

Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Environment,
Conservation and
Climate Change





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** (the **Act**), I am pleased to present the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan for the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change – a category one government entity designated under the **Act**. This plan has been developed to align with the applicable strategic directions of Government and highlights key priorities, goals and objectives for the period of April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2029. As Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for achieving the specified goals herein.

My department's focus is on safeguarding our air, land, and water, while ensuring that development occurs responsibly and sustainably. The Department plays a central role in guiding climate action, conservation initiatives, environmental protection, and evidence based policy that supports healthy communities and a sustainable economy. We will continue to work with interest groups, communities, and partners across the province to achieve these objectives and to build a more sustainable future for generations to come.

I am grateful to work alongside such a skilled and dedicated team within the Department. Their expertise and commitment are essential to achieving the goals set out in this plan, and I sincerely appreciate their ongoing service to the people of this province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Tibbs', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon. Chris Tibbs

Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change

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Departmental Overview

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is committed to protecting the province's land, water, and air. It is responsible for stewardship of the province's natural environment through the administration of the environmental assessment process; the prevention and control of pollution; and management of water resources across Newfoundland and Labrador. The Department also oversees the management and remediation of impacted sites; manages wilderness and ecological reserves; and evaluates opportunities to expand the province's network of protected areas.

The Department leads provincial strategies and develops programs to advance climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, support the transition to a low-carbon economy, and contribute to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Organizational Structure

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is divided into five divisions across two branches:

Environment Branch

- Environmental Assessment Division – oversees the environmental assessment process to ensure that proposed projects are developed in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- Pollution Prevention Division – develops plans, programs, standards, and activities related to waste management, petroleum storage, industry air emissions, environmental science, pesticides, contaminated sites, and environmental emergency response.
- Water Resources Management Division – implements programs to protect, enhance, conserve, develop, control, and effectively utilize Newfoundland and Labrador's water resources.

Conservation and Climate Change Branch

- Climate Change Division – develops policy, research, analysis, and initiatives related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as energy efficiency.
- Policy, Planning and Natural Areas Division – oversees the management of the province’s wilderness and ecological reserves, protected areas planning, and provincial Canadian Heritage Rivers Program, as well as coordinates and supports the Department’s policy development and strategic planning activities.

The Department leads several cross-departmental initiatives, including the Provincial Waste Management Strategy, Drinking Water Safety Action Plan, and Climate Change Action Plans. In addition, the Department coordinates activities related to 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 www.gov.nl.ca/ecc.

Reporting Entities

The **Transparency and Accountability Act** and **Public Service Commission Act** establish planning and reporting requirements for government entities. Four such entities report to the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change, of which three are currently active. The entities that report to the Minister include:

- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Advisory Council;
- Multi-Materials Stewardship Board;
- Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council; and
- Net-Zero Advisory Council (inactive).

Legislation

The Department is responsible for managing the following legislation and associated regulations:

- **Environmental Protection Act;**
- **Management of Greenhouse Gas Act;**
- **Water Resources Act;** and
- **Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act.**

Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is to advance the environmental sustainability of the province.

Staff and Budget

The Department’s gross expenditure budget for 2026–27 is \$61,398,900 with planned related revenue of approximately \$33,501,800, for a net expenditure of \$27,897,100.

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change comprises 114 positions (69 permanent, 40 temporary, and five contractual), located in seven offices throughout the province.

Branch	# of Employees	Budget
Executive and Support Services	9	\$1,085,400
Environment	84	\$13,119,400
Conservation and Climate Change	21	\$13,692,300

Primary Clients

The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change's primary clients include:

- Owners and operators of large industrial facilities, including those involved in electricity generation; manufacturing and processing; mining and quarrying; and oil and gas extraction;
- Businesses involved in activities such as pesticide application, waste management, heating oil and refrigeration services, among others;
- Consultants, such as those in the engineering and waste management sectors;
- Government partners at municipal, interprovincial, and federal levels;
- Non-governmental, volunteer, and not-for-profit organizations; and
- Members of the public.

Vision

The vision of the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is a clean, sustainable, and resilient environment protected through responsible stewardship for current and future generations.

Strategic Issues

Issue 1 – Protecting and Managing Water Resources

The Department’s Water Resources Management Division oversees programs to protect, enhance, conserve, develop, and effectively utilize Newfoundland and Labrador’s water resources. The Department’s programs include the provision of technical advice to communities for the delivery of clean, safe drinking water; preparation for floods and droughts; and water and climate monitoring. The Department relies on innovative, forward-thinking actions – supported by dedicated, sustained investment – to anticipate and adapt to communities’ evolving needs and the growing variety of activities and events that may impact water resources.

The Department’s work towards strengthening and safeguarding water resources supports Government’s commitments to promote public health and safety while supporting environmental sustainability and resilience. Increased protection, monitoring, and management of water resources will improve access to clean, safe drinking water; enhance Government’s capacity to respond to events that may affect water safety or availability; and support Government to deliver modern, effective services, and supports across the province.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have improved protection and effective management of water resources across Newfoundland and Labrador through new and enhanced processes, instruments, and training efforts.

Indicators:

- Updated existing and introduced new protection mechanisms and programs.
- Continued operator training, education and one-on-one mentoring to improve drinking water safety.

- Encourage adaptation of dam safety review protocols by dam owners to minimize risk to public safety and environment.
- Enhanced public safety against potential floods.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have initiated steps to improve protection and effective management of water resources.

