



*Avalon Peninsula
Regional Council
of the
Rural Secretariat,
Executive Council*



*Annual Activity
Report 2006-07*



Message from the Chair

As Chairperson for Avalon Peninsula Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat I hereby submit the annual activity report for the 2006-07 fiscal year. On behalf of the council and in accordance with the Guidelines for Annual Activity Reports for Category 3 Government Entities, my signature is indicative of the council's accountability for the results and any variances explained herein.

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council was appointed in August 2005. The contents of this report outline the council's activities for fiscal year 2006-07, the second year of the council's operation.

During the past year, much of the work of the council has been focused on creating a vision document for the Avalon Region. The council finalized a working draft of the vision and singled out priorities to work on over the next year. This document outlines the council's vision for the region in 2020, and can begin to act as a discussion document for the region to build consensus around where we need to go as a region in the future.

In the fiscal year 2006-07 the council worked towards the identification of three regional priorities from the 2020 vision. These priorities are skills development, infrastructure and the environment. The council looks forward to engaging Government around these priorities, both to better understand what is currently being done in these areas to achieve regional sustainability, and to give advice on policy changes needed to take us into the future.

The council also initiated a citizen engagement process in fiscal 2006-07. This has been an interesting undertaking, and given the Regional Planners and several participating council members a better understanding of the views of citizens and groups in the region. It has largely validated the work of the council and the vision document.

Over the coming year, we anticipate further refining our discussions with Government departments around the council's regional priorities, putting the Vision document into the public realm for discussion, and continuing the citizen engagement process. It has been an interesting year, and I look forward to engaging our partners this coming year.

Sincerely,



Kerry Murray
Chair
Avalon Peninsula Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat

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Regional Council Overview

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council is comprised of thirteen volunteer members; six female and seven male. Members of the council have a variety of backgrounds that reflect both the larger and smaller communities in the region, and include members with a cross-section of business, labour, social, cultural and environmental perspectives. They do not represent any particular organization. Council members are asked to bring their collective expertise and experiences to the table to discuss long term regional sustainability and development.

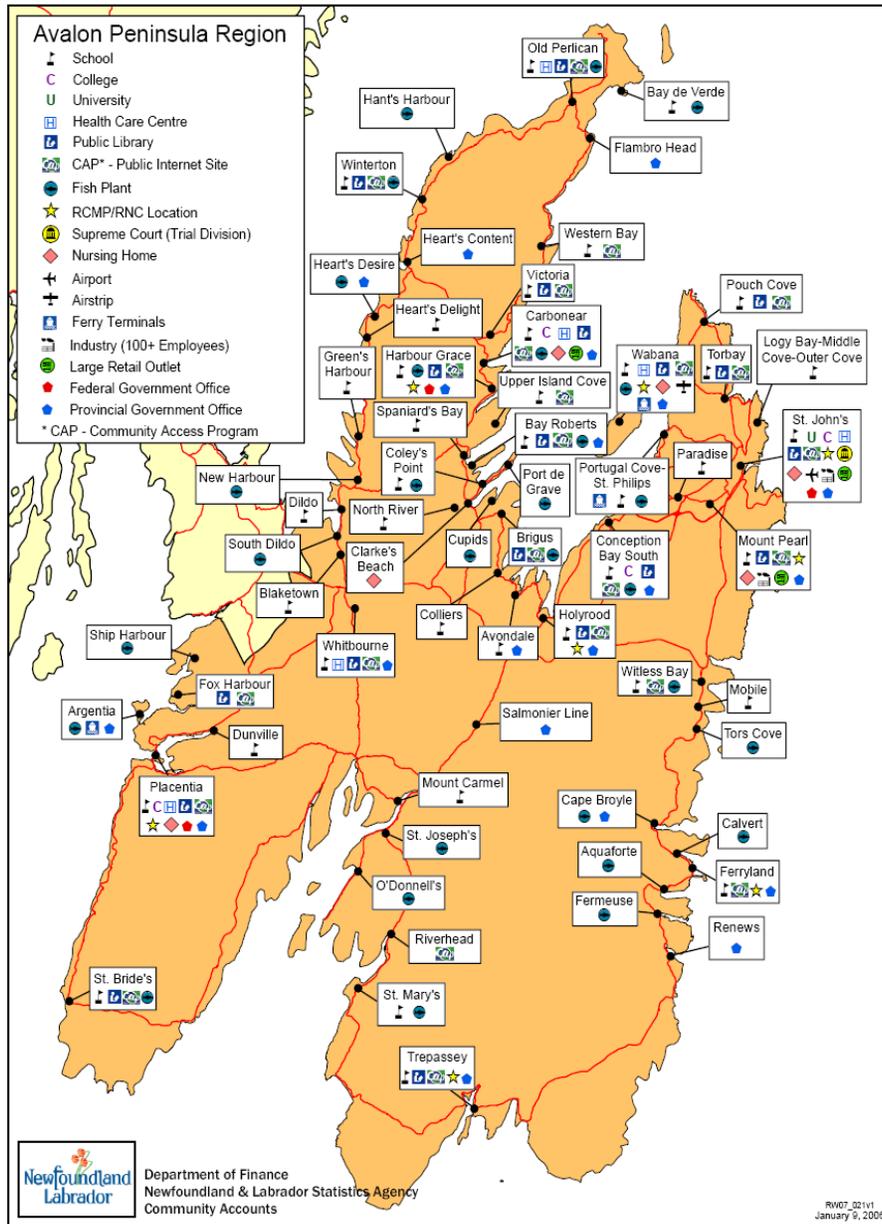
The council has representation from larger and smaller communities throughout the region:

