

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

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 2023-24 Annual Report of the Office of the Executive Council. The Office of the Executive Council is a category 3 entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, and this report provides an overview of progress toward the achievement of first-year objectives established in the Office's 2023-2026 Activity Plan.

Fiscal year 2023-24 presented a number of priorities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: housing challenges, inflation and cost-of-living pressures, and ongoing labour shortages, including in the health care sector, to name but a few. In each case, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador responded with measures that were timely, effective, and appropriate. Also in each case, the Office of the Executive Council played a leadership role through the coordination of strategic priorities across departments and support for the decision-making processes that result in the programs and services Newfoundlanders and Labradorians depend on. All government departments and agencies, led by the Office of the Executive Council, have contributed to the achievement of Government's vision for a province that is socially, economically, culturally, and environmentally sustainable.

This report was prepared under my direction, and I am accountable for the results reported herein.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Andrew Furey". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable Dr. Andrew Furey
Premier

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Office of the Executive Council supports the general operations of the Provincial Government, including those of Cabinet and the broader public service, through the provision of leadership, coordination, and advice to the Premier, Cabinet, committees of Cabinet, and departments and agencies.

For planning and reporting purposes under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, the Office of the Executive Council is a category 3 entity and includes the following:

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

There are entities within the Office of the Executive Council that, in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, prepare separate multi-year plans and annual reports. These are Treasury Board Secretariat; the Office of the Chief Information Officer; the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat; the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation; and the Office of Women and Gender Equality. Furthermore, while they fall under the responsibility of the Office of the Executive Council, the Premier's Youth Council, the Newfoundland and Labrador Bravery Award Review Panel, and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council are also independent in terms of planning and reporting.¹ For more information, please consult their respective annual reports.

¹ However, this report identifies some activities related to the latter two entities given the role of Cabinet Secretariat and the Provincial Protocol Office in their achievement. See Issue Three below.

Staff and Budget

The work of the Office of the Executive Council is supported by 84 employees, with an approximate budget of \$9.9 million (Estimates 2023).

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Office of the Clerk of the Executive Council, including Cabinet Secretariat and the Provincial Protocol Office	33	\$2,576,900
Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment	10	\$681,700
Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Office	7	\$2,575,400
Communications and Public Engagement Branch	26	\$3,299,600
Financial Administration Division	8	\$777,500

For more information on the Office of the Executive Council, please see: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/>. More information on the Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment can be found at <https://www.govhouse.nl.ca/>.

Highlights and Partnerships

Office of the Clerk of the Executive Council

Cabinet Secretariat

Cabinet Secretariat provides administrative, logistical, and strategic support, as well as impartial advice, to the Premier and the Cabinet. In fiscal year 2023-24, the Secretariat processed, analyzed, and advanced 358 submissions and other documents for Cabinet's consideration, and recorded Minutes of Council to document the decisions taken. Depending on their nature or the direction provided, some Minutes of Council require that Orders in Council be drafted for the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor. In 2023-24, 269 Orders in Council were prepared.

Cabinet Secretariat is also responsible for providing operational and administrative support to the Economic Policy Committee and the Social Policy Committee of Cabinet, which met 47 times in 2023-24. As part of this work, Cabinet Secretariat provides impartial advice and performs supplementary analysis of the items advanced for the Committees' consideration. The Secretariat also supports the meetings of other Cabinet Committees, which in 2023-24 included the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure, the Cabinet Committee on Seniors, the Cabinet Committee on Routine Matters and Appointments, the Hurricane Fiona Response Committee, and the Cabinet Committee on Cyber Security.

Finally, as part of its role to support the operations of the Office of the Premier, Cabinet Secretariat analyzed, processed, and advanced 65 briefing notes from various departments and agencies on matters related to Government operations, public policy, or any matter of the day.

