



**Avalon Peninsula
Regional Council
of the
Rural Secretariat
Executive Council**

Annual Activity Report 2011-12



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As Chairperson for the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council, I hereby submit the annual Activity Report for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. On behalf of the council and in accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, my signature is indicative of the council's accountability for the results reported.

The focus for the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council this past year has been to develop quality advice for the Provincial Government on an issue of significance related to regional sustainability. In order to meet this commitment, the council engaged in a community-based research process in an effort to enhance its knowledge of the subject area as well as provide information of significant relevance for the discussions and deliberations that followed. The council is pleased to report this process led to the submission of a policy advice document focusing on public transportation options for seniors within the Avalon Region.

The Activity Report that follows clearly outlines the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council's process for policy advice development resulting in the recommendations as submitted to the Department of Health and Community Services in March 2012.

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will continue its collaborative approach to developing sound policy advice for the Provincial Government's consideration and looks forward to meeting its future commitment to Government through ongoing and collaborative research and deliberative dialogue.

Sincerely,



Des Linehan
Avalon Peninsula Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The 2011 Census population for Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region was 257,662. This represents an increase of 5.8 percent since 2006. Over the same period, the entire province experienced a population increase of 1.8 percent since 2006 (514,536 in 2011, up from 505,470).

The 2007 income for every man, woman, and child (personal income per capita) in Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region was \$27,300. For the province, personal income per capita was \$24,900. After tax personal income per capita, adjusted for inflation, was \$17,600 for Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region in 2007. For the province it was \$16,400.

The 2007 self-reliance ratio for Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region was 83.9 percent. This is a measure of the community's dependency on government transfers such as: Canada Pension, Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, Income Support Assistance, etc. The higher the percentage of income that comes from transfers the lower the self-reliance ratio. The provincial self-reliance ratio for 2007 was 79.4 percent.

The number of individuals in Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region who received Income Support Assistance at some point in the year 2010 was 24,345. The 1991 figure was 36,800.

Census 2006 reported 18.2 percent of people 18-64 years of age in the Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region did not have a high school diploma compared to 25.1 percent of people in the entire province. About 81.8 percent of people aged 18-64 in the region had at least a high school diploma compared to 74.9 percent in the province. Approximately, 18.0 percent of people aged 18-64 in the region had a Bachelor's Degree or higher in 2006 compared to 13.3 percent in the province as a whole.

A major indicator of well-being is how a person rates their own health status. In 2009-2010, 63.3 percent (+/-2.7 percent) of individuals in Avalon Peninsula Rural Secretariat Region rated their health status from very good to excellent. The provincial number in 2009-2010 was 60.1 percent (+/-1.6 percent). In 2009-10, for Canada, 60.2 percent (+/-0.3 percent) of individuals age 12 and over rated their health status as very good to excellent.

Additional information, including gender-specific information and information for other levels of geography, can be found at www.communityaccounts.ca and www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural.

2. REGIONAL COUNCIL OVERVIEW

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council is comprised of 12 members – eight male and four female. The council currently has representation from larger and smaller communities throughout the region, including eight members from communities of less than 5,000 people. The council met five times in 2011-12.

The council does not have a budget and, as such, an audited financial statement is not required in this report. Meetings of the council and associated costs are funded through the budget of the Rural Secretariat.

The Rural Secretariat also funds two regional planner positions in the region, who among other duties, act as an information resource for the council and facilitate their meetings. The planners for the Avalon Peninsula region are Jamilee Fitzpatrick and Michelle Yetman. Their regional offices are located in Placentia (Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development) and Carbonear (College of the North Atlantic campus).

Regional Council members	Community
John Adams	Harbour Grace
Paul Connors	Mount Pearl
Lorelei Dean	Holyrood
Sheila Lee	Riverhead, St. Mary's Bay
Des Linehan	Placentia
Jay McGrath	Mount Pearl
Betty Moore	Clarke's Beach
Kerry Murray	Topsail
Maureen Sullivan	Calvert
Brendan White	Northern Bay
Dave Woodman	Harbour Main
Paul Canning	St. John's

For an updated listing of council members please visit: <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/regionalmem.asp>

3. MANDATE

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council's mandate is to:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing a region.
- To review key economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity, etc.) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify policies and programs which either a) advance b) negatively impact or c) need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five-year period.

