

Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Justice and
Public Safety





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

In accordance with section 5 of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I hereby submit the Department of Justice and Public Safety's Strategic Plan for the period of April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029. As the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of its goals and objectives.

The Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of safer communities, recognizing that public safety depends on proactive, collaborative, and informed approaches. Through prevention-focused strategies and strong partnerships, this Strategic Plan supports efforts to reduce harm, enhance community confidence, and respond effectively to emerging public safety issues. Effective service delivery requires appropriate tools, skilled personnel, and modernized systems that meet the needs of the Department and justice system stakeholders. The Department will also focus on improved resources and performance monitoring. This strategic issue prioritizes the responsible allocation of resources, strengthened performance measurement, and the use of evaluation to support informed decision making to support greater transparency, accountability, and continuous service improvement for the benefit of the people of the province.

Through the implementation of the 2026-29 Strategic Plan, the Department will make progress toward creating safer communities and a stronger, more responsive organization that is well positioned to meet current demands and future challenges of the justice system. My signature below is indicative of my commitment to achieving the goals and objectives identified in this Strategic Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Conway Ottenheimer', written over a white background.

Hon. Helen Conway Ottenheimer
Minister of Justice and Public Safety
Attorney General

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Department of Justice and Public Safety (the Department) ensures the impartial administration of justice and the protection of the public interest through the dual offices of the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and the Attorney General.

Mandate

This mandate reflects the dual responsibilities of the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and the Attorney General of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Department is responsible for the provision of legal services to the Provincial Government and is responsible for the protection and safety of people in the province with respect to their persons and property. The Department's responsibilities are met through:

- Managing the Fines Administration Division
- Overseeing the Support Enforcement Program
- Administering the Office of the Public Trustee
- Protecting human rights and administering the Human Rights Commission
- Administering the courts, including family justice services
- Delivering adult probation services
- Overseeing the Office of the High Sheriff
- Providing services to victims of crime
- Offering legal advice to provincial government departments
- Delivering legislative drafting through the Office of the Legislative Counsel
- Administering legal aid services
- Supporting the Serious Incident Response Team
- Prosecuting accused persons
- Providing police protection
- Operating the province's correctional facilities
- Administering the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Primary Clients

The Department primarily serves the general public and Provincial Government departments and agencies. The Department provides a range of services to individuals or groups of individuals through the courts, public prosecutions, family justice services, support enforcement, victim services, correctional services, fines administration, and policing. The Provincial Government itself is also a significant client of the Department. Civil law services are provided to Provincial Government departments and agencies in the form of legal advice, as well as representation in litigation. Legislative drafting services are provided by the Office of the Legislative Counsel.

Vision

A justice and public safety environment that is accessible and understood and which plays a key role in creating a fair, equitable and safe society where all people can pursue their lawful rights and freedoms.

Lines of Business

- **Adult Probation** is responsible for administering court imposed, community-based sentences for offenders who require supervision, control and counselling to develop their potential as law abiding members of the community.
- **Civil Division** is responsible for providing legal advice to Provincial Government departments and agencies. These services include providing legal opinions, drafting commercial and financial documents, and representing the Provincial Government and its agencies in negotiations and civil actions before administrative tribunals, all levels of court and judicial inquiries.
- **Court Services** is responsible for providing infrastructure and administrative support to the Provincial Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. Family Justice Services, which falls under the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, is responsible for

promoting dispute resolution outside the court process. The program assists parties in resolving parenting and support issues and offers parent information sessions, mediation, and counselling. Provincial Court also has responsibility for three specialty courts: Drug Treatment Court, Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court, and Mental Health Court.

- **Correctional Services** is responsible for the safe and secure custody of youth and adult offenders, which includes services and programs for sentenced, remanded and detained offenders to assist with recovery and reintegration back into the community after release from custody.
- **Finance and General Operations Division** is responsible for planning, organizing, directing and controlling overall financial and administrative operations of the Department, including coordinating the annual budget submission, providing budgetary advice, ongoing financial analysis and consultative services, monitoring expenditures and receivables during the financial year for accurate financial information and financial reporting, ensuring proper financial controls and monitoring systems are in place, and human resource administration supports.
- **Fines Administration** is responsible for the processing, billing and collection of fines, penalties and surcharges imposed on individuals by Provincial Court, summary offence tickets, or other legislation. Ticket processing, billing and collection services are also provided to third parties such as municipalities, hospitals, and post-secondary institutions.
- **Office of the Chief Medical Examiner** is an independent entity that is responsible for reporting, investigating, and recording deaths pursuant to the **Fatalities Investigation Act**. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is also responsible for appointing physicians to act as medical examiners and appointing medical investigators.
- **Office of the High Sheriff** is responsible for providing services to the Supreme and Provincial Courts. The Office of the High Sheriff administers the jury system, provides court security, judgement enforcement and trust account services, and executes orders and decisions of the Court.

