Understanding Amish Migrations to New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba[1]

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Abstract: For nearly two centuries, the Amish of Canada inhabited only one province: Ontario. Since 2015, however, Amish families have started to migrate from Ontario to New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba. This paper seeks to understand both why Amish families felt the need to move out of Ontario and why they chose those specific destinations. It argues that three factors structure Amish interprovincial migrations in Canada: farmland prices, the geography of existing Amish settlements in both Canada and the United States, and the political hospitality of provinces. Most specifically, the paper suggests that Prince Edward Island might be the most Amish-friendly jurisdiction in North America, while Quebec might be the least Amish-friendly jurisdiction of the continent.

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Ninety-eight percent of the world's Amish population currently lives in the United States. In this context, the academic literature on the Amish unsurprisingly focuses almost exclusively on this country. Yet, recent developments in the country with the second biggest Amish population, Canada, should draw the attention of Plain Anabaptism scholars.

From the 1820s until recently, the Amish inhabited only one Canadian province: Ontario (Steiner, 2015). However, in the past few years, the Amish have established settlements in New Brunswick (2015), Prince Edward Island (2016), and Manitoba (2017). This paper seeks to understand why Amish families recently decided to migrate from Ontario to these three provinces. It argues that interprovincial political differences underwrite to a large extent the geography of the Amish in Canada. Crucially, the paper reveals that the Amish are allowed to run their parochial schools in some provinces, but not in others—whereas Amish parochial schools have been allowed across the United States since the 1972 *Wisconsin v. Yoder* Supreme Court ruling. In Ontario and

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Prince Edward Island, Amish parochial schools are formally legal; in New Brunswick, they have been tolerated so far, but their legality remains to be formally established; in Manitoba, they are illegal, but discussion is ongoing between the provincial authorities and the Amish; in Quebec, they are illegal and the Amish have little hope of being accommodated. The paper also reveals that one province, Prince Edward Island, has arguably done more than any other jurisdiction in North America to attract and retain Amish migrants. The article thus suggests that Amish migrations might work differently in Canada than in the United States.

The next section of the paper clarifies the puzzle of the recent Amish migrations to New Brunswick (NB), Prince Edward Island (PEI), and Manitoba (MB), and identifies three hypotheses potentially accounting for them. Then, after a short section on data and methods, the paper discusses the results and concludes.

Puzzle and Hypotheses

There are currently 21 Amish settlements in Canada. Ten of them are located in the southwestern area of Ontario and, as the table below illustrates, this is where the bulk (over 80%) of the Canadian Amish lives.

As Table 1 also illustrates, these settlements had already been established by 1996, while new settlements were founded in Central Ontario as of the late 1990s, in Northern Ontario as of the late 2000s, and in other provinces as of the mid-2010s.

What accounts for these migrations out of Southwestern Ontario? Why have Amish families decided to migrate specifically to New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba, and not to Quebec or Nova Scotia? More generally, what kind of places attract and sustain Amish populations? In their study and review of the American literature on this question, Anderson and Kendra (2015) chiefly describe the typical Amish settlement as being located in a rural area near a small commercial center with cheap farmland and neighboring Amish settlements of similar affiliations.

Anderson and Kendra (2015) would thus suggest an explanation of the recent Amish migrations out of Ontario: the Amish moved to get access to cheaper farmland and chose places close to Amish settlements of similar affiliation, perhaps near the American border.

The existing literature on the Amish from Canada is unhelpful in addressing the puzzle of these recent migrations. There are only two social science scholarly studies specifically focusing on the Amish from Canada—Thomson (1993) and Regehr (1995). Both were published in the mid-1990s and neither seriously discusses matters of geography. The wider literature on Canadian politics, however, supplies a different explanation—overlooked by Anderson and Kendra (2015)—to account for the recent Amish migrations: political hospitality. In Canada, where interprovincial social policy and cultural differences are vast (Wiseman, 2007; Buckingham, 2015; Haddow, 2015), one should expect some provinces to be politically more attractive to the Amish than others.

Table 1
Existing Amish Settlements in Canada, 2020

Settlement	Region	Date Founded	2020 Population
Milverton / Millbank	Southwestern Ontario	1824	1,210
Aylmer	Southwestern Ontario	1953	605
Owen Sound / Desboro	Southwestern Ontario	1954	530
Norwich	Southwestern Ontario	1954	645
St Marys / Lakeside	Southwestern Ontario	1958	130
Mossley / Mt. Elgin	Southwestern Ontario	1962	270
Lucknow	Southwestern Ontario	1973	730
Chesley	Southwestern Ontario	1979	305
Tiverton / Kincardine	Southwestern Ontario	1995	200
Minto / Greenbush / Harriston	Southwestern Ontario	1996	80
Cameron / Lindsay	Central Ontario	1998	165
Powassan	Central Ontario	2001	175
Stirling / Belleville	Central Ontario	2005	205
Iron Bridge	Northern Ontario	2008	105
Englehart	Northern Ontario	2009	170
Manitoulin / Tehkummah	Northern Ontario	2014	60
Carlingford	Victoria County, NB	2015	70
Cardigan	Kings County, PEI	2016	90
Mt Stewart / Summerville	Kings County, PEI	2016	160
Vita	Eastman Region, MB	2017	70
Eldorado / Madoc	Central Ontario	2018	35
Total			**6,010**

