People & Economy

Background Report
Plan Review



reVISION Plan Review
Some Community Assembly Required

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The Municipality of the District of Chester (the Municipality or the district) is made up of coastal villages and small rural communities in the eastern half of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. The eastern edge of the Municipality borders the Halifax Regional Municipality. Hants County and Kings County are to the north of the Municipality. The Municipality of Lunenburg lies to the west. The Atlantic Ocean lies to the south.

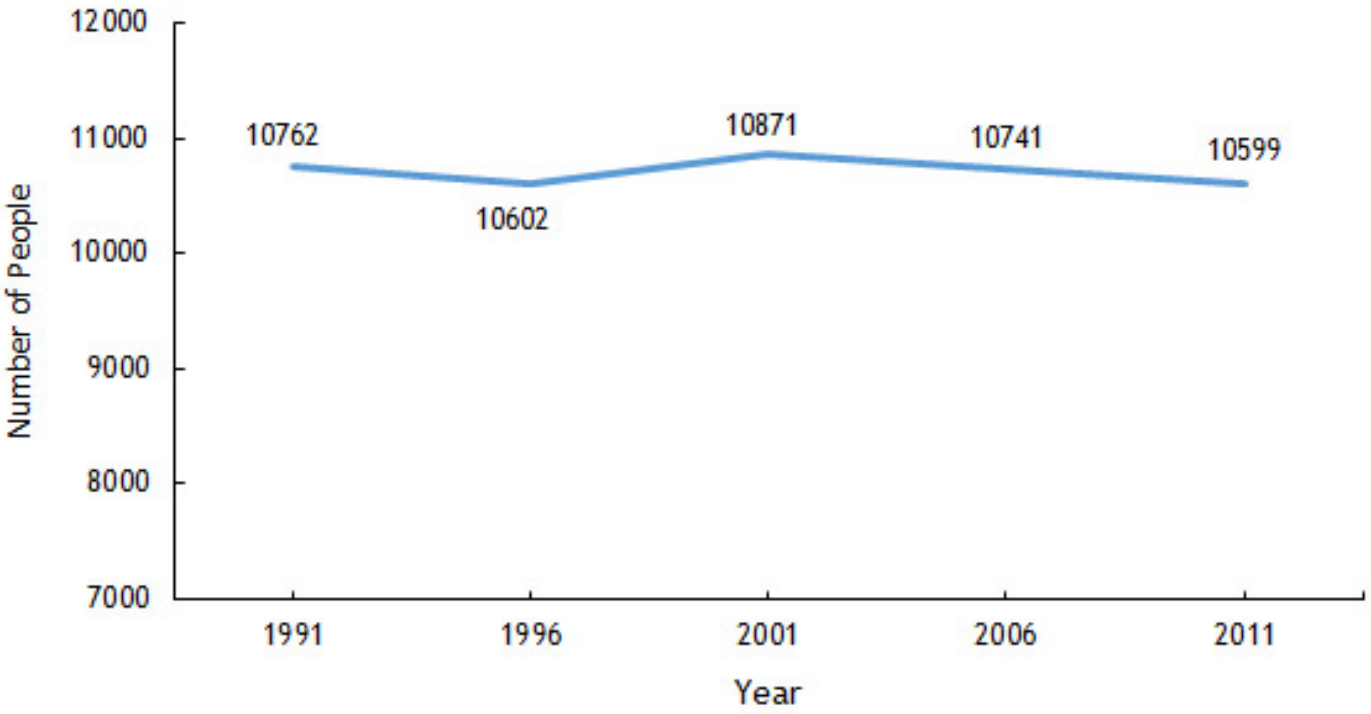
Communities in the municipality are some of the oldest in the province. To help residents create a strong future, the Municipality is creating a new Municipal Planning Strategy. Strong background knowledge is essential to good decision making. Municipal staff have created a series of background reports to help residents and Councilors understand the issues and opportunities in their communities.

Municipal Population

Most communities are on the Atlantic Coast. Hubbards, East River, Chester, Chester Basin and Western Shore are coastal communities along Highway 3. Many coastal communities – such as Blandford, Mill Cove, Borgels Point and Martins River – are on peninsulas just off of Highway 3. Inland communities like New Ross, Chester Grant and Windsor Road are on trunk highways connecting the South Shore to the Annapolis Valley. Highway 103 runs parallel to the Atlantic Coast, connecting the municipality to Halifax, Bridgewater and the rest of the South Shore.

