

2023-2026

# STRATEGIC PLAN

**Municipal and Provincial Affairs**





## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, I am pleased to present the Strategic Plan for the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026. This plan was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and sets out how the Department will address government's strategic directions and my mandate as Minister.

We have listened to and heard from municipal leaders about the importance of addressing conflict of interest and conduct issues and on September 1, 2022 the **Municipal Conduct Act** was proclaimed.

Work continues to bring forward modern and enabling municipal legislation, such as addressing the outdated **Municipalities Act, 1999**. This will be followed by new legislation to replace the **City of Corner Brook Act** and the **City of Mount Pearl Act**, and finally, new legislation to replace the **City of St. John's Act**.

Recently, the Department outlined next steps in a regionalization approach to advance community sustainability and viability through collaboration and service sharing. Collaboration and service sharing help build resilient communities, and help ensure residents receive the services they need, such as drinking water, fire protection, economic opportunities and recreational facilities.

The approach recognizes the unique geographic and population challenges in Newfoundland and Labrador while building upon the many successful examples of service sharing that exist in the province today. It will help support community leaders and build vibrant, sustainable communities.

The Department will continue to help communities assess their challenges and opportunities, and support collaborative initiatives that address gaps and build capacity. As Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the specific goals and objectives contained herein.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Haggie". The signature is stylized and includes a large initial "J".

Hon. John Haggie  
Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs



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## Departmental Overview

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is a category 1 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** that supports the economic, social and environmental sustainability of municipalities, communities and regions through the delivery of effective programs and services.

The Department looks to enhance the resilience of the province's communities through the utilization of financial and administrative tools to support the development of community capacity, regional collaboration and sound municipal governance.

Department Executive, with support from the Policy and Strategic Planning Division, address matters pertaining to the Provincial Affairs mandate of the Department.

## Lines of Business

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is organized into five divisions:

- **Local Governance and Land Use Planning**
  - Supports the vision of viable sustainable communities led by strong local governments. The Division's Land Use Planning Section helps promote and support the planned growth of sustainable communities.
  
- **Municipal Finance**
  - Provides financial assistance and guidance to municipalities with respect to funding programs, borrowing, debt servicing, and financial compliance. It also provides financial assistance and support through special assistance grants which provide financial aid to support municipalities and related organizations for emergencies and financial difficulties. In addition, Municipal Finance staff provide general assistance to municipalities beyond the municipal budgetary

process including special projects or initiatives involving municipalities, local service district committees or other entities. The Community Enhancement and Employment Program provides short-term employment for workers in rural areas of the Province as well as Administration of the Canada Community Building Fund.

- **Municipal Support**

- Responsible for the provision of ongoing support and advice on local government issues. Regional offices serve as the primary contact between the department and local governments throughout the province.

- **Policy and Strategic Planning**

- Coordinates and supports the department's policy agenda and is primarily responsible for the development of a policy and planning framework for the Department to help support a system of local government that efficiently provides services to residents of the province. The Division coordinates, reviews, develops and supports the Department's policy agenda and legislation. The Division is also responsible for the Department's accountability and transparency requirements, including responsibility for the Departmental Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Annual Reports, and Departmental program evaluation. Finally, the Division is responsible for the coordination of community collaboration and service sharing initiatives including stakeholder outreach and consultations.

- **Strategic Financial Management**

- This shared service Division provides the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs and three other Departments and one agency with financial management and general operations services. The Division is the point of contact for all Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABC's) financial reporting



through the department. It is also the main departmental contact for the Department of Finance and Treasury Board Secretariat related to financial functions, budget submissions, public accounts and budget monitoring submitted by departments and ABCs.

