

2023-2026

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## Environment and Climate Change





## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is responsible for protecting and conserving our province's environment and ensuring it is clean, safe, and sustainable for present and future generations. It is responsible for leading the Government's strategy to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, while meeting our emission reduction commitments. The Department also supports provincial labour relations and standards by facilitating the settlement of collective agreements, providing dispute resolution services, appointing arbitrators, and providing workplace training. In addition, the Department ensures compliance with minimum terms and conditions of employment.

As the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister Responsible for Labour, I am pleased to present this Strategic Plan for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026. This three-year plan was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and sets how the Department will address government's strategic directions and my mandate as Minister. This plan builds on and identifies the Department's key goals and objectives to be accomplished throughout this planning period. My Department commits to using Gender Based Analysis + as a lens through which decisions will be made on how to achieve these goals.

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

Sincerely,

Hon. Bernard Davis  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change



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## Departmental Overview

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is a category 1 government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** that is responsible for the protection and enhancement of the environment through the implementation of water resource and pollution prevention regulations and policies, as well as conducting environmental assessments of proposed development projects, managing impacted sites and ecological reserves, and considering pathways for new protected areas. The Department further develops strategy and programs related to climate adaptation and mitigation, and net zero carbon emissions, while supporting a green transition and improved energy efficiency. Additionally, the Department works with employers, employees, and unions to foster positive employment relations conditions.

## Organizational Structure

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is divided into seven divisions under three branches:

- **Environment Branch**
  - Water Resources Management - implements programs to protect, enhance, conserve, develop, control, and effectively utilize the water resources of Newfoundland and Labrador.
  - Pollution Prevention - provides for the development of plans, programs, standards and activities concerning environmental emergencies, waste management, petroleum storage, industry, air emissions, environmental science, pesticides, and contaminated sites.
  - Environmental Assessment - oversees the environmental assessment process that ensures that proposed projects proceed in an environmentally acceptable manner.

- **Climate Change Branch**
  - Climate Change - develops policy, research, analysis, and initiatives related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and energy efficiency.
  - Policy, Planning and Natural Areas - develops and coordinates departmental policy and planning initiatives, and oversees the administration and management of the province's wilderness and ecological reserves, provincial protected areas planning, and provincial Canadian Heritage Rivers Program.
  
- **Labour Branch**
  - Labour Relations - facilitates the settlement of collective agreements, providing dispute resolution services, appointing arbitrators, and providing workplace training.
  - Labour Standards - ensures compliance with minimum terms and conditions of employment.

A number of key cross-departmental initiatives are led by the Department, including the Provincial Waste Management Strategy, Drinking Water Safety Action Plan, and Climate Change Action Plan. In addition, the Department leads horizontal initiatives related to maintaining environmental health, including the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Technical Working Group and the Impacted Sites Liability Assessment Program.

For more information on the Department's vision, mandate and lines of business, please visit us online at [www.gov.nl.ca/ecc](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ecc).

## Reporting Entities

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

- Multi-Materials Stewardship Board;
- WorkplaceNL;

- Labour Relations Board;
- Net-Zero Advisory Council;
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Advisory Council;
- Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel;
- Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council; and
- Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division.

## Legislation

**Environmental Protection Act;**  
**Essential Ambulance Services Act;**  
**Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act;**  
**Interns and Residents Collective Bargaining Act;**  
**Labour Relations Act;**  
**Labour Standards Act;**  
**Management of Greenhouse Gas Act;**  
**Public Service Collective Bargaining Act;**  
**Shops Closing Act;**  
**Teachers' Collective Bargaining Act;**  
**Water Resources Act;**  
**Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act;** and  
**Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act.**

## Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Environment and Climate Change is to protect, enhance, and conserve the province's natural environment including its water, air, and soil quality. In supporting the Minister Responsible for Labour, the Department takes a lead role in ensuring effective relationships between employers and employees through the administration and enforcement of applicable legislation.



## Staff and Budget

The Department’s gross expenditure budget for 2023-24 is \$87,135,000 with planned related revenue of approximately \$34,136,300 for a net expenditure of \$54,998,700.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change has 177 positions (113 permanent, 50 temporary, seven seasonal, and seven contractual) located in eight offices throughout the province. Approximately **58** per cent of employees are female and 42 per cent are male.

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Executive and Support Services	12	1,188,300
Environment	85	19,442,400
Climate Change	38	62,870,600
Labour	17	1,413,300
Labour Relations Board	7	754,900
Workplace, Health, Safety and Compensation Review	15	1,465,500

## Primary Clients

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

- large industries such as utilities, mining, oil refining companies, as well as industry associations;

- 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;
- unions;
- employers;
- labour organizations;
- employer organizations;
- professional organizations;
- other levels of government;
- non-governmental, volunteer and not-for-profit organizations; and
- general public.

## **Vision**

The vision of the Department of Environment and Climate Change is a clean, sustainable, and protected environment supported through effective stewardship and a province where employees and employers are supported to achieve a healthy, safe, and productive workplace.

