

Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Municipal and
Community Affairs





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, I am pleased to present the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' strategic plan for April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029. As a category one entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, this plan sets out how we will advance government priorities over the next three years in line with my ministerial mandate.

The 2026–2029 Strategic Plan supports our Department's mandate, government priorities, available resources, and the commitments in **For All of Us**. Consistent with the Premier's mandate letter, it supports Government's 2025 election commitments by strengthening local governments and communities, reducing administrative barriers, supporting local decision-making, and encouraging regional approaches to development and service delivery. This plan will guide our work and help us respond to the diverse needs of the sector around the province.

Local governments face growing challenges in governance, service delivery, infrastructure, demographic change, and climate impacts. This plan addresses three key strategic issues through goals focused on modern legislation, meaningful engagement, strong local governance, and better departmental service.

Through this plan, the Department commits to working with cities, towns, local service districts, Inuit Community Governments, partners, and residents to support effective leadership, build capacity, and strengthen adaptability.

As Minister, I am accountable for preparing this plan and achieving its objectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Tibbs', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Chris Tibbs
Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs

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Departmental Overview

Introduction

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is a category one government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** that advances the economic, social, and environmental well-being of communities by working with local governments and communities to support strong governance, capacity, and service delivery.

The Department has two branches:

- Municipal and Community Support
- Community Engagement

The Department supports government priorities by:

- supporting local governments to enhance governance, economic growth, long-term sustainability, and community viability;
- working with partners across sectors to improve services and outcomes for residents; and
- leading and supporting public engagement across government so residents, communities, and partners can help shape policies and programs.

For more information on the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, please visit the Department's website at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/mca/>.

Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is to advance the economic, social, and environmental well-being of communities. This is done by engaging, collaborating, and supporting local governments and partners to strengthen governance, build local capacity and resilience, and support the delivery of reliable and sustainable services.

Vision

The vision of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, led by effective, responsive, and adequately resourced local governments, and grounded in engagement and regional collaboration.

Lines of Business

Municipal and Community Support Branch

- **Local Governance and Land Use Planning**

This division consists of two specialized units: (1) the Local Governance unit is responsible for administering and interpreting 26 municipal and provincial statutes and related regulations (see page 8), municipal election oversight, municipal training, community relocations, and community restructuring. (2) The Land Use Planning unit administers the **Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000**, reviews and registers municipal planning documents, and develops land use plans (e.g., provincial road zoning plans, regional plans, protected area plans, and local area plans). This unit also provides advice on land use/municipal planning and development regulation matters and supports the appeal process related to municipal and Government Services development and enforcement decisions.

- **Municipal Finance**

This division provides financial assistance and guidance to local governments on funding programs, borrowing, debt servicing, and financial compliance. It administers the following programs:

- Special Assistance Grants for municipal emergencies and financial difficulties,
- Municipal Operating Grants to help small and medium-sized towns with operating costs, service delivery, and administration,
- The Community Enhancement Employment Program, which supports projects in tourism, economic development, community infrastructure, and

services while providing skills and employment opportunities for workers, and

- The *Build Communities Strong Fund - Community Stream*, a federal program providing stable, annual infrastructure funding to communities.
- **Municipal Support**

This division provides day-to-day front-line support to cities, towns, and local service districts. It helps local governments with administrative, financial, and legislative matters so they can meet their legal and operational responsibilities. Regional offices in St. John's, Gander, and Corner Brook serve as a main point of contact with communities throughout the province.
- **Policy and Strategic Planning**

This division coordinates and supports the Department's policy and planning work. It supports policy development, legislative, accountability and transparency requirements, strategic planning, annual reporting, and program evaluation.
- **Strategic Financial Management**

This shared services division provides financial and operational management support to the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, three additional government departments, and one agency. It is the primary point of contact for all Agencies, Boards, and Commissions' financial reporting through these departments. It also works closely with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board Secretariat on budgeting, reporting, and monitoring.