Provincial Protocol Office

In 2023-24, the Provincial Protocol Office coordinated numerous diplomatic and consular visits and meetings, including:

- His Excellency Patrick Van Gheel, Ambassador, Belgium;
- His Excellency Bořek Lizec, Ambassador, Czech Republic;
- Her Excellency Hanne Fugl Eskjær, Ambassador, Denmark, and the Arctic Business Alliance;
- Dr. Christian Burgsmueller, Deputy Head of Mission for the European Union;
- Mr. Johan Schitterer, Consul General, France;
- Mr. Méline Ricard-Boulieu, Cultural Counsellor, France;
- Her Excellency Sabine Sparwasser, Ambassador, Germany;
- President Guðni Thorlacius Jóhannesson, Iceland, and First Lady Eliza J. Reid;
- His Excellency Jon Elvedal Fredriksen, Ambassador, Norway;
- Nordic Ambassadors' Tour:
 - Her Excellency Hanne Fugl Eskjær, Ambassador, Denmark,
 - His Excellency Roy Kennet Eriksson, Ambassador, Finland,
 - His Excellency Hlynur Guðjónsson, Ambassador, Iceland,
 - His Excellency Jon Elvedal Fredriksen, Ambassador, Norway, and
 - His Excellency Urban Ahlin, Ambassador, Sweden;
- His Excellency Dr. Khalid bin Rashid Al-Mansouri, Ambassador, State of Qatar;
- Mr. Judika Tladi, First Secretary, South Africa;
- Mr. Tendani Munyai, Second Secretary, South Africa;
- Unveiling of Türkiye Monument:
 - Her Excellency Esra Demir, Ambassador, Republic of Türkiye,
 - His Excellency İlhami Aktaş, Governor of Çanakkale, and
 - Mr. İsmail Kaşdemir, President of Gallipoli Historic Site; and
- Her Excellency Yuliya Kovaliv, Ambassador, Ukraine.

Further activities of the Provincial Protocol Office during the reporting period included overseeing or coordinating:

- The 16th investiture into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the subsequent call for nominations for the 17th investiture;
- The issuance of two Volunteer War Service Medals;
- Nominations for the Newfoundland and Labrador Bravery Award;
- The Public Service Award of Excellence;
- Applications for the lighting of the Confederation Building;

- Applications to use the courtesy pole at Confederation Building;
- Half-masting notifications for all Provincial Government buildings;
- Coordination with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for:
 - The creation and procurement of the Premier's Medal for Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation,
 - The repatriation program for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier taking place in July 2024,
 - The 75th Anniversary of Confederation, and
 - The Installation Program of the Caribou Statue from Gallipoli (with the Turkish Embassy);
- Preparation for the first official visit of the Governor General of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, to Newfoundland and Labrador in July 2024; and
- Assistance to the Embassy of Norway for a Norway Constitution Day Event Program being held at The Rooms.

Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment

The 2023-24 reporting period was a transition year for the Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment, which saw the Honourable Judy May Foote conclude her time as Lieutenant-Governor and the Honourable Joan Marie Aylward installed as the 15th Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador on November 14, 2023.

The Lieutenant-Governor is the representative of The King in Newfoundland and Labrador, and this position is non-partisan and apolitical. The viceregal representative has important responsibilities within our system of government: ensuring Newfoundland and Labrador always has a Premier; swearing in the Premier and Cabinet Ministers; summoning, proroguing, and dissolving the House of Assembly; delivering the Speech from the Throne; and giving Royal Assent to bills of the House of Assembly. In 2023-24, the Lieutenant-Governor granted Royal Assent to 31 bills.

Her Honour also presides over multiple events, such as ceremonies, investitures, receptions, and presentations. Most significant of these events are those which mark achievement and recognize people who have demonstrated excellence, valour, bravery, or dedication to service that brings credit to the province and the country. Foremost of

these ceremonies is the annual investiture of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, of which the Lieutenant-Governor is Chancellor.

The installation of a new Lieutenant-Governor requires all volunteer and philanthropic organizations to reapply to the Office of the Lieutenant-Governor for patronage. This process was ongoing following the installation of Her Honour in November 2023, and organizations were in the process of application leading up to the end of the fiscal year. The former Lieutenant-Governor was Honorary Patron of 61 organizations.

Over the course of 2023-24, the Lieutenant-Governor attended a number of community and special events, among them: a visit with Canadian Cancer Society; the Royal Newfoundland Regiment Gallipoli Commemorative Parade; the Church Lads' Brigade Award Ceremony; the Holocaust Memorial Service; the NONIA's 100th Annual General Meeting; Provincial Francophonie Day and Flag Raising Ceremony; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Exemplary Service Medal Ceremony; the Public Service Award of Excellence Ceremony; the CLB Award Ceremony; International Women's Day events; the BMO Winterset Award Ceremony; events celebrating Black History Month; and Sharing Our Cultures 2024 Official Opening Ceremonies.

