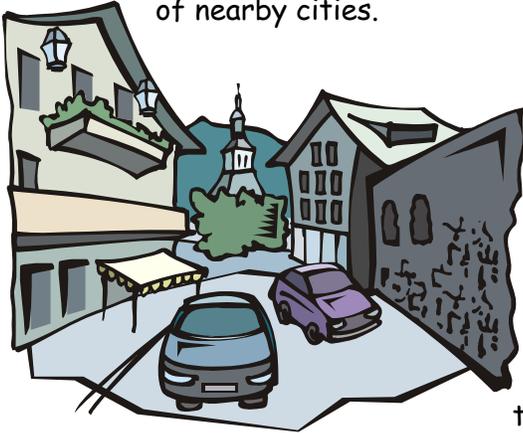


The Future of Crocusville

The Background:

Trevor and Sarah go to school in Crocusville, but they are not sure how much longer the high school portion of the school will remain open. Crocusville is a small farming community in the Canadian prairies with a population of approximately 500 at the present time. The village is going through difficult times with a declining population, hard times in the agriculture industry, and the effects of urbanization and growth of nearby cities.



Fifty years ago Crocusville was a thriving community with a population of over 700. The village had several grocery stores, a pharmacy, several garages and implement dealerships, two hardware stores, an elementary and a high school, several cafes, and four active churches. Over the years, however, the community has struggled with the realities of change forced on many prairie towns by increased urbanization, mechanization and changes in family life. Although farms in the area have become larger, they are much more mechanized and require fewer people to do the work. In some cases, the farms are owned by large companies. Most graduates of the local school moved to the city to continue education or to get jobs. Even the young people who stayed in town would often go to the city for most of their shopping, services, and entertainment. These realities have brought about a decline in the population and the closure of many of the businesses in Crocusville. There are a number of empty buildings on the main street and now there is even talk of closing down the high school.

Trevor's family runs the local hotel and he would like to get a degree in business administration and then come home and take over the family business. But he is not sure that the hotel can survive in the declining town and provide him with a good living. Sarah's family lives on a large farm, which is run by her father and older brother, but she and her younger brother are not interested in farming and plan to leave for the city right after high school.

Despite its problems, Crocusville has some positive things going for it. It is a pleasant village with well-kept houses and gardens. There is a good supply of inexpensive housing and the cost of living is much lower than in the city. It still has a K-S4 school, and it has a recently built senior citizens' residence, an extended care home, and a clinic that is run by an itinerant doctor one day a week. The village is on a major highway and a rail line. There is a small river nearby, although no one has thought of building cottages or developing a tourist business.

The Future:

The town council and chamber of commerce are concerned about things and want to develop a plan to turn things around. They have looked at plans developed by other towns in similar circumstances. One community placed ads in a major national newspaper to attract residents to a quiet, safe and low-cost rural lifestyle. Another town billed itself as a retirement community to attract senior residents, many of whom might still have considerable disposable income and interests in volunteering to improve the quality of life. Perhaps tourism services, such as a golf course and cottages, could be developed. They might be able to get funding to restore old grain elevators and develop an agricultural museum. Perhaps they could fix an old building and change it into a country teahouse and craft shop, and market Crocusville as a place for nearby urban residents to visit.



What are the best options to ensure the continued survival of Crocusville?