

**Grand Falls-Winsor—Baie Verte—  
Harbour Breton Regional Council  
of the  
Rural Secretariat  
Executive Council**

**Annual Activity Report 2011-12**



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

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As chairperson for the Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Regional Council, and in accordance with the Provincial Government's commitment to accountability, we submit the Regional Council's 2011-2012 Activity Report. My signature below is on behalf of the entire council, and is indicative of our accountability of the results reported. The Regional Council is a category III Provincial Government entity under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

Over the past year, the council has focused on the need for meaningful participation of citizens in the decision-making processes that affect them. Council partnered with Memorial University, who investigated approaches and techniques for community engagement used in the region in the past; innovative techniques that have been used elsewhere and tested the benefits and challenges associated with the new techniques piloted in the region. The findings of this work were submitted in an advice document.

In addition, our advice letter on the *After School Physical Activity* program applauded the Provincial Government on the success of this initiative. It allows children bussed long distances to participate in after school activities. Council encouraged government to consider continuing this pilot project as a permanent program.

We are committed to support the Provincial Government moving forward on issues that affect regional sustainability. In particular the continuance of our community engagement and community-based research work in enhancing an understanding of citizens' perspective is conducive to government and community collaboration.

In the future we hope to continue our dialogue with government and community. Our overall goal is to help influence and effect positive change through the building of regional knowledge and refining our policy advice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Armstrong". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature is a vertical blue line.

Debbie Armstrong, Chair  
Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat

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# 1. OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

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The 2011 Census population for Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region was 47,305. This represents a decline of 2.7 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 gross income for every man, woman, and child (gross personal income per capita) in Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region was \$21,400. For the province, gross personal income per capita was \$24,900. After tax personal income per capita, adjusted for inflation, was \$14,500 for Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region in 2007. For the province it was \$16,400.

The 2007 self-reliance ratio for Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region was 72.4 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 Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region who received Income Support Assistance at some point in the year 2010 was 5,235. The 1991 figure was 10,150.

Census 2006 reported 33.8 percent of people 18 to 64 years of age in Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region do not have a high school diploma compared to 25.1% of people in the entire province. About 66.2 percent of people aged 18 to 64 in the region had at least a High School diploma in 2006 compared to 74.9 percent in the province as a whole. Approximately 8.0 percent of those people aged 18 to 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, 62.2 percent (+/- 4.4 percent) of individuals age 12 and over in Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Rural Secretariat Region rated their health status as excellent or very good. The provincial number in 2009-2010 was 60.1 percent (+/-1.6 percent). In 2009-2010, 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](http://www.communityaccounts.ca) and [www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural](http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural).

## 2. REGIONAL COUNCIL OVERVIEW

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The Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Regional Council is comprised of 13 members; six female and seven male. The council currently has representation from larger and smaller communities throughout the region, including twelve members from communities of less than 5,000 people. The council met five times in 2011-12.

<b>Regional Council members</b>	<b>Community</b>
Deborah Armstrong (Chair)	Pleasantview
Tracey Comeau	Seal Cove
Jerry Dean	Botwood
Ruth Down-Robinson	Grand Falls-Windsor
Colin Forward	Baie Verte
Phoebe Foster	Miawpukek Mi'kamawey Mami'omi (Conne River)
Jamie Kendell	St. Alban's
Hubert Langdon	English Harbour West
Steward May	Belleoram
Chris Mills	Burlington
Don Stewart	Harbour Breton
Joan Strickland	St. Alban's
Bernice Walker	Norris Arm

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

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 a regional planner position in the region, who among other duties, acts as an information resource for the council and facilitates the work of council. The planner for the Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton region is Linda Brett. Her office is located in Springdale.

