

2. Geographic & Historic Context

History

Through the efforts of historians and the Yarmouth County Museum, the history of Yarmouth has been well documented and its artifacts preserved are generally well known to its citizens. Early evidence indicates that the Vikings travelled the Bay of Fundy and were familiar with the local shores.



Figure 2.1 Prosperity in Yarmouth in the late nineteenth century resulted in rapid growth, and the wealth of many seafarers living in the Town led to the building of many fine homes, many of which still remain and which contribute to a superb residential environment within a short distance of the downtown.

Champlain and Demont were also familiar with the shores and documented early French exploration of the coast. However, it was not until June 9, 1761, that an organized settlement originated with the landing of three families from Sandwich, Massachusetts along the Chebogue River.

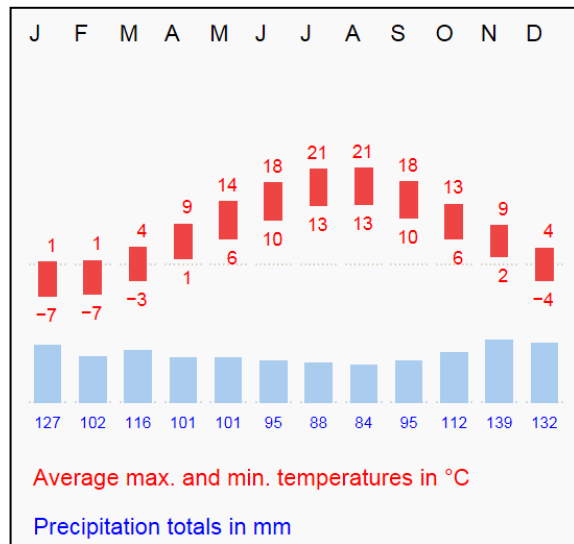
Yarmouth's prosperity as a seafaring Town peaked in the late 1800's. This period

saw a great deal of shipping and trade activity, wooden ship construction as well as the development of a significant commercial fishery. Yarmouth's fate, then as now, was very much tied to the ocean. The Town was incorporated in 1890. Today, Yarmouth's economic base has diversified, relative to earlier times, although the fishing industry is still considered the backbone of both the local and regional economy. Commercial and Industrial businesses serving the region have located within the Town, strengthening its position as a regional business center. The Town also serves as a regional center for government and medical services. These elements combine to provide a strong base for diversified future development.

Geography, Topography and Climate

The Town of Yarmouth lies in southwestern Nova Scotia, a region characterized by its level topography and frequent lakes, streams and wetlands. Situated on Yarmouth Harbour approximately 300 kilometers

Figure 2.2 Average monthly climate variations in Yarmouth (1981-2010)



southwest of the capital city of Halifax, the Town of Yarmouth encompasses approximately 1,110 hectares in Yarmouth County. Highways 1 and 101 which follow the Bay of Fundy and 3 and 103, which pass along the south shore, provide the primary routes of access.

The Yarmouth region is influenced by an oceanic climate which tempers any major hot or cold variations. As shown in the figure, the summer highs average 17 degrees Celsius (August) while winter lows average -3 (January). This is one of the mildest extremes in eastern Canada (compare Halifax with an average range from -4.1 to 19.1 and Saint John with a range from -8.9 to 18.8).

During most winters, there is little snow

accumulation during the winters because of the mild temperatures.

