

2025-2026

Annual Report

Labrador Affairs





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Labrador Affairs, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the period of April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026. I am accountable for the preparation of this report and for the achievements of the goals and objectives contained within. Labrador Affairs is a category two entity, and this report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's **Transparency and Accountability Act**. It highlights the department's progress in achieving the objectives outlined in the 2023-2026 Business Plan.

Labrador Affairs plays a vital role in advancing the economic and social development of Labrador. This is accomplished by ensuring that Labrador's perspectives are effectively represented within government, as well as by representing the provincial government on provincial, national, and northern committees. The department also delivers Labrador-specific programs that support residents in areas such as sport travel, safe winter travel, and air access.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of the staff of Labrador Affairs. Their ongoing commitment is essential to the continued success of our work. I look forward to addressing both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lela E.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon. Lela Evans
Minister of Labrador Affairs

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Department of Labrador Affairs supports the economic and social well-being of Labradorians through policy and program development and advocacy within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Key responsibilities include the administration of responsive programming such as the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy and Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy, which supports access and mobility. The department also administers medical transportation assistance programming for the province. While this program is available province-wide, it holds particular significance for Labrador residents who frequently travel to the island portion of the province to access essential healthcare services.

The department has offices in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and St. John's. Further information about the department can be found at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/la/>.

Staff and Budget

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Executive Support	5*	\$484,100
Labrador Affairs	9**	\$2,802,600
Medical Transportation Program	53	\$14,579,100
TOTAL:	67	\$17,865,800

*The Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs is shared with Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

** The Trail Inspector is seasonal.

The Department of Labrador Affairs has three branches, Executive Support, Labrador Affairs and Medical Transportation Program. The Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs and the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Medical Transportation Program are in St. John's, and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs and the Director of Labrador Affairs are in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

For additional details on the mandate and lines of business of Labrador Affairs please visit website at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/la/>.

Highlights and Partnerships

Highlights

The department leads Arctic and northern policy initiatives on behalf of the Province and is in line with its mandate to advance the social and economic development of Labrador. It also provides advice on government policies, planning, and programs that affect the region. Department officials participate in monthly working group meetings for the Government of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, as well as the Arctic Cooperation Advisory Committee. Planning for the Northern Development Ministers Forum continued in 2025–2026, including regular Deputy Minister meetings and Senior Officials Working Group meetings.

The Labrador Winter Games were held from March 8-14, 2026, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay with nearly 500 athletes competing in 14 events including traditional and modern sports like snowshoe racing, badminton, volleyball and the Northern Games. The department provided funding of \$750,000 to host the event and is a member of the Labrador Winter Games Board of Directors in an ex-officio capacity. The Minister participated in Labrador Winter Games activities including a meet and greet with the Labrador Winter Games Board and the opening and closing ceremonies. The Games are often referred to as the "Friendship Games" and feature traditional and modern-day sports and skill competitions which reflect the cultural diversity of Labrador.

The Labrador Air Access Program (LAAP) was introduced as a pilot initiative to help offset the high cost of air travel in Labrador and the Northern Peninsula. The pilot ran from August 29, 2025, through the end of the 2026 fiscal year. The program will be extended to March 31, 2027, with policy enhancements aimed at better meeting community needs.

The department continued to provide funding to the three Indigenous governments and organizations in Labrador through the Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Program. The funding is used towards nutritional and artistic endeavours including funding for supplies for food banks and community freezers and cultural hunting trips.

Partnerships

In 2023–2024, Labrador Affairs formed a partnership with SmartICE to monitor and maintain the winter trail system from Nain to Natuashish. In 2025-2026, SmartICE, with support from Inuit Community Governments and Innu Nation, expanded and managed the full trail from Nain to Makkovik. SmartICE is renowned for its work in developing climate change adaptation tools and services that integrate Indigenous knowledge of ice with ice-monitoring technology. This technology was applied to the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy Program trails on the north coast which ensured access to real time sea ice data.

In 2025–2026, the department continued to expand support for low-to-moderate-income residents through its pilot partnership with Hope Air. This initiative provides eligible patients with advanced, fully coordinated medical travel support, including flights and accommodations, eliminating the need for upfront payment and reducing financial barriers to care.

