



Halifax Labour Market Monitor



~April 2011~

This is an overview of the Halifax Region which includes all of Halifax County. It consists of dense urban areas, as well as less populated communities. The Halifax County line starts along the coast just west of Hubbards and runs along the coast including Dartmouth, Lawrencetown, Tangier, Sheet Harbour, and Moser River. Communities along the top of the border include Enfield, Milford, Upper Musquodoboit, and Dean.

The Labour Market Monitor is a monthly report focusing on Labour Market Information.

Labour Force Trends

The labour market in Halifax deteriorated on a year over year basis. Employment in the region decreased by 1,500 from April 2010 to April 2011, reflecting a large decrease in full time work which was partially offset by an increase in part time work. With the labour force decreasing only slightly on a year over year basis, the unemployment level rose between the two periods and the unemployment rate increased to 6.6 percent this month compared to 6.0 percent in the same period last year.

<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/lfss05b-eng.htm>

Halifax	Apr	
	2010	2011
Region: 250		
Labour Force (000)	235.3	235.0
Employed (000)	221.1	219.6
Full Time	179.6	177.2
Part Time	41.5	42.4
Unemployed (000)	14.2	15.5
Participation Rate (%)	70.7	69.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.0	6.6

Data is 3 month moving average from the Labour Force Survey - Statistics Canada

Construction

The Nova Scotia Home Builders Association (www.nshba.ns.ca) released an industry-funded report this month that says residential construction directly and indirectly employed 27,200 people in 2010. According to the study, tourism employed the most at 31,700 people. Residential construction-related industries include finance, insurance, real estate, retail and wholesale trade, and professional and technical services. The residential sector accounts for almost 41 percent of total construction activity in Nova Scotia, while renovations make up 58.5 percent of the residential category. According to the Association's CEO, 2011 will be a challenging year as government stimulus programs end. (Chronicle-Herald, April 12)

Nova Scotia non-residential construction activity and employment is expected to see continued growth following a record year in 2010, according to a Construction Sector Council (www.nscsc.ca) forecast. The non-residential sector in Nova Scotia employed 13,811 workers in 2010, up from 12,524 in 2009. Employment levels are expected to be maintained until 2013 then decline as major Nova Scotia industrial and engineering projects end. According to a council economist, the employment numbers were driven by infrastructure investments in roads and bridges, military spending and major private developments such as the Deep Panuke offshore natural gas project. (Chronicle-Herald, April 21)

Labour Market News by Industry

Education

Figures released by the **Nova Scotia Teachers Union** (www.nstu.ca) show about 230 full-time teaching positions are expected to be cut across the province. The **Halifax Regional School Board** (www.hrsb.ns.ca) will lay-off 44 probationary teachers, but many of them are expected to be hired back according to a board spokesman. Halifax has also eliminated 23 consultant and nine office support positions. According to the Education Minister, declining enrolment is driving the cuts at school boards. There are about 9,900 teachers in Nova Scotia. (Chronicle-Herald, April 28)

Health Care

Members of the **Nova Scotia Nurses' Union** (www.nsnu.ns.ca) ratified a tentative agreement with the province, which includes a one percent yearly raise over two years that will expire on November 1, 2011. The union represents about 4,800 people working as registered nurses, nurse practitioners or licensed practical nurses at hospitals and long-term care facilities, including acute-care nurses at the **Dartmouth General Hospital** and the **IWK Health Centre** in Halifax. Negotiated in the contract was the elimination of mandatory overtime and an increase in the premium for continuing education. The 2,500 Capital Health registered nurses, represented by Local 97 of the NSGEU, have yet to settle their contract for its personnel who work in the fields of mental health, critical care, transplants, corrections and rehabilitation. (Chronicle Herald, April 28)

Health-care workers with **Capital Health** (www.capitalhealth.ca) ratified a new contract that will give them a one percent yearly increase over two years. Most of the contract is retroactive and will expire in October 2011. **Local 42** of the **Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union - NSGEU** (www.nsgeu.ca) represents about 3,800 workers in the