## 3. MANDATE

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The Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Regional Council's mandate is:

- 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

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The Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton 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

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The core values explain the character of the organization. The core values of the Grand Falls-Windsor-Baie Verte-Harbour Breton Regional Council are as follows:

### Core Values

Collaboration  
Creativity  
Inclusion  
Learning Culture  
Engagement  
Honesty  
Excellence

<b>Collaboration:</b>	Each person is committed to working together effectively.
<b>Creativity:</b>	Each person seeks to transcend traditional ideas, rules and patterns to create new ideas, relationships, and methods.
<b>Inclusion:</b>	Each person acknowledges others' view and perspectives and has the right and opportunity to express their own.
<b>Learning culture:</b>	Each individual is recognized and valued for the skills that he or she brings and is encouraged to continue to learn.
<b>Engagement:</b>	Each person believes community engagement is essential to the development of good public policy
<b>Honesty:</b>	Each person is open and honest in all dealings and maintains the highest integrity at all times
<b>Excellence:</b>	We strive for excellence and quality in everything we do

## 6. PRIMARY CLIENTS

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The primary clients of the Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Regional Council include the Rural Secretariat (Appendix D), the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat, other Regional Councils, and departments and agencies within the Provincial Government, among others.

The Regional Council also engages with officials of departments and agencies of the Provincial Government, as well as individuals, groups and organizations within the region during the course of its investigation and identification of issues and opportunities pertinent to its mandate.

## 7. VISION

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The vision of the Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Regional Council is of a sustainable region with healthy, educated, prosperous people living in safe, inclusive communities.

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

## 8. MISSION

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The mission statement identifies the focus of the Regional Council. It represents the longer-term goals which the council will work towards as it moves forward on the strategic directions of the Provincial Government. The Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton 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 council will support the mission of the Rural Secretariat by collaborating on common issues that impact sustainability. Through presentations, dialogue, research and regional expertise, council members and stakeholders will learn from each other and develop policy and/ or decision-making advice.

The council will use the analytical tools of innovative public engagement, collaboration, and/ or varied research methodologies to engage and support regional partners and stakeholders in issues impacting regional sustainability. As a result, regional input will inform public policy so that the region can enhance its long-term sustainability.

For additional detail please refer to the Rural Secretariat Activity Plan 2011-14.

## 9. REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

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In the 2011-14 Activity Plan, the council identified one objective: to provide ongoing advice to the Provincial Government on issues that affect the region. This objective was developed in consideration of the council's mandate and financial resources along with the Provincial Government's strategic directions (Appendix A). In light of these strategic directions the council provided citizen- based policy advice by utilizing community-based research, and often other collaborative tools, to gather, form and validate information and knowledge contained in their submissions.



The identified measures and indicators will be used to monitor progress. The council will report on the same objective for each year in the 2011-14 planning cycle.

### **9.1 Issue: Provide Advice to Government**

The Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Regional Council believes that community engagement is crucial to long-term sustainability.

Supporting the survival of rural regions depends on finding innovative and inclusive ways to engage people, in order to increase their capacity to participate in the policy-making processes that will, in part, determine their futures. Effective community engagement should be a first step towards creating the circumstances and opportunities to ensure that rural communities thrive economically, socially and culturally.

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

**Measure:** Provided advice

Indicators	Accomplishments
Issue Identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to council’s desire to have issues identified in a comprehensive manner and on a timely basis, the next two accomplishments were completed ahead of schedule.</li> <li>• Council members used the following criteria to determine issues of interest:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Has potential to positively impact regional sustainability</li> <li>○ Will broadly impact residents across the region</li> <li>○ Has major consequences if not investigated</li> <li>○ Is within provincial government’s jurisdiction</li> <li>○ Will strongly impact a particular group within a select geographic area</li> <li>○ Is a good time to pursue</li> <li>○ Is not being dealt with by other organizations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• During the March 11 and 12, 2011 council meeting, members identified effective community engagement as an issue within</li> </ul>