- **Office of the Legislative Counsel** provides legislative drafting services to the Provincial Government. Additionally, in conjunction with the King's Printer and the House of Assembly, the office ensures the publication and dissemination of provincial legislation.
- **Office of the Public Trustee** is responsible for protecting the financial assets and well-being of clients under the **Public Trustee Act, 2009**. The Office of the Public Trustee is a Crown corporation created by legislation and operates fully independent of government.
- **Policing Services** are delivered through the province's two policing agencies: the RNC and the RCMP. The Policing and Public Safety Division provides administrative accountability on the provision of policing services. Through a broad range of policing services, both police agencies are responsible for enforcing the law to protect public safety.
- **Policy, Strategic Planning and Information Management** is responsible for providing leadership in the identification, development and implementation of broad policy initiatives, departmental, horizontal planning, and accountability processes in government, as well as for supporting informed policy development through internal and external stakeholder engagement. The Division holds department-wide responsibility for all matters relating to records and information management.
- **Public Prosecutions** is responsible for prosecuting all offences pursuant to the **Criminal Code of Canada** and provincial statutes. Prosecutors appear in every level of court in the province and in the Supreme Court of Canada. Public Prosecutions also provides legal opinions and advice on criminal and criminal-related matters to policing agencies and other Provincial Government departments that enforce provincial statutes.
- **Support Enforcement** performs several services related to the collection and distribution of court-ordered funds for support, maintenance or alimony. This includes registering and transmitting Support Orders, issuing Notices of Garnishment, tracing delinquent payers, and receiving and transmitting Interjurisdictional Support Orders applications.

- **Victim Services** provides a free service to support victims of crime. Services are available to adult victims of crime, 16 years of age and older, whether the crime has been reported or a charge has been laid. Services are also available to children, youth, or witnesses when under 16 years of age, when charges are laid.

Staffing and Budget

As of April 1, 2026, the Department employed 1,551 staff, including the RNC. It also funded approximately 466 RCMP officers and 153.5 civilian staff to deliver frontline policing in about 41 locations across Newfoundland and Labrador under the Provincial Policing Services Agreement and Community Tripartite Agreements.

The Department employs a wide range of professionals including lawyers, police officers, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, correctional officers, youth care counselors, deputy sheriffs, information management specialists, administrators, financial managers, educators and administrative support staff.

Branch	# of Employees	Budget
Corporate and Strategic Services Branch	88	\$18,603,600
Courts and Justice Services Branch	428	\$36,485,900
Legal Services Branch*	62	\$33,276,900
Public Prosecutions Branch	71	\$10,016,000
Public Safety and Correctional Services Branch**	902	\$220,896,100
Total	1,551	\$319,278,500

* The staffing count for Legal Services does not include the Legal Aid Commission but does include its budget.

** The staffing count for the Public Safety and Correctional Services Branch does not include the RCMP but does include its budget.

More information on the Department of Justice and Public Safety is available on the Department's website, which can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/jps/>.

Strategic Issues

Issue One: Safer Communities

Safer communities are a foundational outcome of a strong and effective justice system and directly improve the well-being and quality of life of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. A strong sense of safety reduces risk, fosters public confidence, and allows individuals and families to live, work, and participate fully in community life. Policing plays a central role, with sustained investments in recruitment and resource allocation to ensure officers are available when and where they are needed to respond promptly, conduct effective investigations, and address local safety concerns. In addition, investments in Public Prosecutions means that criminal matters proceed through the courts and are brought to justice in an efficient manner. Security at provincial court locations protects the public and court staff, allowing matters to proceed safely, efficiently, and without disruption. Equally important are safe and effective adult custody and community sentencing services, delivered through appropriate staffing, training, and targeted programming that promotes the accountability of offenders, supports rehabilitation, and reduces the risk of reoffending, contributing to safer communities. Gender Based Analysis plus (GBA+) considerations are an essential component of this work to ensure safer communities for all, addressing the distinct needs of diverse groups through measures such as trauma-informed services, culturally appropriate policing, and supports for victims of gender-based and intimate partner violence. Taken together, these elements support a comprehensive approach to community safety that enhances public trust in the justice system and delivers meaningful, tangible safety outcomes that benefit people and communities across the province. The Department's actions support these priorities and align with the government's strategic direction to deliver results that support safer communities for all people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will have enhanced community safety by reducing risks to the public, strengthening enforcement and accountability, and ensuring justice services are delivered safely and effectively across the province.

Indicators:

- Increased police recruitment to ensure police services have the number of officers needed to keep communities safe.
- Improved resources at the Provincial Court and Supreme Court to better support court workload and improve processing efficiency.
- Improved resources at Public Prosecutions to support timely access to justice.

Objectives

Objective 1.1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will have initiated investments in select programs and services that strengthen community safety.

Indicators:

- Commenced the implementation process for the Digital Evidence Management System for the RNC.
- Installed a new CCTV system at the Youth Centre in Whitbourne to increase safety and visual coverage at the facility.
- Increased funding to support recruitment and retention for the RNC and RCMP.
- Recruited additional staff to the Office of the High Sheriff to enhance security at Provincial and Supreme Courts.
- Increase in availability of Indigenous cultural programming in correctional facilities to support rehabilitation.
- Increased best practices in correctional services by offering correctional officer training throughout the province.
- Enhanced community policing by renewing the RCMP Auxiliary Program.

