

2014-17

Office of Public Engagement
Executive Council



Activity
Plan



Message from the Minister

As Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement, and in accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I am pleased to present the Activity Plan for the Office of Public Engagement for 2014 - 2017.



In 2012, the Office of Public Engagement was created to bring together several separate entities and programs from various Departments of Government. The objectives of these programs and entities shared a common theme of engagement, and streamlining them allows us to better carry out our mandate.

A significant priority for the Office of Public Engagement for the next three years will be the implementation of the Open Government Initiative. This initiative represents a change in the way Government does business. It represents a commitment to four key pillars: open information, open data, dialogue, and collaboration. This initiative applies to all government departments and agencies, and is led by the Office. Along with residents of the province, we will co-create Newfoundland and Labrador's first Open Government Action Plan.

Another key priority is youth engagement. The Office connects with young people and strives to ensure their voices are heard using a variety of means including through the Getting the Message Out program which delivers presentations to students across the province, through the Community Youth Networks who provide community-based facilities for school-aged youth and offer programs and services to youth aged 5-29, and through recognition events such as the URock Volunteer Awards.

The Office will also continue its important work supporting communities and the community sector. As well, we will continue to work with labour, business, and other groups to build strong collaborative networks.

The goals and objectives outlined in this plan reflect the mandate of the Office of Public Engagement, the strategic directions of government, and current budget. As Minister, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of its goals and objectives.

I would like to extend my thanks to the staff of the Office of Public Engagement for their work on this plan, and for their work in advancing public engagement and open government in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Hon. Steve Kent
Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement
Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador
Registrar General

Table of Contents

Overview 1

Mandate 2

Lines of Business 3

Values 4

Primary Clients 5

Vision 6

Issues 6

Appendix A: Strategic Directions 11

Appendix B: Newfoundland & Labrador Youth Advisory Committee 12

Overview

Established in October 2012, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) brought together the Rural Secretariat, the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Office (ATIPPO), the Strategic Partnership, the Getting the Message Out program, and the Office of Youth Engagement.

Over the next three years, the OPE will focus much of its attention on advancing the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's commitment to open government. On March 20, 2014, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched its Open Government Initiative and its new website. Through this initiative, residents of NL are provided with new opportunities to shape and inform policy and decision-making. In an effort to become a world leader in open government, the Open Government Initiative is supported by four pillars: open information, open data, dialogue and collaboration. The OPE encourages departments to proactively disclose information and data of interest to the public. In addition, the OPE involves citizens, youth, business and labour groups, community sector, academic institutions and other government departments in dialogue about issues facing the province. For more information on the Open Government Initiative and the four pillars or to "have your say" please visit the website (<http://open.gov.nl.ca>). A public engagement plan is underway to gather information from citizens and stakeholders to develop the GNL's first Open Government Action Plan which will include accountability measures.

Further to this, the OPE supports citizens, communities and stakeholders to better engage one another so that they can more effectively collaborate on important issues and initiatives that will enhance their sectors, communities or regions. Additionally, the OPE will support the Provincial Council and Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat.

The work of the OPE reflects the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's broad commitment to open government. In keeping with the government's strategic direction (Appendix A), the Office will help government to support a vibrant and prosperous province where citizens, stakeholders, community agencies and academic institutions are supported and encouraged to work together with government, to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The work of the OPE is delivered with a staff complement of 34 positions; 21 female, 10 male and three vacancies.

Ten positions are aligned with the nine Rural Secretariat regions with offices located in Carbonear, Placentia, Bonavista, Burin, New-Wes-Valley, Springdale, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Roddickton and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Most offices are co-located with the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development or the College of the North Atlantic. The remaining 24 positions are located in St. John's.

The OPE's 2014-15 budget is approximately \$7.8 million.