## Reporting Entities

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

- Municipal Assessment Agency
- West Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board (disestablishment on June 1, 2023)
- Central Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board (disestablishment on June 1, 2023)
- Eastern Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board (disestablishment on June 1, 2023)
- Labrador Regional Appeal Board (disestablishment on June 1, 2023)
- North East Avalon Regional Plan Oversight Committee [Inactive]
- Humber Valley Regional Planning Advisory Authority Leadership Committee [Inactive]
- A roster of adjudicators [replacing the four Regional Appeal Boards] (see **Annex A**)

For more information on the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, please visit us online at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/mpa/>

## Legislation

**Assessment Act, 2006;**

**Avian Emblem Act;**

**Building Standards Act;**

**City of Corner Brook Act;**

**City of Mount Pearl Act;**

**City of St. John's Act;**

**Mineral Emblem Act;**

**Municipal Affairs Act;**

**Municipal Authorities Amendment**

**Act, 1991;**

**Municipal Elections Act;**

**Municipalities Act, 1999;**

**City of St. John's Municipal  
Taxation Act;  
Coat of Arms Act;  
Commemoration Day Act;  
Crown Corporations Local Taxation  
Act;  
Evacuated Communities Act, 2016;  
Family Homes Expropriation Act;  
Floral Emblem Act;  
Housing Act;  
Housing Association Loans Act;  
Municipal Conduct Act;**

**Provincial Anthem Act;  
Provincial Flag Act;  
Regional Service Boards Act, 2012;  
Remembrance Day Act;  
St. John's Centennial Foundation  
Act;  
St. John's Municipal Council Parks  
Act;  
Standard Time Act;  
Taxation of Utilities and Cable  
Television Companies Act; and  
Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000.**

## Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is to advance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of municipalities, communities, regions and the province through the delivery of effective programs, services and supports.

## Staff and Budget

The Department's gross expenditure budget for 2023-24 of \$163,814,900 with planned related revenue of approximately \$34,489,200 for a net expenditure of \$129,325,700.

Division	# of Employees	Net Budget
Executive Support	8	1,027,200
Strategic Financial Management	10	833,100
Policy and Strategic Planning	6	457,700
Regional Support	13	999,900
Municipal Finance	9	683,500
Municipal Support	-	39,093,900
Local Governance and Planning	11	987,100
Canada Community-Building Fund	3	85,243,300

**Totals:** **60**    **129,325,700**

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs has 74 positions (58 permanent, 14 temporary, and 2 contractual), currently with 60 employees on staff located in three offices throughout the province.

Region	Positions
Eastern	66
Central	4
Western	4

### Primary Clients

The primary clients of the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs include:

- Local governments that consist of approximately 270 municipalities, 172 local service districts and five Inuit Community Governments; and

Major stakeholders include:

- Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Professional Municipal Administrators of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Combined Councils of Labrador;
- Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Professional Planners;
- Provincial and Territorial Officials' Committee on Local Governance; and
- The general public.

### Vision

The vision of the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is to strengthen and support sustainable communities which are pro-active in working collaboratively together in the creation of greater regional cooperation to provide shared services.

## **Strategic Issues**

### **Issue 1 - Supporting Local Governments through Enhanced Processes and Legislation**

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is committed to exploring solutions that will meet the needs of current and future local governments and residents. This includes providing local governments with the necessary tools to explore new and innovative ways for municipal service delivery to residents, supporting community capacity building and encouraging economic activity.

As a priority, the Department will advance and implement changes to municipal legislation to ensure an effective and modern framework for municipal governance. This work will also support the Department's ongoing commitment to promote greater regional collaboration with respect to service sharing among communities.

The Department will encourage, incentivize and where possible facilitate this collaboration while recognizing the autonomy of local communities to be the drivers for improving and delivering services at the local level.

The Department must also look within its internal operations to determine how service delivery and internal processes may be improved. Greater use of technology can lead to improved access to services and quality of service delivery for the Department's clients.

#### **GOAL:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have enhanced processes and municipal legislation to support stronger local governance.

**Indicators:**

- Implemented new enabling municipal legislation to provide all municipalities with increased flexibility and autonomy, while also ensuring appropriate levels of accountability.
- Updated the **Municipal Elections Act** to ensure municipalities have modern election legislation to ensure strong governance.
- Implemented processes to modernize operations and deliver services more efficiently.

**Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have modernized municipal legislation and improved service delivery.

