Strategic Plan

2025-2026

Environment, Conservation and Climate Change

Newfoundland & Labrador

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change, I am pleased to present this Strategic Plan for the period of October 29, 2025 to March 31, 2026. This plan was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and sets how the Department will address government's strategic directions in accordance with my mandate as Minister. This plan identifies the Department's key goals and objectives to be accomplished throughout this planning period.

In developing this plan, consideration was given to the strategic directions and mandate of Government. The Department is responsible for protecting and conserving our province's environment, leading Government's efforts to efforts to reduce green house gas emissions and supporting communities in adapting to climate change and responding to its impacts.

Throughout the planning period, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will focus on strategic issues of enhancing environmental protections and addressing climate change challenges in the province.

As Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the specific goals and objectives contained herein.

Sincerely,

Hon. Chris Tibbs
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change

Newfoundland & Labrador

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Departmental Overview

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is a category 1 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** that is responsible for the protection and enhancement of the environment through the implementation of water resource and pollution prevention regulations and policies, as well as conducting environmental assessments of proposed development projects, managing impacted sites and ecological reserves, and considering pathways for new protected areas. The Department develops strategies and programs related to climate adaptation and mitigation and net zero carbon emissions, while supporting a green transition and improved energy efficiency.

Organizational Structure

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is divided into five divisions under two branches:

Environment Branch

- Water Resources Management – implements programs to protect, enhance, conserve, develop, control, and effectively utilize the water resources of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Pollution Prevention – develops plans, programs, standards and conducts activities concerning environmental emergencies, waste management, petroleum storage, industry, air emissions, environmental science, pesticides, and contaminated sites.
- Environmental Assessment – oversees the environmental assessment process that ensures that projects proceed in an environmentally acceptable manner.

Conservation and Climate Change Branch

- Climate Change – develops policy, research, analysis, and initiatives related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and energy efficiency.
- Policy, Planning and Natural Areas – coordinates departmental policy and planning initiatives, and develops and oversees the administration and management of the province's wilderness and ecological reserves, provincial protected areas planning, and provincial Canadian Heritage Rivers Program.

A number of key cross-departmental initiatives are led by the Department, including the Provincial Waste Management Strategy, Drinking Water Safety Action Plan, and climate change action plans. In addition, the Department leads horizontal initiatives related to maintaining environmental health, including the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Technical Working Group and the Impacted Sites Liability Assessment Program.

For more information on the Department's vision, mandate and lines of business, please visit us online at www.gov.nl.ca/ecc.

Reporting Entities

Under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, a number of government entities prepare plans and annual reports. Entities which report to the Minister include:

- Multi-Materials Stewardship Board;
- Net-Zero Advisory Council;
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Advisory Council; and
- Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council.

Legislation

Environmental Protection Act;
Management of Greenhouse Gas Act;
Water Resources Act; and
Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act.

Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is to protect, enhance, and conserve the province's natural environment including its water, air, and soil quality.

Staff and Budget

The Department's gross expenditure budget for 2025-26 is $34,956,200 with planned related revenue of approximately $66,453,800 for a net expenditure of $31,497,600.

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change has 148 positions (79 permanent, 57 temporary, seven seasonal, and five contractual) located in seven offices throughout the province.

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Executive and Support Services	11	956,100
Environment	97	12,442,700
Climate Change and Conservation	40	21,495,300

Primary Clients

The primary clients of the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change include:

- large industries such as utilities, mining, oil refining companies, as well as industry associations;
- businesses involved in such areas as pesticide application, waste management, heating oil and refrigeration services, among others;
- the engineering and waste management consultant community;
- the academic community and student populations;
- professional organizations;
- other levels of government;
- non-governmental, volunteer, and not-for-profit organizations; and
- general public.

Vision

The vision of the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is a clean, sustainable, and protected environment supported through effective stewardship.

Strategic Issues

Issue 1 – Enhancing Environmental Protections

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change works collaboratively with local communities, other levels of government, industry, business, academia, and the public to advance protection of the environment. These relationships create a network of stakeholders who implement cohesive strategic approaches to preserve, protect, and improve the quality of land, air, and water to provide better living for all residents of the province now and in the future.

The Department actively uses policies, legislation, and regulation to protect our environment. To address ever-changing activities impacting the environment, new mechanisms and programs are needed. Over the reporting period, the Department will focus on ways to enhance policies and programs to better protect our province's environment.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have enhanced environmental protections for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Indicators:

- Introduced new environmental protection mechanisms and programs.
- Enhanced engagement activities with the public, industry, and Indigenous governments and organizations on protecting province's environment.
- Enhanced collaboration with the federal government on environmental protection.

Objective:

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change

will have begun implementing actions to enhance environmental protections .

Indicators:

- Implemented priority items outlined in the Drinking Water Safety Action Plan including development of a semi-public water supply database, identifying baseline drinking water quality of private supplies and supporting boil water advisory reduction on public water supplies.
- Advanced flood risk mapping for risk areas and communities.
- Completed sample collection, reporting, and management of surveillance as part of the wastewater surveillance program.
- Assessed and developed mitigation activities for impacted sites.
- Developed an approach with the Federal Government regarding a process for joint environmental assessments.
- Engaged with Indigenous governments and organizations and the general public on proposed protected areas.

Issue 2 – Addressing Climate Change Challenges

Throughout the planning period, the Department will continue to work toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions with a goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Most recent greenhouse gas emissions estimates for the province are among the lowest since 1992.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have taken action to lower the province’s carbon footprint and to support communities as they adapt to climate change.

Indicators:

- Implemented actions to reduce carbon emissions.
- Supported communities and residents in adapting to changing climate.
- Enhanced engagement with industry on reaching net zero target.
- Greenhouse gas reduction, in tonnes, as a result of actions taken.

Objective:

- By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have undertaken initiatives to reduce the provincial carbon footprint and adapt to a changing climate.

Indicators:

- Provided residential rebates and invested in projects in the private, municipal, non-profit, and public sectors under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Collaborated with all levels of government, as well as industry, community, and Indigenous governments and organizations, to progress initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Supported the work of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Advisory Council.
- Assisted governments, organizations, businesses, and residents be prepared for a worsening climate, such as through the creation of tools to evaluate proactive infrastructure adaptation options at a municipal and local level and provide heat alerts.
- Initiate process for new Climate Change Action Plan.

Newfoundland & Labrador