Source: Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies (2020); Bergen & Van Beek (2019)

One area where one could expect consequential interprovincial differences is education—an exclusively provincial jurisdiction in Canada. With respect to education and the Amish, the situation is critically different in Canada and in the United States. Prior to *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), some states were more tolerant than others toward the education preferences of the Amish (Keim, 1975; Meyers, 2003). In *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), however, the United States Supreme Court clarified that, across the United States, Amish children were allowed to stop school after the 8th grade, follow a largely Amish curriculum, and be taught by Amish teachers who had themselves no formal education beyond the 8th grade (Kraybill et al., 2013, pp. 254–257). In Canada, since there has been no ruling equivalent to *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), the right of the

Amish to attend their own schools is not guaranteed. In fact, in all provinces, formal education is compulsory until the age of at least 16. Moreover, several provinces require teachers to have formal certifications that traditional Amish schoolteachers lack (Van Pelt et al., 2017), while Quebec requires all its schools to follow the provincial curriculum. Hence, the default option for the Amish parochial schools in Canada is to be illegal; individual provinces need to proactively make them legal.

In sum, three hypotheses could be distinguished. According to the farmland prices hypothesis (H1), the Amish moved from Ontario to other provinces in search of cheaper farmland; according to the Amish neighbor hypothesis (H2), the Amish migrated to places located close to existing Amish settlements of similar affiliation; and according to the political hospitality hypothesis (H3), the Amish were attracted by politically hospitable provinces and repelled by politically inhospitable provinces.

Data and Methods

This is a qualitative research study focusing on within-case analyses. As is usually the case in such analyses, this paper privileges a process tracing method, which is about finding diagnostic pieces of evidence within a case that contribute to support or reject alternative explanatory hypotheses (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012).

To find diagnostic pieces of evidence, I complemented my documentary research by a systematic review of the three main Amish newspapers circulating in Canada—*The Diary*, *The Budget,* and *Die Botschaft*—between January 2014 and December 2019. I also conducted 20 semidirected interviews with various actors from Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, including Amish migrants, close neighbors, and government officials. (See the appendix for the information on these interviews.) New respondents were solicited until the point of saturation (Baker & Edwards, 2012).

Results

Hypothesis 1: Farmland Prices

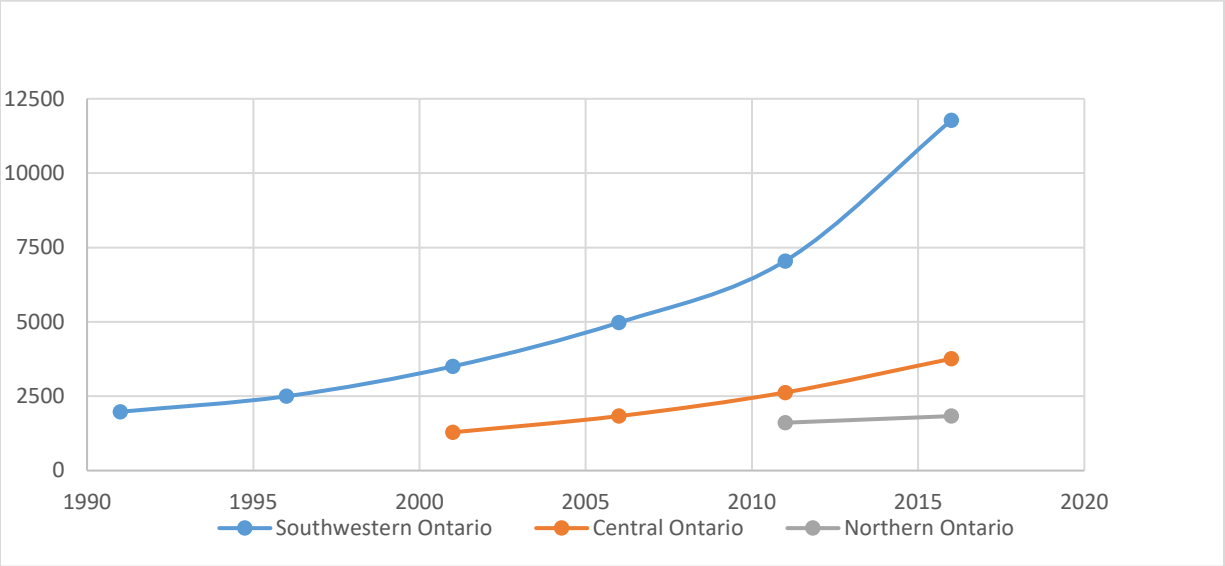
Young Amish families who do not inherit a farm from the previous generation typically have two options: choose another line of work or migrate. If they choose to migrate, they will typically look for cheap farmland. This quest for cheap farmland partly explains the migration of some Amish families to Canada. As Regehr (1996, p. 133) explains,

> [A] number of reasons have been given to explain why Old Order Amish migrated from the United States to Canada after 1953. First, land and the cost of establishing new farms had become too expensive in the United States. Prices were lower in Ontario, and available land was allegedly better.