Indicators:

- Continued work on the Drinking Water Quality Improvement Initiative, by:
 - updating and developing standards, policies, and guidelines to protect drinking water, that reflect current best practices and account for the impacts of climate change; and
 - developing outreach materials to educate municipal officials about the importance of clean, safe, and secure drinking water.
- Improved flood risk management and monitoring practices across the province, by:
 - advancing a provincial flood management strategy;
 - developing a new operational flood forecasting system for the Exploits River; and
 - increasing the number of communities with new or updated floodplain mapping from 45 to 50.
- Improved operation and maintenance of water and wastewater systems by developing guidelines, inventories for facilities, and reviews of systems.
- Finalized semi-public water supply inventory, guidance framework, and webpage.
- Developed system for interactive baseline groundwater chemistry mapping and improved quality control procedures for real-time groundwater quality monitoring stations.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have advanced initiatives that improve protection and effective management of water resources.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have developed, coordinated, implemented, and supported initiatives that improve protection and effective management of water resources.

Issue 2 – Strengthened Stewardship of Land and Air

Government activities, policies, programs, and legislation are essential means through which the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change can promote, sustain, and improve the province's natural environment. The Department will support initiatives that encourage individuals, groups, and communities to act responsibly and to participate actively in the protection of Newfoundland and Labrador's land and air.

Enhancing stewardship of land and air includes promoting sustainable land use; advancing initiatives that reduce emissions and improve air quality; and supporting practices that protect ecosystems and maintain the integrity of natural landscapes. The Department will focus on developing new tools and approaches to improve stewardship of land and air resources, to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador is well positioned to address and adapt to evolving environmental pressures and emerging challenges.

The Department will continue to work collaboratively with communities, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, other levels of government, industry, businesses, academia, and the public to advance environmental stewardship across the province, emphasizing environmental protection as a shared responsibility.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have implemented initiatives that increase environmental stewardship and strengthen protection of land and air resources.

Indicators:

- Increased government coordination, accountability, and information exchange on projects.
- Expanded outreach and partnerships with the public, industry and Indigenous governments and organizations to promote environmental stewardship and protected areas across the province.
- Advanced new programs and regulatory tools to support environmental protection.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have initiated steps that increase environmental stewardship and strengthen protection of land and air resources.

Indicators:

- Finalized an approach with the federal government regarding a process for joint environmental assessments.
- Continued work towards an agreement with the federal government for remediation of former military sites in Labrador.
- Engaged with Indigenous Governments and Organizations and members of the public on proposed protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.
- Assessed and developed mitigation activities for impacted sites managed by the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have advanced initiatives that increase environmental stewardship and strengthen protection of land and air resources.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have developed, coordinated, implemented, and supported initiatives that increase environmental stewardship and strengthen protection of land and air resources.

Issue 3 – Responding to Climate Change

The impacts of climate change can be significant on communities, individuals, and the environment and are worsening. Warmer temperatures and changes in precipitation can impact natural ecosystems, public health, water availability, and food production. The Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change is responsible for climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and programs. Throughout the planning period, the Department will work towards developing new climate change mitigation and adaptation action plans to support realistic and actionable steps to reduce emissions and improve communities' resilience to the impacts of climate change. Achieving the objectives of these action plans will require a coordinated whole-of-government approach and support from partners.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will manage actions that meaningfully reduce the province's carbon footprint while enhancing the communities' capacity to prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change.

Indicators:

- Conducted consultation and engagement processes with the public, industry, municipalities, Indigenous governments and organizations, and other interest groups.
- Released a new Climate Change Action Plan to reduce carbon emissions and enhance climate change adaptation and resilience.
- Implemented actions to reduce carbon emissions.
- Supported communities and residents in adapting to a changing climate.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have initiated steps to reduce the province's carbon footprint and enhance ability to adapt to climate change.

Indicators:

- Collaborated with all levels of government and engaged with the public and industry, municipalities, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, and other interest groups to progress development of the Climate Change Action Plan.
- Supported citizens and interest groups to undertake climate change mitigation and adaptation measures by developing resources and tools, managing funding support programs, and through public education initiatives.
- Participated in intergovernmental and interprovincial working groups and committees and programs to advance climate change policy coordination.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change will have advanced actions that reduce the province's carbon footprint and ability to adapt to climate change.

Objective 3:

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By March 31, 2029, the Department will have developed, coordinated, implemented, and supported strategies to reduce the province's carbon footprint and prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change.

Annex A: Select Relevant Government Strategic Directions

The issues, goals, and objectives set out in this plan support Government’s commitments made as part of its 2025 election platform and subsequent Government mandate, which can be accessed [here](#). The following represents a summary of those commitments most relevant for the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

Supporting Municipalities, Encouraging Strong Regions¹

- Work with municipalities to identify and address vulnerabilities to storm damage, forest fires, flooding, and update emergency preparedness plans for dealing with the increasing number of extreme events.
- Improve the delivery of safe, potable drinking water. We will work with local leaders and communities to develop workable small-town solutions that match the area’s needs.
- Prioritize funds to municipalities who want to invest to create or improve a municipal water supply.

Protecting Our Environment²

- Review learnings from previous Climate Change Action Plans and create a more attainable Climate Change Action Plan.
- Amend the Oil to Electric Incentive program to allow more home owners to make the switch away from oil heated homes.
- Promote environmental education and awareness through community programs and outreach.
- Work with Indigenous leaders to understand the threat that climate change has on the Indigenous way of life.
- Support communities in adapting to climate change and recovering from its impacts.

¹ Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. **For All of Us: PC Platform 2025.** 31

² Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. **For All of Us: PC Platform 2025.** 35

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- Help develop long-term strategies while providing direct aid to residents affected by climate-related disasters, including floods, wildfires, and severe storms.