The department is a member of the Labrador West Alliance, a collaborative initiative that brings together key regional stakeholders to advance shared priorities in Labrador West. Through this partnership, the department worked alongside municipal leaders, Indigenous governments and organizations, industry representatives, and community groups to support coordinated regional development. Labrador Affairs officials accompanied members of the Alliance to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories in July 2025

for a best practices tour to garner insights on how to support community readiness during major resource expansion.

The department continued to lead the Action Team in addressing homelessness and supporting vulnerable populations in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The Minister of Labrador Affairs, along with the Minister responsible for Housing and the Member of the House of Assembly for Lake Melville, met with the Action Team on March 6, 2026, to discuss supports that are required for vulnerable populations in the region.

Report on Performance

Issue One: Northern and Arctic Priorities

As the northernmost region of the province, Labrador offers a strategic gateway to economic and social development opportunities in the Arctic and Canada's North. The department plays a central role in advancing the province's interests in these areas by leading Arctic and Northern policy initiatives. This work supports the department's broader mandate to foster Labrador's social and economic growth while providing informed advice on government policies, planning, and programs that affect the region.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, Labrador Affairs will have strengthened its role in Northern and Arctic priorities at the regional and national level.

GOAL INDICATORS/DISCUSSION ON 2023-26 PERFORMANCE

The geographic location of Labrador and its proximity to the North has provided Newfoundland and Labrador with the opportunity to engage in areas of economic and social development in the Arctic and Canada's North. This was accomplished through the following:

Lead activities of Northern and Arctic importance to the province;

- Visited Ottawa to meet with federal counterparts in June 2024 to discuss search and rescue infrastructure in Labrador and upgrades to 5 Wing Goose Bay.
- In 2024, the department provided submissions and presented to the Standing Committee on Transportation and the Competition Board of Canada's Airline Market Study in relation to air access in Labrador.

- In 2024, Labrador Affairs also attended the Future of Labrador West Summit hosted by the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce and focused on energy, housing, healthcare, and labour force needs in the region.
- The department continued to be represented on the Labrador West Alliance. Labrador Affairs accompanied Alliance members to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories in July 2025 for a best practices tour to garner insights on how to support community readiness during major resources expansion.
- Labrador Affairs attended MINEx 2025 and 2026 in Labrador West. MINEx is an opportunity to learn from mining industry leaders, analysts, suppliers and supporters, to examine the industry outlook and its opportunities, and to build partnerships to strengthen the future of mining in Labrador.
- Over the three-year reporting period, Labrador Affairs attended Expo Labrador, which provided the opportunity to learn about business development in the Labrador region.
- The department met with the Labrador North Chamber of Commerce on areas of importance.
- The Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs participated in an internal deputy ministers' working group and provided strategic advice on defence development initiatives and operations in Labrador.

Strengthen relationships with Arctic and Northern partners on a regional and national level by hosting and attending conferences;

- Attended the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavík, Iceland in October 2024, and while there, met with the Canadian Ambassador to Iceland, Premier of Nunavut, Iceland Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate, and Quebec Minister responsible for Plan Nord.
- Continuous planning for the Northern Development Ministers Forum occurred over the multi-year plan cycle, including regular Deputy Ministers and Senior

Official Working Group meetings. June 2026 has been set as the date for the Forum.

Participate in activities related to the Arctic and North to increase collaboration and cooperation between the Province and northern stakeholders.

- Continuous participation in monthly and bilateral meetings of the Arctic Cooperation Advisory Committee, Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.
- Participated in the Northern Development Ministers Forum (NDMF), collaborating with federal, provincial, and territorial northern partners to advance shared northern and Arctic priorities and strengthen cooperation on issues affecting northern communities across Canada.

2025-2026 Objective

By March 31, 2026, Labrador Affairs will have advanced recommended actions on priority areas related to Northern and Arctic initiatives.

Indicators

1. Continue to work with Nunavut on the priorities for the MOU.

In February 2023, the Governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together on shared priorities. Since then, both governments have held several virtual meetings and one in-person meeting to advance this collaboration.

Labrador Affairs, in consultation with Nunavut, drafted an annual report in April 2025 for the previous year and planned for in-person meeting but work has not progressed due to elections in both jurisdictions.