Capital district health authority, including paramedics, social workers, licensed practical nurses, and medical laboratory technologists. According to NSGEU's president, improvements were gained in weekend shift differentials, vacation entitlements and in retention increments. (Chronicle Herald, April 16)

The role of pharmacy technicians in Nova Scotia will expand to include more technical aspects of processing prescriptions, with new changes being made to the Pharmacy Act. According to the registrar of the **Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists** (www.nspharmacists.ca), pharmacy technicians - also known as assistants, will have to undergo training at accredited institutions and take a national exam in order to be licensed. There are two accredited institutions in Nova Scotia and training can take up to two years. Unlicensed support staff can still work at pharmacies, but will be unable take on the expanded technical roles or be able to call themselves pharmacy technicians. The need for more qualified pharmacy technicians was due in part to allow pharmacists to take on more responsibilities as a result of legislation tabled last spring, which will allow pharmacists to do some tasks that previously only physicians could provide. (Chronicle Herald, April 8)

Manufacturing

The Nova Scotia Supreme Court rejected Scanwood's application for a third extension of court protection and approved a motion to place the financially insolvent firm into receivership. Green Hunt Wedlake has been appointed receiver for the Dartmouth furniture manufacturer, which employed about 235 people. **Scanwood Canada Inc.** has about \$20 million in assets to liquidate, but owes \$14.8 million to secured creditors and \$9 million to unsecured creditors. (Chronicle Herald, April 19)

Irving's Halifax Shipyard (www.irvingshipbuilding.com) won a

\$6-million contract to refit a coast guard icebreaker, which will be in the shipyard until June and will keep 100 people busy cleaning and painting, as well as doing steel and pipe repairs and other mechanical work. The Irving-owned facility has laid off about 90 workers in the last two months. The Halifax Shipyard is hoping to be one of two Canadian shipyards to build ships over the next three decades under the federal government \$35-billion shipbuilding plan called the **National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy**. According to the president of Local 1 of the CAW/ Marine Workers Federation, the contract could create as many as 1,000 new jobs. The union currently has about 750 workers employed at the shipyard, with skilled trades people earning \$20 to \$30 an hour plus full benefits. (Chronicle Herald, April 19)

Professional Scientific and Technical

Hercules SLR Inc. (www.herculesslr.com), a marine engineering and services firm located in Burnside Park, has purchased all the assets of **IMP Marine Division** (www.impmarine.com). As part of the deal Hercules agreed to employ all active employees of IMP Marine and plans to operate all 10 IMP Marine locations. Hercules, formerly known as Bridgeport Wire Rope & Chain, specializes in marine equipment and apparatus for securing, lifting and rigging. (Chronicle Herald, April 16)

MedMira (www.medmira.com), a Halifax bioscience company, will provide the Canadian military with diagnostic tests for HIV and hepatitis. The rapid test can be used in cases of occupational exposure, medical surveillance programs and routine medical checks. Earlier this month MedMira also landed a contract with Triplex International Biosciences Co. Ltd. of China, who has ordered 400,000 rapid HIV tests. (Chronicle Herald, April 15)

Seven veterinary practices in the Halifax area began operating as a single business

entity this month, tentatively called **The East Coast Veterinary Group**. The seven clinics include Clayton Park Veterinary Hospital, Dartmouth Veterinary Hospital, Eastern Shore Veterinary Hospital, Harbour Cities Veterinary Hospital, Petworks Veterinary Hospital, Westwood Hills Veterinary Hospital and Woodbury Veterinary Hospital. The amalgamation will create the largest veterinarian organization in the region, with 25 veterinarians and about 100 veterinary technicians and customer-service staff. No job losses will occur and workers will have greater chances for advancement, workplace flexibility and other benefits, while the owner-veterinarians will benefit from consolidating business operations. (Chronicle Herald, April 13)