There is strong correlational evidence that the rise of farmland prices is the key driver of Amish migrations, first out of Southwestern Ontario, then out of Central Ontario. Figure 1 shows that the average value of farmland and buildings in Southwestern Ontario has nearly quintupled over the last twenty years, increasing from about $2,500 per acre in the late 1990s to nearly $12,500 per acre in the late 2010s. Farmland prices had also increased to over $3,700 in Central Ontario by 2016. Farmland in Northern Ontario remained around $2,500 per acre in 2016/2017. The graph suggests that as farmland prices increased in Southwestern Ontario, Amish families started moving to Central Ontario and then to Northern Ontario and other provinces.

Figure 1

Average Estimated Value of Farmland and Buildings ($) per Acre in Ontarian Counties with Amish Settlements, 1991–2016



Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2019)

Farmland prices in the areas where Amish live outside of Ontario are comparable—or lower—to those in Northern Ontario. In eastern PEI, at the time the Amish moved in, farmland was about $2,000 per acre ("Let's Help the Amish," 2014; MacDonald, 2016). In Carlingford, New Brunswick, the actual price paid by the Amish settlers seems to have been around $1,200 per acre—$600,000 for about 500 acres.[2] In Vita, Manitoba, a *Winnipeg Free Press* article reveals, "[T]he municipality sold 3½ parcels of land (560 acres) to the Amish people, at an average price of $45,000–$50,000 per quarter section" (Redekop, 2017). Since a quarter section represents 160 acres, average price was between $280 and $315 per acre—substantially cheaper than farmland in

[2] The prices paid for real estate are public information in New Brunswick. Hence, I know that the Amish paid exactly $600,000 for a piece of land on October 22, 2014 (Service New Brunswick, n.d.). However, the size of the property is not public information. An anonymous interviewee informed me it was about 500 acres.

Ontario.[3] The data is unambiguous: farmland is cheaper in Northern Ontario, NB, PEI, and MB than in Southwestern and Central Ontario.

Interviews with the Amish or their allies confirm that farmland prices underscore the recent Amish migrations in Canada. Media reports from interviews with a non-Amish ally who moved from Ontario to Prince Edward Island along with the Amish identify the rise of farm prices as the primary reason for the move ("Amish Scout New Community," 2014; Coulter, 2014; Bissett, 2016; Fraser, 2016). As an editorial from a local PEI newspaper put it: "Land prices in Ontario are $15,000 to $20,000 per acre,[3] which is unaffordable for a mixed-use farm operation. In P.E.I., farmland goes for $1,500 to $2,500 an acre" ("Let's Help the Amish," 2014). In *The Diary*, the scribe from Linwood, Ontario, reports: "A load of people went to Prince Edward Island, a 22-hour drive away, land shopping…. There's not many farms available here in this area for an affordable price" (November 2015).

Farmland prices are not lower in PEI than in Northern Ontario, but the quality of the farmland is arguably better on the Island. The Amish ally reports that the initial plan was to move to Northern Ontario, not Prince Edward Island. The latter destination was only considered after land shopping in the north of the province proved to be disappointing due to the poor quality of the land. Journalist Coulter (2014) explains,

> [The ally] has tried moving some communities to Northern Ontario where the land is cheaper but the terrain is rugged and not conducive to mixed farming…. "This past spring they couldn't even grow oats which is a pretty basic crop. You can grow oats almost anywhere but up there the crops were no good at all so that was discouraging to the Amish I took there."

Another issue with Northern Ontario is that it is sometimes perceived as too peripheral for the Amish, as being too far from a medium-sized urban center (interview #16)—a consideration acknowledged as key by Anderson and Kenda (2015).

Interviews similarly reveal that the farmland price differentials between Southwestern Ontario and New Brunswick was a key factor determining the decision to migrate (interview #16). *The Budget* scribe from Smyrna, Maine (September 25, 2014), hence reports about the future settlement in Carlingford: "They find the price land of Southern Ontario a bit hard to swallow and are interested in New Brunswick."

The historian Royden Loewen likewise reported that "the migration into Manitoba is in response to high farmland price" (Redekop, 2017). Interviews with Amish from the new Manitoba settlement point in the same direction: "The desire to become farmers, coupled with the high price of farm land in southwestern Ontario, motivated the move to Manitoba, said Edward Miller, one

[3] According to a local anonymous real estate agent, "At the time the Amish purchased their land from the municipality it would have been at or slightly below market value. The land the Amish purchased was marginal land" (interview #20).

of the recently arrived Amish men" (MacLean, 2018). *The Diary* scribe from Mossley, Ontario, discusses in these terms the appeal of the Vita farmland, in Manitoba (August 2017):

> News for this area is about latest Manitoba trip. A small bus load headed out to search for cheaper land on June 26 and were gone all week. The ones home thought it was a long week wondering and waiting… I guess it was hard to resist buying when talking hundreds of dollars instead of thousands of dollars an acre… So many young men wish to have their own farm and for the price of land in this area it is not possible.

