

Activity Plan

2026-2029

Intergovernmental
Affairs Secretariat





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat's activity plan for the period of April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029 which sets out our priorities to advance the interests of Newfoundland and Labrador in an increasingly complex and connected world. This plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with requirements for category three entities under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. As Premier and Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs, I am accountable for the preparation of the plan and for the achievement of its objectives.

Strong, effective engagement with other governments is essential to making sure our province's unique needs and perspectives are reflected in decisions that influence our economy, our communities and our future. The Secretariat plays a central role in coordinating our Province's approach to relationships with federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as international partners. Through this work, we are improving collaboration, supporting well-informed decisions, and helping position Newfoundland and Labrador to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

This plan reflects our commitment to advancing key social and economic priorities, expanding and protecting trade opportunities and strengthening coordination across government. By working closely with departments and partners, we are taking a strategic approach to intergovernmental engagement that delivers real results for the people of our province.

Whether advocating for sustainable federal funding, supporting businesses in accessing new markets, or working together on shared priorities such as health, public safety and economic development, our focus remains clear: building a stronger, more resilient Newfoundland and Labrador.

Together, we will continue to build strong partnerships and pursue opportunities that contribute to a prosperous, safe and healthy future for all of us.

Sincerely,

Hon. Tony Wakeham
Premier
Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs

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Role of the Secretariat

Located within the Office of the Executive Council, the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat (the Secretariat) is the Provincial Government's lead entity for coordinating Newfoundland and Labrador's intergovernmental and trade policy priorities.

Mandate

In accordance with the **Intergovernmental Affairs Act**, the Secretariat provides strategic policy advice, analysis, and support to the Premier, ministers, and departments on intergovernmental and trade policy issues and priorities. The Secretariat also supports the Premier, ministers and departments in building and strengthening relationships with other sovereign governments and international entities to advance provincial interests.

Vision

The Secretariat envisions a resilient and prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador where the Province's best interests are promoted through engagement with governments across Canada and internationally.

Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Secretariat's three divisions provide coordinated economic, social, and trade policy expertise, ensuring the province's unique needs remain central in intergovernmental dialogue and negotiations at regional, national, and international levels. The Secretariat also works to promote Newfoundland and Labrador's interests on the international stage by supporting the Premier's participation in various diplomatic visits and trade engagements.

Economic Policy

The Economic Policy Division provides intergovernmental policy advice to support economic growth throughout the province, focusing on areas such as natural resource management, energy and mining, the environment, fisheries and aquaculture, fiscal and economic policy, industrial development, immigration, skills and labour, infrastructure, tourism, and other matters of constitutional interest. It also supports provincial participation in intergovernmental forums such as First Ministers' Meetings, the Council of Atlantic Premiers, and the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers.

Social Policy

The Social Policy Division provides intergovernmental policy advice to support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities throughout the province in priority areas such as health, housing, education, Indigenous relations and reconciliation, justice and public safety, seniors, and women and gender equality. It also supports provincial participation in intergovernmental forums such as the Council of the Federation and Seamless Canada, and leads on provincial interests related to national defence, military, and foreign affairs.

Trade Policy

The Trade Policy division is responsible for coordinating the Province's approach to interprovincial and international trade matters. It supports the Province's participation in the negotiation, ratification, and implementation of trade agreements, and provides analysis and advice on trade commitments and their implications for Newfoundland and Labrador. The division also represents the province in intergovernmental trade and procurement forums, including the Committee on Internal Trade, contributing to collaborative efforts to improve the functioning of domestic and international trade frameworks, and overall economic productivity.

Lines of Business

Intergovernmental and Trade Policy Advice: The Secretariat monitors and analyzes intergovernmental matters in social, economic, resource, trade, and constitutional policy areas, providing strategic advice that supports provincial priorities and advances the Government's intergovernmental and trade agenda.

Promotion of the Province's Interests: The Secretariat builds and strengthens relationships with other governments and international entities to advance Newfoundland and Labrador's interests. It advocates for the Province in key bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international intergovernmental forums and conferences to present and promote provincial priorities. It also acts as lead liaison to the Department of National Defence to promote the Province's interests in this area in coordination with provincial departments. Finally, the Secretariat supports government departments in engaging in intergovernmental meetings and advancing provincial positions within both meetings and intergovernmental agreements.

Support and Coordination: The Secretariat coordinates and provides support for interdepartmental initiatives that have intergovernmental implications for the Province, and also for ensuring the Premier is supported and prepared for intergovernmental meetings.

Primary Clients

The Secretariat's primary clients are the Premier, ministers, and departments, who rely on its strategic intergovernmental and trade policy advice, analysis, and coordination to inform decision-making and advance provincial priorities. The Secretariat also engages with external stakeholders, including industry groups and businesses, regarding trade-related concerns and the negotiation and administration of trade agreements.