Objective 1.2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will support safer communities by implementing and expanding initiatives that enhance service capacity and reduce risks within the justice system.

Objective 1.3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives and strengthen their impact to support improved outcomes for safer communities.

Issue Two: Improved Resource and Performance Monitoring

Positive outcomes within the justice system require the Department to focus on strengthening the resources necessary to deliver services efficiently and effectively for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This includes greater consideration of expanded electronic service delivery, as well as the transition of select existing services to digital platforms. GBA+ considerations are integrated into these efforts to support improved resource and performance monitoring, including by examining how different groups (e.g., women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, seniors, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals) access services, using disaggregated data to identify gaps, and applying inclusive, user-centered design in digital tools. For clients and stakeholders, increased access to electronic services supports timelier, more convenient interactions with the justice system, reducing barriers to access and improving service responsiveness. Improved digital tools and information management systems are equally important for internal operations, enabling staff to perform their duties more efficiently, consistently, and accurately. Enhanced electronic service delivery and information management can better connect the various components of the justice system, supporting integration across programs and services. The result is more seamless internal operations that contribute to fairer, faster, and more reliable justice services for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition, the Department will place increased emphasis on the evaluation of select programs and services to ensure they are effective, outcome-focused, and deliver measurable benefits to individuals, families, and communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. The actions taken by the Department to support these initiatives and achieve positive outcomes are in accordance with the government's strategic direction of responsive and accountable services.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will have improved service delivery by modernizing resources and evaluating programs and services.

Indicators:

- Implemented modern technology and improved digital records options to enhance operations of public prosecutions.
- Implemented court registry and courtroom modernization initiatives at Provincial Court and Supreme Court locations.
- Demonstrated effectiveness of departmental programs by completing program evaluations to identify improvements to service delivery.
- Introduced body worn cameras for the RNC across the province.

Objectives

Objective 2.1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will have initiated improvements and modernization in select service areas and conducted program evaluations.

Indicators:

- Implemented electronic ticketing software in the Fines Administration Division.
- Completed two evaluations for the Drug Treatment Court and the Mental Health Court.
- Initiated information management activities at the Supreme Court Registry.
- Introduced and invested in enhanced resources to support the administrative staff at Provincial Court.
- Initiated a new process for the enhanced collection of bail data.

Objective 2.2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will implement and expand improvements and modernization initiatives and advance program evaluation activities.

Objective 2.3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will evaluate improvements and modernization initiatives and strengthen their impact to support improved service outcomes for the justice system.

Annex A Strategic Directions

Strategic directions represent significant desired outcomes that the Department will work towards that may require a combined effort. These major directions usually come from such sources as platform documents, Speeches from the Throne, Budget speeches, policy documents, and other communiqués as well as public commitments. The Department is required by legislation to incorporate these directions into the strategic planning process to ensure key commitments are advanced for consideration and delivered as services. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador identified the following strategic directions for the 2026-29 planning cycle. Outcomes will support the policy direction of government and require focus in the following areas:

Strategic Direction #1: Delivering results for safer communities.

Outcome: Building safer communities means addressing the underlying factors that contribute to community safety concerns while making targeted investments in programs and resources that support public safety and other essential areas of the justice system. This outcome supports the policy direction of government and will require focus in the following areas:

- Delivered programs and services that support safer communities.
- Actions taken to address factors that contribute to community safety concerns.

Strategic Direction #2: Responsive and accountable services

Outcome: Responsive and accountable services are delivered by improving the justice system's use of digital resources and supporting evaluation of the Department's program and services. This outcome supports the policy direction of government and will require focus in the following areas:

- Investing in digital and technological solutions to improve the justice system.
- Reviewing and evaluating justice system services for effectiveness.

Annex B Departmental Entities

The following entities under the Department are responsible for planning and reporting as category 3 entities, pursuant to the **Transparency and Accountability Act**:

- Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities;
- Child Death Review Committee;
- Commissioner of Lobbyists;
- Consumer Advocate;
- Criminal Code Mental Disorder Review Board;
- Human Rights Commission;
- Human Rights Commission Panel of Adjudicators;
- Newfoundland and Labrador Legal Aid Commission (Legal Aid NL);
- Office of the Chief Medical Examiner;
- Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Public Complaints Commission;
- Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Public Complaints Commission Panel of Adjudicators; and,
- Serious Incident Response Team of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Activity plans and annual reports for the entities can be viewed on the Department's publications webpage at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/jps/publications/>. In addition, the following are entities of the Department, but do not have any reporting responsibilities under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**:

- Complaints Review Committee;
- Fitness to Practice Committee of the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Law Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Law Society Disciplinary Panel;
- Legal Appointments Board;
- Judicial Complaints Panel; and,
- Judicial Council of the Provincial Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.