The rise of farmland prices is clearly the push factor explaining Amish migration out of Southwestern Ontario. However, farmland prices cannot, by themselves, predict the destination chosen by migrating Amish families. Amish from Southwestern Ontario seeking farmland worth around $2,000 per acre had plenty of options in the neighboring provinces. The Farm Credit Canada Values Reports indicate the farmland value range representing 90% of the sales in Canada's different regions. According to the 2017 report (Farm Credit Canada, 2018), in 2016, these ranges started below $2,000 in a total of 16 regions in the provinces located between Manitoba and Prince Edward Island: all five of Manitoba's regions, one Ontario region (Northern Ontario), six Quebec regions (Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Outaouais, Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, Bas-Saint-Laurent-Gaspésie, Chaudière-Appalaches, and Estrie), two New Brunswick regions (Western New Brunswick and Southwestern New Brunswick), all three Nova Scotia regions (Annapolis Valley, Truro-Shubenacadie, and Pictou-Antigonish), as well as one Prince Edward Island region (Kings). Moreover, many of these regions enjoying Southeastern or Atlantic Maritime climates are highly suited for agriculture.

Hypothesis 2: Amish Neighbors

Hypothesis 2 complements Hypothesis 1: Amish families move out of Southwestern or Central Ontario to places with affordable farmland *and* with existing Amish settlements of similar affiliations.

These two hypotheses seem to be able to account for much of the Amish migration history within Ontario. One can distinguish four periods in the demographic history of the Amish in Ontario. During the first period, from 1824 to 1953, there was only a single settlement in the province, located in the southwestern region (Thomson, 1993). Then, from 1953 to 1998, settlements proliferated in the region, but only in the southwestern area, newcomers settling near existing settlements presumably to enjoy the benefits of neighborhood. As farmland prices increased in Southwestern Ontario, the Amish moved to the closest region, Central Ontario, establishing new settlements there from 1998 to 2008. The Amish from Saint Marys (Southwestern region), for example, created a sister settlement in Powassan (Central region) in 2001 (Draper, 2016)—located about 275 miles away. As farmland prices increased in that latter region as well,

the Amish moved to virtually the next closest region, Northern Ontario, creating new settlements there from 2008 to 2015. For example, in 2008, the Swartzentruber Amish from Owen Sound (Southwestern region) created a sister community in Iron Bridge (Draper, 2016)—located about 240 miles away. Then, as the Wallbank story indicates, at least some Amish families considered first moving to Northern Ontario before deciding to move to another province.

These two hypotheses are also able to explain the migration toward New Brunswick. The settlement in New Brunswick was founded by three Swartzentruber[4] families from Chesley, Ontario, who bought about 500 acres in the village of Carlingford immediately adjacent to the Easton settlement in Maine in the spring of 2015 (see *The Diary*, from Easton, Maine: January 2015, May 2015, June 2015; from Chesley, Ontario: May 2015, June 2015). The Carlingford and Easton districts in fact currently share the same bishop and have a very close relationship (interviews #9, #13).

At about the same time, two other Swartzentruber families from Chesley attempted to create a district in Centerville (Florenceville) in New Brunswick, less than 30 miles south of Carlingford. In January of 2020, the two families were still there, but had not succeeded in attracting other families and so have not succeeded in creating a new district (interview #16).

Why not move directly to Maine? International emigration is complicated for the Amish, especially the Swartzentruber Amish who oppose pictures of themselves (Kraybill et al., 2013, p. 104).[5] However, the Amish from Maine and New Brunswick are able to cross the border and visit each other without a picture identification, by carrying a copy of their birth certificate (interviews #6, #16).

The hypotheses similarly account quite well for the migration towards Manitoba. Vita is also directly adjacent to the U.S. border. Most Amish who have migrated to Vita are Buchanan Amish[6] who come from Mossley, Ontario. Although there are no Buchanan Amish settlements immediately on the American side of the border, the Amish newspapers report that the Vita Amish have a relationship with two relatively close settlements in Minnesota (i.e., between 200 and 230 miles away): the one in Frazee (*Die Botschaft*, Frazee, May 2018) and the one in Sebeka (*The Diary*, Vita, December 2018).

[4] The Swartzentruber Amish originate from a split in Holmes County, Ohio, in 1913–1917. They migrated from the United States to Owen Sound, Ontario, in 1954 (Scott, 2009). They are considered one of the most conservative Amish affiliations and have drawn the attention of scholars. In particular, see Johnson-Weiner (2017).

[5] A group of Old Order Amish families from northern Indiana, for example, had attempted to move to PEI in the 1950s, but were not allowed to cross the border as they objected to have their photograph taken *(Canadian Mennonite*, 1956).

[6] The Buchanan Amish emerged from Buchanan County, Iowa, in 1914. They founded the Mossley settlement in Ontario in 1962 (Scott, 2009).

The Amish neighbor hypothesis, however, fails to explain the migrations towards PEI. The Milverton[7] and Troyer[8] (Norwich) settlements in PEI are both very far from any similarly affiliated Amish settlements. As one journalist summarizes the situation, "The biggest single hang-up is the 22-hour drive. Some of them can't get their heads around that" (Coulter, 2014). One interviewee reported that PEI seemed perfect except for the fact that it was so far.

The two traditional hypotheses cannot account for the greater popularity of PEI relative to NB and MB among the Amish, as attested by Table 1, and the absence of Amish settlements in Quebec. Eastern PEI farmland is cheaper than in Southwestern Ontario, but not systemically cheaper than in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, and PEI is considerably further from Ontario than is Quebec. For example, according to the 2017 Farm Credit Canada Values Report, farmland prices in 2016 typically ranged between $1,500 and $3,500 per acre in PEI's Kings County; between $1,200 and $3,800 per acre in the Outaouais region in Quebec; and between $1,200 and $6,100 per acre in the Estrie region in Quebec. Among the Amish, then, why is PEI so popular and Quebec so unpopular?