Public Administration

Thirty-three housing employees with the **Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority** (www.halifax.ca/boardscom/mrha) in Halifax, walked off the job this month after almost two years of trying to reach their first contract. The 33 workers are administrative workers tasked with managing the paperwork for 5,000 units and are represented by Local 47 of the **Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union**. Workers currently earn over \$30,000 a year and are looking for wage parity with workers at the Cobequid and Eastern Mainland Housing authorities, who earn about \$1,100 a year more. (Chronicle Herald, April 15)

Real Estate

According to the **Royal LePage House Price Survey** (www.royallepage.ca), the average condominium price in the Halifax Regional Municipality jumped 13.1 percent to \$191,500 in the first quarter of 2011 from \$169,250 in the first quarter a year ago. The average price of detached bungalows in Halifax rose about 7.3 percent in 2011 to \$264,833 and standard two-storey homes prices in the municipality

went up 7.1 percent to \$298,000 in the first quarter of 2011. (Chronicle Herald, April 13)

Cushman & Wakefield Atlantic (www.cweast.com) released numbers indicating that office vacancy rates downtown were 8.9 percent for the first quarter of 2011, while vacancy rates in the suburbs were 5.9 percent for the same period. According to a spokesperson, there has been a huge movement of firms leaving downtown, while vacancy rates in suburban Halifax have been dropping. The downtown core has about 4.4 million square feet of office space, compared to 2.7 million square feet of office space in the suburbs. Weak market demand is expected to hamper progress on downtown projects like Armour Group's proposed \$16-million Waterside Centre on Upper Water Street. (Chronicle Herald, April 28)

Transportation and Warehousing

The **Halifax Port Authority** (www.portofhalifax.ca) reported that 2.4 million metric tonnes of cargo were handled during the first quarter of 2011, the same as in 2010. General cargo traffic, which includes machinery and forest products, dropped by 13.7 percent in 2011 when compared to the same period last year. Container traffic of retail and manufactured goods, which makes up 37 percent of port business, grew by 3.6 percent in the quarter compared with last year, while bulk cargo traffic, which comprises 58 percent of port business was down 1.2 percent. Halifax was also visited by a record 261,216 cruise ship passengers in 2010, up 14.7 per cent from 2009. (Chronicle Herald, April 20)

RLM Airport Transport & Tours Inc. has bought the assets of **Airporter 2008 Inc.** (www.airporter.biz), a bankrupt Halifax airport shuttle bus company. RLM plans to continue operating the 16-bus fleet and retain the business's 27 employees. (Chronicle Herald, April 13)

A pilot program between Saskatchewan farmers and the **Port of Halifax** has demonstrated that food crops such as lentils, peas, and chickpeas can be economically shipped to the port via rail, held at the grain elevator, and then shipped overseas in containers. **Halifax Grain Elevator Ltd.** (www.halifaxgrain.com) renovated portions of its grain elevator last year to make them suitable for handling the more delicate crops produced for human consumption. The elevators are typically used for feed crops for cattle. Canada is the world's leading exporter of lentils, peas and chickpeas and Halifax will now have the ability to tap into this market. (Chronicle Herald, April 28)

In June, **American Feeder Lines** will begin weekly calls at the **Port of Halifax** (www.portofhalifax.ca), as part of a new container-ship shuttle service linking Halifax with Boston and Portland. The United States is looking for more environmentally friendly alternatives and is trying to reduce the number of trucks on the highway, which should bode well for the shuttle service. (Chronicle Herald, April 28)

Note: In preparing this document, Service Canada has taken care to provide clients with labour market information from reliable sources that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Service Canada.

For more information please contact your local Labour Market Information Analysts for Halifax:
neill.evans@servicecanada.gc.ca
or
glenn.yetman@servicecanada.gc.ca
or visit our website at:
www.labourmarketinformation.ca