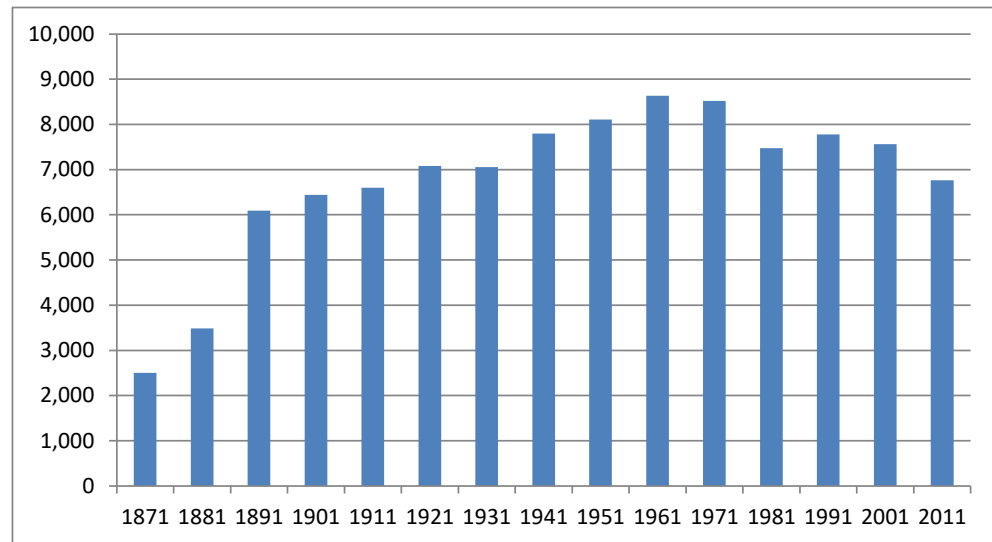
Precipitation, meanwhile, is significant and distributed throughout the year.

Fog occurs about every other day on average.

Population

As shown in Figure 3, the population of the Town has risen and fallen since the turn of the twentieth century. The population peaked in 1961 at 8,636 and was generally stable until 1971. Between 1971 and 1981, the population fell by 1,044 (12.3%). The population decline was temporarily reversed in 1986 with a net population increase of 142 persons (+1.9%) between 1981 and 1986 and a further increase of 164 persons (+2.15%) between 1986 and 1991. This is a significant increase in light of the continuing decrease in the average size of households. However, the population began to decline again thereafter with a reduction of 220 persons (3%) by 2001 and a further 800 people (11 %) between 2001 and 2011. Today's population is about the same as it was in 1911.

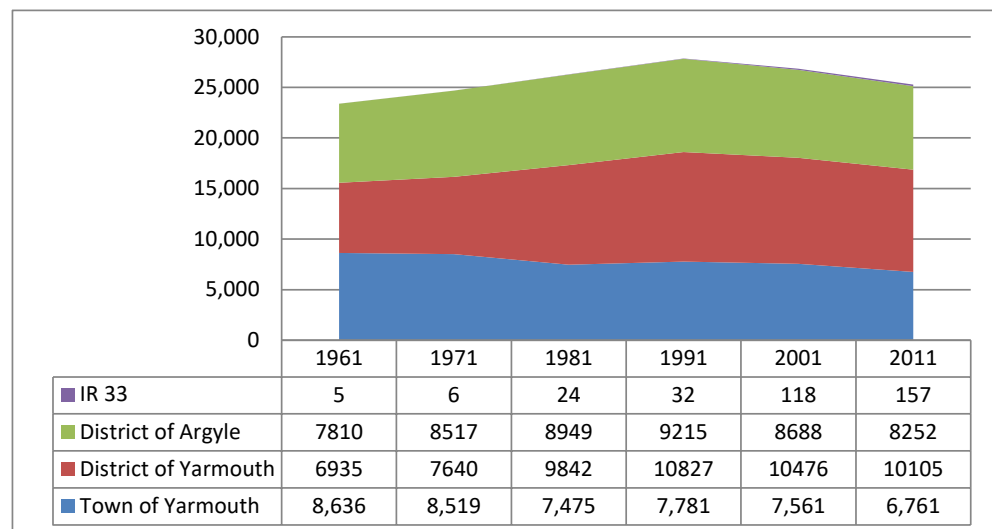
Figure 2.3 Town of Yarmouth: Population (1871-2011)



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada

Meanwhile, in the adjoining Districts of Yarmouth and Argyle, population continued to increase until 1991, after which, it too began to experience declines, though not as severely as in the Town, as shown in Figure 4. The only unit to experience continual growth in the past half century was Acadia First Nation (IR 33) which grew from 5 people in 1961 to 157 in 2011.