Community Engagement Branch

This branch leads public engagement and consultation efforts for core departments within the Provincial Government, government entities, agencies, boards and commissions and other key partners in the province. It supports residents, communities, and local governments by creating structured opportunities to interact and share views,

build confidence and capacity, and inform policy and program development across governments.

Staff and Budget

The Department’s gross expenditure budget for 2026-2027 is \$191,078,600, with expected revenues of \$33,518,200, for a net expenditure of \$157,560,400.

The Department has 80 positions, with 71 active employees as of April 1, 2026, located in seven communities across the province (i.e., St. John’s, Gander, Corner Brook, Placentia, Burin, New-Wes-Valley, and St. Anthony).

Division or Branch	# of Employees	Budget
Minister’s Office	3	\$258,200
Executive Support	6	\$732,500
Administrative Support	n/a	\$111,800
Strategic Financial Management	10	\$880,100
Policy and Strategic Planning	6	\$565,300
Regional Support	14	\$1,017,600
Municipal Finance		
Internal Budget	8	\$645,600
Program Funds	n/a	\$42,478,700
Local Governance and Planning	11	\$1,090,000
<i>Build Communities Strong Fund - Community Stream</i>	4	\$108,815,700

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Community Engagement	9	\$964,900
Total	71	\$157,560,400

Primary Clients and Partners

The primary clients of the Department include:

- Local governments consisting of three cities, 266 towns, 172 local service districts, and five Inuit Community Governments,
- Residents within these communities, and
- Other government departments.

Key partners also include:

- Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador,
- Professional Municipal Administrators of Newfoundland and Labrador,
- Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Professional Planners, and
- Residents of unincorporated areas.

Reporting Entities

Under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, government entities are also required to prepare plans and annual reports. In the case of the Department, this refers to the [Municipal Assessment Agency](#).

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

City of St. John's Municipal Taxation Act

Coat of Arms Act

Commemoration Day Act

Crown Corporations Local Taxation Act

Evacuated Communities Act, 2016

Floral Emblem Act

Municipal Conduct Act

Mineral Emblem Act

Municipal Affairs Act

Municipal Authorities Amendment Act, 1991

Municipal Elections 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

Towns and Local Service Districts Act

Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000

Strategic Issues

Issue 1 – Strong Local Governance

Local governments around the province continue to play a vital role in serving their communities, often while navigating increasing demands on their governance responsibilities. Many are working hard to address challenges such as attracting candidates for municipal councils and local service district committees, recruiting qualified staff, meeting legislative and reporting requirements, managing conduct issues involving elected municipal officials and employees, delivering services, and responding to evolving expectations from residents.

These pressures are further shaped by growing service delivery demands, more complex regulatory requirements, demographic changes, and the impacts of climate and emergency events - often with limited financial, administrative, and human resources capacity.

With sustained support and practical tools, local governments will be better positioned to strengthen governance capacity, support municipal officials, and continue delivering services while planning for future needs.

In recognition of these realities, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will continue to work alongside local governments to help them respond effectively and meet the needs of their residents. This includes modernizing municipal legislation and policies, providing practical supports that encourage respectful governance practices, enhancing training and capacity-building, and continuing engagement with local governments to inform future legislative, policy, and program improvements.

Goal:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have strengthened support for local governments to fulfill their governance responsibilities.

Goal Indicators:

- Legislation and policies reviewed, updated, or initiated to promote strong local governance;
- Training offerings reviewed and updated to improve accessibility, delivery, and alignment with local government needs; and
- Departmental guidance and support for ethical conduct and respectful governance practices assessed and enhanced.

Objective 2026-2027:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have identified initiatives that strengthen departmental support for local governments to fulfill their governance responsibilities.

Indicators:

- Engagement activities completed to inform legislative, policy, or program changes;
- Reviews initiated to identify needed updates to municipal legislation and policies; and
- Internal assessments completed to align departmental supports, including training and municipal conduct support, with local government needs.