- To advance regional cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about the economic and social measures, and to encourage regional partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To serve as a sounding board in their region for new or proposed initiatives.
- To select an individual to represent the region on the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

4. LINES OF BUSINESS

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council supports the Rural Secretariat's four lines of business:

Citizen-based policy advice: The Rural Secretariat supports nine citizen-based Regional Councils, and one stakeholder-based Provincial Council, to develop policy and decision-making advice for submission to government. Typically, councils, with the support of Rural Secretariat staff, hold public engagement sessions involving citizens and/or stakeholder group representatives, and conduct community-based research activities, to inform the development of advice documents.

Collaboration: The Rural Secretariat understands that collaboration is critical for sustainability in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The Rural Secretariat works to support existing rural collaborative processes such as partnerships. Other times they work to help convene new regional collaborative processes such as networks or alliances. The broad goal is to help build a strengthened 'culture of collaboration' in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Research: The Rural Secretariat collaborates with provincial partners on a number of formal research endeavors that help to improve understanding of the challenges facing, and opportunities available to, rural regions of this province. The Rural Secretariat also works directly with regional partners and councils on a host of community-based research initiatives – small regional-level data-gathering efforts that give those involved the information and knowledge they need to effectively advise the Provincial Government on regional and rural policy issues.

Public dialogue and engagement: In addition to supporting councils to conduct public engagement efforts, the Rural Secretariat is also available to assist other Provincial Government departments to design and deliver their own public engagement initiatives. The Rural Secretariat also periodically convenes special deliberative dialogue initiatives on themes deemed to be of particular importance to the rural sustainability of this province, often in partnership with rural stakeholder groups and other government departments.

5. VALUES

The core values explain the character of the organization. The core values of the Rural Secretariat are as follows:

Collaboration:	We are committed to building a culture of collaboration within Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond
Creativity/innovation:	We strive to transcend traditional ideas, rules, and patterns, and to work together to create new ideas, relationships, and approaches
Inclusion:	We acknowledge difference and cherish the views and perspectives of all. We take steps to ensure all have an opportunity to express their views
Learning culture:	We accept that we have a lot to learn and relish the opportunity to learn more
Participation/engagement:	We believe citizen/stakeholder/community engagement is essential to the development of good public policy
Teamwork:	We provide support to one another, work co-operatively, respect differing views and strive to make our work environments safe and enjoyable
Honesty:	We are open and honest in all our dealings and maintain the highest integrity at all times
Excellence:	We strive for excellence and quality in everything we do

6. PRIMARY CLIENTS

The primary clients of the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council include the Rural Secretariat, the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat, and departments and agencies within the Provincial Government, among others.

The council engages individuals, groups and organizations within the region as it carries out its work.

7. VISION

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council supports the vision of the Rural Secretariat:

Vibrant rural regions and communities where collaborative organizations and engaged and informed citizens work closely with governments to advance rural sustainability.

Through its work, the council identifies priorities that contribute to regional sustainability which consider economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects.

8. MISSION

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council supports the mission of the Rural Secretariat:

By March 31, 2017, the Rural Secretariat will have worked with regional and departmental partners to improve the sustainability prospects of rural communities and regions.

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council agrees with the mission of the Rural Secretariat and strives to support it by providing advice to the Provincial Government on issues affecting the region. The council engages citizens, conducts research and works with partners to ensure that the advice being provided will assist in improving the sustainability of rural communities and regions.

9. REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

In its 2011-14 Activity Plan Council identified one objective: to provide ongoing advice to the Provincial Government on issues that affect the region. The activities and performance of Council with respect to this objective, as outlined below, are in keeping with Council's mandate as well as in support of the Provincial Government's strategic directions for the Rural Secretariat (Appendix A). The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will be reporting on the same objective for each year of the plan.