10,599 people lived in the municipality in 2011, the last census year. The 2011 population was 1.3% lower than it was in 2006, but the population has been quite stable since 1991. A stable population is rare in rural areas of Nova Scotia, as some have lost large numbers of residents in the last decade. While rural communities have declined, Nova Scotia has had limited population growth. Counties such as Hants and Colchester, are the only areas outside Halifax with consistent growth.

Some areas of the district have had sharper declines, including Western Shore, Blandford and



Municipal Population Change - District of Chester: The total population has been fairly stable since 1991, but delinced 2.5% since 2001. Census of Canada. Accessed via Nova Scotia Community Counts website.

	Population					Change (%)	
	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	1991-2001	2001-2011
Windsor Road	464	480	570	554	555	19%	-3%
Western Shore	2704	2615	2506	2412	2389	-8%	-5%
New Ross	1572	1561	1472	1470	1393	-7%	-6%
Hubbards	2027	2021	2056	2091	2082	1%	1%
Chester	2353	2319	2349	2294	2348	0%	0%
Chester Basin	1869	2006	2026	1994	1976	8%	-3%
Blandford	1707	1455	1612	1616	1528	-6%	-5%

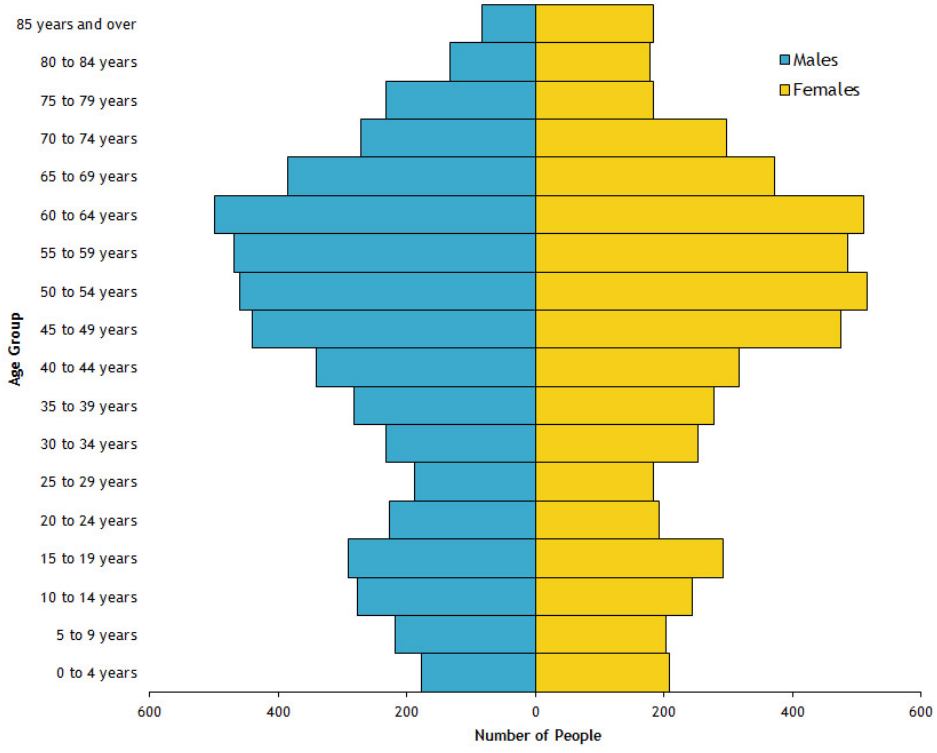
Above: Population Change by Community: Since 1991, population declined in many communities.

New Ross. This is in line with provincial trends. In general, populations have dropped the most in rural areas that are farthest from major towns or cities. Only two communities in the district had stable populations since 1991. Chester Village had no change, while Hubbards gained a few dozen people.

Population Characteristics

Like many parts of Nova Scotia, the district has an aging population. The Municipality has an older population than other areas of the province; in 2011 the median age was 49.9 years. The median age for the province was 43.7. Nova Scotia's median age is one of the highest in the country.