Staff and Budget

As of March 31, 2026, the Secretariat had a staff complement of 14 (8 female and 6 male), and an estimated budget of \$2,368,700.

The Secretariat is located in the East Block of the Confederation Building in St. John's.

For more information about the Secretariat's work, please visit: www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ias.

Strategic Issues

As the lead entity for coordinating the Province's intergovernmental and trade priorities, the Secretariat focuses on advancing the interests essential to securing a healthier and more prosperous province.

Issue One – Advancing the Province's Strategic Social and Economic Intergovernmental Priorities

The Secretariat is dedicated to advancing Newfoundland and Labrador's intergovernmental priorities through constructive engagements with federal, provincial, territorial, and other sovereign governments. This involves promoting provincial objectives through various intergovernmental engagements and forums, such as the Council of the Federation, Council of Atlantic Premiers, First Ministers' Meetings, New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, Seamless Canada, and other multilateral, bilateral, and regional engagements.

In accordance with the **Intergovernmental Affairs Act**, the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs is required to participate in the negotiation and execution of all intergovernmental agreements between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and other sovereign governments. The Secretariat plays a fundamental role in providing assistance and support to government departments during these negotiations and assessing agreements to ensure consistency with government's intergovernmental policies and priorities.

The Secretariat recognizes that continued and effective intergovernmental collaboration is essential to building a future where opportunity thrives for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This commitment is reflected through the strategic work of the Social Policy and Economic Policy Divisions within the Secretariat, which brings together complementary expertise to support a coordinated approach across all areas: our economy, our finances, and our people. Through close collaboration with federal,

provincial, and territorial counterparts, this work advances growth across all regions to deliver lasting benefits for the Province.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Secretariat will have supported the advancement of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's strategic social and economic intergovernmental priorities to ensure the Province's unique circumstances are reflected in intergovernmental decision-making.

Objective 2026-2027

By March 31, 2027, the Secretariat will have supported the advancement of the Province's social and economic strategic intergovernmental priorities.

Objective Indicators

- Supported and managed the Province's participation in intergovernmental forums to advance Provincial priorities, including the Council of the Federation, the Council of Atlantic Premiers, First Ministers' Meetings, New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, Seamless Canada, and other multilateral, bilateral, and regional engagements.
- Participated in and supported intergovernmental missions, protocol meetings, and formal engagements with federal, provincial, territorial, and other sovereign governments to advance intergovernmental objectives and strengthen relationships.
- Supported and collaborated with government departments in the development of briefing materials and the provision of strategic support and policy advice in advance of intergovernmental discussions and forums.

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- Negotiated and executed intergovernmental agreements, including advancing efforts across Government to strategically maximize federal funding and support, particularly in areas aligned with provincial social and economic priorities.
- Supported advancement of provincial priorities through providing strategic policy advice and support to the Premier, ministers, and departments.

Objective 2027-2028

By March 31, 2028, the Secretariat will have further supported the advancement of the Province's strategic social and economic intergovernmental priorities.

Objective 2028-2029

By March 31, 2029, the Secretariat will have achieved meaningful progress on the advancement of the Province's strategic social and economic intergovernmental priorities.

Issue Two – Advancing and Protecting the Province’s Domestic and International Trade Priorities

As the Provincial Government's primary division responsible for negotiating and executing trade agreements, the Secretariat's Trade Policy Division plays a central role in stimulating a strong and competitive economy. Trade policy encompasses the objectives, regulations, agreements, and various arrangements that govern trade relations between governments and jurisdictions. In essence, trade policy strives to minimize and eliminate obstacles to the unrestricted movement of individuals, commodities, services, and investments between regions.

The Secretariat is committed to advancing and protecting Newfoundland and Labrador’s trade priorities by leveraging opportunities to expand access to new markets, advocating for the reduction of interprovincial trade barriers within Canada, and responding effectively to protectionist measures introduced by other jurisdictions. Through this work, the Secretariat will help create conditions that enable Newfoundland and Labrador businesses to succeed in domestic and international markets.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Secretariat will have supported the advancement and protection of Newfoundland and Labrador’s domestic and international trade priorities to contribute to a strong and competitive provincial economy.

Objective 2026-2027

By March 31, 2027, the Secretariat will have supported the advancement and protection of the Province’s domestic and international trade priorities.

Objective Indicators

- Provided advice and consultative services within the Government related to domestic and international trade agreement negotiations and disputes, including adherence to existing international trade agreements, such as the Canada-United States-Mexico

Agreement (CUSMA) and the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Agreement Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

- Supported and represented the Province's trade and economic policy interests at ongoing trade forums and negotiations at the domestic and international level.
- Supported and collaborated with government departments in developing briefing materials, coordinating provincial input on the negotiation of free trade agreements, providing strategic advice and analysis on the implementation of existing agreements, and responses to protectionist policies in other jurisdictions.
- Coordinated and supported the Province's efforts on reducing interprovincial trade barriers within Canada and strengthening trade relationships between provinces, territories, the federal government, and international jurisdictions, through participation in the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table (RCT), other CFTA working groups and the Atlantic Trade and Procurement Partnership (ATPP).
- Advocated for the Province's interests in the negotiations of ongoing international free trade agreements, including the inaugural review of CUSMA; Canada's negotiation of free trade agreements, with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South American Common Market (Mercosur), the Philippines, Costa Rica, and Indonesia; and the new Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India.