9.1 Issue 1: Provide Advice to Government

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council believed that public transportation for seniors within the region was of significant importance given the lack of a coordinated transportation system and the continued rise in the number of seniors anticipated in coming years. In addition, the council was aware of the Provincial Government's commitment to supporting seniors' transportation challenges through the development of community partnerships. As a result, the council felt the timing was appropriate to develop and submit policy advice related to this significant issue for the Provincial Government's consideration as it moves forward with its support to communities in solving public transportation challenges for seniors within the region.

Objective: By March 31, 2012 the council will have provided advice to the Provincial Government on issues that relate to regional sustainability

Measure: Provided advice

Indicators	Accomplishments
Issue Identified	<p>The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council reviewed the current government’s commitments to supporting seniors’ transportation challenges, in an effort to help them identify an issue to provide advice to government. Through this review, as well as the council’s knowledge and understanding of the region, they identified transportation for seniors as their priority for the 2011-12 fiscal year.</p>
Researched issue	<p>Council received a presentation from the Office for Aging and Seniors, Department of Health and Community Services on current initiatives being undertaken by the Provincial Government and related challenges facing seniors in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Council was informed that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed \$1.5 million over three years for the Age-Friendly NL Transportation Project, part of the Department of Health and Community Service’s <i>Close to Home: A Strategy for Long-Term Care and Community Support Services</i>.</p> <p>To build upon the information received from the Office for Aging and Seniors, the council engaged a graduate student from Memorial University’s Department of Geography to conduct further research on the challenges and opportunities for seniors within the Avalon Region.</p> <p>The research focused on identifying local transportation needs within the Avalon Region. Local characteristics as well as a literary review of possible transportation models with similar characteristics as the Avalon Region assisted the council in developing recommendations to government.</p>

Indicators	Accomplishments
	<p>A review of available national and international literature related to transportation models which serve the needs of rural and urban transport disadvantaged seniors led to the discovery of a suggested alternative to the conventional transit option – <i>Flexible, Intermediate or Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)</i> services. DRT services are designed to fill the gap between a personal automobile and conventional public transportation.</p> <p>The research explored four DRT models and the potential application of such a service within the Avalon Region to enhance the information provided to the Avalon Council for consideration in formulating its advice. They were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlotte Dial A Ride, New Brunswick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Fully flexible service</i> • Community Wheels, Nova Scotia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Semi-flexible service</i> • Fare Car, Devon, UK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Semi-scheduled service</i> • Rural Lift, Northern Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Mix of services, mix of vehicles</i> <p>The research identified four DRT models that have the potential to address the transportation needs of seniors and other transport disadvantaged residents of the Avalon Peninsula. However, the council believes the final choice of the most appropriate model should be guided by strong knowledge of the local transportation needs and available resources, and be built upon existing transportation services and other local assets. Therefore, the development of a partnership or a working group which would include all interested parties/stakeholders could provide a good starting point for building a successful DRT model.</p>
Consensus developed on advice to Government	The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council reviewed the information compiled during the research. After several meetings to discuss the findings, the council developed consensus on

Indicators	Accomplishments
	<p>seven recommendations to government as it moves forward to enhance transportation for seniors. The recommendations were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a partnership or a working group consisting of representatives from local organizations, targeted population groups, transport operators and funding bodies to facilitate preliminary research, develop, implement and operate a transportation model. • Based on the geographical layout of the Avalon Peninsula, travel patterns of its residents and the optimal scale for partnership, the implementation of a local transportation model in each Economic Zone with possible coordination of occasional trips to St. John's or between Zones. • Implementation of a centrally coordinated volunteer driver (Dial-a-Ride) scheme and to support the volunteer driver scheme with provision of some form of incentives to the drivers, such as reimbursement for mileage, training, insurance coverage, etc. • Development of a semi-flexible or semi-scheduled door-to-door type of service is another suitable option in the context of the Avalon Peninsula geography and small population size of its communities. These types of transportation services can be effectively complimented by the volunteer driver scheme. • In terms of the vehicle allocations, explore the feasibility of three options. First, contracting a local taxi (a car or minivan) or mini-bus operator (similar to Fare Car, United Kingdom). Second, purchasing a vehicle (minivan or mini-bus) and supplement its use by chartering it to local organizations if sufficient demand exists (similar to Community Wheels, Nova Scotia and Rural Lift, Northern Ireland). Third, purchasing a vehicle (minivan or mini-bus)