Indicators	Accomplishments
	<p>the region. The process of identifying issues began with council members stating regional issues observed or experienced within the region. Issues identified included: land use planning, regionalism, community engagement, retention and recruitment of skills, labour, transportation, and food security. After researching the strengths and challenges of each issue, members who championed an issue, answered questions with other members providing rebuttals. Subsequently, council members voted to identify the 2011-12 year's issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On June 1 and 2, 2011, in consultation with Dr. Kelly Vodden, Memorial University Department of Geography, council confirmed the need for effective community engagement within the region and identified this issue to the researcher.</li> </ul>
<p>Researched issue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August 1, 2011 the council initiated a research partnership with Dr. Vodden to investigate past experiences with community engagement in the region and innovative approaches to citizen and community engagement that might be undertaken in the future.</li> <li>• This research provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a literature review on community engagement approaches and practices; extending from regional to international experiences;</li> <li>○ a comprehensive research report outlining better public engagement techniques with respect to timing, methods, capacity –building, and innovative approaches;</li> <li>○ a summary report intended for policy-makers and public readers; and</li> <li>○ a presentation to deliver key research results to relevant government Ministers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Indicators	Accomplishments
Consensus developed on advice to Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the March 2 and 3, 2012 council meeting, members viewed the researchers presentation, asked questions, accepted submitted reports and reached consensus on policy options. The council compiled policy options and submitted them to government.</li> <li>• Two significant policy options were identified as advice for consideration by government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should adopt a provincial standard for Community Engagement. These standards should be adopted through an inclusive process. The Rural Secretariat should become the lead agency in support of this provincial standard.</li> <li>○ The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should identify resources that support the provincial standard. One idea is to have a long term pilot to determine the level of support needed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Communicated advice to Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter of council's recommendations, the document <i>Developing Innovative Approaches for Community Engagement</i>, and a summary report was distributed to Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, Minister of Health and Community Services, Minister of Finance, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Education , Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, Minister Responsible for the Volunteer and Non-Profit Sector, MHA for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, MHA Baie Verte – Springdale, MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, MHA for Exploits and Assistant Deputy Minister for Rural Secretariat.</li> </ul>

Indicators	Accomplishments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An accompanying letter invited each Minister, or a senior member of their staff, to discuss these findings. The council invited each department to engage with council on this issue.</li> </ul>

**Discussion of Results:**

There is now widespread agreement among community development practitioners, governments and society on the need for meaningful participation of citizens in the decision-making processes that affect them. Despite this common understanding, different levels of governments struggle with significant engagement of the citizens they represent when creating policies or programs.

Members of the Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Regional Council encourage government to consider the recommendations in this advice as a means to strengthen its engagement with community. Council members were pleased with the research and their ability to share this information with several government departments.

## 10. ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Regional Council aims to provide input and advice to the Provincial Government on long-term opportunities and challenges facing the region. The council strives to be a regional voice for citizens identifying key economic, social, cultural and environmental issues crucial to sustainability. This is a long-term process that will require ongoing collaboration with citizens, stakeholders and interests in the region.

In addition to the points raised in Section Nine, three additional highlights and accomplishments are worthy of mention. These are consistent with the Provincial Government’s strategic directions for the Rural Secretariat and council’s mandate, and will serve to inform the work of the council.

- In January 2012, council members attended Regional Council Renewal and Orientation meeting where the Provincial Government asked council members to deliberate and provide advice for Fire and Emergency Services – Newfoundland and Labrador (FES-NL) on the topic of 911. This unit is tasked to prepare citizens, communities, partners and governments to deal with, respond to and recover from fire, emergencies, and disasters. Participants, asked to discuss the feasibility of expanding basic and/ or enhanced 911 services in the province, provided input based on their regional perspectives. Councils were pleased to be asked and would be willing to participate in similar engagements in the future.

- Two other areas of interest for the council were accessing health care and providing after school bussing to students wishing to participate in educational activities following the regular school day. After research and deliberation, the council submitted letters of advice to the appropriate departments within the Provincial Government.
- In 2011-12, Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton Regional Council in partnership with Gander –New-Wes-Valley Regional Council, Central Health, Nova Central School District, College of the North Atlantic, private post-secondary institutions and Memorial University of Newfoundland’s Faculty of Medicine have initiated a Central Newfoundland Citizens’ Engagement. This initiative hopes to design, implement and evaluate an evidence informed process which will engage rural citizens in discussions related to sustainable services that meet the needs of the population. This work will be ongoing for the following two years.

