

Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities

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# Strategic Plan

2020 - 2023





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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities, I am pleased to present the Strategic Plan for the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2023. This plan was prepared in accordance with the Transparency and Accountability Act and sets out how the Department will address government's strategic directions and my mandate as Minister.

This plan builds upon the strategic directions, commitments and investments of our government and identifies the Department's key goals and objectives to be accomplished throughout the 2020-2023 planning period.

Specifically, our strategic issues of advancing environmental sustainability and supporting local governments through improved processes and regulations will lead to better outcomes for our environment, communities and residents.

We will continue to focus on our mandate to advance economic, social and environmental sustainability of municipalities, communities, regions and the province through effective programs, services and supports.

As this plan was developed in the context of a global pandemic, the Department will also focus efforts on assisting and supporting communities to navigate through these exceptional circumstances.

As Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the specific goals and objectives contained herein.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hon. Derek Bennett

Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities

## Departmental Overview

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities is a category 1 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** that supports the economic, social and environmental sustainability of municipalities, communities and regions through the delivery of effective programs and services.

The Department provides the financial and administrative tools to support development of community capacity, regional cooperation and sound municipal governance. The Department is responsible for environmental protection and enhancement through the implementation of water resource and pollution prevention regulations and policies, as well as coordinating environmental impact assessments of proposed development projects and managing impacted sites. The Department further develops strategy related to climate adaption and mitigation and energy efficiency. As was announced on September 10, 2020, protected areas functions moved to this Department from the former Department of Fisheries and Land Resources.

## Organizational Structure

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities is organized into three branches:

- **Climate Change Branch**
- **Environment Branch**
- **Municipal Affairs**

A number of key cross-departmental initiatives are led by the Department, including the Provincial Waste Management Strategy and the Drinking Water Safety Initiative. In addition, the Department leads horizontal initiatives related to maintaining municipal

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self-sufficiency and environmental health including the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Technical Working Group and the Impacted Sites Liability Assessment Program

### Reporting Entities

Under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, a number of government entities also prepare plans and annual reports. Entities which report to the Minister include:

- Multi-Materials Stewardship Board
- Municipal Assessment Agency
- West Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board
- Central Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board
- Eastern Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board
- Labrador Regional Appeal Board
- Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council
- North East Avalon Regional Plan Oversight Committee [Inactive]
- Humber Valley Regional Planning Advisory Authority Leadership Committee [Inactive]

For more information on the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities, please visit us online at [www.gov.nl.ca/eccm](http://www.gov.nl.ca/eccm).

### 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;

Municipalities Act, 1999;

Municipal Elections Act;

Provincial Anthem Act;

Provincial Flag Act;

Regional Service Boards Act, 2012;

Remembrance Day Act;

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Coat of Arms Act;  
Commemoration Day Act;  
Crown Corporations Local Taxation Act;  
Environmental Protection Act;  
Evacuated Communities Act;  
Floral Emblem Act;  
Housing Act;  
Housing Association Loans Act;  
Management of Greenhouse Gas Act  
Mineral Emblem Act;

Municipal Affairs Act; City of St. John's  
Municipal Taxation 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;  
Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000;  
Water Resources Act; and  
Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act (1980).

### Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities is to advance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of municipalities, communities, regions and the province through the delivery of effective programs, services and supports.

### Staff and Budget

The Department's gross expenditure budget for 2020-21 is \$149,850,500 with planned related revenue of approximately \$43,551,500 for a net expenditure of \$106,299,000.

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities has 191 employees (134 permanent, 49 temporary, and 8 contractual) located in **16** offices throughout the province. Approximately **52** per cent of employees are female (**48** per cent male).

Region	Staff
Avalon Peninsula	154
Central East	10
Central West	5
Labrador	7
West Coast/Northern Peninsula	15

## Primary Clients

The primary clients of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities include:

- Local governments that consist of approximately 272 municipalities, 171 local service districts and 5 Inuit Community Governments; and
- Regional Service Boards which provide municipal services on a regional basis.

Some of the major groups that we serve include:

- Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL);
- Professional Municipal Administrators (PMA);
- Combined Councils of Labrador;
- Regional Waste Management Authorities and Committees;
- the general public;
- large industries such as pulp and paper, mining and oil refining companies;
- businesses involved in such areas as pesticide application, waste management, heating oil and refrigeration services, among others;
- the engineering and waste management consultant community;
- the academic community and student populations; and
- environmental non-governmental organizations.

## Vision

The vision of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities is a clean, sustainable, protected environment with strong, resilient municipalities, communities and regions supported by the delivery of effective programs and services.



# Strategic Issues

## Issue 1 - Advancing Environmental Sustainability

Ensuring that the province's air, water and soil are protected from negative environmental impacts is a key pillar of the Department's mandate. Through various legislative and regulatory frameworks, the Department focuses on water resource management, pollution prevention, environmental assessments and protected areas.