**Indicators:**

- Introduced new modern, enabling municipal legislation to replace the existing **Municipalities Act, 1999** to provide municipalities with increased flexibility and autonomy.
- Commenced Review of the **Municipal Elections Act**.
- Drafted new enabling legislation for the cities of Corner Brook and Mount Pearl to replace the existing **City of Corner Brook Act** and the **City of Mount Pearl Act**.
- Developed online training for councillors and staff.
- Streamlined the appeal process by the introduction of Appeal Board adjudicators to replace the four existing Boards.

**Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have introduced new, modern municipal legislation to replace the existing **City of Corner Brook Act, City of Mount Pearl Act, and City of St. John's Act**; and, introduced amendments to the **Municipal Elections Act**.

**Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have enacted modern municipal legislation for all municipalities; and, updated the **Municipal Elections Act** as well as supported the 2026 municipal elections.

**Issue 2 – Community Collaboration and Service Sharing**

The Department is focusing on expanding regional services, working with local governments to identify service and administrative gaps, and working with communities to encourage service sharing and community collaboration. To ensure successful outcomes, communities will be encouraged to initiate inter-community relationship building, which can lead to increased community cooperation and collaboration. The Department will encourage, incentivize and where possible facilitate community cooperation and collaboration.

**Goal:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have supported improved community collaboration and shared services across municipalities and regions.

**Indicators:**

- Allocated \$500,000 for initiatives by communities that support regional services and enhanced community cooperation that help address service gaps and build capacity through a collaborative, shared services approach.
- Completed a community sustainability assessment tool for all municipalities and local service districts to identify service gaps.
- Implemented an inter-departmental committee to determine meaningful ways to incentivize community collaboration and service sharing.

**Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have worked with municipalities and local service districts to complete community sustainability self-assessments to identify service and capacity gaps; and, worked with communities to address those gaps through collaboration and service sharing.

**Indicators:**

- Developed program delivery options for the \$500,000 allocated for regional services and enhanced community cooperation for initiatives that help address service gaps and build capacity through a collaborative, shared services approach.
- Developed and distributed a community sustainability self-assessment tool for municipalities and local service districts.

**Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have further identified service and capacity gaps and begun addressing gaps in partnership with communities.

**Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have implemented recommendations from the interdepartmental review committee incentivizing community collaboration and service sharing through existing Government programs and services.



### **Issue 3 – Regional Service Delivery**

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will undertake a review of the **Regional Service Boards Act, 2012** and Regional Service Board operations to identify potential additional regional services that could be provided to local governments and residents.

#### **Goal:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have reviewed the **Regional Services Boards Act, 2012**, including stakeholder and public consultations, to determine if there is a renewed role for the boards to improve access to services and service delivery.

#### **Indicators:**

- Updated the **Regional Service Boards Act, 2012** to improve service sharing and enhance community sustainability.
- Implemented the necessary changes to Regional Service Boards to ensure effective delivery of enhanced services throughout the Province.

#### **Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have initiated a review of the **Regional Service Boards Act, 2012** and determined potential additional regional services.

#### **Indicators:**

- Initiated a review of the Regional Service Board Act.
- Conducted consultation with key stakeholders including the five active Regional Service Boards.

**Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have completed a review of the **Regional Service Boards Act, 2012** and determined potential additional regional services and governance structures.

**Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will have implemented recommendations from the review of the **Regional Service Boards Act, 2012**.

## Annex A

Amendments to the **Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000**, which will come into effect June 1, 2023, will result in the disestablishment of the four current Regional Appeal Boards. The Amendments will also allow the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs to appoint a roster of up to 20 adjudicators. The adjudicators will take over the role of the former Boards in hearing appeals related to land use planning decisions, such as issuing or refusing permits and orders issued by municipalities or in some cases the Department of Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador. Unlike the Boards, there is no Chairperson or Chief adjudicator responsible for the adjudicators. Funding for the adjudicators is completely within the Department's budget and administrative support is provided by Departmental employee(s).

The Department will address matters and statistics related to the adjudicators as part of the Department's Annual Reports. This would include matter such as, the number of hearings per fiscal year, broken down by region; the number of virtual hearings; the number of postponements; and the number of decisions rendered in a timely manner (e.g. within a specified period, such as 21 days).