Mandate

The OPE is mandated to **promote and advance open government, rural engagement, youth engagement, business and labour collaboration and the community sector capacity in the province** by:

- administering the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and promoting new and innovative government-wide proactive disclosure of information and data policies and practices that are informed by the citizens and stakeholders of the province;
- creating, supporting and delivering meaningful dialogue and public engagement opportunities that build capacity consistent with leading practices in this field in order to better connect the people of the province to their government;
- conducting and supporting research and evaluation activities to inform government policy and decision-making processes;
- working with internal and external partners to identify, build and support effective collaborative processes to address public policy issues and issues of common interest to special interest groups, community, business, labour and government sectors; and,
- administering the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*, including all orders and regulations passed or made under the Act and for carrying out the powers, functions and duties necessary to fulfill the requirements of the legislation.

Lines of Business

The OPE operates within the following lines of business:

Access to Information and Data and Protection of Privacy: The OPE is responsible for the overall administration and coordination of the ATIPP Act as well as the proactive disclosure of information and data by departments as part of the Open Government Initiative. This includes administering the Act by ensuring statutory requirements such as annual reports and legislative reviews are completed; collecting and maintaining statistics on access to information requests; providing guidance, assistance, training and advice on the application and interpretation of the Act to public bodies; assisting public bodies with the implementation of the appropriate privacy breach protocol where necessary; and providing leadership with respect to proactive disclosure of information and data, including policy development and liaising with departments to facilitate the online posting of information as well as maintenance of the Open Information webpage.

Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act: The OPE administers this Act and performs all necessary activities to carry out the requirements of its role respecting the legislation, including designing and delivering information and awareness sessions for key stakeholders and public bodies that are affected by the Act and working in partnership with the Office of the Citizens' Representative and the Labour Relations Board to ensure its effective implementation.

Dialogue: The OPE demonstrates to the public and the public service best practices in public engagement through the development and implementation of leading engagement and dialogue activities with emphasis on the youth, community sector, business and labour sector as well as regional councils. As a pillar of the Open Government Initiative, dialogue plays an important role in engaging citizens and stakeholders across the province. Additionally, the OPE is available to support government entities, advisory councils, regional groups, community organizations and stakeholders in the design and delivery of their own public engagement initiatives.

Collaboration and Partnership Support: The OPE recognizes that all forms of collaboration, including partnerships, are an important form of high level engagement and therefore a significant part of the Open Government Initiative. The OPE works to support and participate in existing collaborative efforts with the business and labour sector and the ten citizen-based voluntary Provincial and Regional Councils. The OPE also helps convene and provide partnership brokering support (both internally and externally) to new collaborative efforts such as networks or alliances.

Research and Evaluation: The OPE supports and partners with government entities, academic institutions, and other partners and stakeholders on collaborative research efforts that are integral to understanding issues of importance to regions and the province and to supporting public engagement practices. Additionally, the OPE supports, convenes and partners in relevant evaluation efforts, with an emphasis on approaches that directly involve multiple stakeholders in the evaluation process. The OPE is also responsible for the development and implementation of the Rural Lens, an analytical tool used by government departments to assess the rural implications of proposed policies and decisions.

Values

The core values of the OPE are as follows:

Innovation

We will be proactive in addressing issues and developing innovative solutions to address existing and future interests and concerns of those we serve. This will be accomplished by cultivating a learning culture in which all ideas are listened to and given due consideration. Through innovation we will become increasingly creative and flexible problem solvers.

Service Excellence

We strive for excellence and are committed to providing the highest quality of service delivery in all aspects of our work. Through continued learning, strong partnerships, individual and collective initiatives we aim to provide consistently accurate and relevant guidance and advice to those we serve.

Respect and Inclusion

We embrace the diversity that exists among us. We demonstrate this by listening to and considering the ideas and opinions of stakeholders, the public and co-workers with courtesy to ensure a productive and healthy environment in which all are active participants. We are committed to providing support, working co-operatively, respecting differing views and striving to make our work environments safe and engaging for everyone.

Integrity and Transparency

We are open and honest in all our work and maintain the highest integrity and ethical standards at all times. We will provide reliable and objective analysis and advice which will help those we serve to be better informed and better prepared to participate in government decision-making processes.