To advance environmental sustainability in the province over the next three years, the Department will continue to work collaboratively with local communities, other levels of government, industry, business, academia, and citizens. These relationships create a network of stakeholders who implement cohesive strategic approaches to preserve, protect and improve the quality of land, air and water for current and future generations.

Additionally, the Department plays an integral role in creating and implementing policies to lessen the human impacts that relate to climate change. Using scientific, evidence-based approaches, the Department works across government to integrate climate change considerations into government policies, procedures and work activities.

Throughout the planning period, the Department will work toward the provincial goal to meet net zero emissions by 2050 and implement the five year Climate Change Action Plan, which is designed to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stimulate clean innovation and growth, and help build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

### **GOAL:**

By March 31, 2023, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have implemented efforts to improve environmental sustainability.

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## Indicators:

- Implemented improved environmental processes to ensure clean air, soil, and water.
- Implemented actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, transition to a low-carbon economy, and enhance resilience to the impacts of climate change.

## Objective 1:

By March 31, 2021, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have begun implementation of improvements related to environmental sustainability.

## Indicators:

- Developed a drinking water quality action plan.
- Continued support of the Regional Water and Waste Water Pilot Program.
- Continued assessment and development of mitigation activities for impacted sites.
- Continued flood risk mapping to better anticipate and respond to possible flooding events.
- Continued to implement the five-year Climate Change Action Plan.
- Approved projects under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, including the Home Energy Savings Program.
- Implemented the ban on the distribution of retail plastic bags.
- Continued Muskrat Falls methylmercury monitoring and worked with Indigenous and local populations to develop and plan for community based monitoring and health management initiatives.
- Continued review of the provincial Environmental Assessment process and legislation to reflect changes to federal **Impact Assessment Act**.
- Continue work on a Natural Areas System Plan.

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### **Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2022, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have continued to build on its efforts towards enhancing environmental sustainability.

### **Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2023, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have advanced environmental sustainability.

### Issue 2 - Supporting Local Governments through Enhanced Processes and Legislation

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities is committed to finding solutions that will meet the needs of current and future states of local governments and to provide local governments with the necessary tools to explore new and innovative ways to better deliver municipal services to residents, support community capacity and encourage economic activity.

As a priority, the Department will advance and implement changes to municipal legislation to ensure an effective and modern framework for municipal governance. This piece of work will also support the Department's ongoing commitment to finding ways for regional collaboration to occur with respect to governance and service sharing.

The Department must also look within its internal operations to determine how service delivery and internal processes can be improved. Greater use of technology can lead to improved access to services and quality of service delivery for the Department's clients.

#### **GOAL:**

By March 31, 2023, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have improved departmental service delivery, amended regulations, and modernized internal processes.

#### **Indicators:**

- Identified opportunities to modernize operations and deliver services more efficiently.
- Enhanced capacity for effective and sustainable local governance, including regional collaboration opportunities.
- Amended municipal legislation, regulations, and/or policies as identified by the Department.

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## Objective 1:

By March 31, 2021, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have initiated activities to improve current service delivery, regulations, and processes.

## Indicators:

- Advanced recommendations related to modernization of municipal legislation
- Worked with interested communities and stakeholders to advance regional collaboration.
- Supported the Premier's Forum on Local Government, providing a venue that highlights challenges and opportunities impacting strong local government initiatives.
- Reviewed and prioritized recommendations of the Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy review.
- Continued work on implementing and supporting the federal wastewater effluent guidelines.
- Reviewed Digital by Design opportunities to improve service delivery and operational efficiencies.

## Objective 2:

By March 31, 2022, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have continued efforts to improve service delivery, regulations, and processes.

## Objective 3:

By March 31, 2023, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will have implemented measures to improve service delivery, regulations, and processes.

# Annex A: Inactive Entities

## **Humber Valley Regional Planning Advisory Authority Leadership Committee**

The Committee's main goal was to prepare a regional land use plan for the area: the Humber Valley Regional Plan. The Committee operated in consideration of the strategic directions of government. The Committee's activities were consistent with strategic directions related to sustainable communities, and a competitive work and business environment, which also supports The Way Forward commitment to advance regional collaboration.

Since the 2017-18 reporting period, the Committee has been inactive. Once the committee is reactivated an activity plan will be developed.

## **North East Avalon Regional Plan Oversight Committee**

The Committee's principal function is to facilitate the development of the North East Avalon's Regional Land Use Plan for recommendation to government. As such, the Committee oversees the work and preparation associated with the development of the Plan. When completed, the North East Avalon Regional (NEAR) Plan will be an overarching planning and policy document intended to guide development, infrastructure and land use within the region.

The North East Avalon region includes the areas from Witless Bay and Holyrood to all lands north to Cape St. Francis, including Wabana. The Committee is established pursuant to section 9 of the **Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000**. It is comprised of mayors from each of the region's 15 municipalities, and the Minister or designate. In addition, the Committee is supported by Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, serving in the capacity of project management lead, with technical advice and support from the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities. The Committee has been inactive since the 2018-19 reporting period. Once the committee is reactivated an activity plan will be developed.



