

Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Fisheries and
Aquaculture



Message from the Minister

In accordance with government's commitment to transparency and accountability, I am pleased to submit to the House of Assembly and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture's Strategic Plan for April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029.

As a category one government entity, under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** (the Act), the department is required to prepare a strategic plan every three years. As Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the goals and objectives contained therein.

In accordance with the Act, this document identifies the key areas the department will focus on considering the strategic directions of government, the department's mandate and its fiscal resources. Through the goals and objectives outlined in this strategic plan, the department will further contribute to its vision of sustainable renewable resources that are responsibly developed for the social, cultural, ecological and economic well-being of the province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Loyola O'Driscoll', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon. Loyola O'Driscoll
Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture

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Overview

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture supports the growth, development and sustainability of the province's fishery and aquaculture sectors. The Department develops and delivers on programs, policies and legislation in these sectors through its two branches, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and five divisions. Support to the executives is provided by the Policy and Strategic Planning division and Communications. The organizational structure of the two branches of the department is as follows:

Fisheries Branch:

- Licensing, Inspection and Quality Assurance Division - responsible for licensing fish processors, fish buyers, as well as inspecting licence holders to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and terms/conditions of licences.
- Sustainable Fisheries and Ocean Division - provide strategic advice on the sustainable management of fishery resources, as well as on integrated coastal and oceans management related to regional and national priorities.
- Seafood Marketing and Development Division - provides market intelligence and supports market development initiatives. It administers seafood innovation and development programs.

Aquaculture Branch:

- Aquaculture Development and Administration Division - supports the sustainable growth of the aquaculture industry through the issuance and renewal of aquaculture licenses and compliance.
- Aquatic Animal Health Division - monitors and maintains the health of aquatic species cultured in the province.

There are five Agencies, Boards and Commissions, that are under the purview of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Please see annex A, for the details.

The Department manages funding programs which support innovation, accessing and securing new markets and enhancing an understanding of adjacent fish species. The fisheries and aquaculture sectors are key pillars of the province's economic growth, employing people throughout the province. For additional information, please visit the departmental website at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/fisheries/>.

Contact Information

Contact information for the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture can be found on the departmental website at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/fisheries/department/contactfa/>.

Minister's Office:

Tel: (709) 729-7967 and (709) 729-3705

Email: faminister@gov.nl.ca

Staff Complement

As of March 31, 2026, the department had 76 employees and 126 positions. Several vacancies persist within fisheries inspection roles, primarily due to challenges in recruiting for seasonal positions and the geographic location of some roles. Some permanent positions are also being repurposed or redefined to support the new standalone Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and therefore remain vacant as of March 31, 2026. The distribution of employees by branches of the department are:

Branches	Number of Staff
Fisheries	38
Aquaculture	28
Executive and Executive Support	10
Total Department	76

The department is headquartered in St. John's, with a total of 15 office locations in 15 communities throughout the province.

Online Services

The department offers a number of online services such as the Fish Processing, Fish Buyers, and Aquaculture Site Licensing and Development services that are available at: <https://licensing.eservices.gov.nl.ca/citizenaccess/>

Additionally, the information on provincial programs and available funding is available at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/fisheries/programs-and-funding-2/>

Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture includes development and growth of fisheries and aquaculture, for optimum sustainable economic benefit to the province as well as ensuring its ecological integrity.

Vision

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture envisions a strong, sustainable and innovative fishery and aquaculture sector, developed in collaboration with stakeholders, that supports employment, enhances value-added production, expands domestic and international markets and contributes to long-term economic growth and prosperity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Budget

The department's budget for fiscal 2026-2027 is \$12,144,900 as shown below.

Branches	Budget
Fisheries	\$6,516,000
Aquaculture	\$3,659,700
Executive and Executive Support	\$1,969,200
Total Department	\$12,144,900

Lines of Business

1. **Aquatic Animal Health:** Provides regulatory oversight of the aquaculture industry focused on aquatic animal health, biosecurity and disease through monitoring, surveillance and early detection of aquatic animal diseases, implementation of biosecurity standards, review of aquatic animal health management plans and oversight of diagnostic testing, sampling, and laboratory coordination.
2. **Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement:** Conducts comprehensive inspection, compliance and enforcement duties for the fishing and aquaculture industries within its legislative authority. Fisheries Field Representatives conduct inspections at fish buying stations, points of export, processing plants, aquaculture sites, dockside and on-board vessels throughout the province. Additionally, the Department is responsible for auditing provincially licensed fish processors and licensed fish buyers to ensure compliance with legislation, regulations, policies and licensing conditions.