Hypothesis 3: Political Hospitality

From a broad historical perspective, national policies have played a major role in determining the geographical location of the Amish. In the eighteenth century, the Amish started migrating to Pennsylvania in large part because of its religious tolerance (Nolt, 2015). Similarly, the fact that Canada did not have compulsory military or alternative service after World War II drove many Amish to Canada, who went on to create the Aylmer settlement, in Ontario (Regehr, 1995). Yet, the role of policies in structuring Amish migration patterns remains largely understudied.

Thomson (1993) and Regehr (1995) both report how the Amish, since their arrival in the country in the early 1820s, have negotiated with Canadian authorities on various policy issues, including pension plans, social insurance numbers, health insurance, cemetery laws, education, jury duty, and milk storage regulations. The Amish then only lived in Ontario and, because Ontario is the largest and politically most dominant province, these two studies treated Canada as having a singular political culture. Regehr (1995), in particular, emphasizes the difference between the American political culture, which stresses personal rights and freedoms, and the Canadian political culture (singular), which stresses reciprocal privileges and responsibilities. Hence, a formal judiciary decision clarifying the extent of the Amish's rights (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972) seemed only necessary in the United States.

[7] The Milverton Amish arrived in the Perth area, in Ontario, directly from Europe in the early 1820s (Scott, 2009).

[8] In 1931–1932 there was a split among the Swartzentrubers that resulted in the formation of the Troyer Amish in Wayne County, Ohio. Troyer families migrated from the United States to the Norwich area, in Ontario, in 1954 (Scott, 2009).

Now that the Amish live in different provinces, one needs to be attentive to the country's different provincial cultures (Wiseman, 2007; Haddow, 2015; Buckingham, 2015) and to the possibility that some provinces may be politically more hospitable to the Amish than others.

Consider education. Should the Amish be exempted from compulsory schooling or from following the public curriculum? In the United States, this question has spurred a debate, both in academia and in civil society. To a large extent, the debate opposed two variations of liberalism, one emphasizing individual autonomy, the other toleration of diversity (Galston, 1995). Some argue that Amish parochial schools do not offer an adequate exit option to Amish children and so undermine their individual autonomy, their freedom to choose a kind of life different from their parents' (Mazie, 2005; Okin, 2002; Barry, 2001). Others argue that a liberal state ought to tolerate non-liberal groups like the Amish rather than impose a uniform conception of education (Galston, 1995; Kymlicka, 2001).

In Canada, Amish education has hardly spurred any debate. Yet, provinces are reacting very differently to the Amish demands in the area of education. Ontario and Prince Edward Island are the only two provinces where traditional Amish education—i.e., formal schooling only until the 8th grade, teachers lacking formal certifications, and Amish curriculum—is formally legal. In New Brunswick, the Amish parochial school has essentially gone unnoticed since its opening in 2016. In Manitoba, the Amish have so far failed to legally establish a parochial school, although they are currently discussing with the provincial authorities the possibility of opening one. In Quebec, Amish parochial schools are illegal and have little hope of being accommodated in the near future.

The Amish never seem to have attempted to create a settlement in Quebec. I argue that this is mostly because Quebec's education laws are incompatible with the Amish preference to send their children to parochial schools. Quebec is the only province where all schools, including nonsubsidized private schools, must follow the provincial curriculum; Quebec also requires teachers to have formal certifications that traditional Amish schoolteachers lack (Van Pelt et al., 2017).

The maps produced by Anderson and Donnermeyer (2013) show that Quebec is the home of two Plain Anabaptist groups: Conservative (p. 12) and Holdeman (p. 13) Mennonites. More recent research reveals that there are in fact only Holdeman Mennonites—with a branch in Montreal and another in Roxton Falls, in the Estrie region (Lougheed, forthcoming). How are these Plain Mennonites accommodated?

The case of the Holdeman group in Roxton Falls has received some media attention. In 2007, several families from that community left the province because their parochial school was considered illegal as it was not following the provincial curriculum (Lavallée, 2007; "Mennonites Leaving Quebec," 2007). That said, journalists reported that in 2014, the small illegal Mennonite school in Roxton Falls (then counting 22 students) was still operating—along with five illegal Jewish schools (Teisceira-Lessard, 2014). In other words, although the Holdeman Mennonites continue to be de facto tolerated, they are hardly accommodated in Quebec.

The topic of illegal schools is a politically sensitive one in Quebec. Two former students of an illegal Jewish school, Yochonon Lowen and Clara Wasserstein, who feel their education inadequately prepared them for life in Quebec, are currently suing the provincial government for having failed to comply with its own law in this matter (Lauzon, 2020). Fearing that the strategy of homeschooling might be employed by parents wishing to shield their children from the provincial curriculum, the current Legault government, in Quebec, is enacting a reform that aims to increase government oversight of homeschooling. Hence, as of 2021, homeschooled students will have to take ministerial exams (Fortier, 2019a, 2019b).

In this context, one might thus reason that, in the mid-2010s, school laws prevented the Amish from seriously considering moving to Quebec—an assumption validated in interview #13 and in one media article, which confirmed that one Old Order Mennonite who moved from Ontario to Prince Edward Island in the mid-2010s reported that his community had consciously avoided Quebec because they knew they could not run their parochial schools in that province (Mercer, 2018).