Name	Community
Anne Manuel	Torbay
Betty Moore	Clarke's Beach
Bride Power	Marysville
Bruce Pearce	St. John's
Des Linehan	Placentia
Don Case	Salmon Cove
Jay McGrath	Branch
John Adams	Harbour Grace
Kerry Murray	Topsail
Maureen Sullivan	Calvert
Patricia Puddister	Bay Bulls
Paul Connors	Conception Bay South
Sheila Lee	Riverhead, St. Mary's Bay

**For an updated listing of council members please visit <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/regionalmem.asp> .*

The council does not have a budget. Meetings of the council and associated costs are funded through the budget of the Rural Secretariat. The Rural Secretariat also funds two staff positions within the region, who among other duties, acts as an information resource for the council and is responsible for the facilitation of the work of the council. The council is supported by two Regional Partnership Planners, Jamilee Fitzpatrick and Ken Carter. Their regional offices are located in Placentia at the McCormick Building and Carbonear at the College of the North Atlantic Campus.

Overview of the Region



The Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat region encompasses the Northeast Avalon including Bell Island, Conception Bay South, Conception Bay North, Trinity Bay North and the areas of Placentia, the Cape Shore, St. Mary's Bay and the Southern Shore.

The region is the smallest Rural Secretariat region geographically and the largest region by population. The majority of the population, approximately 71%, live in towns with more than 5,000 people – in our case, St. John's, Mount Pearl, Conception Bay South, Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, Torbay, and Bay Roberts. The region has relatively few people living in small towns.

Mandate

The mandate of the Regional Councils is:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities of a region.
- To review key regional economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify policies and programs which either advance, negatively impact or need to be developed to encourage the necessary change.
- To advance regional cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about economic and social measures and to encourage regional partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To nominate an individual to represent the region on the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

Highlights and Accomplishments

The council was appointed in August 2005. During the fiscal year 2006-07, the council met five times, with the intention of moving around the peninsula and getting to see all of the sub-regions of the Avalon. The first meeting was held in Burnt Cove in April, the second in St. Brides in June, the third in September in Harbour Grace, the fourth in November in Placentia, and the fifth in March in St. John's.

During these meetings, the council finalized a 2020 vision document for regional sustainability for the Avalon Region. Two key underlying themes of the vision document are promoting regional thinking amongst communities and stakeholders, and increasing the level of regional collaboration. The vision document presents a scenario for 2020 with a strengthened private sector, investments in the provision of key public services, a sustainable workforce with enhanced and responsive skills development and improved and targeted infrastructure. It also does this while maintaining our distinct rural culture and ensuring strong environmental stewardship.