There are fewer children and working age adults. People in the largest group - the baby boomers - are retired or will retire shortly. The population pyramid for the Municipality shows a large number of adults between 45 and 65 years old. The proportion of adults who are retired has increased and will continue to increase. There are fewer young adults between the ages of 20 and 40. The size of this age group decreased 43% between 1991 and 2011 as people moved out of the Municipality. The number of school age children has dropped 22% since 1991.



Population by Age Group - District of Chester: The chart shows the number of residents in five year age groups. 2011 Census of Canada.

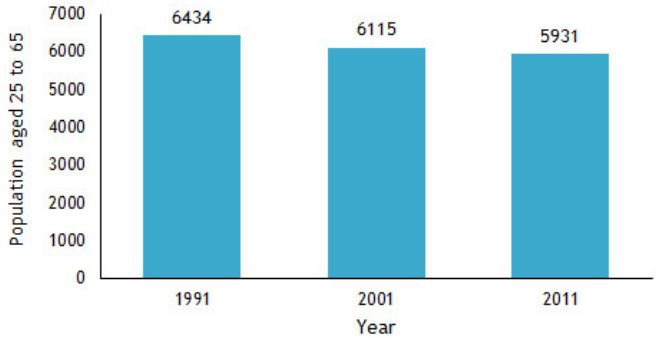
Since 1991, many new houses have been built in the Municipality. These new units were added at a time when populations were slowly dropping. In 1991, there was an average of 2.6 people per household. In 2011, the average had dropped to 2.2 people per household. There are more two-person households now than in the past. More couples – both young and old – live alone

without children. Also, those couples that do have children have smaller families than in the past.

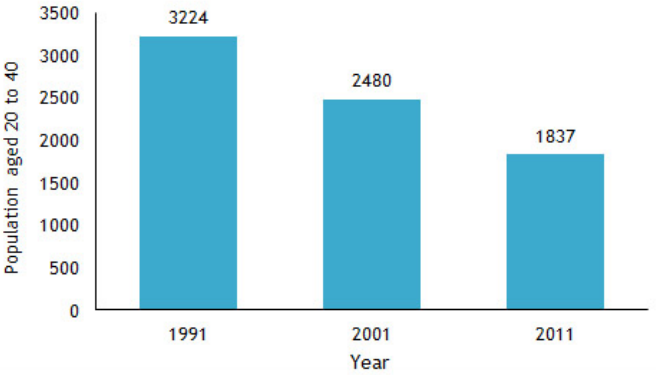
Population Change

Population growth or decline has two parts: migration and natural increase or decrease. Migration inolves people moving in and out of communities. In a wealthy country like Canada, there are often many people moving in and out of communities. When looking at population, the net change is of interest. The net change is the difference between people arriving and people leaving.

Natural increase or decrease is the change in population caused by deaths or births. Net increases in population occur when there are more births than deaths. In Lunenburg County, there were 336 total births in 2009. The same year there were 506 deaths. The natural population change for the County was -173 in 2009, and has been negative in Lunenburg County since at least the year 2000.



Working Age Adults - District of Chester: The number of working age adults dropped 8% between 1991 and 2011. Census of Canada. Accessed from the Nova Scotia Community Counts website.



Young Adults - District of Chester: The number of adults between 20 and 40 years old dropped 43% between 1991 and 2011. Census of Canada. Accessed from the Nova Scotia Community Counts website.

Fewer couples are having children and family sizes are smaller. For a population to stay steady, each female needs to have two children over her lifetime, one to replace her and one to replace her partner. A fertility rate of just over two children per female is the replacement rate. Canada's fertility rate in 2011 was 1.61 children per female. Nova Scotia's fertility rate was 1.47 per female in 2011. Fertility rates below two mean that in the long term, deaths will be greater than births, and population will decline without immigration.

1.47 births per female
The 2011 fertility rate in Nova Scotia

Population Projections

Three methods were used to predict the population of the Municipality until 2036. The simpler method is the exponential growth projection. The current rate of population decline (about 1.5% every five years) was projected into the future. This method projects that in 2036 the municipal population will be 9434. This would be an 11% population decline from 2011.

