

2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT



The Office of the Executive Council





MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

As Premier and Minister for the Office of the Executive Council, I am pleased to present the annual performance report for the Office of the Executive Council for the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. This report highlights the Office's successes for the first year in meeting those priorities outlined in the 2020-23 Activity Plan.

2020-21 has been a challenging time for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as we faced challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This terrible disease has impacted virtually every aspect of our lives including healthcare services, the education system, our workplaces and the economy. I am proud to say that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have responded to this pandemic with resilience and determination.

Despite COVID-19, the Office of the Executive Council has made considerable progress in achieving objectives set out in the 2020-23 Activity Plan. That is a testament to the outstanding public service employees, who have continued to work effectively and efficiently during this time of flux. I would like to sincerely thank all members of the public service for their efforts in ensuring the people of Newfoundland and Labrador continued to avail of vital programs and services in 2020-21. You are second to none.

This report was prepared under my direction in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and as President of Executive Council, I am accountable for the results reported.

Hon. Andrew Furey
Premier

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Departmental Overview

As the Premier's department, the Office of the Executive Council has a central role in supporting the general operations of government, including the functioning of Cabinet and the public service. The Office of the Executive Council provides leadership, coordination, advice, and support to the Premier, Cabinet and across the public service.

For planning and reporting purposes under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, the Office of the Executive Council comprises:

- The Office of the Clerk of the Executive Council, including Cabinet Secretariat; and the Provincial Protocol Office
- The Communications and Public Engagement Branch, including the Public Engagement and Planning Division;
- The Lieutenant Governor's Establishment; and
- The Financial Administration Division.

For the reporting period in question, the Office of the Executive Council also comprised:

- The Treasury Board Secretariat;
- The Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat (IGAS);
- The Labrador Affairs Secretariat (LAS);
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Bravery Award Review Panel;
- The Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation (OJAR); and
- The Office for the Status of Women (OSW).

However, under the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, these offices and secretariats have prepared separate multiyear plans and reports on their annual progress.

Staff and Budget

The Office of the Executive Council had a staff complement of 72 employees as of March 31, 2021 and had expenditures approximately totaling \$13.85 million for the year. Details are as follows:

Division	# of Employees	Expenditures
Office of the Clerk of the Executive Council, including Cabinet Secretariat and the Provincial Protocol Office	22	\$5,950,406
Lieutenant Governor's Establishment	11	\$757,026
Communications and Public Engagement Branch	30	\$6,447,231
Financial Administration Division	9	\$695,340
Total	72	\$ 13,850,003

Further information about the Office of the Executive Council, including details on its mandate and lines of business, can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/publications/>.

Highlights and Partnerships

Office of the Clerk of the Executive Council, including Cabinet Secretariat

The Office of the Clerk of the Executive Council, including Cabinet Secretariat, provides support to the Premier, Cabinet, and committees of Cabinet. In fiscal year 2020-21, these offices analyzed, processed, and provided 251 cabinet submissions and other documents for consideration by Cabinet and recorded 341 Minutes of Council documenting the decisions taken by Cabinet or by the Premier. Further to the direction provided in some of those Minutes of Council, these offices drafted 257 Orders in Council for approval by the Lieutenant Governor.

The offices provided operational and administrative support to a combined total of 44 meetings of the Economic Policy Committee and Social Policy Committee of Cabinet, including the provision of impartial advice and analysis related to the subject matter of those committee meetings. In addition to providing support to these meetings, the offices provided similar support to meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure, the Cabinet Committee on the Implementation of the Muskrat Falls Inquiry Report, and the Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee.

In addition, these offices analyzed and processed and provided to the Premier's Office, 180 briefing notes prepared by various provincial government departments and agencies on significant matters of government operations or public policy or in relation to topical issues of public interest.

Communications and Public Engagement Branch

Public Engagement

Public Engagement serves to involve the public in the development and improvement of public policy. The Office of the Executive Council understands that responsive actions and better outcomes are achieved when the views of Indigenous groups, stakeholders, communities, organizations and the broader general public are taken into account during the decision making process.

In March 2020, the Public Engagement and Planning Division was asked to support the Department of Health and Community Services and the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre in response to public inquiries related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This COVID-19 Response Centre project was launched March 13, 2020 and was the most significant engagement project in 2020-21.