2. Coordinate and host the Northern Development Ministers Forum.

The Northern Development Ministers Forum (NDMF) is a federal, provincial, territorial meeting held every 12 to 18 months. The Department of Labrador Affairs leads the file on Arctic and Northern initiatives on behalf of the province. The NDMF provides federal, provincial and territorial ministers representing Canada's North an opportunity to advance common interests, raise awareness of northern issues and accomplishments, and learn from experiences across jurisdictions

The NDMF was scheduled to take place in Labrador during the reporting period; however, it was postponed due to elections being held across member jurisdictions. The NDMF has been rescheduled for June 17-18, 2026, with the theme "Building Capacity in the North for the North". As the host, the Minister of Labrador Affairs will chair the proceedings.

As the hosting jurisdiction, the department continued to chair Senior Official Working Group and Deputy Minister meetings. In addition, as part of the NDMF, work on three priority projects continued for presentation at the upcoming forum. The areas of priority included Northern Drinking Water Systems, Economic Reconciliation in the North, and Northern Youth Leadership. In consultation with member jurisdictions, additional priority areas for the June forum were identified that include Northern and Arctic Sovereignty, Northern Response to Tariffs, and Emergency Preparedness.

Newfoundland and Labrador will host a session featuring three Labrador-based organizations that are building capacity in the North through economic development and workforce growth (Torngait Services Inc.), community-based innovation and technology (SmartICE), and education, research, and knowledge development (Memorial University's School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies). Together, they demonstrate how northern-led solutions are strengthening local expertise, leadership, and opportunities in Labrador communities.

3. Participate in relevant conferences, trade shows and working groups that focus on Arctic and Northern sovereignty and development.

In addition to representing the province on the NDMF and collaborating with Nunavut on the MOU, the department also participated in various meetings and committees throughout 2025-2026 related to Arctic and northern initiatives, including:

- Participation in monthly meetings and virtual attendance of the annual meeting of the Arctic Council Advisory Committee in February 2026.
- Participation in monthly meetings of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.
- Participation in bi-lateral meetings with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

Issue Two: Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy

Since 2005, Labrador Affairs has administered the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy (LTGS), a program designed to enhance safe winter mobility for isolated communities across the region. In 2025-2026, the LTGS provided funding to eight service providers to maintain and mark designated snowmobile trails connecting remote communities to larger service centres in Labrador. With an annual budget of \$611,000, the program supported essential operational costs, including staffing, fuel, insurance, communications, and supplies for trail marking and grooming.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, Labrador Affairs will have updated delivery of the LTGS that is responsive to the needs of isolated Labrador communities.

GOAL INDICATORS/DISCUSSION ON 2023-26 PERFORMANCE

The winter trail system is essential for Labrador communities without road access, and through the LTGS, the Province supports safe travel for the public which aligns with one of Government's priorities of public safety. Labrador Affairs works collaboratively with communities, service providers and Indigenous Governments and Organizations to support safe winter travel and access through the following:

Collaborate with Labrador's isolated communities and other stakeholders on service delivery options;

- In June 2023 and March 2025, the department hosted in-person meetings with the Innu Nation, Inuit Community Governments, the Nunatsiavut Government, and SmartICE to discuss the LTGS program. The discussion focused on current challenges, the impacts of climate change, and future delivery options for the North Coast. Insights shared during the session helped guide improvements to the program to better serve residents in the region. Another session is scheduled as a follow-up to the 2026 season. As climate change continues to affect ice conditions and shorten winter travel seasons, Labrador Affairs and its partners must remain adaptive and innovative in identifying new ways to support safe and reliable access.
- During the past three program seasons, Labrador Affairs has formed a partnership with SmartICE to monitor and maintain the winter trail system from Nain to Makkovik. SmartICE is renowned for its work in developing climate change adaptation tools and services that integrate Indigenous knowledge of ice with ice-monitoring technology. The information which is gathered by SmartICE helps communities and residents in northern Labrador and Canada's North make more informed decisions before travelling on sea ice to avoid dangerous or hazardous areas.

Improve administration and delivery of the program.