Figure 2.4 Population Trends (1961-2011)

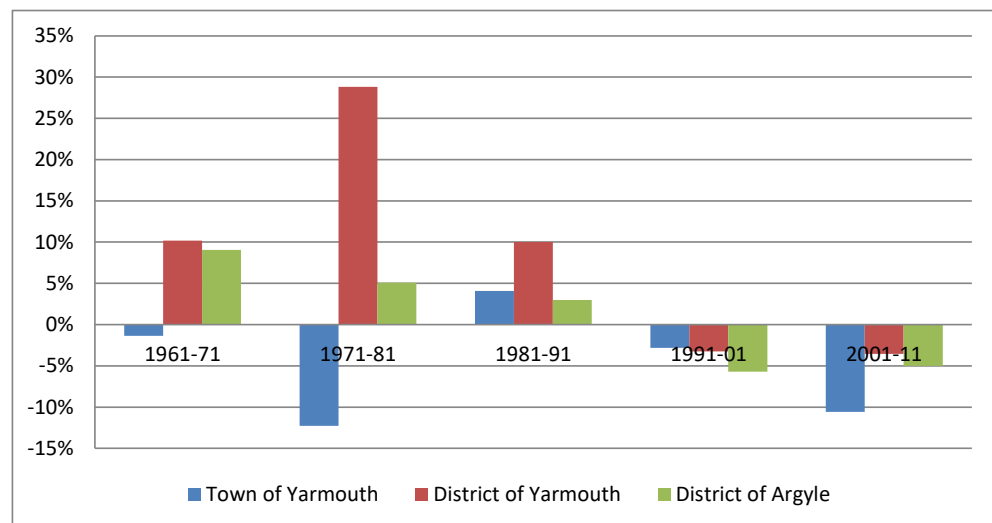


Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada

The gradual decrease in the Town's population since 1961 may be attributed to out-migration and a reduction in average household size. Statistics Canada Census information indicates that the average household

size in Yarmouth in 1971 was 3.4 persons while in 1981 it was 2.7 persons. The 1986 Census indicated that there was a further reduction in the average number of persons per household to 2.6 and there was a further drop to 2.4 persons in the 1991 Census. From 1991 to 1996 the figure held steady at 2.4 persons, however, by 2011 the figure had dropped to about 2.1 persons per household. Generally, at least until recently, the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth captured the out-migration of Town residents who did not relocate outside the County. Figure 5 shows the percentage change in population for the municipal units in Yarmouth County between 1961 and 2011 and shows how all units began to decline in population between 1991 and 2001. This decline appears to be continuing.

Figure 2.5 Percent Population Change in Yarmouth County (1961-2011)



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada. Yarmouth County is comprised of the Town of Yarmouth, the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth and the Municipality of the District of Argyle. Data shown in this figure do not include IR 33.

Statistics also show that in Yarmouth, as throughout the Province, the percentage of the population over the age of 65 years has grown steadily since 1966. In 1966, 11.9% of the Town's total population was over 65 years old. By 2011 this figure had risen to encompass 22% of the Town's population. An increase in the relative number of older residents as reflected in the average or median age of the overall population. This has been occurring in Yarmouth and the rest of Nova Scotia and Canada; however the rate of increase has been higher in Yarmouth than elsewhere, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 2.6: Change in Median Age - 2006-2011

	Median Age		Increase	
	2006	2011	Actual	Percent
Canada	39.5	40.6	1.1	3
Nova Scotia	41.8	43.7	1.9	5
Town of Yarmouth	42.3	46.0	3.7	9

Source: Table 7 Canada, Nova Scotia and Yarmouth, T – Median age, 2006 and 2011 censuses

Conclusion

An examination of population statistics indicates that though the population of the Town continues to fall, and as it ages, the Town can expect a moderate continued demand for the upgrading of community services and infrastructure. This is largely the result of the decline in household size which tends to result in continued demand for new housing stock even with a declining population. This trend cannot continue endlessly, of course, and for real growth to occur, new residents need to be attracted to the town. This plan is intended to provide a foundation for new growth by providing policies that make it easier and more attractive for (i.e., enable) new investment in the community. Demand for services will also continue to grow if growth continues to take place within the region surrounding the town. The Town will also experience additional need to support the aging population as the size of the senior population continues to grow.