Objective 2027-2028

By March 31, 2028, the Secretariat will have further supported the advancement and protection of the Province's domestic and international trade priorities.

Objective 2028-2029

By March 31, 2029, the Secretariat will have achieved meaningful progress on the advancement and protection of Newfoundland and Labrador's domestic and international trade priorities.

Issue Three – Advancing Effective Collaboration and Implementation of the Province’s Intergovernmental Approach

Advancing the Province’s intergovernmental approach is a shared effort across the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. In recognition of this shared responsibility, the Secretariat works collaboratively with government departments to bring together diverse perspectives and expertise, ensuring the Province’s intergovernmental approach is well informed, cohesive, and responsive to the Newfoundland and Labrador’s unique circumstances and needs.

Through this coordinating role, the Secretariat works to strengthen alignment across government departments through promoting a consistent understanding of provincial priorities and strategic positions on intergovernmental issues. These activities help ensure the Province is well positioned to respond to emerging challenges and adapt to changing circumstances. Collectively, these efforts support more effective intergovernmental engagement and enhance the Province’s ability to advance its interests and influence outcomes.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Secretariat will have enhanced collaboration across government departments to support the cohesive and effective implementation of the Province’s intergovernmental approach.

Objective 2026-2027

By March 31, 2027, the Secretariat will have strengthened collaboration with departments to promote a consistent understanding of provincial priorities and strategic positions on intergovernmental issues.

Objective Indicators

- Increased awareness across departments of the Secretariat's functions, including when and how the Secretariat supports intergovernmental engagement.
- Improved alignment across departments on intergovernmental priorities and engagement, supported through coordinated planning and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Supported departments to ensure consistent Provincial messaging and alignment of priorities in intergovernmental engagement, reflected through briefing materials, correspondence, meeting communiqués, and participation in intergovernmental forums.

Objective 2027-2028

By March 31, 2028, the Secretariat will have further strengthened collaboration with departments to promote a consistent understanding of provincial priorities and strategic positions on intergovernmental issues.

Objective 2028-2029

By March 31, 2029, the Secretariat will have achieved meaningful progress in strengthening collaboration with departments to promote a consistent understanding of provincial priorities and strategic positions on intergovernmental issues.

Annex A: Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction: A Growing and Affordable Economy

Outcome: Enhanced collaboration and partnerships with federal, provincial, territorial, and other sovereign governments on economic development, including rural economic development, focused on diversification, increased trade and market access, responsible fiscal management, strategic adoption and safe use of technology and artificial intelligence (AI), and long-term economic growth for Newfoundland and Labrador.

This outcome requires focus in the following areas:

- Working with the federal government on projects and other initiatives that deliver economic benefits for Newfoundland and Labrador in areas such as natural resources development, including offshore oil and gas, renewable energy, and critical minerals; fisheries and aquaculture; defence and security; immigration and labour needs; and infrastructure.
- Leveraging access to federal funding programs that advance provincial economic priorities, including supporting economic growth of rural regions across the province.
- Working with federal, provincial, and territorial governments to develop strategies and share best practices to ensure federal investment and procurement opportunities give consideration for smaller jurisdictions.
- Negotiating and implementing national and international trade agreements, as well as provincial positioning on ongoing and potential trade disputes.
- Participating in intergovernmental forums, conferences and working groups to advance provincial interests.

Strategic Direction: A Safe and Healthy Province

Outcome: Enhanced collaboration and partnerships with federal, provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous peoples, and international jurisdictions to support the overall health, safety, and well-being of communities throughout the province.

This outcome requires focus in the following areas:

- Working with departments to advocate to the federal government for provincial priorities related to safe and healthy communities, including for programs and funding arrangements that respect provincial jurisdiction and are responsive to Newfoundland and Labrador's unique demographic and geographical needs.
- Working with provinces, territories and the federal government to advance shared health priorities and ensure adequate and sustainable federal funding that considers Newfoundland and Labrador's evolving needs.
- Advancing provincial priorities in intergovernmental discussions on public safety, including supporting efforts to address crime and community safety concerns, justice system improvements, and emergency response coordination.
- Advancing provincial priorities in intergovernmental discussions related to well-being, including education, early learning and child care programs and services, housing stability, affordability pressures, and labour challenges, while ensuring initiatives reflect local needs and support communities, including in rural areas.