Indicators	Accomplishments
	<p>to be used jointly by two or three neighbouring Zones, serving each of them on a selected day(s) of each week and providing coordinated trips to St. John's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The low population density in the area suggests that services solely targeted to seniors have the potential to encounter a very low patronage. We suggest exploring the possibility of including other groups of the transport disadvantaged residents into a user category for a potential local transportation model. • Further research is required to define the travel needs of local seniors and other transport disadvantaged groups, as well as the estimation of their potential patronage, is required to guide the development of the most suitable transportation model.
Communicated advice to Government	Council submitted their advice to Department of Health and Community Services in March 2012.

Discussion of Results:

Council has met its objective of providing advice to the Provincial Government. Council identified the issue of the transportation for seniors. They conducted research to assist them in developing their advice. Through discussions and deliberations, the council came to a consensus on the advice that it was to submit to government for consideration. The council submitted this advice in March 2012 to the Department of Health and Community Services.

10. ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to the points raised in Section 9, a number of additional highlights and accomplishments are worthy of mention. These are consistent with the Rural Secretariat's strategic directions and mandate, and will serve to inform the work of the Council.

Regional Council Renewal

Avalon Peninsula Regional Council participated in a multi-site engagement event "Regional Council Renewal" to meet with councils from across the province in an effort to introduce newly appointed council members to the Rural Secretariat. More specifically this event was designed to: inform council of their role; understand and energize members to carry out their mandate; highlight/demonstrate Rural Secretariat tools and staff expertise; build relationships between

and amongst councils and the Rural Secretariat and to reinforce commitment from Minister/Cabinet/Government. The event was delivered from three sites and linked using various technologies in an effort to demonstrate by example how technology can be used to enhance communication throughout the province.

Fire and Emergency Services-Newfoundland and Labrador Engagement Session

Avalon Peninsula Regional Council participated in an engagement session to provide feedback to Fire and Emergency Services-Newfoundland and Labrador (FES-NL) with regard to exploring the feasibility of a province-wide 911 system.

Provincial Council Engagement Session

In an effort to gather input from regional councils Avalon Council participated in a feedback dialogue session to generate input for Provincial Council with regard to priority areas for Provincial Council to focus on.

11. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

As the nature of the work of the Council is broad-based and long-term in nature, the challenges and opportunities faced by the Council remain fairly similar from year to year. It feels that these challenges and opportunities can be categorized along three themes.

Provision of Policy Advice to government

The council's mandate commits it to reaching consensus on the priorities for change in its region and to identifying policies and programs to encourage desired change. The challenge for council, given the range of issues, perspectives, interests and needs within its region, is to reach consensus on priorities for change and on policy advice to provide to the Provincial Government. The opportunity for council is to position itself as an objective, informed and influential advisory body within the region that can both provide informed bottom-up policy advice to government as well as respond to top-down policy level requests from government that may impact on the region.

Regional collaboration

The council's mandate commits it to sharing information, advancing regional cooperation and to encouraging regional partners to more actively participate on matters that can advance regional sustainability. The challenge for council is to position itself as an objective, informed and influential advisory body within the region that can advance collaboration. There are two opportunities for council. First, it can position itself as a broad-based and cross-sectoral advisory body that can lead, participate and/or support regional collaboration across a range of sectors, communities and interests. Second, as a broad-based advisory body, it can identify the various supports necessary to foster collaboration and be a conduit for advice to government to advance efforts.

Regional communications

The council understands that a range of non-governmental organizations in rural areas provide advice to the Provincial government on a range of policy matters. In large part, these organizations are focused on particular agendas, needs and interests, among others, regional economic development, environmental awareness and protection, social policy advancement and municipal governance. The challenge for it is to openly and positively communicate its mandate and role to other regional stakeholders and interests, and to position itself as an objective, informed and influential advisory body that can assist other stakeholders. The opportunity for it, through new and strengthened relationships with regional stakeholders, is to ensure that a broad range of perspectives are considered as it identifies regional priorities, provides advice to government and fosters collaboration.

APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic Directions

1. **Title:** Rural Newfoundland and Labrador

Outcome Statement: A sustainable rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

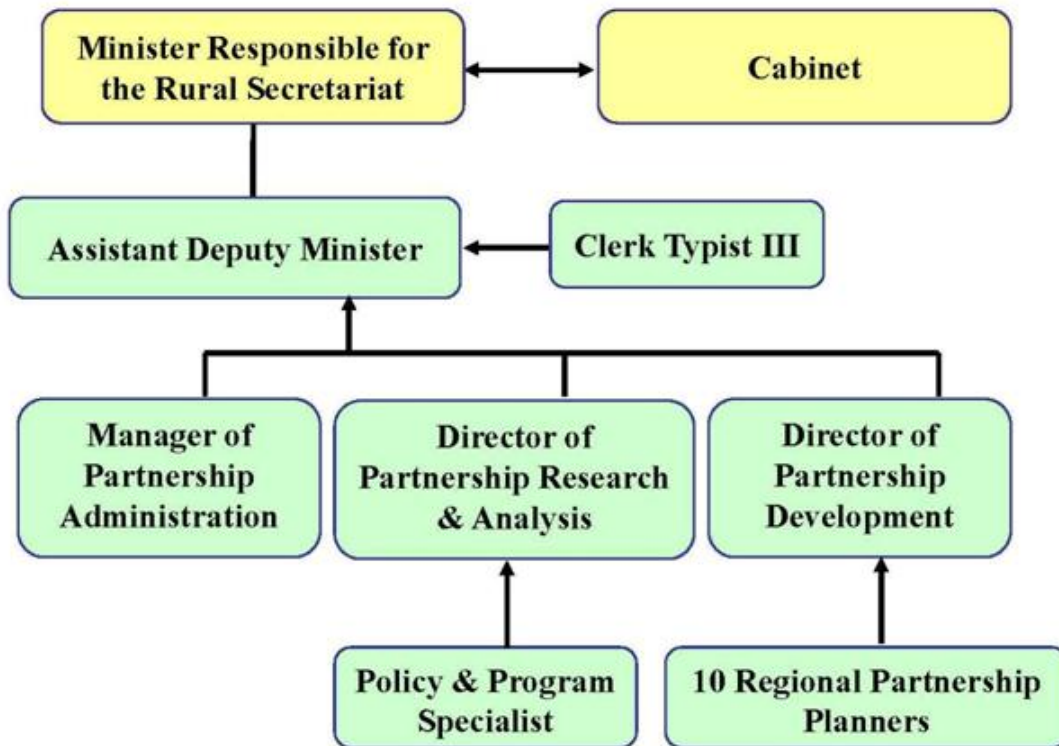
Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Rural Secretariat in the areas of:

- Citizen-based policy advice
- Public dialogue and engagement
- Collaboration
- Research

Focus Areas/Components of the Strategic Direction	This Direction is:
	addressed in the council's activity plan
1. Citizen-based policy advice	X
2. Public dialogue and engagement	
3. Collaboration	
4. Research	X

APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Rural Secretariat Organizational Chart



APPENDIX D: MANDATES OF RURAL SECRETARIAT AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

Mandate of the Rural Secretariat

The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:

- Promote the well-being of rural Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at integrating economic, social, cultural aspects of rural and regional development.
- Act as the focal point for government to work with local and regional partners to build strong and dynamic regions and communities.
- Ensure that rural concerns are considered throughout the Provincial Government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting rural Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.
- Promote awareness of provincial and federal programs and services regarding rural communities.

Mandate of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

The Provincial Council's mandate is:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing Province.
- To review key economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, Employment Income usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify and advise the Provincial Government on policies and programs which either a) advance, b) negatively impact or c) need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five year period.
- To advance cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about the economic and social measures, and to encourage government and community partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To serve as an external sounding board for government for the development of strategies, policies, programs and budget issues that will effect Provincial and Regional sustainability.

Photo Credits:



Courtesy of the Rural Secretariat



Courtesy of the Rural Secretariat



Courtesy of the Rural Secretariat



Rural Secretariat

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