

**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**ACTIVITY PLAN  
2023-26**

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## Message from the Vice-Chair

I am pleased to present the 2023-26 Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities (the Board) Activity Plan. This plan has been prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and Guidelines for Multi-Year Performance based planning for Category 3 entities.

This planning cycle is expected to be a busy period for the Board and one that is marked by change and transition. Changes to the Board's structure, mandate, responsibilities and/or authority are anticipated as part of Government's ongoing review of the Board and the **Public Utilities Act**. In addition, the Board awaits the appointment of a new Chair and CEO which is likely to bring new approaches and strategic directions for the Board.

The Board's mandate is broad and its work has significant impacts for stakeholders, who include electricity, automobile insurance and petroleum products customers and industry participants. The Board's strategic priorities are focused on improving the efficiency of its regulatory tools, streamlining its regulatory framework and building and maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders and the public.

Effective communication as to the Board's processes and decisions is essential to ensure that stakeholders have a full and fair opportunity to participate and understand and trust the decisions of the Board. At the same time, technical subject matter, complicated issues and lengthy decisions can be difficult to fully explain in a manner that is consistent with evolving expectations. Given this the Board has identified communication as a continued area of focus, building on the work already completed with the implementation of the Board's new website which now provides accessible information in relation to all of its mandates.

This plan outlines the Board's priorities, goals and objectives for the next three fiscal years from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2026. During this period the Board will focus on implementing a new communications strategy and plan which is consistent with its vision and values and in particular which promotes the trust and confidence of stakeholders and the public.

I am accountable for the preparation of this plan, as well as for the achievement of its objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dwanda Newman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dwanda Newman, LL.B.

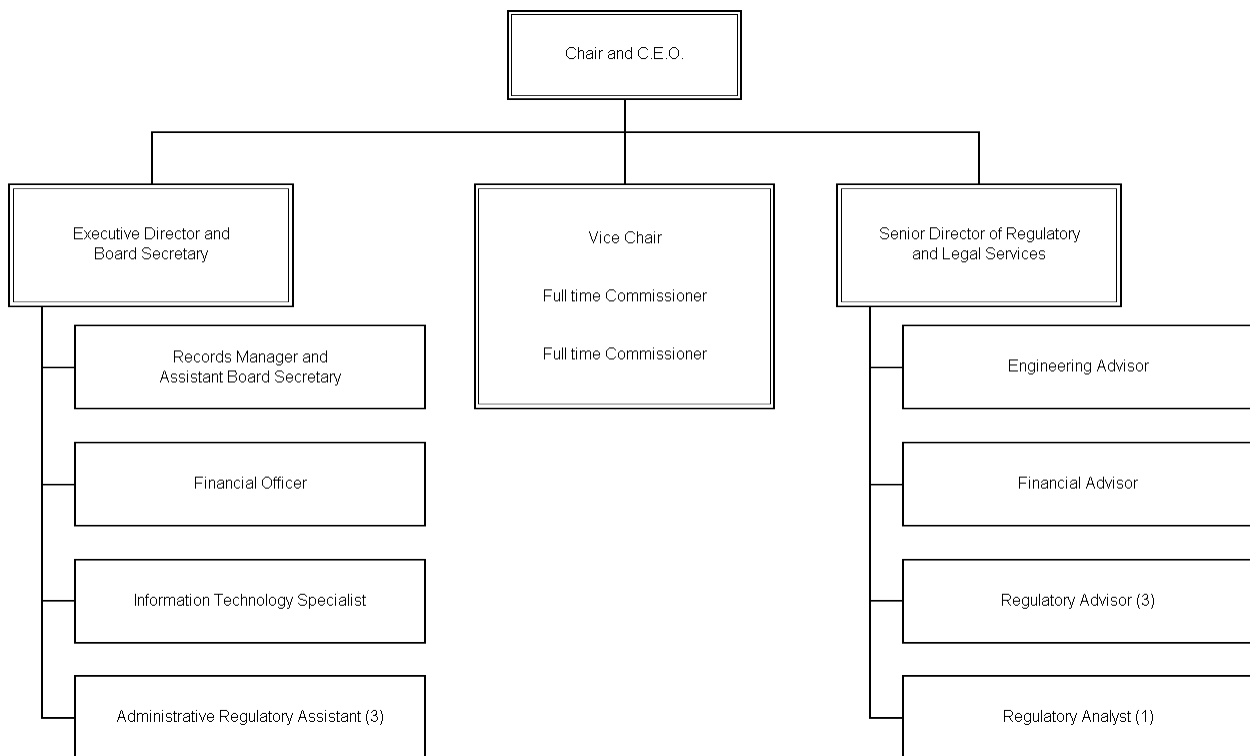
Vice-Chair

## Overview

Created by statute in 1949 the Board is comprised of four full-time commissioners, appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, including the Chair and Chief Executive Officer and the Vice-Chair. The **Public Utilities Act** gives the Chair and Chief Executive Officer the full authority for the overall operation, management and financial administration of the Board and the Vice-Chair the authority to exercise the powers of the Chair in their absence. In addition, to the four commissioners, the Board has 14 permanent full-time professional staff positions located in St. John's.