## 1 1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

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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 four 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-sectorial 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 the Provincial Government to advance efforts.

**Long-term thinking**

Long-term thinking continues to be an opportunity and a challenge. Council believes that long-term thinking is essential to achieve regional sustainability, it provides an opportunity to set a shared priority goal and to, collectively, define the steps required to achieve the goal.

**Regional community-based research**

Rural Secretariat staff work with regional partners and regional councils to develop community-based research initiatives. These initiatives gather data at the regional level giving stakeholders involved the information and background knowledge they need to effectively advise the Provincial Government on regional and rural policy issues. Council can use this opportunity to delve more deeply and attain evidence based information on their identified priorities for sustainability.

# APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

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## 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:

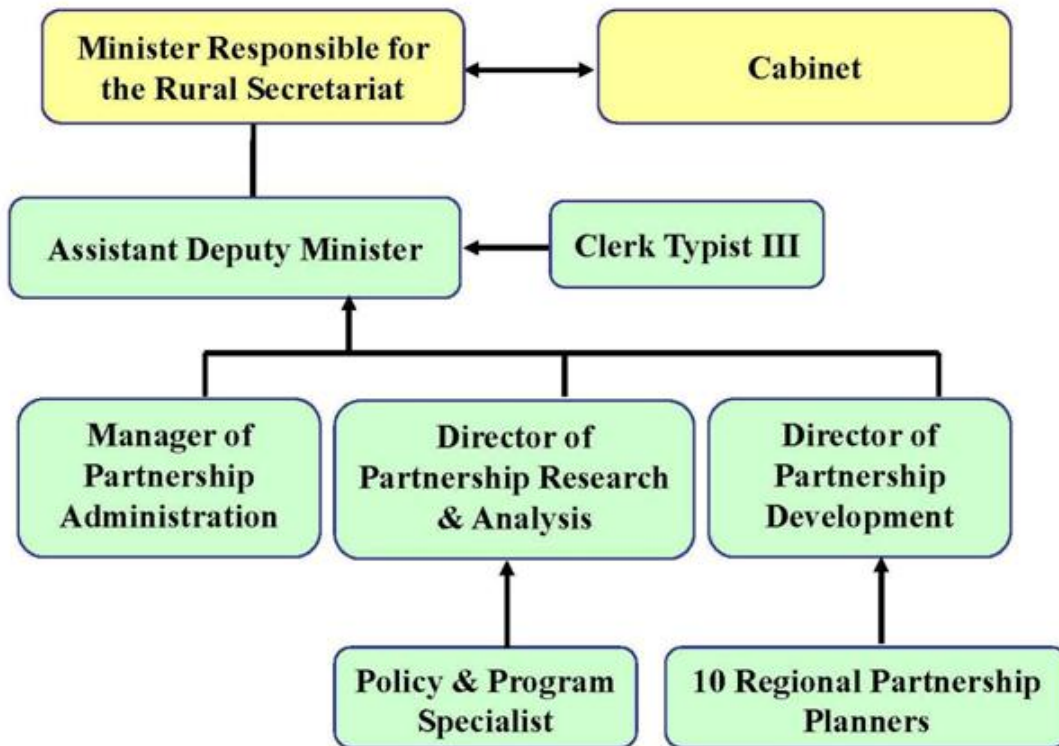
- Citizen-based policy advice
- Public dialogue and engagement
- Collaboration
- Research