## Strategic Issues

### Issue 1 – Enhancing Environmental Protections

The Department of Environment and Climate Change works collaboratively with local communities, other levels of government, industry, business, academia, and the public to advance protection of the environment. These relationships create a network of stakeholders who implement cohesive strategic approaches to preserve, protect, and improve the quality of land, air, and water to provide better living for all residents of the province now and in the future.

The Department actively uses policies, legislation, and regulation to protect our environment. To address ever-changing activities impacting the environment, new mechanisms and programs are needed. Over the next three years, the Department will focus on ways to enhance policies and programs to better protect our province's environment.

#### **GOAL:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have enhanced environmental protections for Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### **Indicators:**

- Introduced new environmental protection mechanisms and programs.
- Enhanced engagement activities with the public, industry, and Indigenous governments and organizations on protecting province's environment.
- Enhanced collaboration with the federal government on environmental protection.

#### **Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have initiated steps to enhance environmental protections.

**Indicators:**

- Released and implemented priority items outlined in the Drinking Water Safety Action Plan including development of a semi-public water supply database, identifying baseline drinking water quality of private supplies and supporting Boil Water Advisory reduction on public water supplies.
- Completed flood risk mapping on the west coast of Newfoundland and Labrador with a strategic focus on communities on the southwest coast and in the Codroy Valley area.
- Completed sample collection, reporting, and management of surveillance for 20 sites as part of the Permanent Program for Wastewater Surveillance.
- Assessed and developed mitigation activities for impacted sites.
- Continued an internal review of the provincial Environmental Assessment process and legislation.
- Increased capacity for environmental assessment and regulatory oversight of projects,
- Increased engagement with the public on social media platforms to consult with the public on projects registered for environmental assessment.
- The development of templates to streamline the Environmental Assessment process.
- Engaged with Indigenous governments and organizations and the general public on proposed protected areas.
- Engaged with the Federal Government and Indigenous organizations on feasibility of establishing a National Marine Conservation Area and National Park on the South Coast of Newfoundland.

**Objective 2: By March 31, 2025, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have further enhanced environmental protections.**

**Objective 3: By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment and Climate change will have implemented mechanisms to protect the province's environment.**

## **Issue 2 – Addressing Climate Change Challenges**

Throughout the planning period, the Department will continue to work toward the provincial goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and to meet net zero emissions by 2050 by continuing to implement the 2019-2024 and 2025-2030 Climate Change Action Plans with a focus on both mitigation and adaptation.

The initiatives in the current Climate Change Action Plan are already demonstrating results. Most recent greenhouse gas emissions estimates for the province are the lowest since 1992. This planning cycle will see completion of remaining actions and further work to achieve the 2030 and 2050 targets.

### **GOAL:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have taken action to lower the province's carbon footprint and support communities adapt to climate change.

### **Indicators:**

- Conducted consultation and engagement process with public, industry, stakeholders and Indigenous Governments and organizations on the development of the Province's 2025-2030 Climate Change Action Plans.

- Released Climate Change Action Plans for 2025-2030.
- Implemented actions, including those outlined in Climate Change Action Plans, to reduce carbon emissions.
- Supported communities and residents in adapting to changing climate.
- Enhanced engagement with industry on reaching net zero target.
- Greenhouse gas reduction, in tonnes, as a result of actions taken.

**Objective 1:**

- By March 31, 2024, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have undertaken initiatives to reduce the provincial carbon footprint and adapt to a changing climate.

**Indicators:**

- Provided residential rebates and invested in projects in the private, municipal, non-profit, and public sectors under the Low Carbon Economy Fund and Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Invested in continued transition to electric vehicles throughout the province.
- Collaborated with all levels of government, as well as industry, community, and Indigenous governments and organizations, to progress initiatives identified in the Climate Change Action Plans.
- Supported the work of the provincial Net Zero Advisory Council and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Advisory Council.

**Objective 2: By March 31, 2025, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have continued initiatives to reduce the provincial carbon footprint and support communities to adapt to a changing climate.**

**Objective 3: By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have furthered initiatives to reduce the provincial carbon footprint and support communities to adapt to a changing climate.**

### **Issue 3 - Supporting Provincial Labour Relations and Labour Standards**

To support the Minister's mandate for Labour, the Department works with employers, employees, and unions to foster effective relationships between employers and employees.

#### **GOAL:**

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Environment and Climate Change will have worked to improve labour relations supports and maintained a responsive labour policy framework.

#### **Indicators:**

- Improved engagement with labour organizations.
- Supported analysis of minimum wage increases and related recommendations.

#### **Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Environment and Climate will have commenced initiatives to support labour relations and maintain responsive labour policy.

#### **Indicators:**

- Brought together labour organizations to discuss and share ideas to foster improved labour relations.
- Completed assessment and funding of eligible applicants for Transitional Support Program for Smaller Employers.
- Determined a mechanism for conducting the 2024 Minimum Wage Review.

**Objective 2: By March 31, 2025, the Department will have further advanced initiatives to support labour relations and maintain responsive labour policy.**

**Objective 3: By March 31, 2026, the Department will have implemented initiatives to support labour relations and maintain responsive labour policy.**