

County's population jumps 7%

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The numbers have been tabulated by Statistics Canada and each of the four municipalities within Haliburton County has grown in population.

Between 2001 and 2006,

Haliburton County grew seven per cent, slightly higher than the 6.6 per cent provincial average. Highlands East grew the least at 2.2 per cent and Minden's population was raised 4.6 per cent. Algonquin Highlands saw an 8.2 per cent jump and Dysart had the biggest expansion with

a 12.2 per cent increase in population.

Highlands East Reeve Dave Burton was taken aback by the figures.

"I was surprised by the numbers, to be honest. They were lower than what I'd thought they'd be."

Although growth seemed small in Highlands East, Burton said that the indication of growth was still a positive sign.

Overall, the numbers seem promising for Haliburton County. However, there continues to be a lingering worry that

See **Declining** page 3

Declining family population still worrisome

from page 1

not enough young people are moving into the area.

"I'm pleased to see we're higher than the provincial average but the concern is the way our population is growing. The youth population is declining and it's going to create some real problems," says Warden Murray Fearrey.

Burton referred to his own family to illustrate what typically happens.

"My son's moved away to get work. There's just not a lot of work here."

Without youth moving or staying in the area, Fearrey says the county can be in for some serious trouble. With seasonal work being the common type of employment, he says the county needs better-paying commercial jobs to draw in more young people into the community.

Burton says that "We don't really have

a highway to us, that's just the way it is. We will have to look into different types of growth opportunities."

One of the chief concerns is the sustainability of the education system. Without young families moving in, enrollment in schools is predicted to drop, jeopardizing local access and funding for children in the area.

"We have to measure how schools can function financially and meet their budget targets unless there's an increase in student population. It's been a problem but now it's starting to be highlighted as a major concern," says Fearrey.

It's important to lure families to Haliburton. "High-speed Internet is one example of how the region is trying to stay on top of the growth game. We're pursuing high-speed so people can raise their families here."

It seems to be seniors seeking a tran-

quil place after retirement who are moving here.

The need for more doctors is crucial to an aging population. As baby boomers hang up their work clothes, the issue of healthcare becomes all the more important, here and across the country.

Haliburton County has already created a committee to encourage doctors and other professionals to move to Haliburton. Signs can already be seen along Hwy. 35 that promotes health professionals to "work where they play".

If the population continues to grow with a large majority of older residents, municipalities and the county as a whole must brace themselves for its residents' needs.

"Long-term care beds will be an issue. As more of the senior population increases, there will be more demands," says Fearrey.