The cohort survival method projects that in 2036 the population will be 8836. This would be a decline of 17% from 2011. This method used Canadian birth rates and fertility rates to predict the number of births and deaths in each age group over the next twenty five years. It did not consider people moving in or out of the Municipality.

Both methods have flaws. The exponential rate does not consider the size of specific age groups in a population. For the municipality, the exponential projection could underestimate population decline, because deaths will increase as the population ages.

The cohort projection model did not consider people moving to or from the Municipality. A cohort model that incorporated migration predicts the population to be 8826 in 2036. This projection shows the population dropping slowly at first and quickly after 2026. All three projections highlight the following trends and how they may play out in the future:

- the population is aging
- younger residents are leaving
- new residents tend to be older

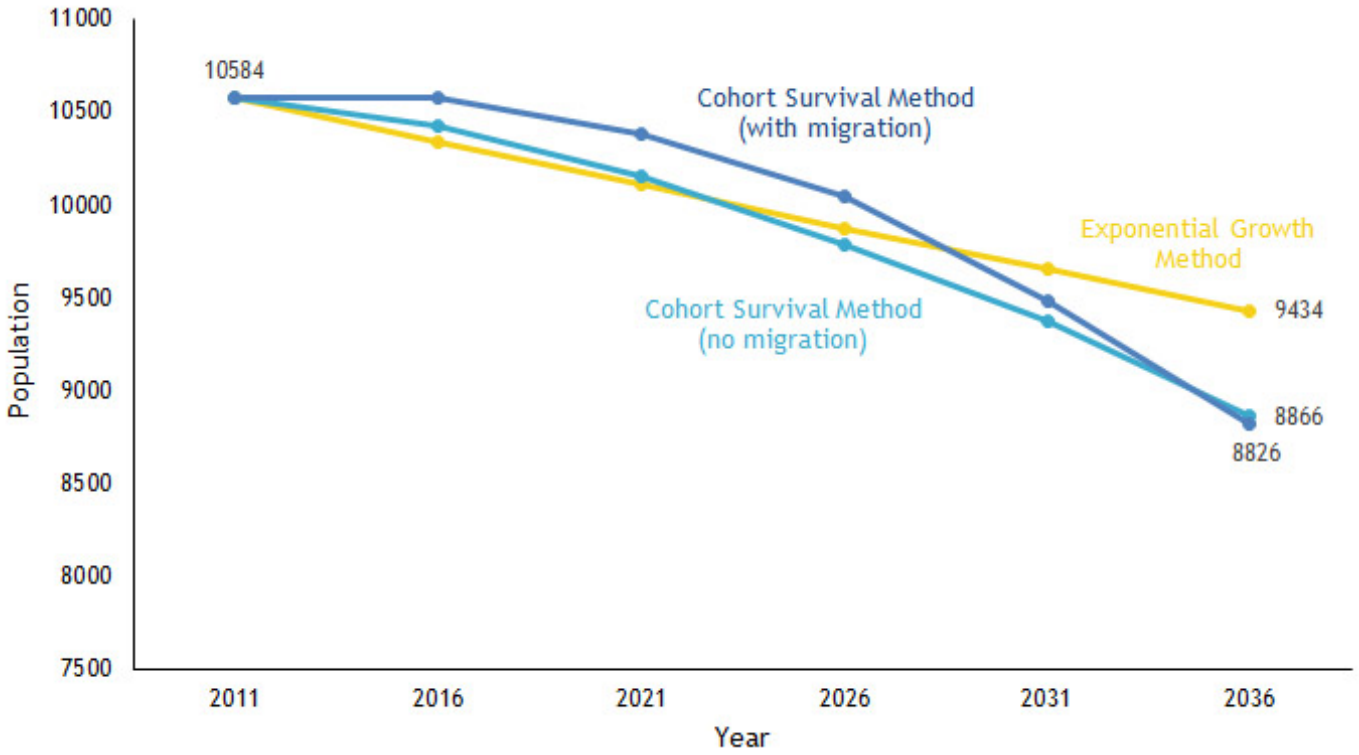
Population decline in the Municipality is currently slow. If demographic trends continue, the population will drop quickly. New residents tend to be older. They are not in the age groups that start families, meaning that the number of deaths will continue to be larger than the number of births. Most new residents come from Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's population is aging and slowly declining. The pool of potential residents to draw from is aging and may continue to shrink.