- Budget 2023 saw \$3.34 million allocated to the LTGS program to enhance safe snowmobile travel for residents of Labrador's isolated communities. A one-time funding total of \$3.2 million allowed for the purchase of new groomers, snowmobiles, equipment, buildings, trail markers and warming shelters. Annual operating costs were increased in Budget 2023 by \$140,000 to reflect increasing operational costs, which brought the program's annual operating budget from \$471,000 to \$611,000. Labrador Affairs regularly monitors the program budget to identify funding needs

2025-2026 Objective

By March 31, 2026, Labrador Affairs will have assessed the effectiveness of the program updates for the LTGS.

Indicators:

1. Continue to engage service providers of the LTGS program.

In March 2025, the department hosted an in-person meeting with the Innu Nation, Inuit Community Governments, the Nunatsiavut Government, and SmartICE to discuss the LTGS program. The discussion focused on current challenges, the impacts of climate change, and future delivery options for the North Coast. Insights shared during the session guided improvements to the program to better serve residents in the region.

Ahead of the 2025-2026 season, meetings were held with service providers in Southern and Central Labrador. Throughout the grooming season, the department maintained regular weekly contact with service providers, offering consistent support, guidance, and oversight to ensure safe and effective trail operations.

In 2025, Labrador Affairs staff visited communities on the North Coast to meet with service providers and view LTGS program infrastructure and equipment. During the 2026 program season, the Trail Inspector visited communities on the North and South Coasts and Central Labrador to assess trails and discuss equipment requirements.

2. Implement enhancements that are responsive to trail safety and changing conditions.

The SmartICE contract covers 300 kilometres of trail network, including the Natuashish to Makkovik extension added in 2025-26. Through SmartICE, Innu Nation Guardians were engaged in 2026 to work on the trails around Natuashish. SmartICE is renowned for its work in developing climate change adaptation tools and services that integrate Indigenous knowledge of ice with ice-monitoring technology. The information gathered by SmartICE assists communities and residents in Labrador in making informed travel decisions, helping to avoid dangerous or hazardous areas.

In recent years, service providers, drawing on local, traditional, and Indigenous knowledge, have observed notable changes in winter conditions. As a result of climate change, snow amounts have become unpredictable, and sea ice is forming later, becoming thinner, and more susceptible to early breakup. During the 2025-2026 winter season, these challenging conditions shifted focus to traveler safety by ensuring trails are marked and emergency shelters were accessible.

A Trail Inspector employed by Labrador Affairs, seasonally, is responsible for monitoring the trail system while working with the service providers. The Trail Inspector met with groomer operators to discuss the trail conditions and issues with program equipment. The Trail Inspector also traveled to communities on the North and South Coasts and Central Labrador to assess trail conditions.

Issue Three: Medical Transportation Assistance

The Department of Labrador Affairs administers two key programs that support residents who must travel to access medically necessary Medical Care Plan (MCP) insured services not available in their home communities: the Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP) and the Medical Transportation Supports (MeTS) Program. Together, these programs reduce financial and geographic barriers to care and help ensure equitable access to health services across Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly for residents in rural and remote areas.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have supported the increased health and well-being of residents of the province by enhancing and improving the availability of financial transportation assistance to facilitate access to specialized health services.

GOAL INDICATORS/DISCUSSION ON 2023-26 PERFORMANCE

Over the three-year reporting period, the Department of Labrador Affairs has made measurable progress toward this goal through increased program utilization, targeted investments, and improvements to service delivery. These results, combined with sustained growth in demand, underscore the importance of continuing to modernize programs, strengthen access, and ensure long-term sustainability. This was accomplished through the following:

Refined and updated specific guidelines and/or policies to address the unique needs of residents of the province to access medical services through provincial medical transportation assistance programs;