Collaboration

We seek the knowledge and opinions of others, including stakeholders, the public and co-workers when developing policy advice and in the delivery of our mandate. We acknowledge the competencies and contributions of our colleagues and believe engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and the public is essential to the development of good public policy.

Leadership

We build capacity, encourage advancement and cultivate effective leaders by empowering staff to guide and inspire others including stakeholders, the public and co-workers.

Primary Clients

The OPE has two primary client groups:

Clients external to government and clients within the Provincial Government.

- The OPE interacts with the general public, both individuals and groups, through targeted engagement activities and through leading the proactive disclosure of information and data that is of interest to the public.
- The OPE interacts with citizens and stakeholder groups, including Regional Councils, the Provincial Council, community and regional organizations, volunteer and non-profit organizations, business groups, labour organizations, municipalities, postsecondary institutions, Regional Health Authorities, school boards and youth supporting agencies.
- The OPE supports Provincial Government entities to engage the public and stakeholder groups in policy and decision-making matters. It also supports Provincial Government entities with access to and requests for information and data and supports the proactive disclosure of information.
- The OPE will, if requested, broker the development of collaborative relationships between and among key stakeholder groups and government.
- The OPE works in partnership with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Office of the Citizens' Representative and the Labour Relations Board in its administration of the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*.

Vision

The vision of the OPE is:

Excellence in public engagement and open government

Excellence in public engagement will foster a vibrant and prosperous province where citizens, stakeholder groups, community agencies and academic institutions are supported and encouraged to work together with government, to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Excellence in open government will lead to informed and engaged citizens, increased opportunities for the public to participate in government policy and decision making in a meaningful way and enhanced collaboration among government, stakeholders and citizens.

Issues

Issue 1: Public Engagement

The OPE designs and develops innovative public consultation processes to increase government's engagement with communities, labour, business and community sector partners as well as other stakeholders and the general public. The OPE also supports government entities, partners and stakeholders to ensure consultation processes are inclusive, engaging and appropriate to the need. Collaboration and partnership development plays an integral role in the success of engagement efforts. Supporting others to enhance their existing and future engagement activities is critical to achieving the OPE mandate and is in keeping with the strategic direction of government applicable to the OPE (Appendix A). Specifically, this issue contributes to the dialogue and collaboration focus areas of the strategic directions.

The OPE recognizes the value of the province's youth and will strive to ensure their voices are heard. Over the next three years, the OPE will have a particular focus on youth engagement through the addition of a civic engagement stream to the Getting the Message Out program, by supporting the appointment of youth to Provincial and Regional Councils and the development of new youth advisory mechanisms.

The OPE is also aware of the need to reinvigorate the ways in which the Office and other government entities engage with its citizens and stakeholders therefore new methods and strategies will be utilized in order to more fully and more meaningfully bring citizens input into key governance processes such as policy development and decision-making. Over the next three years, the OPE will make significant efforts to improve public engagement practice within government and across other sectors.

Goal:

By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives to strengthen public engagement capacity within government and across other sectors.

Measure:

Initiatives undertaken to strengthen public engagement capacity within government and across other sectors.

Indicators:

1. Initiated and participated in learning events designed to increase public engagement knowledge and skills;
2. Identified ways to best engage our external partners;
3. Provided new opportunities to increase the public's awareness about the value and need for youth engagement;
4. Provided new opportunities for youth to participate in engagement activities including activities related to policy and decision making; and
5. Worked collaboratively with other departments and external stakeholders to build public engagement capacity.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2015, the Office of Public Engagement will have initiated activities to increase capacity to support and deliver innovative public engagement efforts.

Measure:

Initiated activities to increase capacity to support and deliver innovative public engagement efforts.

Indicators:

1. Explored new public engagement tools and techniques (i.e. social media, online engagement);
2. Increased use of technology for public engagement initiatives;
3. Provided guidance and advisory services with respect to the design and/or delivery of public engagement activities;

4. Formally recognized excellence in public engagement practice within the public service and across other sectors, where appropriate;
5. Distributed materials related to public engagement (i.e. the Public Engagement Guide); and
6. Piloted, assessed and implemented a new civic engagement stream in the Getting the Message Out program.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2016, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives through the Open Government public engagement process to identify new capacity requirements and ways in which to better engage our external partners.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have worked collaboratively with our external partners to initiate activities that allow all parties to enhance their respective internal capacities.