Immigration

Birth rates in Canada and Nova Scotia are well below the threshold to maintain a steady population. Without continued immigration, the population in Canada would peak and then decline. Immigration to Nova Scotia is limited, and the provincial population is slowly dropping.

Young people are leaving the Municipality, but for the time being the population decline is slow, as newcomers take their place. Most people that moved to the District (over 60%) in the last decade have come from another part of Nova Scotia. The number of people in Nova Scotia has begun to decrease, and it will be more difficult to attract residents from other areas of the province. The number of young people – the most mobile age group – is declining in Nova Scotia, making it likely that the number of people moving to the Municipality will decline.

In 2011, 6.6% of residents were born outside of



Above: Projections for the District of Chester. One cohort survival method considers trends in migration in and out of the Municipality. The other cohort survivial projection does not consider in or out migration.

Canada. This is higher than many rural areas, and also higher than the provincial average of 5.3%.

	2011		2006	
Moved from within Nova Scotia	1040	64.2%	885	62.8%
Moved from within Canada	450	27.8%	415	29.4%
Moved from outside Canada	129	8.0%	110	7.8%
Total	**1619**		**1410**	

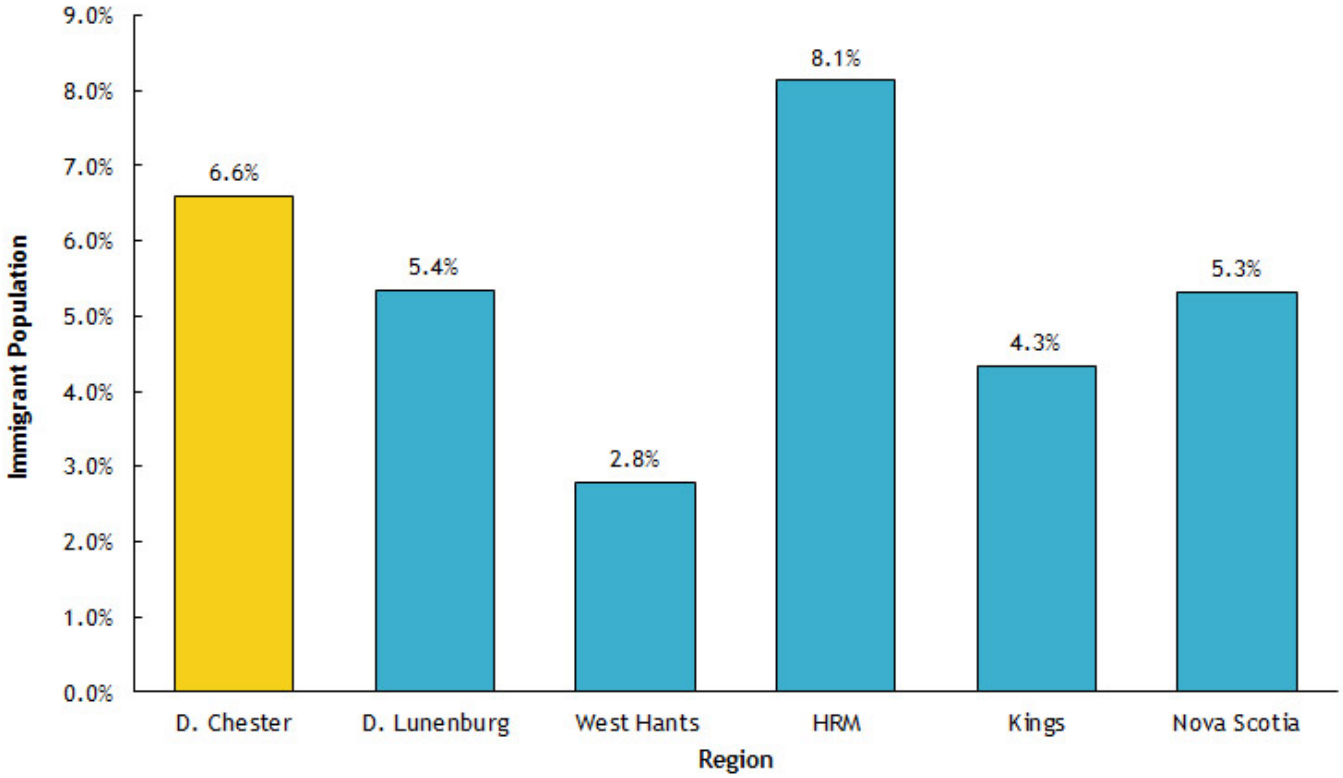
New Residents to the District, by place of origin. 2011 data: National Household Survey. 2006 data: Canadian Census of Population.