In 2020-21, the Public Engagement and Planning Division quickly adapted and implemented a number of virtual methods of engagement and consultation in order to adhere to public health restrictions during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

Therefore most engagement projects took place as virtual sessions or online questionnaires. As of March 31, 2021, the engageNL online platform had 15,668 registered users. In 2020-2021, the Public Engagement unit of the Public Engagement and Planning Division supported 40 distinct engagement and consultation projects of varying size and scope with a total of 35,514 participants, including: 524 participants who attended 23 virtual and 4 in-person engagement sessions; 1,686 responses to surveys and questionnaires through the PEP's online platform, engageNL and; 33,304 responses through the COVID-19 Response Centre.

The projects with the highest participant rates (in descending order) for 2020-21 were the: COVID-19 Response Centre; A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan (online questionnaire); Multi-year Roads Plan (online questionnaire); Tourist Establishments (online questionnaire) and; Western Health – Virtual Care (virtual sessions).

Across projects, the type of support included: the provision of expert advice on the appropriate engagement approach in order to achieve intended objectives; comprehensive design and delivery; support and facilitation of in-person/virtual sessions; development of online project landing pages and questionnaires; and the development of project completion transmittal reports. Some of the main support provided as part of the COVID-19 Response Centre included responding to inquiries, media monitoring, and tracking and reporting of inquiries and responses.

Community Sector

The Policy, Planning and Coordination unit of the Public Engagement and Planning Division continued with its annual distribution of grant funding to youth organizations and community sector groups in 2020-21. Grants to Youth Organizations provide project funding which is application based for youth engagement initiatives and activities. In 2020-21, 38 organizations received funding through the program.

The funding of community sector groups also continued during the reporting period, along with funding support to the Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSCNL). The community sector faced many challenges in program and service delivery as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, with the imposed public health restrictions many organizations had to pivot to find innovative ways to provide services to their clients.

The Office of the Executive Council supported the initiatives of the CSCNL during this difficult time with continued funding support, access to training modules for Pandemic Recovery Readiness and an extension of grants for Volunteer Week activities which moved to a virtual online model due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. In addition the Office of the Executive Council collaborated with CSCNL to further progress actions from the 2018 Community Sector Work Plan that highlights and strengthens the contributions of the voluntary/non-profit sector to the province's economy.

Communications

The Communications and Public Engagement Branch oversees the communications activities of government and provides strategic counsel to the Premier, Cabinet and departments. The branch's roles include: developing communications policies and procedures; advising on communications planning; managing news release distribution services; providing video and photography support to the Premier and Cabinet; overseeing government's web content standards; providing multimedia communications support; and overseeing government's social media presence.

Social Media

In 2019-20, the Communications and Public Engagement Branch expanded government's social media presence to Facebook and Instagram in an effort to more effectively reach residents, businesses, municipalities and community organizations locally and globally. Since then, the social media accounts have expanded considerably in terms of reach, engagement and followers. The provincial government's Facebook account has received more than 58,600 total likes (35,065 in 2019-20) and now has more than 121,700 total followers (72,657 in 2019-20). The Instagram account has more than 8,300 followers (6,082 in 2019-20) and the Twitter account now has more than 47,200 followers (36,900 in 2019-20). The official government YouTube channel has over 8,000 subscribers, houses over 600 videos, and has streamed more than 175 live events and news conferences with over 2.5 million views.

To ensure the effective use of these new platforms, professional development sessions are held to train communications professionals on matters such as live-streaming events and incorporating social media into communications plans.

Videography

Video production is an effective tool to increase awareness, sustain messaging beyond announcements and educate residents of government's initiatives and activities. In 2020-21 the Communications and Public Engagement Branch recognized the ever-changing environment of communications, and enhanced the use of video to modernize how government connects, engages and communicates with residents of the province. The Communications and Public Engagement Branch offers in-house supports to film and produce video messages. As well professional development sessions are specifically designed for video production (camera, editing, lighting, and audio) to provide enhanced training to departmental communications staff. Media training seminars were also coordinated and delivered to Ministers and departmental senior executive.

Marketing and Brand Management

The Marketing and Brand Management Division is government's core creative services group and also partners with agencies, boards and commissions of government, offering brand guidance and marketing consultation services. The division allows for continued maintenance and enhancement of a unified visual identity across government, while proactively leveraging cross-department synergies. It also manages the provincial brand overall with resident stakeholders and government's Live/Work/Invest website (www.findnewfoundlandlabrador.com), helping build a strong brand for the province in international markets.

