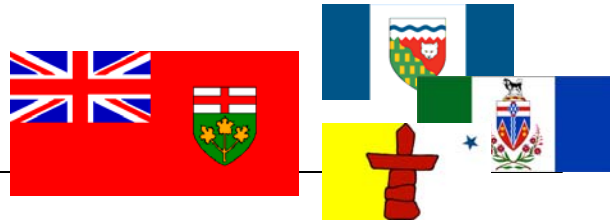


Transplanted in the North



It's beautiful, the cold's not so bad, but the prices are steep

IQALUIT - With the wind whistling outside, making a -5 C day feel like -20 C, Alice Ladner and Thomas Druyan sit in their living room in Apex, bright sunshine warming the space. They live in an apartment in Iqaluit's satellite community, overlooking Koojesse Inlet on Frobisher Bay. Married for six years, they've been here a year and a half. It's early May and the spring festival, Toonik Tyme, was two weeks ago. Still, there's lots of snow left as Iqaluit received far more than usual this past winter.

"It's just beautiful; I don't really mind the cold," Ms. Ladner says of living in Nunavut. "It's always quiet. We have a beautiful view of the bay. I don't even notice there aren't any trees; it doesn't affect me. We get up in the morning if the sun is just rising and get our camera and run out and take pictures of the sky." She's the administrator for the Iqaluit District Education Authority, comprised of four schools. A lawyer, Thomas used to live in and work for the federal government in Ottawa. Now he drafts regulations and laws for Nunavut's legislature.

"I wanted to get away from the culture and atmosphere of Ottawa and wanted a change and came up here," he says. In Iqaluit, it's different: far more laid-back, where many people kind of fly by the seat of their pants in the workplace because there's no set way of doing things, or it hasn't been identified yet.

"There isn't the same level of procedure and process, which is good," Mr. Druyan says. "But a lot of it is bad because people don't know there should be a procedure." The high wages and difficulty in attracting workers makes for a lower-calibre crop in general, he says.

Neither owns a car and both walk to work in Iqaluit. Ms. Ladner says because it's drier, she's never felt as cold here as down south. The couple doesn't go out for dinner much and says there's really very little to spend money on. It's a good thing. What first strikes newcomers to Canada's north isn't the cold or the lack of trees, it's the prices. There's no other way to say it, living in the north is expensive.

Goods have to be flown in or shipped to communities when the ocean is ice-free. On top of that, energy costs are much higher, adding to the mark up on items that come from the south. True, wages are high in the capital. According to the 2001 Canadian census, the average Iqaluit household earned \$69,650, compared to \$45,440 in Nunavut as a whole. Two-or-more-person Iqaluit households earned \$79,002. In Oshawa, the average household brought in \$60,642.

Still, the prices can shock. At Iqaluit's North Mart, the northern equivalent of a Wal-Mart, you can buy almost anything, from food to ATVs. But make sure your bank account is prepared for the hit: a honeydew melon is \$10.99 and a 12-pack of instant oatmeal \$5.29.

"Freight is very significant, obviously," says store manager Glenn Cousins. "But there's other aspects contributing to costs and services in the north." He notes that electricity, depending on if it's charged at a residential or business rate, is 30 to 40 cents per kilowatt hour here, six times the rate down south.

"The whole economy is inflated so people need to be paid more," Mr. Cousins says. A lot of residents, including Mr. Druyan and Ms. Ladner, order a year's worth of dry goods by ship if they can afford the up-front fee. Each unit in their complex has a dry goods room for storage. Others order food every week or two, including meat and produce. The couple had cable at \$70 a month, but found they could easily do without it and cancelled it.

Mr. Druyan says he might stay two more years or a little longer and that they're not ready to leave yet. Originally from Toronto, he confesses to missing what only a big city can offer in the way of culture and entertainment.

"I would like to go to some shows," he says wistfully. They face more pressing challenges, such as three power outages in the past month, including one in the winter that lasted one-and-half days.

"It was pretty cold overnight," says Mr. Druyan, noting the toilet water and pipes froze. The warmth of summer brings massive mosquitoes, swarms of 20 to 30 that stick to a hiker like glue. It also brings a remarkable profusion and variety of flowers on the tundra. Each hopes in their jobs to help make the new territory better before they leave.

"I could easily stay up here forever if it wasn't that my children and grandchildren (including daughter Sarah in Whitby) are down south," Ms. Ladner says.

SOURCE: The News Advertiser, July 17, 2005.

Calculate the difference in prices of these basic grocery items, then total all 3 columns.

ITEM	NORTH MART (Iqaluit, NU)	LOBLAWS (Ajax, ON)	DIFFERENCE (\$NU – \$ON)
Lettuce	\$2.99	\$1.15	
Melon	\$10.99	\$1.99	
Frozen Dinner	\$3.99	\$1.47	
Pork Chops (/kg)	\$13.99	\$9.24	
Steak (/kg)	\$29.99	\$19.82	
Ground Beef (/kg)	\$10.99	\$6.59	
Milk (2L)	\$6.59	\$2.39	
Eggs (/dozen)	\$3.19	\$2.49	
Sugar (2kg)	\$4.99	\$1.93	
Instant Oatmeal (12)	\$5.29	\$2.47	
Ketchup (1L)	\$6.99	\$3.47	
TOTAL			