Labour Force

The labour force is composed of people working or people looking for work. The participation rate is the percentage of the total population that is in the labour force. People in the labour force are of working age and represent the most important group of taxpayers. For economic growth to happen, there must be enough workers in the labour force for businesses to find workers. Workers within the labour force must also have the right skills and training to match employers needs.

In 2011, the National Household Survey found the Municipality's participation rate was 58.4%. 5,331 residents were in the labour force. Census data showed 4,880 people in the labour force in 2006. The National Household Survey in 2011 used different methods than the Census. The labour force numbers from 2011 are potentially inaccurate. The number of working age residents in the Municipality is dropping, making it unlikely that the labour force grew by almost 10% between 2006 and 2011.

The National Household survey also has information about occupations. In 2011, the percentage of workers in finance/ business, science/ technology, and sales/ services in the Municipality were at least two percentage points below the provincial average. These are likely to be strong growth sectors in the future.



Immigrants as a Percentage of Total Population: Residents born outside of Canada make up 6.6% of the population in the District of Chester. This is higher than other rural areas and the Nova Scotia average.

Occupation	Percentage of Workers						
	D. Chester	D. Lunenburg	West Hants	HRM	Kings	N.S.	Can.
Management	11%	9%	10%	11%	12%	10%	11%
Finance & Business	11%	14%	15%	17%	12%	15%	17%
Science & Technology	4%	4%	5%	8%	5%	6%	7%
Health	6%	6%	5%	7%	7%	7%	6%
Education, Law & Government	12%	9%	11%	14%	15%	13%	12%
Arts, Culture & Recreation	4%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Sales & Services	22%	24%	21%	25%	22%	24%	23%
Trades & Transportation	19%	20%	23%	12%	14%	15%	14%
Resources & Agriculture	5%	6%	4%	1%	6%	4%	2%
Manufacturing	6%	7%	5%	2%	6%	4%	5%

Percentage of Workers in Different Occupations: The percentage of total wokers by type of occupation, showing how the District of Chester compares to different regions. 2011 National Household Survey.

Education

The level of school that someone completes is their educational attainment. Different communities have collectively achieved different levels of education than residents in other communities. Residents that have more education usually have higher incomes and more diverse job options.

Residents of the Municipality tend to have slightly lower education levels than the Nova Scotian average. The number of residents that received education after high school is 55% in the Municipality and 54% in Nova Scotia. The Municipality, however, has more residents without a high school education and fewer university graduates. A larger percentage of residents have college or trade education than the Nova Scotia average, reflecting the type of industry common in rural areas.

Income

Household incomes in the Municipality are similar to the District of Lunenburg, but lower than the provincial average. The median household income in the Municipality was $50,277 in 2011. In Nova Scotia, the median houshold income was $53,606 in the same year.