The council recognizes that it is now time to move from the visioning process to engaging government and other stakeholders around consensus building and moving toward implementation. The council chose three priorities from the vision to work towards implementing during the 2007-08 fiscal year. These are improved and more locally need focused skills development, investments in key infrastructure and taking a nationally recognized role in environmental stewardship.

Council's thinking has changed in a number of areas as they have gotten a better understanding of the issues facing the region. By beginning to engage government on regional priorities, in particular skills development for our future workforce, the council has been given evidence of the changing labour force from the Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment. That discussion gave the council a better understanding of what government is doing, and trends into the future. This discussion informed the council but also validated much of what the council said in the vision document.

Over the past year, regional planners in conjunction with several council members have been involved in citizen engagement. A total of 20 engagements, with over 100 individual participants, have taken place throughout the Avalon region. This process has been informing people of the council discussions and priorities, challenging stakeholders to bring solutions based ideas to the table, and laying out the serious demographic issues facing the region and the province. The process has again validated council priorities and the visioning process. Most people recognize the need to take seriously long term planning to ensure regional sustainability.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Over the past year the vision document and council priorities have been formulated and the challenge for the coming year will be to take the vision and begin to build consensus in the region around implementation.

There are still many challenges in the way of attaining the council vision. Horizontal policy and practice needs to be furthered so that many partners both within and outside government come together to achieve sustainability.

Our goal is regional sustainability over the long term. Our focus and challenges are long-term in nature, particularly around encouraging collaboration, long term thinking and not quick fixes, and building consensus around the vision document. The council will continue citizen engagement as a key tool for our work. These themes will continue to dominate our deliberations over the next few years, and we outline below our thinking around them.

Collaboration

Collaboration, as the Council defines it, requires a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to make decisions that will maximize benefits for the whole and not just a piece of the whole. This kind of collaboration provides opportunities and benefits that would not otherwise be possible. It also poses a challenge for individuals to step out of their 'comfort zones' and look at issues differently.

Long-term thinking

Long-term thinking will continue to be both an opportunity and a challenge. Thinking long-term, in the context of the work of the council, provides an opportunity to set a shared goal for the region and to, collectively, define the steps required to achieve the goal. Thinking long-term will also be challenging for individuals and groups when there are immediate issues surfacing within regions.

Citizen Engagement

There is an opportunity through this process for citizens to directly influence public policy development. This citizen engagement process is a purposeful, deliberate process to engage citizens in a two-way conversation with government decision-makers. This process is not limited to the citizens that sit on the councils of the Rural Secretariat, rather there is a process for the broader citizenship to engage in a discussion about the future policy directions of government. The challenge will be to truly open our minds, listen to each other and discuss issues in a respectful manner.

Vision Development

The vision document that has been developed by the council is not intended to achieve a final form, but rather the intention is for it to continue to be a working document. The vision document will identify what we want to see 15 to 20 years out. Today that time frame is 2022-2027. In five years time, that time frame will be 2027-2032. As priorities are accomplished new priorities will be identified. This will provide an opportunity for us to be informed about what is moving and changing in our regions, where the next opportunity will be and where the next challenge will be. It will also provide a challenge for all involved to have faith in the process and realize that it will take time until these priorities are accomplished. It takes time to make significant change and it is important for this council to remain focused on the future, even in the midst of immediate challenges.

Appendix A

Strategic Directions

1. Title: Regional Partnership Development

Outcome Statement: Stronger and more dynamic regions.

Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Regional Council in the areas of:

- Partnership Development
 - Within regions
 - Between government and regions
- Forum for informed discussion and priority identification that links economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of regional sustainability.