3. **Licensing:** Responsible for licensing and permitting fish processing, fish buying and aquaculture operations, as well as the development and administration of the policies and regulations that govern these activities. Acting under the **Fish Inspection Act**, the Department supports the Minister in fish processing licensing decisions. As the provincial lead for aquaculture licensing, it delivers a comprehensive, one-stop licensing program under the **Aquaculture Act, 2023**, coordinating internal review and input from relevant provincial, federal and other partners to ensure informed and effective licensing decisions.
4. **Research and Development:** Supports the growth and modernization of the fishing and aquaculture industries through the provision of technical and financial support. Innovation within these sectors is fostered through interaction with stakeholders, including fish processors, aquaculture operators, industry-related organizations, other government departments and academia. The Department also supports research by industry-related organizations, other government departments, federal partners and academia to enhance understanding of fish stocks, sustainable fish management and the effects of climate change.
5. **Seafood Marketing and Development:** Provides marketing support to the province's fish and aquaculture industries by working collaboratively with industry, stakeholders and the federal government to support market development, market intelligence and promotion. Through targeted programs and services, the Department aims to maximize production opportunities, strengthen market awareness and increase demand for Newfoundland and Labrador seafood products in domestic and international markets.
6. **Sustainable Resource Management:** Contributes to the sustainable management of our adjacent fish resources by providing input into federal decision-making processes to support stock viability and secure long-term benefits for the province and its fishing industry. The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture also plays a significant role in the sustainable management of

our coastal and ocean resources through strong collaborative relationships with federal partners, other provincial departments, as well as industry stakeholders and academia.

Primary Clients

The primary clients and stakeholders of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture include individuals or groups who use the department's services and resources and who have an influence on its business. In delivering its mandate, the Department interacts with many clients and stakeholders throughout the province. For a listing, please refer to Annex B.

Strategic Issues

The strategic issues are developed taking into consideration the specific strategic directions of the department (Annex C), which include prioritizing the fishery and aquaculture sectors; focusing on joint fisheries management; and fostering collaboration with stakeholders to build a robust fishery that creates jobs, supports young harvesters and stimulates economic growth in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Strategic Issue 1 – Enhancing Value, Access and Competitiveness of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors

The fisheries and aquaculture sectors are fundamental to Newfoundland and Labrador's economy, employment and rural coastal communities. At the same time, global seafood markets are becoming more competitive, with increasing demand for higher-value products, strong branding, traceability and reliable supply.

To remain competitive, the province needs to strengthen its ability to increase the value of seafood products, expand access to existing and emerging markets and better respond to changing trade conditions. There are clear opportunities to grow value-added processing, develop new products, enter new markets and support industries such as sealing. However, these opportunities are constrained by market access challenges, regulatory requirements and limits in industry capacity.

The core challenge is transitioning from a resource-based sector focused on volume to a modern, market-driven industry that emphasizes value, innovation and global competitiveness—while ensuring economic benefits are retained within the province.

Addressing this issue is critical to sustaining rural communities, supporting employment, increasing export revenues and securing long-term economic growth. It will require

coordinated action across government and industry to improve market access, attract investment and support innovation and value-added production.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, working with industry partners, will have strengthened the value, market access and competitiveness of the province's fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Goal Indicators

- Legislation and policies better support industry growth and competitiveness.
- Increased value-added production and improved access to markets for fish, aquaculture and seal products.
- Stronger market positioning to help increase global demand for Newfoundland and Labrador seafood products.

Objective 2026–2027

By March 31, 2027, the Department will have initiated actions to increase product value and improve market access and competitiveness.

Indicators

- Initiated a review of fish inspection legislation to support growth, competitiveness and efficient service delivery.
- Secured or advanced new federal funding agreements for the fish and seafood sectors.
- Transferred responsibility for fish processing licence application reviews from the Fish Processing Licensing Board to the Department to improve timelines and efficiency.

- Supported projects that increase the value of harvested products.
- Initiated activities to expand access to domestic and international markets.

Objective 2027–2028

By March 31, 2028, the Department will have continued implementing actions that increase value-added production, expand market access and strengthen competitiveness.

Objective 2028–2029

By March 31, 2029, the Department will have enhanced value-added production, improved market access and increased overall economic returns from the sectors.