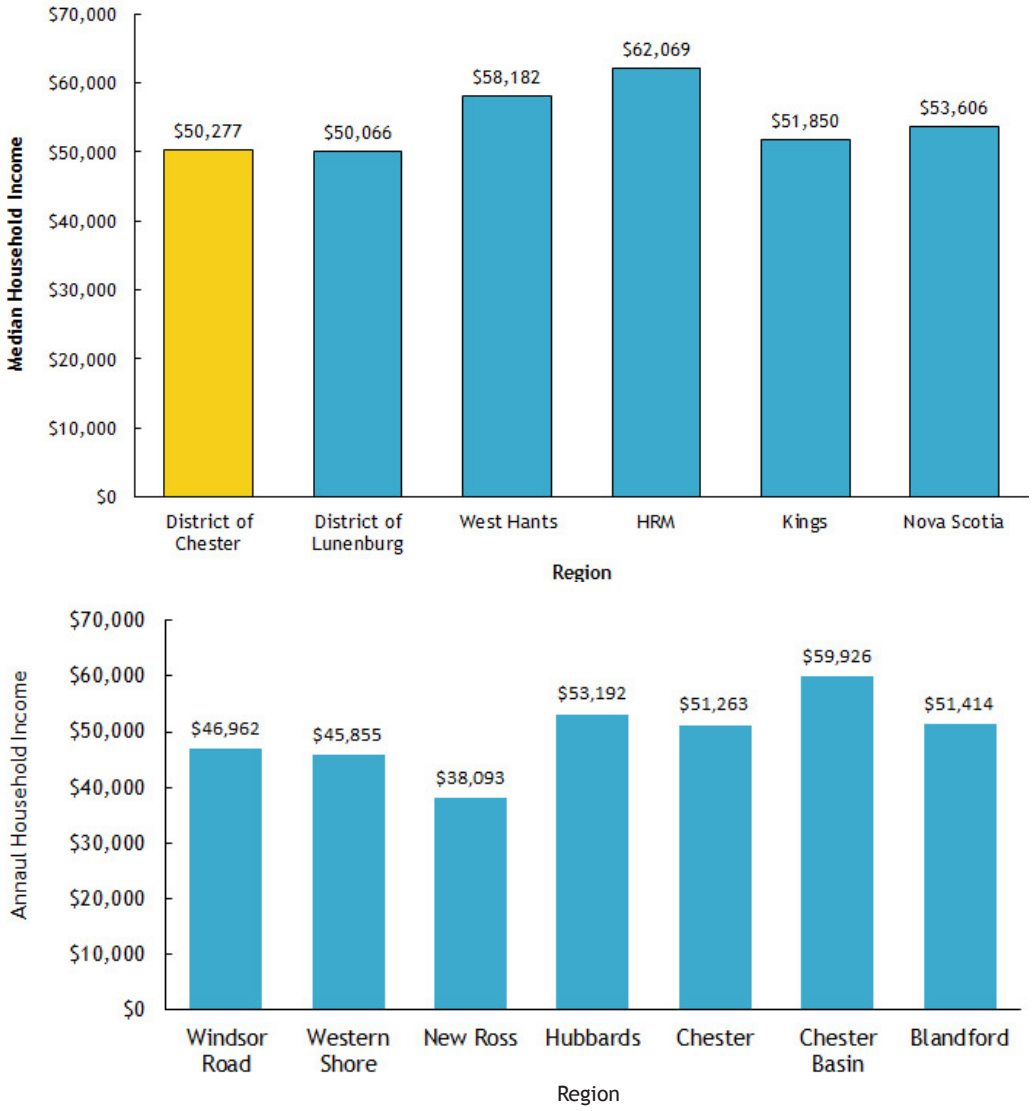
As define by Statistics Canada, the number of low income households was 18.3% in 2011. This was higher than the provincial rate of 17.4%. The Municipality also had more low income households than other rural regions. The percentage of low income household ranged between 12% in Chester Village and 23% in several rural communities.

Economic Profile

A detailed economic profile has not yet been developed for Chester Municipality, although base information is available through Statistics Canada and the "Community Counts" web page of the Nova Scotia Department of Finance. Addtionally, the Municipality's new Economic Development Strategy provides useful information.

Statistics Canada reports that the sectors of greatest employment continue to be manufacturing, construction, retail sales and service. Together, these industries employ nearly half of the 4,880 people in the labour force. However, these sectors are all declining. Health care, social services, the natural resource sector, accommodations and food services are also important sectors, together employing about 1100 people.

Manufacturing activity is concentrated in the south of the District, at or near principal roadways connecting to Highway 103. The largest



Median Annual Income per Household: Income in the District is lower than other areas of the Province **(top)**. There is a wide range of median incomes between different communities within the District of Cheter **(bottom)**.

manufacturer is the Louisiana Pacific Plant at Exit 7. Construction activity is dominated by residential construction in the vicinity of Chester Village, with an anticipated spike in activity in the Mill Cove area as a result of progress by a local developer.

The Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) 2009 provided an overview of the region's resourced-based economy. Little has changed since that time. There has been little or no growth, and some decline in fishery, forestry and agriculture.