Education, however, might not be the only problem for the Amish in Quebec. When asked whether she/he had considered Quebec as a migration destination, one interviewee mentioned that the French language appeared to be an issue. Amish are a rural people, and outside Montreal, French is the native language of almost 90% of Quebecers; yet the Amish generally do not speak French.

If Amish have been able to make their home in what is now Ontario for almost 200 years, it is partly because their parochial schools have always been legal in the province. Until 1960, "rural schools in Ontario were run by local school boards with minimal direction from Toronto" (Regehr, 1996, p. 133).

In the 1960s, as the Ontario government started playing a more active role in education, the Ontario Education Ministry gave Old Order Mennonite and Amish families permission to remove their children from formal schooling at age 14 provided they were needed at home on the family farm until the formal school-leaving age—currently 18 years old (Steiner, 2015, p. 357; Regehr, 1996, pp. 25–27; Regehr, 1995, pp. 172–175).

Amish parochial schools currently fall into the category of uninspected private schools, which do not offer Ontario Secondary School Diploma credit courses. To comply with the law, these nonsubsidized schools need to meet seven requirements set by the provincial government, including having (i) a principal in charge of the school; (ii) a control of content of the program or courses of study; (iii) a control of quality of instruction and evaluation of student achievement; (iv) a common school-wide assessment and evaluation policy; (v) a common procedure for reporting to parents; (vi) a common school-wide attendance policy; and (vii) a central office for the secure maintenance of student records. These requirements are silent concerning the content of the curriculum and the training of the teachers.

The situation of the Amish in New Brunswick is exceptional insofar as their presence has not yet been acknowledged by the provincial government. The district in Carlingford set up a school

that started operating in the fall of 2016 (interview #16), yet in January 2020, the school was still absent from the New Brunswick registry of independent schools.[9] The province does not seem to know about this school. As one interviewee summarized, "[The Amish] seem to do their own thing…until the government starts waving a red flag…so far, the New Brunswick authorities have left them alone" (interview #11). This laissez-faire approach seems to satisfy the Amish, one of whom made this comment: "Some seem to think N.B. stands for 'nothing better'" (*The Diary*, Chesley, October 2019).

New Brunswick is the only province that does not legally recognize independent schools: "New Brunswick's education legislation does not recognize independent schools of any kind, although…20 independent schools were operating in the province in 2013/14, serving 1,032 students" (Van Pelt et al., 2016, Table 1). Because the New Brunswick Education Act has no provision on either private education or homeschooling, independent schools are de facto uninspected by the provincial government and do not offer recognized New Brunswick Secondary School Diploma credit courses (interview #16).

One could thus infer that the Amish children in New Brunswick are de facto allowed to attend their parochial schools, although the law is not as explicit as it is in the other provinces. Moreover, since the school-leaving age is 18 in New Brunswick, it is unclear whether the Amish in the province are authorized to quit formal schooling after Grade 8.

Among the authorities in New Brunswick, interest in having the Amish move into the area so far mainly seems to come from the Kent Regional Service Commission, a local governmental service delivery body. Inspired by the success of Prince Edward Island in attracting Amish farmers, it has been seeking to attract thirty Milverton Amish families from Southwestern Ontario since 2017 (interview #14). The idea is to attract a population truly dedicated to farming in order to revitalize the agricultural sector of the area. So far, however, no Amish family has moved to the region.

Since their arrival in Manitoba in 2017, the Amish have been homeschooling their children. There is still no Amish school in the province (Manitoba Education, 2020; interview #17) and it is unclear whether it will be possible for the Amish to establish a school in that province.

Manitoba authorizes nonfunded independent schools, which do not have to hire certified teachers and do not need to implement the provincial curriculum. However, school is mandatory until the age of 18 in Manitoba, and no ethnic or cultural group is exempt from that requirement—including the Old Order Mennonites and Hutterites currently established in the province. It would clearly be illegal for the Manitoba Amish to leave school at 14, the typical age of the Amish children once they finish Grade 8 (interview #17).

The Amish are nonetheless currently in dialogue with Manitoba Education to meet the requirements to be granted a code for a nonfunded independent school. Both parties seem to be negotiating in good faith, but it is yet unclear whether a solution can be found. As a result, the future of the Amish in that province is uncertain.

[9] Yet there is a Facebook page where anyone could easily find information on that school: https://www.facebook.com/AmishCarlingford/.

The provincial governments in New Brunswick and Manitoba played no role in attracting the Amish. In contrast, the Prince Edward Island Liberal governments of Robert Ghiz (2011–2015) and Wade MacLauchlan (2015–2019) made efforts to recruit and retain Amish immigrants.

In Prince Edward Island, the story begins in the fall of 2014, when the aforementioned Amish ally and a group of Amish first came to the Island for a prospective visit ("Amish Scout New Community," 2014; "Des Amish Pourraient S'établir," 2014; Coulter, 2014). They were able to meet with government officials, including the executive director of the PEI Federation of Agriculture, John Jamieson (interview #4).

Immediately, the main newspaper in the province, *The Guardian*, published an editorial titled "Let's Help the Amish Feel Welcome" (October 30, 2014). And on November 1, 2014, John Jamieson visited the Millbank and Norwich Amish settlements in Southwestern Ontario to promote Prince Edward Island, making PowerPoint presentations (Walker, 2014; interview #4).