Strategic Issue 2 – Advancing Sustainable Resource Management and Sector Resilience

The long-term success of Newfoundland and Labrador's fisheries and aquaculture sectors depends on healthy ecosystems, effective management and the ability to respond to environmental, economic and regulatory pressures. While the federal government is responsible for the management of wild marine fish stocks, the Province plays a key role in making important contributions to this management through collaboration, policy alignment and contributions to science and advisory processes.

The sector is facing increasing pressures from climate change, shifting fish stock distributions, aquatic animal health risks and growing expectations for environmental responsibility. These factors are creating both risks and opportunities, requiring more adaptive and coordinated approaches to management.

Maintaining strong provincial engagement in federal decision-making is essential to ensure provincial interests are reflected. It must also strengthen collaboration with Indigenous partners, industry and stakeholders, while continuing to monitor ecosystems and aquaculture operations and improve readiness for risks such as climate impacts, disease outbreaks and market disruptions.

The core challenge is balancing environmental sustainability with economic growth, while communicating provincial priorities to be reflected in federal decisions that shape the sector.

Addressing this issue is critical to maintaining healthy fish stocks, protecting marine ecosystems and ensuring the sector remains resilient and competitive over the long term. Strong partnerships, science-based decision-making, climate adaptation and coordinated governance will be essential to achieving these outcomes.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture will have strengthened the sustainability and resilience of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors through science, collaboration and proactive monitoring.

Goal Indicators

- Increased integration of provincial input into science-based advice supporting sustainable fisheries.
- Improved understanding of climate change impacts and marine ecosystem conditions.
- Strengthened aquatic animal health and biosecurity practices across the sector.

Objective 2026–2027

By March 31, 2027, the Department will have initiated and established key activities and partnerships to strengthen its contribution to sustainability and resilience through science, monitoring and collaboration.

Indicators

- Increased collaboration with federal partners and stakeholders through enhanced participation in science related and stock advisory processes, to support science-based advice and decision-making.
- Supported activities to advance awareness of oceans science, sustainable resource management and marine conservation, to increase knowledge and awareness of ocean ecosystems and changes occurring within the oceans.
- Carried out monitoring and surveillance on aquatic animal health, ecosystems and climate impacts.
- Monitored aquatic species health to inform decisions and improve industry practices.

Objective 2027–2028

By March 31, 2028, the Department will have expanded and integrated collaborative, science-based approaches, resulting in enhanced monitoring coverage, stronger partnerships and increased use of science in decision-making to support sustainability and resilience.

Objective 2028–2029

By March 31, 2029, the Department will have demonstrated strengthened sustainability and resilience practices, including improved support for resource management decisions and an enhanced ability of the sector to respond to environmental, economic and biological risks.

Annex A – Entities

The following entities fall under the purview of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture:

- Appeal Board of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board
- Fish Processing Licensing Board
- Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board
- Torngat Joint Fisheries Board
- Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board Disciplinary Panel (Inactive)

Annex B – Primary Clients

Academia/Agencies/Boards

- Appeal Board of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board
- Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research
- College of the North Atlantic
- Marine Institute
- Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board

Federal Departments/Agencies

- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
- Export Development Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
- Global Affairs Canada
- Health Canada

Indigenous Governments and Organizations

- Innu Nation
- Miawpukek First Nation
- Nunatukavut Community Council
- Nunatsiavut Government
- Qalipu First Nation
- Torngat Joint Fisheries Board

Fisheries Industry Stakeholders

- Atlantic Groundfish Council
- Association of Seafood Producers (ASP)
- Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation
- Fish Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW-Unifor)
- Seafood Processors not Members of ASP

Aquaculture Industry Stakeholders

- Atlantic Canada Fish Farmers Association (ACFFA)
- Aquaculture Operators
- Canadian Aquaculture Industry Association (CAIA)
- Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association (NAIA)
- Newfoundland and Labrador College of Veterinarians
- Processors of Cultivated Fish

Annex C – Strategic Directions

Strategic directions are the expressions of desired physical, social or economic outcomes that would normally require action by, or involvement of, more than one government entity. These directions are generally communicated by government through platform documents, the Speech from the Throne, annual budget speeches and policy documents. The **Transparency and Accountability Act** requires departments and public bodies to take into account these strategic directions in the preparation of their performance-based plans.

These following specific strategic directions for the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture were considered in the development of this document:

- Prioritize the Fishery and Aquaculture Sectors
- Focus on Joint Fisheries Management
- Fostering Collaboration with Stakeholders

These strategic directions aim to build a robust fishery that creates jobs, supports young harvesters and stimulates economic growth in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