There has been a modest but steady decline in fish landings since 2003 (a peak year). There has been a corresponding decline in value as well. As a result, more people are leaving the fishery, although there has been some growth in aquaculture.

Forestry had been supported by the Bowater Mersey paper mill in neighbouring Queen's County, before it closed. Today, forestry in the region can no longer rely on this mill. Activity is now concentrated in sawmills, hardwood production, tree farming and, more recently, producing energy from biomass.

Traditional agriculture (livestock, dairy, grain and field vegetables) is a minor activity in the District, compared to the rest of Lunenburg County. There is a limited amount of arable land and much of it is low quality class 4 and 5 soils. Where agriculture is possible, in both coastal and inland areas, it is increasingly taken up by non-agricultural settlement.

Tourism

Visitor exit surveys show that most visitors are staying with family or friends. Most visitors choose the South Shore (including the District) for coastal sightseeing, hiking and beach exploring. Craft shops, museums and historic sites also attract a high number of visitors. Lunenburg County ranks second in Nova Scotia for the number of people activity working in the arts and culture fields. These

areas are a strong compliment to tourism, and are potential growth sectors within the local economy.

Issues and Opportunities

The ICSP, and the Economic Development Strategy for Chester Municipality both identified economic issues and opportunities. The former focused on the lack of year-round employment opportunities and indicated that a lack of affordable housing and accessible health care hampers development. The latter pointed to the lack of a formal economic development program to facilitate development (now addressed by appointing an Economic Development Officer). A general lack of investment readiness was also noted, including unregulated rural zoning. Both documents saw significant opportunity in niche areas such as in tourism, the arts and culture. Both advocated greater business support through partnerships to support new ventures and through better transportation.

Social Profile

The most recent comprehensive social profile generated at the Provincial level was created in 2007. A profile specific to Chester Municipality has not been generated, although base information is available on the Community Counts web pages of the Nova Scotia Department of Finance and in Lunenburg County Vital Signs reports.

In **family structure**, married families make up the bulk of households, but numbers are on the decline, having decreased by 2.4% between 2006 and 2011. Increases were seen in common-law and lone-parent families.

In **health**, issues such as high rates of smoking and obesity persist. There is a corresponding low rate of physical activity. The Integrated Community Sustainability plan recommended that future planning should encourage the development of a healthy community.

In **education**, Chester Municipality slightly outpaces the rest of Nova Scotia, in that 54.5 % of those aged 15 and over have completed some form of post-secondary education, but one quarter of the population has completed only high school.

In **safety and crime**, Lunenburg County is consistently below the Nova Scotia and national averages for violent crime, property crime and sexual assault.

Finally, community identity and sense of belonging are intangibles related to customs, values and traditions. Most places can boast a strong sense of "community", and the Municipality is no exception. In 2010, three quarters of Lunenburg County population reported a sense of belonging

to a community. Strong ties to land and sea are reflected in many organized community events throughout the calendar year, for which there is a ready army of volunteers. Over half of the County population was engaged in volunteer activity in 2010. Older adults seeking places to retire have sought the tranquility of the setting - particularly in coastal areas. These new residents have made their own contributions to community. A strong sense of community identity may also be reflected in the area's higher than average participation in elections.

Conclusions

The demographic, social and economic picture for Chester Municipality is not unique. All of Nova Scotia, except some areas near HRM, is experiencing population decline. This trend is expected to continue as demographics shift to an aging population. The Ivany Report has highlighted the need for Nova Scotia to make significant changes to economic develoment in order to reverse these trends.

The Municipality's Economic Development Strategy recognizes these issues, but also sees opportunities in focusing on emerging sectors such as tourism, professional and knowledge-based services, and on arts and culture. It provides key strategic goals for economic development including:

- maintaining and building partnerships;
- being investment ready and business-friendly;
- being a "stand-out" community;
- growing MODC's economic sectors; and
- becoming a known tourism destination.

The goal is to create new Municipal planning documents that recognize and support the quality of life associated with a rural municipality and facilitate much-needed economic prosperity. While planning documents are not primary economic development tools, they must play a supporting role by creating an inviting, liveable community that supports new employment and business investment.