- In 2023, the department completed a comprehensive review of MTAP policies, procedures, guidelines, forms and stakeholder feedback to identify opportunities to improve financial assistance, operational efficiency and program accessibility.
- In September 2023, the In-Province Flight Voucher Program was introduced, providing eligible Labrador-Grenfell Health Zone residents with up to \$1,000 in upfront airfare assistance and 75 per cent coverage of additional eligible airfare costs up to \$8,000.
- An 85 per cent airfare assistance rate for Labrador-Grenfell Health Zone residents whose annual eligible airfare costs exceed \$8,000 was introduced in 2024.
- In January 2024, the department increased assistance for out-of-province air travel by eliminating the \$400 deductible for Island residents and aligning airfare assistance rates with those provided to Labrador-Grenfell Health Zone residents.
- Additional enhancements made in January 2024, include increased accommodation reimbursement rates to \$150 per night in-province and \$175 per night out-of-province; and, increased the private vehicle reimbursement rate from \$0.20 per kilometre to \$0.25 per kilometre for patients travelling more than 4,000 kilometres annually for medical care.
- In 2024-25, the department updated MTAP policy materials and developed new resources, including a specialized insured services reference guide, escort eligibility guidance and non-medical escort templates.
- In 2025-26, there was expanded support options for low-to-moderate income residents through a partnership with Hope Air, providing eligible patients with coordinated travel arrangements and up to 100 per cent coverage of eligible travel expenses.

- Also in 2025-26, the program expanded private vehicle assistance by applying the \$0.25 per kilometre reimbursement rate to all eligible kilometres travelled, replacing the previous threshold-based approach that limited enhanced assistance to travel exceeding 4,000 kilometres annually.

Utilized feedback for monitoring and reviewing the medical transportation programs to ensure policy is current and effective for meeting the evolving needs of the province;

- In 2023, the department engaged stakeholders and conducted a program review to identify policy and service delivery improvements focused on affordability, accessibility and program efficiency.
- During the reporting period, program utilization, patient volumes and travel demands were monitored to support ongoing policy refinement and funding decisions.
- In 2024-25, MTAP information materials and guidance documents were revised to improve clarity, consistency and understanding of program requirements.
- In 2025-26, the department evaluated the effectiveness of recent program enhancements, including airfare assistance changes, the Flight Voucher Program and Hope Air supports, to assess emerging client needs and service pressures.
- In 2025-26, completed an operational efficiency review to identify opportunities to modernize program administration, streamline processes and enhance client service delivery.

Improved program efficiency by establishing quicker application assessment rates, call response rates and turnaround times for pre-payments and reimbursements;

- A fast-track Flight Pass Program with application assessments completed within two business days was introduced in 2023-24, as well as a redesigned MTAP application and claim forms, reducing paperwork requirements and introducing electronic signature functionality.

- In 2024-25, enhanced online forms with digital submission capabilities to streamline intake and processing were introduced and MTPA staffing increased from nine (9) to seventeen (17) positions to support growing demand and improve service delivery.
- Also that year, the department reduced average claim turnaround times from approximately six-eight weeks to one-two weeks.
- In 2025-26, there was advanced development of online application tools designed to reduce errors, improve submission quality and support faster processing. A case management approach was implemented within MeTS to improve responsiveness, continuity of service and workload management.

Improved public awareness of the medical transportation assistance programs through a greater online presence;

- 2023 saw the launch of a dedicated MeTS webpage containing eligibility information, application requirements and program guidance.
- In 2023-24, an enhanced MTAP website with updated program information, online fillable forms, electronic signature options and examples of completed forms was introduced.
- In 2024-25, the MTAP claim guide was modernized with public-facing materials using plain language, improved formatting and clearer presentation of program benefits and requirements.
- Also in 2024-25, a MTAP fact sheet and QR-code enabled materials to improve access to program information was introduced.
- During the reporting period, an increased awareness of available medical transportation supports through promotion and expansion of the Flight Pass Program and Hope Air partnership initiatives.

2025-2026 Objective

By March 31, 2026, the department of Labrador Affairs will have assessed the efficacy of MTAP and MeTS updates and highlighted areas for further resolution.

In 2025–2026, the department focused on assessing the effectiveness of recent program enhancements while responding to continued growth in demand. Since transferring to Labrador Affairs in April 2023, MTAP has experienced a 77 per cent increase in claims and a 66 per cent increase in patients, reflecting rising awareness and utilization of the program.