Issue 2: Open Government

The OPE is mandated to promote and advance open government in the province. The Open Government Initiative was launched in March 2014. As a part of this initiative, an Open Government Action Plan will be developed in collaboration with the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Open Government Initiative is built upon four key pillars: open information; open data; dialogue and collaboration. Creating a culture of openness within government and with the public is essential to the success of this initiative. New webpages on open government and each of the pillars have been launched to highlight relevant and current information and encourage citizens to go online or call to voice their thoughts and ideas.

Along with these new resources, a number of other engagement methods will be used to inform the development of the Open Government Initiative and the Open Government Action Plan. The OPE will lead a comprehensive public engagement process across the province to engage citizens, stakeholders and other government departments in a dialogue about open government and to gather relevant information to inform the Action Plan.

Further to this, the mandate demonstrates a commitment to open, accountable and transparent government policies and practices and will be achieved through the OPE's work with departments and agencies in the administration of the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act* and the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and through development and implementation of an innovative, government-wide proactive disclosure policy and promotion of practice that supports the principles of openness and transparency. This issue is consistent with government's strategic direction applicable to the OPE (Appendix A) and contributes to all focus areas.

Goal:

By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives to ensure citizens have increased access to the information, data and dialogue opportunities they need for meaningful participation in the development of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Measure:

Initiatives undertaken to increase citizens' access to the information, data and dialogue opportunities they need for meaningful participation in the development of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Indicators:

1. Provided citizens with a variety of opportunities to help inform an Open Government Action Plan;
2. Created a proactive disclosure policy to provide citizens with increased access to information and data; and
3. Increased internal partnership brokering capacity to help support effective collaboration and dialogue efforts.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2015, the Office of Public Engagement will have developed and released an Open Government Action Plan that has been co-created with citizens and stakeholders.

Measure:

Developed and released an Open Government Action Plan that has been co-created with citizens and stakeholders.

Indicators:

1. Provided learning and awareness-building opportunities for the public and internal/external stakeholders related to the pillars of open government;
2. Designed and delivered in-person and online engagement activities to inform the Open Government Action Plan;
3. Developed a draft Open Government Action Plan based on information and feedback gathered;
4. Draft plan was released for further public feedback; and
5. Announced/launched the Open Government Action Plan.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2016, the Office of Public Engagement will have expanded the amount of information and data available to the public through its proactive disclosure policy.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives to promote and enhance collaborative efforts that bring government, community, business and other entities together.

Appendix A: Strategic Directions

Title: Public Engagement in Newfoundland and Labrador

Outcome Statement:

Citizen and stakeholder participation is enhanced through innovative open government initiatives and best practices in public engagement

Focus Areas:

- Open data
- Open information
- Dialogue
- Collaboration

Focus Areas/Components of the Strategic Direction	This Direction is:		
	addressed in the entity's activity plan	addressed in the entity's operational plan	addressed in the work plans of the entity
1. Open data	✓		
2. Open information	✓		
3. Dialogue	✓		
4. Collaboration	✓		

Appendix B: Newfoundland & Labrador Youth Advisory Committee

The Youth Advisory Committee (the Committee) was established in June 2001 to serve as a forum for the youth of the province to voice their views and concerns and increase youth involvement in the Provincial Government's decision-making process.

Responsibility for the Committee, which is a Category 3 entity under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, was transferred from the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills to the Minister responsible for the Office of Public Engagement upon the creation of the OPE.

A key role for the Committee was to advise Provincial Government departments responsible for youth-related programs and policies. A new model for youth engagement is presently being configured that will provide new ways to reach more youth through various means.

For this reason, the Committee did not meet in 2013-14 and no annual report on its activities was prepared. Should the Committee become active a plan will be prepared in accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.



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