Objective 2027-2028:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have advanced initiatives in priority areas to address gaps in supports for local governments.

Objective 2028-2029:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have finalized and evaluated priority improvements to strengthen support for local governments.

Issue 2 – Regional Collaboration Opportunities

Local governments around the province are working to address important issues such as service delivery, infrastructure, land use planning, emergency preparedness, and economic development. Many of these priorities extend beyond municipal boundaries, creating opportunities for communities facing similar issues to learn from one another and work together, even where capacity, resources, and access to services may differ.

Stronger regional collaboration among local governments within and across regions can improve efficiency, make better use of limited resources and capacity, and support more sustainable service delivery. While local priorities, geography, and administrative capacity can shape how collaboration develops in practice, there is a growing opportunity to build on existing efforts and better understand where collaborative approaches are already making a difference.

Developing a clearer understanding of current practices and barriers can help uncover opportunities to strengthen regional collaboration, ease pressure on local governments, and better support long-term regional needs.

In this context, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is committed to building a stronger understanding of existing efforts and identifying practical approaches to support greater regional collaboration among local governments over time. This includes targeted community engagement, improved data collection and analysis, and consideration of policy and legislative updates that can help enable long-term success.

Goal:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have implemented initiatives to strengthen regional collaboration among local governments.

Goal Indicators:

- Legislation and policies related to regional collaboration reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement and updated, as necessary;
- Engagement with partners and local governments completed to identify shared regional priorities and collaboration approaches;
- Information gathered and analyzed on existing regional or inter-municipal collaboration initiatives, barriers, and opportunities; and
- Initiatives to support regional collaboration implemented.

Objective 2026-2027:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have completed focused engagement and information gathering to identify regional priorities, existing collaboration efforts, barriers, and opportunities.

Indicators:

- Engagement with local governments and relevant partners completed to identify shared priorities, existing collaboration efforts, barriers, and opportunities;
- Engagement findings documented and analyzed to inform potential legislative or policy support options; and
- Review of legislation and policies related to regional collaboration initiated to identify opportunities for improvements.

Objective 2027-2028:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have analyzed engagement findings and identified options to support regional collaboration.

Objective 2028-2029:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have advanced and implemented practical regional collaboration approaches based on engagement and analysis.

Issue 3: Service Delivery and Process Enhancement

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs delivers a wide range of programs and supports to local governments and communities. As needs and expectations continue to evolve, there is a valuable opportunity to ensure services, funding programs, information, and internal processes remain clear, accessible, and responsive. This includes enhancing how complex programs and funding are managed, improving access to reliable information, and strengthening coordination across government.

Strengthening service delivery will help local governments and communities access supports more easily, navigate program requirements with greater confidence, streamline processes, and reduce duplication. This includes improving selected funding program design and predictability, using technology to enhance access to information and services, strengthening data collection and use, and supporting better community service coordination across government.

Goal:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have improved the efficiency and accessibility of selected departmental supports and services for local governments.

Goal Indicators:

- Selected programs and processes reviewed and updated to support better alignment with local government needs and improve access, efficiency, and consistency;

- Data collection and information-sharing approaches strengthened to support evidence-informed decisions;
- Selected digital tools implemented to improve access to departmental services and information; and
- Engagement with relevant departments completed to identify opportunities to improve coordination of support and services to local governments.

Objective 2026-2027:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have reviewed selected service delivery processes, funding programs, and inter-departmental coordination to identify opportunities for improvement.

Indicators:

- Review of the Special Assistance Grant Program completed to improve service delivery;
- Review of the Municipal Information Management System completed to improve data collection and use;
- Review of land use planning processes and supports completed to improve consistency and access; and
- Engagement with relevant departments completed to inform improved inter-departmental coordination of support and services to local governments.

Objective 2027-2028:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have implemented priority improvements to service delivery processes, funding programs, and inter-departmental coordination.

Objective 2028-2029:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have finalized and evaluated selected service delivery improvements to increase access, consistency, and efficiency for local governments.