During the reporting year, MTAP processed 12,744 claims for 7,382 patients, representing increases of 24 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, over the previous year. Total medical travel trips increased to 39,654, while out-of-province travel rose by 18 per cent, highlighting continued reliance on specialized services not available within the province. Utilization by Labrador residents also continued to grow, with 1,616 flight vouchers issued for Labrador-Grenfell Health Zone patients travelling to the island for care, a 29 per cent increase from 2024–2025. Program expenditures exceeded the \$6.1 million budget, reflecting sustained growth in demand and the essential role these programs play in supporting access to care.

Indicators:

1. Expanding Support for Low-to-Modest Income Families.

In 2025–2026, the department continued to expand support for low- to modest-income residents through its pilot partnership with Hope Air. This initiative provides eligible patients with advanced, fully coordinated medical travel support, including flights and accommodations, eliminating the need for upfront payment and reducing financial barriers to care.

The partnership supports individuals and families with an annual household income of \$70,000 or less and complements MTAP's traditional reimbursement model by providing an option for patients who may not have the financial means to pay expenses upfront. By offering access to up to 100 per cent coverage of eligible travel costs for those who qualify, the program improves equity and ensures that individuals facing financial challenges can access medically necessary services when required.

This approach represents a shift toward more proactive, client-centered service delivery, particularly for vulnerable populations who may otherwise delay or forego care due to cost.

2. Enhancing Access to Specialized Insured Health Services.

Access to specialized health services continued to be supported through targeted investments and increased program utilization. In 2025–2026, the province invested \$1 million in MTAP enhancements, which supported both the Hope Air pilot initiative (outlined in Indicator 1) and an increase to the private vehicle mileage reimbursement rate from \$0.20 to \$0.25 per kilometre. This investment helped offset rising travel costs while expanding access to coordinated, upfront travel support for eligible patients.

Increased utilization across all program areas demonstrates the continued need for medical transportation support. Growth in out-of-province travel further highlights the importance of these programs in ensuring access to specialized services that are not available within Newfoundland and Labrador.

The continued expansion of flight voucher support for Labrador residents also reflects improved access to care. The 29 per cent increase in vouchers issued in 2025–2026 underscores the program's critical role in addressing geographic barriers and supporting timely access to services for patients in remote regions.

3. Improving Program Efficiency and Service Delivery.

Improving program efficiency and client experience remained a key priority in 2025–2026. An operational efficiency review identified opportunities to streamline processes, modernize forms and public-facing materials, and improve overall program administration. Implementation of these changes is underway, with a portion expected to be completed by summer 2026.

As part of ongoing modernization efforts, the department advanced the development of simplified online application tools for MTAP. These online forms are designed to reduce errors, eliminate incomplete submissions, and accelerate processing times by standardizing how information is collected. This is expected to improve turnaround times while strengthening data quality and reporting for decision-making. The first online direct submission form is anticipated to launch in early summer 2026, with additional forms to follow later in the year.

MeTS also enhanced service delivery through the implementation of a case management approach. By assigning dedicated staff to specific groups of clients, the program is improving continuity of service and enabling more responsive and consistent handling of travel requests. Built-in backup support ensures service continuity during staff absences or periods of high demand, helping to reduce delays and maintain reliable client experience.

Opportunities and Challenges

Air access and affordability remain a top priority for Labradorians, particularly in remote and coastal communities. Limited air service options and high costs in the region continue to present challenges and affect affordability, reliability, and overall service quality. Recognizing these challenges, the department continues to advocate for improved air transportation options. This includes working collaboratively with federal,

provincial, and municipal partners to explore opportunities for increased airline competition, appropriate infrastructure at regional airports, and more consistent and affordable flight schedules.

Search and Rescue (SAR) remains a critical concern in Labrador, particularly due to the absence of a dedicated SAR base in the region. Communities currently rely on seasonal and volunteer resources, which can lead to delays in emergency response times and raise concerns about public safety. Addressing these gaps is essential to improving emergency preparedness and ensuring timely support for residents.

Labrador is seeing significant investment in defense infrastructure. Enhancements at 5 Wing Goose Bay, as part of Canada's NORAD modernization efforts, are strengthening national defense capabilities and supporting multinational training operations. These developments not only reinforce Canada's northern security posture but also bring economic and employment opportunities to the region. The department continues to lobby the Federal Government for both improved SAR infrastructure and the advancement of 5 Wing Goose Bay developments, recognizing Labrador's strategic importance in national safety and security.