The Board's functional organizational structure consists of regulatory and legal services and corporate services. Regulatory and Legal Services oversees the Board's regulatory mandate with responsibility for coordination and management of applications, research, investigations, compliance monitoring, financial/technical reviews and customer complaints. The Executive Director is responsible for Corporate Services which involves management of the internal administrative functions of the Board including finance, communications, information technology and human resources.

Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities  
Organizational Chart  
At March 31, 2023



## **Mandate and Lines of Business**

The Board is an independent, quasi-judicial regulatory body constituted under the **Public Utilities Act**.

The Board is responsible for the regulation of electric utilities in the Province to ensure that the rates charged are just and reasonable and that the service provided is safe and reliable. The Board is also responsible for the supervision of rates charged by automobile insurers in the province. Since 2004 the Board has been responsible for petroleum products pricing in the province. The Board also has limited responsibilities with respect to the motor carrier industry and setting compensation under the **Expropriation Act**. The Board's jurisdiction is defined by the following legislation:

- i) **Public Utilities Act**
- ii) **Electrical Power Control Act, 1994**
- iii) **Petroleum Products Act**
- iv) **Automobile Insurance Act**
- v) **Insurance Companies Act**
- vi) **Motor Carrier Act**
- vii) **Expropriation Act**
- viii) **Public Utilities Acquisition of Lands Act**

These acts fall under the responsibility of various departments of Government, including the Department of Justice and Public Safety, Digital Government and Service NL and Industry, Energy and Technology.

In fulfilling its regulatory responsibilities, the Board conducts public hearings, technical conferences, stakeholder meetings, compliance monitoring, audits, technical/financial reviews and investigations. Hearings held by the Board in the discharge of its mandate are quasi-judicial in nature and are conducted in accordance with the provisions of the **Public Utilities Act**, **Public Inquiries Act** and **Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities Regulations, 1996**. Orders issued by the Board have the force of law and can only be appealed to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and/or the Court of Appeal.

## **Values**

The Board takes significant pride in the regulatory work it performs on behalf of the people of the Province. The Board believes it must not only be open, transparent and accountable but also must carry out its mandate in a way that reflects a standard of excellence and demonstrates a competence and responsiveness that will engender public trust and confidence.

## **Excellence**

The Board strives for excellence in the performance of its duties. It endeavors to write reports, decisions and orders that are of the highest quality, well-reasoned and understandable.

## **Integrity**

The Board is committed to adhering to the highest ethical and professional standards in the performance of its duties and responsibilities.

## **Objectivity and Fairness**

Openness and transparency are essential elements in regulation. The Board strives to ensure that its activities are conducted in compliance with the legislation and regulations by applying legal and regulatory standards objectively and fairly.

## **Public Trust and Confidence**

The Board takes ownership and responsibility for all of its actions and decisions. The organization is managed responsibly to maintain the confidence, respect and trust of the public, stakeholders and Government.

## **Teamwork**

The Board believes that teamwork and a spirit of cooperation are essential to its success.

## **Primary Clients**

In serving its clients the Board strives to achieve an equitable balance between the interests of consumers and service providers in the electric utility, automobile insurance, petroleum product and motor carrier industries. These clients include:

- Electrical Utilities
- Petroleum Products Wholesalers and Retailers
- Automobile Insurance Companies
- Electricity Consumers
- Automobile Insurance Customers
- Petroleum Products Customers
- Consumer Advocate

## Vision

The vision of the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities is excellence in regulation which engenders the trust and confidence of the people of the Province.

## Strategic Directions

The **Transparency and Accountability Act** requires government entities to take into strategic directions into account in the preparation of their multi-year performance-based plans.

For the 2023-26 planning cycle the Board will continue to build upon previously identified priority action areas to further strengthen the efficiencies realized and ensure continued support of an effective and responsive regulatory environment.

## Strategic Issue

### **ISSUE: Communications Strategy and Plan**

The Board has a broad mandate which can have significant impacts for all electricity, automobile insurance and petroleum products consumers and industry in the province. Given this, effective communication is essential so that stakeholders can understand the work of the Board and its impact. Communication of clear and understandable information as to the work of the Board can be challenging due to the often technical nature of the Board's mandate and the complexity of the issues. In addition, expectations of the public as to the accessibility of information may be evolving and the Board needs to consider how to meet these expectations. Over the next three years, the Board will review its communications strategy and implement new approaches to ensure effective communication which engenders trust and confidence in the work of the Board. The strategic issue of strengthening Board communications will be prioritized during this planning cycle.

<b>Objective Year 1</b>	<b>By March 31, 2024 the Board will have reviewed its Communications Strategy and Plan</b>
<b>Indicators:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communications firm hired.</li><li>• GAP analysis determining desired outcomes for the Communications Strategy and Plan completed.</li><li>• Communications Strategy and Plan reviewed.</li></ul>	
<b>Objective Year 2</b>	<b>By March 31, 2025 the Board will have determined its Communications Strategy and Plan approach</b>
<b>Objective Year 3</b>	<b>By March 31, 2026 the Board will have implemented the key components of its Communications Strategy and Plan</b>