are small. When you look at the numbers it just doesn't work, we don't have that kind of work in winter. We have a natural resource-based industry and it closes down and then the skills are not the same. Forestry workers they work in big \$600,000 forestry things very technical, etc., but the fish plant worker just doesn't have that skill. It found sounds okay in theory, but when you get down to the details, it doesn't work. Some jobs are just seasonal, that's how they'll always be. Lobster gets caught from spring to fall, well in Nova Scotia it gets caught in winter, it sounds great but once you try, it doesn't work.

**Edward Greenspon-** I guess that would render the temporary foreign workers type of program as an ongoing continuum. It's temporary in terms of stay in Canada, but as a program, it will have to be a more permanent program.

**Francis McGuire-** That's right. But there is a continual talk about there is a ladder from temporary to permanent and a lot of people are using it, but Katrina, that's your area of expertise.

**Edward Greenspon-** Katrina, are we seeing increasing use of that?

**Catrina Tapley-** Yeah, absolutely we're seeing increasing use, but not all temporary foreign workers are created equal. There are different parts to the temporary foreign worker program. One of the things that we've talked about for the Agri-food industry is the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and it works because it's just that, it's seasonal, and it's a seasonal industry. We think there is room, and I agree with Francis, the numbers aren't huge in this area. We have just launched something called The Agri-food Pilot. What the Agri-food Pilot will look at is year-round jobs in the Agri-food sector and bringing in temporary foreign workers for those jobs with the goal of having a path to permanency for those occupations. A lot of

these will be more greenhouse operated, mushroom growers, meatpacking plants, where you have a more reasonable expectation of year-round employment. For those coming in under traditional Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, I would argue it works well.

**Francis McGuire-** There are some industrial changes in the fish plants, for instance. Many fish plants because, they're trying to attract Canadians have tried to go to multi-species factories so that they can get not 20 weeks of work, but 40 weeks. In those cases, you do see the employer is trying to take those workers that are temporary and move them into permanent but there are only so many plants, that could move into longer term processing. Having multi-catching fish and processing fish and lobsters are mechanically extremely different. From an investment point of view, some are doing it, so it works, but it's limited.

**Edward Greenspon-** Let me ask one last question from the audience and I will embellish it a little bit. It does touch on Agri-food as you were talking about a moment ago, Catrina. It's really about labor market development in the context of the post COVID world that we're looking at. There's a lot of talk about a more resilient economy. There's a lot of talk, that we need to do a reopening, but we also need to think about a rebuilding. Public Policy Forum embarked on a Rebuild Canada project, which basically says that there's two sets of issues that we need to think of, new issues that didn't exist before this happened. That might be the size of public debt, or our house supply chain, issues have arisen, and I think food security might be in that, it's not something we were as concerned with previously. Then other issues are ones where their trajectory has changed a fair bit. The question is asking, in the context of fisheries, agriculture, forestry, "How will the promotion of food security particularly and others will affect labor market development?" How the post COVID world will affect labor market development and the Atlantic Pilot as you see it going forward.

**Francis McGuire-** I'll be controversial. Three potato farmers in New Brunswick can feed all the potatoes New Brunswick is going to eat. If you want to have a potato industry you have to export. So, open borders, better quality assurance so that you can get through borders easy, because it's true fish, it's true of wheat, it's true of all those things. You have to think scale. I go to the market and buy fresh fruit every time I can and vegetables, but that's not going to keep an economy going. We need to export and if it's just New Brunswick, there are almost 800,000 people. Not a lot of people can make money selling to that small market and so there are some market realities. It's good, we should do what we can, but from an economic standpoint, if you want to move the needle, absolutely not.

**Edward Greenspon-** Is COVID-19 changing the profile on the markets for some industries?

**Francis McGuire-** Sure, you see more of that and you see more delivery and local people doing things. And that's all very good and a few people are making a little bit more money, etc. It's not going to change the fundamentals for the potato farmer. If they don't eat French-fries in New York, they're going out of business and then we lose that whole rural development side. I get it, I'm sympathetic, but from an economic development point of view, it doesn't move the needle.

**Edward Greenspon-** Catrina, I'm going to give the last word to you. You can go on to that question, or perhaps you just want to say what your next steps look like from your perspective on what has been a successful program that now has bumped into one of the most consequential and unexpected health and economic events of the past hundred years. So, what do next steps look like to you in that context or outside that context?

**Catrina Tapley-** I'm trying to think of a smooth way to bring up international students because I think it's part of the path forward as well. International education is a \$20 billion a year, industry in Canada. That is a big deal. It's a big deal for Atlantic Canada. I note that you have David Dingwall, the President of the University of Cape Breton coming up next to talk about this, but I'll just put in a couple of plugs. This has been tough during this period. We've put a number of facilitative measures in place in terms of how we still use the real attraction of a post-graduate work permit, which is a big Canada advantage on international education, and how to use that and still allow online or distance learning take place. So, we're allowing this without any penalty to a post-graduation work permit to happen until January, we continue to evaluate and see what happens. We're working right now with provinces and territories, but with universities and college about what's going to happen in September in terms of who's physically coming back to class, who's going to have distance learning, how we've got good protections in place to be able to protect the industry that we have. Then the second thing is how do we continue to push Canada's advantage in this regard, by staying open during this period, by putting other measures in place to be able to protect what's a valuable and pretty important industry. Not just from, it's good for everybody to have, you know, foreign students at the University of Toronto; but the impact that that has on the local economy so Wolfville, on Sackville and Sydney on other places that these are really important economic generators for those communities. That's another thing that we just want to watch pretty closely as we continue to work our way through this crisis and to make sure that our steps are even and hit that balance between protecting the health and security of Canadians and still supporting a critical industry for us. I think that would be the only thing I didn't mention, and I felt badly about it, especially because the president of the University of Cape Breton is next. The other is just to watch closely what's happening in the labor market and to be able to kind of adjust a little bit in real time on that. That comes back to how we look both at a high scope model, which we

continue to believe is important, but also how we support regional labor market needs. So, we move from the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, to the ones we're looking at with municipalities, with rural and northern.

**Edward Greenspon-** That's a great note to end on, I want to thank you both for coming out. I think it's good for the public service to have an opportunity to interact with real people who are trying to cope with these issues too. Of course, this has been a historically important moment for public service, for public policy for really attending to the public interest during crisis. I thank the public service through you for that great work and on behalf of the audience as well. I hope you enjoyed this conversation. Please join us on June 9 for more on the Atlantic Growth Strategy. I'll be chatting with Premier of Prince Edward Island, Dennis King about the ways communities and employers are helping lead the change to a strong and more inclusive economy. I encourage you all to head over to Public Policy Forum to register for June 9, and to read some of the excellent research reports on immigration and economic development written over the past few years. So that's a wrap on this edition of our podcast. I want to thank my colleagues at the Public Policy Forum, and our partner, National Newswatch. If you enjoyed this episode, let us know on Twitter. I'm Edward Greenspon, and this has been Policy Speaking.