Lieutenant Governor's Establishment

Ceremonies and Events

The various levels of activities undertaken by the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Judy May Foote through 2020-21 are divided into three categories, along with speeches delivered at many events. Constitutional duties consist of the Speech from the Throne, meetings with the Premier and Executive Council officials, signing Orders in Council and statutory and non-statutory instruments. In-house events consist of investitures, performances, presentations, meetings, ceremonies and receptions held at Government House and are presided over by the Lieutenant Governor. External events include those that are presided over by the Lieutenant Governor, which may or may not be organized and arranged by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and are held at an outside venue including events such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards presentation, the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers or extraordinary investitures into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

During the reporting period, the Lieutenant Governor represented The Crown by granting Royal Assent to 20 Bills, delivering the Speech from the Throne and signed over 257 Orders in Council as well as presiding over four swearing in ceremonies of Members of the House of Assembly and Cabinet.

The Lieutenant Governor is the Honorary Patron of 56 volunteer and philanthropic organizations and has attended and supported numerous community and religious organizations throughout this past year, despite the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which ranged from lighting a menorah at the start of Hanukkah, marking the 100th anniversary of NONIA in the province and hosting international student groups at Government House. Additionally the Lieutenant Governor supports military and police veterans by attending and laying wreaths at remembrance ceremonies throughout the province. During the reporting period, the Lieutenant Governor attended five award ceremonies and presented 25 awards.

The Lieutenant Governor has additionally hosted visits of Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Consuls General.

Provincial Protocol Office

In January 2017, the Provincial Protocol Office was co-located with the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment and reports to the Office of the Executive Council through Cabinet Secretariat. The Office is physically located in Government House.

In 2020-2021 the Provincial Protocol Office coordinated a number of diplomatic and consular visits, including visits from:

Mr. Johann Schitterer, Consul General of France
Mr. Kevin Skillin, Consul General of the United States of America

A number of in-person diplomatic visits, which were planned, but cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic were instead rescheduled for virtual meetings:

Her Excellency Susan le Jeune D'Algeershecque, Ambassador of the United Kingdom (Virtual)
His Excellency CONG Peiwu, Ambassador of China (Virtual)
Her Excellency Hala Abou Hassira, Ambassador of Palestine (Virtual)
His Excellency Ajay Biaria, High Commissioner of India (Virtual)
His Excellency, Karlis Eihenbaums, Ambassador of Latvia (Cancelled)
Her Excellency, Salome Meyer, Ambassador of Switzerland (Cancelled)

Further activities and responsibilities of the Provincial Protocol Office during the period include the coordination of the call for nominations for the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador and related administration; the administration of applications for the Newfoundland Volunteer War Service Medals; and the administration of nominations for the Newfoundland and Labrador Award for Bravery.

Report on Performance

Issue One – Providing Support to Cabinet and Committees of Cabinet

One of the primary roles of the Office of the Executive Council is to support the decision-making processes of the executive branch of government by providing nonpartisan advice and support to Cabinet and committees of Cabinet. Cabinet is the highest decision-making body in the province and meets regularly to consider policy, program, regulatory, and financial issues as prepared by departments and advanced by ministers of the Crown. The Office of the Executive Council plays a critical role in supporting the Cabinet process, ensuring the effective operation of Cabinet and its committees, liaising with departments and agencies to ensure that necessary actions are taken further to the direction of Cabinet provided in Minutes of Council, and facilitating the coordination of initiatives that involve all or multiple departments and agencies. The indicators identified for each objective will be reported in succession year over year as listed below.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the operations of Cabinet and committees of Cabinet.

Issue 1 – Providing Support to Cabinet and Committees of Cabinet	
Indicators	Actual
Number of Cabinet meetings held	47
Number of Cabinet committee meetings held	26
Number of Minutes of Council issued	341
Number of Orders in Council issued	257

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the operations of Cabinet and committees of Cabinet.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the operations of Cabinet and committees of Cabinet.

Issue Two – Providing Support to the Premier

The Office of the Executive Council is the branch of the provincial government that provides direct, impartial support to the Premier’s role in setting overall government policy, coordinating initiatives brought forward by ministers, and developing responses to government-level issues. The Office of the Executive Council provides briefings to the Premier on matters that will be considered by Cabinet, provides briefing notes to the Premier submitted by departments and agencies on the emergence or status of major issues or those that are likely to attract considerable public attention, maintains records, and meets regularly with the Premier and senior staff to ensure that appropriate responses are developed for government-wide issues and those that are a priority for the Premier. The indicators identified for each objective will be reported in succession year over year as listed below.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Premier as head of the executive branch of government.

Issue 2 – Providing Support to the Premier	
Indicators	Actual
Number of briefing notes provided to the Premier’s Office.	180

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Premier as head of the executive branch of government.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Premier as head of the executive branch of government.