Many Amish were seduced, but PEI officials were unable to convince them they would be able to send their children to Amish parochial schools (interview #2). Amish parochial schools could not be recognized as private schools on the Island, as the provincial School Act specified that private schools on PEI were required to have certified teachers. Homeschooling also did not seem to be an option for the Amish as the School Act required parents to submit education plans to the government that needed to include the name and address of a certified teacher advisor.

To avoid losing potential Amish immigrants, the PEI government decided to amend its School Act. The politically easier path seemed to withdraw regulations on homeschooling as these were minimal and in effect largely ignored (interview #5). Hence, as of October 24, 2015, tutors homeschooling children on the Island were not required to include any reference to a certified teacher advisor in the education plan they submitted to the government ("Amish Community Request," 2015; Bennett, 2016). Then, as of the 2016–2017 school year, tutors no longer needed to provide the government with any sort of education plan (Brown, 2016; Bruce, 2019).

Since their arrival on the Island in the spring of 2016, the Amish parochial schools are thus legally considered institutions of homeschooling. According to an anonymous interviewee, because education remains compulsory up to the age of 16, Amish children between the ages of 14 and 16 who have graduated are considered by the province to be doing educational practicums on the farm—an arrangement similar to the one existing in Ontario.

To further increase the appeal of PEI to the Amish, provincial authorities innovated in the area of health care. In all Canadian provinces, citizens are automatically eligible for the provincial free public health insurance plan. For religious reasons, however, the Amish normally do not want to be covered. As noninsured Canadians, the Amish thus generally pay out of pocket for the health care services they receive.[10] In PEI, however, officials were able to grant the Amish free access to

[10] In Ontario, however, the Amish have negotiated arrangements with certain individual hospitals. Hence, the London Health & Science Hospital, in Southwestern Ontario, offers a 50% rebate for many of its services to the Old Order Mennonites and Amish (interview #13). In Manitoba, the Amish currently still pay the full rate for their health services, but they are in discussion with members of the legislative assembly

medical doctors and hospitals without providing them with a provincial health insurance card. The Amish were instead given a letter identifying the individual, date of birth, and their provincial health number. In return, the government sends the bishops[11] a statement reporting "an aggregated roll-up of all billable medical costs incurred by members of the community [district]" (interview #6) every three months, and the district members then decide, on a voluntary basis, how much they give back as donations to local hospitals.

More generally, interviews with PEI respondents reveal that, to PEI officials, the Amish represented ideal newcomers on at least five fronts (listed here in no particular order). First, given their high fertility rate, they fitted into the province's demographic expansion strategy. Second, given their willingness to take on agriculture, the province's number one economic sector, they promised to revitalize rural eastern PEI. Third, the fact that they paid all their taxes without benefitting from several provincially funded government services—such as schools, children allowances, or social assistance—also made them immediately attractive from a strict accounting perspective. Fourth, by constantly receiving Amish visitors from Ontario and the United States as well as by attracting non-Amish tourists, the Amish promised to favor tourism, the province's number two economic sector. And fifth, from a cultural perspective, the Amish seemed to pleasantly remind the Islanders of their idyllic past, symbolized by Maud Montgomery's famous *Anne of Green Gables* novels.

Indeed, the Amish seem to have benefitted from a warm welcome on the Island. The media has only published neutral or sympathetic articles on the Amish and at the Legislative Assembly, the Amish are the object of a cross-partisan consensus. On the Island, the Amish have no known opponent. I have been able to find only one article expressing some concerns over the Amish-induced policy change in home education (Bennett, 2016).

In fact, the arrival of the Amish has spurred a popular enthusiasm in Prince Edward Island—but not in Manitoba or New Brunswick. The Amish immigration has been widely covered by the media only in Prince Edward Island. Hence, from 2014 to 2019 (inclusively), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC/Radio-Canada) website published no article on the New Brunswick Amish, two articles on the Manitoba Amish (one in French, one in English), but a total of 34 articles on the Prince Edward Island Amish. A similar pattern is found when looking at private newspapers. In New Brunswick, none of the *Brunswick News* media outlets published anything on the New Brunswick Amish.[12] Similarly, *L'Acadie Nouvelle* wrote no story on the Amish of the province. In Manitoba, the *Winnipeg Free Press* published one article reporting on

to bring their rates down (interview #18). In New Brunswick, the Amish pay out of pocket for several health care services, but the situation is less clear. The authorities from Horizon NB, the health care network used by the Amish in the province, "could not comment" on my queries concerning the Amish and health care.

[11] Each PEI settlement initially included only one district, and so one bishop. In 2020, however, the process of creating a second church district in the Mt. Stewart/Summerville settlement started (*Die Botschaft*, Summerville, July 2020).

[12] Yet the recent immigration of Conservative Mennonites in New Brunswick has received some—favorable—media coverage from *Brunswick News* (Scott-Wallace, 2016, 2017).

the arrival of the Amish. In contrast, in Prince Edward Island, *The Guardian* has published 28 articles on the Amish so far.