The Federal Government completed a review of the Nutrition North Canada (NNC) program in 2025. The program supports remote communities on Labrador's North Coast and the community of Black Tickle. Families on Labrador's North Coast face food costs far above the provincial average, placing immense strain on household budgets. Food banks are under pressure due to rising demand, while geographic isolation and limited infrastructure continue to hinder food supply. The Department of Labrador Affairs will continue to advocate to the Federal Government to enhance opportunities for Labrador residents to avail of more affordable foods and goods.

Climate change is having serious impacts on northern regions of Canada. Temperatures are rising faster in the North than in other parts of the world, which is

causing weather patterns to change. These environmental changes are significantly disrupting traditional hunting and fishing practices, while prolonged periods of dryness are heightening the risk of wildfires. Additionally, increasingly unpredictable ice conditions are making safe travel more difficult and hazardous. Labrador residents are seeing these changes up close and are working hard to adapt. The department continues to engage stakeholders involved with the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy program to support safe travel and respond to changing conditions.

The medical transportation assistance programs continue to adapt to better meet the needs of residents. A key focus is improving public understanding of eligibility criteria, particularly what qualifies as a specialized insured medical service. To support this, the department is enhancing communication through clearer examples and more accessible materials. Efforts are also underway to improve the user experience by simplifying claim forms, using plain language, and exploring digital submission options. Additionally, the department is addressing delays caused by incomplete documentation by providing clearer guidance on required information and emphasizing the importance of submitting accurate and complete claims.

LABRADOR AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

	2026-27 Estimates	2025-26 Revised	Budget
	\$	\$	\$
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION			
<i>CURRENT</i>			
1.1.01. EXECUTIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICES			
Appropriations provide for ministerial, executive and administrative support.			
01. Salaries	513,300	426,200	513,300
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	3,600	3,600	3,600
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	88,200	49,400	88,200
<i>Supplies</i>	2,100	2,100	2,100
<i>Purchased Services</i>	1,500	1,500	1,500
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	500	1,300	500
02. Operating Accounts	95,900	57,900	95,900
Amount to be Voted	609,200	484,100	609,200
Total: Executive and Support Services	609,200	484,100	609,200
TOTAL: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	609,200	484,100	609,200
TOTAL: EXECUTIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICES	609,200	484,100	609,200

LABRADOR AFFAIRS

LABRADOR AFFAIRS

	2026-27 Estimates \$	2025-26 Revised \$	Budget \$
LABRADOR AFFAIRS			
<i>CURRENT</i>			
2.1.01. LABRADOR AFFAIRS			
Appropriations provide for the development and implementation of Government policy and programs which impact the Labrador region.			
01. Salaries	843,900	730,200	643,900
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	3,000	3,000	3,000
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	36,000	50,900	35,900
<i>Supplies</i>	8,800	8,800	8,800
<i>Professional Services</i>	300,000	-	-
<i>Purchased Services</i>	93,900	5,200	94,200
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	2,200	6,000	2,000
02. Operating Accounts	443,900	73,900	143,900
10. Grants and Subsidies	4,347,500	1,998,500	1,598,500
Amount to be Voted	5,635,300	2,802,600	2,386,300
Total: Labrador Affairs	5,635,300	2,802,600	2,386,300
2.1.02. MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS			
Appropriations provide for financial assistance to individuals in need of medical transportation.			
01. Salaries	3,179,600	2,963,100	2,963,100
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	80,600	82,000	80,600
<i>Supplies</i>	23,700	15,000	23,700
<i>Purchased Services</i>	12,300	6,000	12,300
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	5,500	8,000	5,500
02. Operating Accounts	122,100	111,000	122,100
09. Allowances and Assistance	15,635,100	11,505,000	12,476,500
Amount to be Voted	18,936,800	14,579,100	15,561,700
Total: Medical Transportation Programs	18,936,800	14,579,100	15,561,700
TOTAL: LABRADOR AFFAIRS	24,572,100	17,381,700	17,948,000
TOTAL: LABRADOR AFFAIRS	24,572,100	17,381,700	17,948,000
TOTAL: DEPARTMENT	25,181,300	17,865,800	18,557,200