Issue Three – Providing Support to the Clerk of the Executive Council as Head of the Public Service

The Clerk of the Executive Council is the most senior government official in the public service and is responsible to the Premier for the overall effectiveness of the public service. In this role, the Clerk of the Executive Council oversees recruitment and training for senior executives; communicates regularly with deputy ministers through meetings to share information and discuss matters that affect the public service and residents of the province; ensures that business continuity planning for government as a whole is in place to provide for the continued delivery of government programs and services during times of disruption; oversees the annual Public Service Award of Excellence to recognize leadership and excellence in the public service; and works with

the Protocol Office and the Lieutenant Governor’s establishment respecting various ceremonial events, including the investiture of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Awards for Bravery, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer War Service Medal. The indicators identified for each objective will be reported in succession year over year as listed below.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Clerk of the Executive Council as head of the public service.

Issue 3 – Providing Support to the Clerk of the Executive Council as Head of the Public Service	
Indicators	Actual
Number of executive development training sessions offered and number of executive participating in those sessions.	Eight sessions were held with a total of 219 participants.
Number of deputy minister group meetings held.	55
Number of inductees to the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.	A meeting of the selection committee of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador was deferred until June 2021 and the investiture of recipients was deferred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nine recipients were identified for investiture at a later date.
Number of Public Service Awards of Excellence bestowed.	The Public Service Awards of Excellence were postponed during 2020-21 due to the public health restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognition for excellence in 2020-21 will occur at the awards ceremony in the following fiscal year.
Number of residents of Newfoundland and Labrador awarded with a Newfoundland and Labrador Award for Bravery.	The Newfoundland and Labrador Award for Bravery was postponed during 2020-21 due to the public health restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. No selection committee meeting or investiture was held in the reporting period.
Number of recipients of the Volunteer War Service Medal.	5

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Clerk of the Executive Council as head of the public service.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Clerk of the Executive Council as head of the public service.

Issue Four – Provision of Government-Wide Communications Functions

The Communications and Public Engagement Branch is responsible for managing the communications and public engagement functions of the provincial government. The branch coordinates communications and consultation activities of all government communications staff and of all departments; provides long-term planning to achieve government’s communications goals; provides media monitoring; provides advice to navigate issues as they arise; and, advances practices of sound public engagement, strategic planning, and annual reporting. The indicators identified for each objective will be reported in succession year over year as listed below.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives to ensure effective communication from the provincial government and effective public engagement with residents of the province.

Issue 4 – Provision of Government-Wide Communications Functions	
Indicators	Actual
Number of Communications Plans reviewed.	235
Number of news releases distributed.	1,168
Number of news conferences held.	218
Number of public engagements held.	40

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives to ensure effective communication from the provincial government and effective public engagement with residents of the province.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives to ensure effective communication from the provincial government and effective public engagement with residents of the province.

Opportunities and Challenges

The continued challenges posed by the ongoing global health pandemic have created an opportunity for the Office of the Executive Council to evolve in responding to the changing needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As in 2019-20, the Office of the Executive Council has continued to adapt and be flexible in response to the continued COVID-19 global pandemic which dominated global attention in 2020-21. The province continues to experience significant economic and social challenges as we adjust to life with COVID-19. Meanwhile, other changes are the result of changing market conditions across the world.

The Office of the Executive Council has found a way to move forward in spite of the continued challenges experienced as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This test of routine practices has provided opportunity to examine efforts in the face of adversity and the fiscal challenges facing Newfoundland and Labrador. The critical role of central planning and coordination through the Office of the Executive Council is vital to the delivery of high-quality programs and services as the evolution of service delivery continues to grow and expand in this new reality.

Financial Statements

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended 31 March 2021 (unaudited) and Estimates 2021.

Please note there is a discrepancy for the Communications and Public Engagement Branch as listed below due to the restatement of grants and some salaries as of April 1, 2021 to the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD).

Division	Actual	Revised	Original
Cabinet Secretariat	\$5,950,406	\$5,950,300	\$2,197,900
Lieutenant Governor's Establishment	\$757,026	\$757,000	\$765,300
Communications and Public Engagement Branch	\$6,447,231*	\$3,067,000*	\$3,583,600*
Financial Administration Division	\$695,340	\$713,400	\$744,300
Total	\$13,850,003	\$10,487,700	\$7,291,100

*Actuals are from the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended 31 March 2021 (unaudited) and does not reflect the restatement of grants and salaries to CSSD, whereas Revised and Original are from Estimates 2021 and this does reflect the restatement.