Similarly, the Amish have been extensively discussed only at the Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly by members of the three parties represented in the legislature. According to the PEI Legislative Assembly Hansard, since 2016, the Liberals mentioned them on 10 different days,[13] the Progressive-Conservatives on 12 days,[14] and the Greens on two days.[15] In contrast, according to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Hansard, the Amish have been mentioned only once[16] in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly—by the MLA of the constituency where the Amish established themselves—and, according to the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly Hansard, not even once in the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly. To our knowledge, PEI is exceptional in the North American continent for its sympathy for the Amish.

Conclusion

For nearly two hundred years, the Amish from Canada lived in only one province, Ontario. Why have they, in the last few years, started moving to New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba? This paper argues that a combination of three factors chiefly account for this recent migratory phenomenon: land prices, the geography of existing Amish settlements, and provincial political hospitality. First, the rise of farmland prices, especially since the 1990s, explains why several Amish families felt the need to move out of Southwestern and then Central Ontario. For many Amish, moving to Northern Ontario constituted a satisfying solution. To others, Northern Ontario seemed to lack good quality soil and seemed too far removed from economic centers, so migrating to other provinces became an option as of the mid-2010s. Second, the Amish migrating to New Brunswick and Manitoba elected to move practically to the U.S. border to be close to an Amish settlement of similar affiliation in the United States—in a context where international immigration is complicated for Amish of conservative affiliation reluctant to having pictures taken of themselves. Third, interprovincial policy differences explain why the Amish have so far avoided moving to Quebec and why they are increasingly moving to Prince Edward Island; while Quebec's education laws are incompatible with the Amish's education preferences, Prince Edward Island has been proactive in welcoming the Amish, holding a recruitment session in Southwestern Ontario, modifying its Education Act to allow Amish parochial schools, and crafting an original arrangement in the area of health care that is favorable to the Amish.

This paper is the first to insist on the role of policy in explaining the geographical distribution of Amish settlements. Future research could further explore this role by focusing on other Plain Anabaptist peoples or policies from other jurisdictions.

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[13] April 8, 2016; April 14, 2016; April 20, 2016; April 26, 2016; November 17, 2016; November 24, 2016; April 12, 2017; November 30, 2017; April 24, 2018; November 12, 2019.
[14] April 20, 2016; April 21, 2016; April 26, 2016; May 3, 2016; May 13, 2016; December 8, 2016; April 26, 2017; April 5, 2018; April 12, 2018; May 10, 2018; November 30, 2018; June 20, 2019.
[15] April 7, 2016; December 8, 2016.
[16] December 3, 2018.

Are other Anabaptists less sensitive to political hospitality? The situation in Manitoba is interesting in that respect, as Manitoba is already the home of Hutterites and Old Order Mennonites; yet it is unclear whether the Amish will thrive there as it is still unknown whether they will succeed, in particular, to establish parochial schools in that province. The situations in PEI suggests a similar portrait. Old Order Mennonites, after similarly moving from Southwestern Ontario to Northern Ontario (Epp, 2018), have also recently moved to PEI (MacDonald, 2016; Mercer, 2018); yet, the political attention in the province clearly targets the Amish, not the Old Order Mennonites. The changes in the Education Act, in particular, were in response to the Amish, not the Old Order Mennonites (Bennett, 2016).

The role of policy in the migration of Plain Anabaptists need not be studied in a Canadian context only. Are some American states politically more Amish-friendly? Some seem to be more tolerant than others with respect to the Swartzentrubers' reluctance to use slow-moving-vehicle triangles (Nolt, 2016, p. 101). Has this interstate policy difference—or have other such differences—impacted Amish migration in the United States? Also, recent developments in New Brunswick's Kent County underscore the role of local authorities in Amish migration and raise the question as to whether, in the United States, some counties are more proactive than others in attracting or repelling the Amish.

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Newspapers

Die Botschaft, Millersburg, Pennsylvania

The Budget, Sugarcreek, Ohio

The Diary, Kirkwood, Pennsylvania

Appendix
List of Interviews

	Date of Interview	Position/Provincial Abbreviation	Type of Interview
1.	October 29, 2018; November 13, 2018 (email)	Realtor (PEI)	In person
2.	October 29, 2018; November 5, 2018	Amish ally (PEI)	In person
3.	November 5, 2018	Consultant (PEI)	In person
4.	November 5, 2018	Deputy Minister, Agriculture (PEI)	In person
5.	November 13, 2018	Deputy Minister, Education (PEI)	Phone
6.	November 15, 2018	Health PEI	Phone
7.	November 15, 2018	Stuartburn Councilor MB	Phone
8.	November 17, 2018	MB	Email
9.	November 19, 2018	Non-Amish neighbor, NB	In person
10.	November 22, 2018	NB	Phone
11.	November 23, 2018	NB	Phone
12.	November 26, 2018	Anonymous*	In person
13.	November 27, 2018	London Health & Science Hospital (ON)	Phone
14.	2020 (several occasions)	Kent Regional Service Commission (NB)	In person & email
15.	January 21, 2020	NB	Phone
16.	February 12, 2020	Anonymous	In person
17.	February 26, 2020	MB Education Ministry	Phone
18.	March 6, 2020	MB	Phone
19.	March 2020	NB	Phone & email
20.	August 2020	MB	Email

*Because there is only one relatively small Amish settlement in New Brunswick and in Manitoba, revealing the province of residence of the interviewee might compromise his or her anonymity.