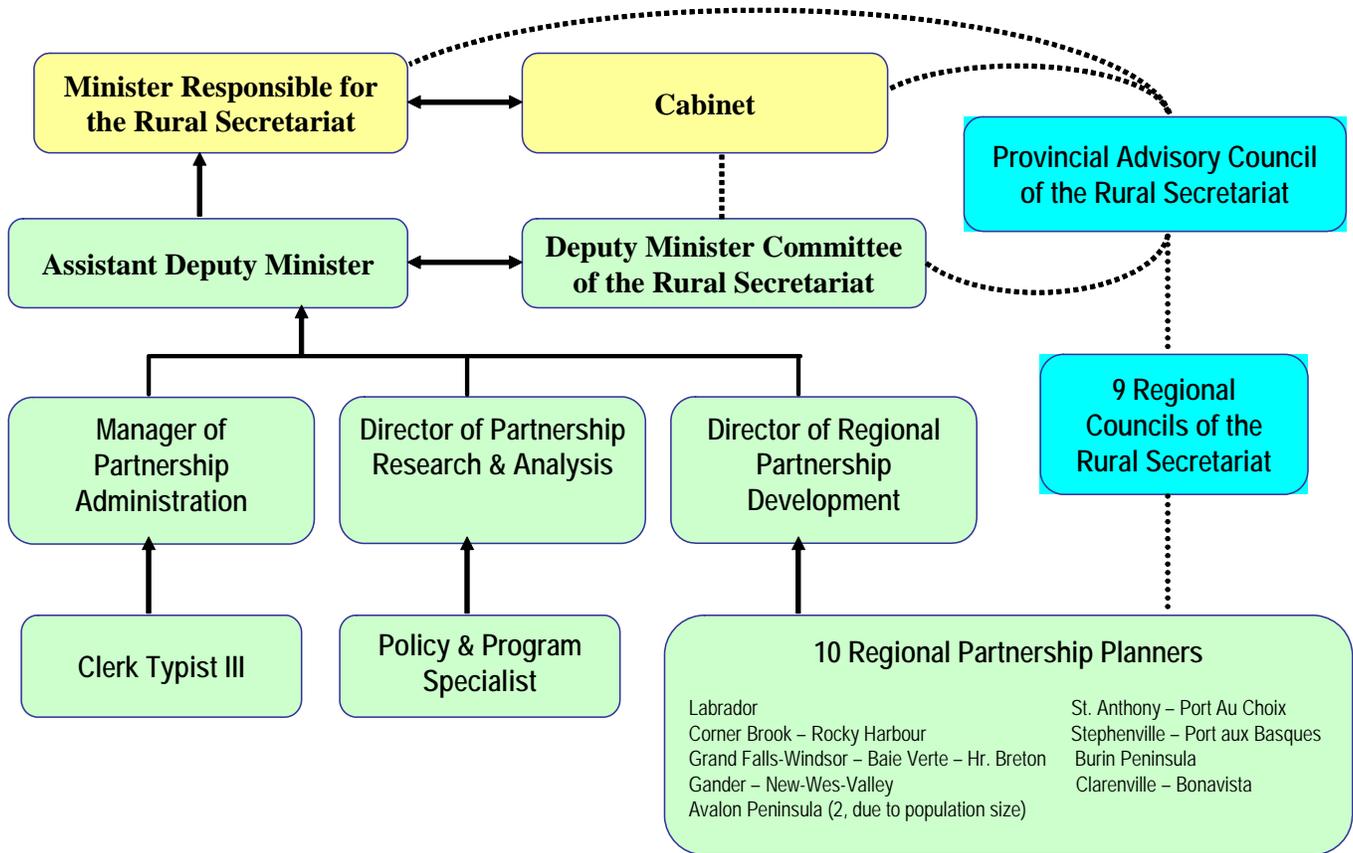
2. Title: Assessment of Policy on Regional Sustainability

Outcome Statement: Improved Government understanding of and response to significant and long-term regional issues.