Additionally, the Lieutenant-Governor supported military and police veterans throughout the year by attending and laying wreaths at remembrance ceremonies across the province. During the reporting period, the Lieutenant-Governor attended 20 award ceremonies and presented 203 awards, including investitures into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Governor General's Exemplary Service Awards to various organizations. The Lieutenant-Governor also hosted seven courtesy visits from various ambassadors, including those of Türkiye, Qatar, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland.

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Office

As the office responsible for overseeing the implementation and coordination of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015**, the ATIPP Office has broad responsibilities in supporting the more than 450 public bodies subject to the Act, including government departments, agencies, boards, commissions, educational bodies, health care bodies, and municipalities. These responsibilities include developing and delivering training; providing leadership and expertise; providing advice and guidance; developing policies, procedures, guides, and educational resources; and reviewing programs and services to ensure privacy protection.

Given the continued increase in the number of requests received by municipalities, the ATIPP Office increased its efforts in 2023-24 to provide tailored training and support to municipalities, including delivering 50 training sessions and fielding more than 600 calls from municipalities. In addition to the performance indicators reported on below (see Issue Five), the ATIPP Office performed five website assessments and responded to over 2,200 enquiries overall.

Communications and Public Engagement Branch

The Communications and Public Engagement Branch leads the Provincial Government's communications, marketing and public engagement activities and provides strategic counsel on communication and consultation issues to the Office of the Premier, Cabinet, departments, and agencies.

Communications

The Branch's communications responsibilities are wide-ranging and include developing communications policies and procedures; advising on communications planning; distributing news releases, media advisories, and public advisories; media monitoring; providing video and photography support; managing marketing activities; providing multimedia support; delivering customized media training for ministers and senior public

service employees; and managing government's social media presence. Moreover, the Branch oversees, coordinates, and supports the communications activities of all communications staff in departments; engages in long-term strategic planning to achieve Government's communications goals; and provides strategic guidance to departments to navigate issues as they arise.

The Branch houses a Marketing and Brand Management Division that offers creative, brand guidance and marketing consultation services. Partnering with departments and agencies, the division supported more than 565 projects in 2023-24, including 15 multi-media awareness campaigns ensuring important messages are received by residents of the province in a timely, effective, and efficient manner.

In terms of digital media, in 2023-24, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Facebook page reached over 5.4 million users, representing a 64.2 per cent increase over the previous reporting period. Recognizing that X (formerly Twitter) remains a powerful social media tool for engaging residents, the Branch invested in X Premium to introduce new "blog-style" posts called X Articles and longer everyday posts, meaning more information can be shared in a single post. These enhancements have contributed to a growth of over 4,500 new followers and over 3.1 million impressions. The Branch also incorporated LinkedIn into its social media content planning, which has allowed for more business, employment, and economy-focused content to be seen by close to 200,000 LinkedIn users. Activities such as live-streaming and recording of announcements and news conferences and monitoring of performance analytics, also continued in 2023-24 to enhance Government's digital presence.

Public Engagement

Public engagement serves to involve the public in the decision-making process. The Public Engagement and Planning Division works with departments, agencies, boards, and commissions to plan, design, implement, and facilitate public engagement and consultation activities which have the potential to inform economic, social, environmental, and cultural policy in the province. In 2023-24, the division supported 21

distinct public engagement projects involving 6,912 participants (including in-person consultations, online questionnaires and sessions hosted by virtual conferencing software). Of the 21 projects, the highest participation rates for 2023-24 were (in descending order): the Teachers Think Tank; Budget 2024; High School Assessments and Evaluations Plan; Pay Equity and Pay Transparency; and Climate Change. As of March 31, 2024, the engageNL online engagement platform had 32,540 registered users, a six per cent increase over the previous period. A wide-ranging list of engagement and consultation projects were hosted on the platform, covering topics such as early learning, wildlife conservation, and critical minerals.

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 non-partisan advice and support to Cabinet and committees of Cabinet. Cabinet 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, and facilitating the coordination of initiatives that involve all or multiple departments and agencies.

Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of the Executive Council will have supported the operations of Cabinet and committees of Cabinet.

Indicator	Result
Number of Cabinet committee meetings held	47
Number of Orders in Council issued	263

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, 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.

Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of the Executive Council will have supported the Premier as head of the executive branch of government.

Indicator	Result
Number of briefing notes provided to the Premier’s Office	65

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 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 group meetings to share information and discuss matters that affect the public service and residents of the province; oversees the annual Public Service Award of Excellence to recognize leadership and excellence in the public service; and works with the Provincial Protocol Office and the Lieutenant-Governor's establishment respecting various ceremonial events, including the bestowal of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Bravery Award, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer War Service Medal.

Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives that support the Clerk of the Executive Council as head of the public service.

Indicator	Result
Number of executive development training sessions offered and number of executives participating in those sessions	Four Assistant Deputy Minister forums: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2023 – 44 participants • December 2023 – 41 participants • January 2024 – 43 participants • March 2024 – 46 participants One Executive onboarding session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2023 – 4 participants
Number of deputy minister group meetings held	30

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Number of inductees to the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador	7
Number of Public Service Awards of Excellence bestowed	18
Number of recipients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Bravery Award	0
Number of recipients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer War Service Medal	2

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 communication goals; provides media monitoring; provides advice to navigate issues as they arise; and advances practices of sound public engagement, strategic planning, and annual reporting.

Objective

By March 31, 2024, 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.

Indicator	Result
Number of communications plans reviewed	179
Number of news releases distributed	1,332
Number of news conferences held	114
Number of public engagements held	21

Issue Five – Provision of Support to Public Bodies on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy

In 2023, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Office transitioned under the Office of the Executive Council. The ATIPP Office oversees the implementation and coordination of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015** by providing guidance and assistance to public bodies that are subject to the Act. This is accomplished through training and providing advice and guidance as well as through the development of policies, procedures, guides, and education resources.

Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of the Executive Council will have undertaken initiatives to support public bodies in discharging their obligations related to access to information requests and protection of privacy.

Indicator	Result
Number of training sessions conducted	98
Number of privacy assessments reviewed	64

Opportunities and Challenges

Fiscal year 2023-24 was one of adjustment, where issues arising from, or exacerbated by, the COVID-19 pandemic took centre stage in the public discourse, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador, but around the world. Notably, the rising cost of living and mental health and addictions issues, combined with other factors, meant that many could no longer find or afford safe, suitable housing. Meanwhile, labour shortages, including in the health care sector, placed additional pressure on systems.

Periods of instability require responses that are swift, carefully weighed and, above all, appropriate to the issue. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador responded with new approaches designed to address immediate needs and lay the groundwork for future responses. In fiscal year 2023-24, Government introduced new plans in the areas of accessibility and poverty reduction, with a focus on addressing childhood poverty, access to suitable employment, and supports for seniors. Furthermore, numerous investments were made in the areas of affordable housing, rapid housing, emergency shelters, and related support services.

In 2023-24, Government introduced a new plan for critical minerals; invested in ocean, health and green technologies; and advanced various energy priorities, including renewable energy initiatives such as wind-hydrogen. Investments were made in business and tourism, notably re-establishment of a direct air link to Europe. And Government continued to welcome immigrants, including from Ukraine, offering them a safe place to live while also increasing the tax base that will be required in a province with an aging population.

As investments are made to increase the revenues that fund social programs, sustainability must remain a key focus. In 2023-24, Government introduced a new Green Transition Fund to position Newfoundland and Labrador as a globally preferred place for green economic investment and assist with the transition to a green economy and meet net-zero goals. Moreover, the Province completed several restructuring

initiatives aimed at ensuring public entities responsible for education, health care, and housing are operating efficiently and effectively, with appropriate levels of oversight and accountability.

In a context of constant global change that is often unpredictable, the commitment of Cabinet Ministers and other elected officials, the expertise and hard work of all public servants, and the strategic leadership of the Office of the Executive Council will be necessary to ensure these efforts achieve their intended impact and translate into a prosperous, secure, and inclusive province for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Financial Information

The expenditure and revenue information below is based on public information found in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2024 (unaudited).

Area	Actual	Revised	Original
Cabinet Secretariat and the Provincial Protocol Office	4,380,204	4,407,900	2,576,900
Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment	723,695	782,700	681,700
Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Office	575,194	2,234,400	2,575,400
Communications and Public Engagement Branch	2,539,819	3,259,600	3,299,600
Financial Administration Division	639,990	747,500	777,500
Total	8,858,902	11,432,100	9,911,100

Premier's Youth Council

The Premier's Youth Council has a mandate to provide advice to the Premier and Provincial Government, bringing a youth perspective to select topics important to youth and Government's agenda. It is a category 3 entity for planning and reporting purposes.

The process to make appointments to the Council is underway and reports will be prepared for future reporting periods in accordance with the requirements of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**.