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

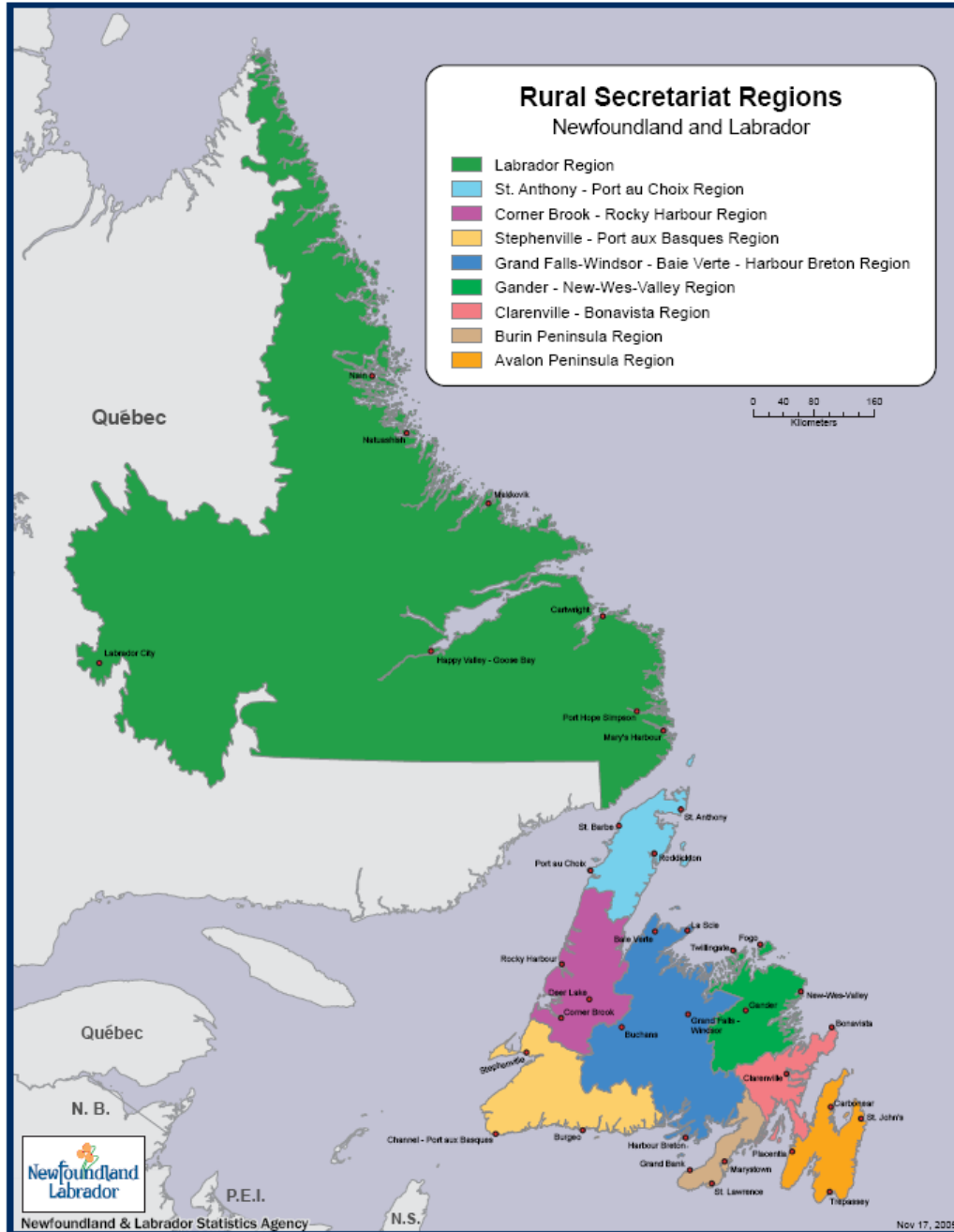
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## Rural Secretariat Organizational Chart





# APPENDIX C: MAP OF RURAL SECRETARIAT REGIONS



# APPENDIX D: MANDATES OF RURAL SECRETARIAT AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

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## **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 Linda Brett



Courtesy of Linda Brett



Courtesy of Life Unlimited for Older Adults



## Rural Secretariat

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