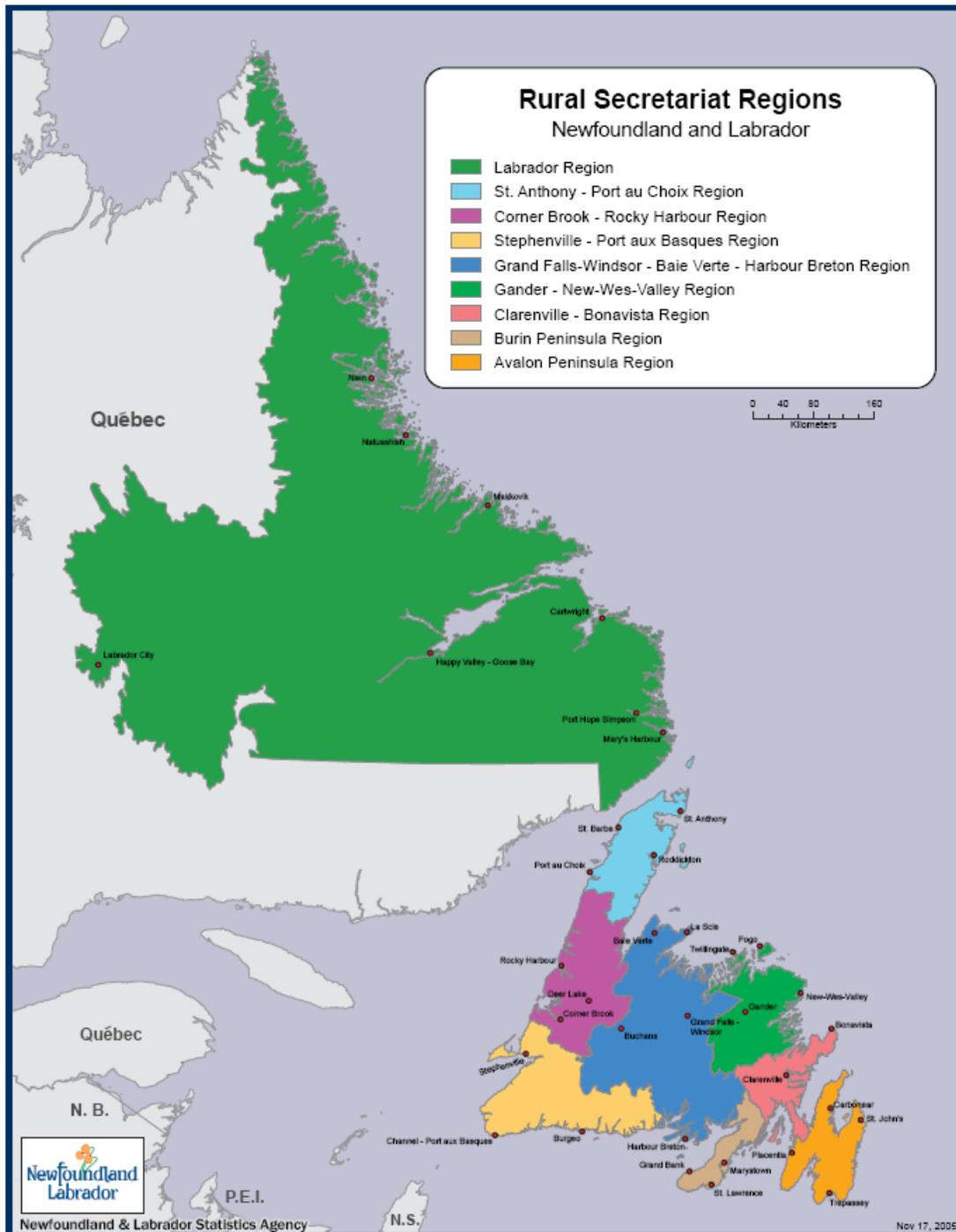
Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Regional Council in the areas of:

- Regional perspectives which can inform the development and implementation of public policy.

Rural Secretariat Structure



Appendix C



Appendix D

Mandate of the Rural Secretariat

The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:

- Promote the well-being of all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of regional development.
- Act as the focal point for government to work with local and regional partners to build strong and dynamic regions and communities.
- Ensure that regional concerns are considered throughout the provincial government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.

Mandate of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

The Provincial Council's Mandate is to:

- Develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing the province.
- Review key provincial economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- Identify and advise government on policies and programs which either advance, negatively impact or need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five year period.
- Advance cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about economic and social measures, and to encourage government and community partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- Meet twice annually with the provincial Cabinet and deputy ministers to advance regional development priorities.
- Serve as an external sounding board for government for the development of strategies, policies, programs and budget issues that will affect provincial and regional sustainability.

Photo Credits:

Bay Roberts Shoreline Walk – Mary Snow

Signal Hill – Paula Whiteway

Canoeing at Juniper Lake – Mary Snow



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