

Business Plan

2026-2029

Labrador Affairs





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister for the Department of Labrador Affairs, I am pleased to present our business plan for 2026-2029. This plan covers the period April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029 and was developed in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, under which the Department is classified as a Category 2 entity. It provides an overview of the Department and indicates key goals and objectives to be accomplished during this period.

In consideration of Government's strategic directions, key priorities of my mandate have been identified for the next three years. These directions support regional development, strong communities, and modern planning that reflects the needs of Labrador. Strengthened relationships are helping build strategic alliances that advances economic growth, social development, and shared action on northern challenges.

As the administrator of province-wide medical transportation programs, the Department continues to engage stakeholders, explore potential partnerships, and implement enhancements to ensure that all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador can access the care they need, regardless of where they live.

By reducing financial and logistical barriers, our programs not only help residents receive the care they need but also contribute to healthier, more resilient communities across Labrador.

As the Minister, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievements of the goals and objectives pertaining to the Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lela E." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon. Lela Evans
Minister of Labrador Affairs

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Departmental Overview

The focus of the Department of Labrador Affairs is to advocate for social and economic development while providing advice on government policies, planning and programs that impact Labrador. The Department is also responsible for the administration of the Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP) and the Medical Transportation Supports (MeTS) Program for the province.

Vision

The vision of the Department of Labrador Affairs is of a strong, sustainable and vibrant Labrador, where all people have the opportunity to prosper and contribute to their communities, regions and the province.

Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Labrador Affairs is to advance the social and economic development of Labrador by ensuring the unique perspectives are considered in the formation of government policy and in the delivery of provincial government programs and services in Labrador. The Department also administers medical transportation assistance programs for all areas of the Province.

Lines of Business:

1. Policy and Programming

The Department of Labrador Affairs is responsible for the development, implementation and administration of provincial policies and programs from a Labrador and rural/remote perspective. The Department aims to ensure that provincial policies, programs and services consider Labrador-related issues by providing advice to provincial government departments and agencies and through its participation in provincial horizontal initiatives.

Labrador Affairs is responsible for the administration of Labrador-specific programs and grants that include:

- the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy;

- the Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Program;
- the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy Program and School Sport NL Labrador Travel Program;
- the Labrador Winter Games; and,
- the Labrador Air Access Program (pilot program).

The Department also administers two programs that provide financial help to Medical Care Plan (MCP) beneficiaries who incur out-of-pocket travel costs to access eligible insured medical services unavailable in their community.

2. Coordination, Collaboration and Advocacy

To achieve its mandate to advance the social and economic development of Labrador, Labrador Affairs coordinates, collaborates, and advocates for Labrador and northern related initiatives. The Department works collaboratively across government departments and entities, as well as with federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal partners, industry organizations, and other stakeholders. The Department also works with Medical Care Plan (MCP) beneficiaries to provide assistance or support for their eligible medical transportation needs through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program and the Medical Transportation Supports Program.

Clients/Stakeholders:

The primary clients and stakeholders of the Labrador Affairs branch include:

- Labrador residents, communities and groups, who expect leadership in facilitating economic and social development in Labrador;
- The Provincial Government and its departments/entities which require policy advice and input on Labrador issues;
- Federal, municipal, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations that seek information and input on Labrador issues; and
- Clients of Labrador Affairs programs which the Department administers.

Clients and stakeholders of the Medical Transportation branch include:

- MCP beneficiaries required to travel from rural and remote areas to larger centres to access specialized insured health care services;
- Income Support clients; and
- Federal, municipal and Indigenous Governments and Organizations.

Additional information on the mandate and lines of business of Labrador Affairs is located on its website at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/la/>.

Staff and Budget

The Department of Labrador Affairs consists of three branches: Executive Support* (3 employees), Labrador Affairs** (10 employees), and the Medical Transportation Program (49 employees), with staff located in Happy Valley–Goose Bay and St. John's. The Department's total budget is \$25,181,300. The Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs and the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Medical Transportation Program are based in St. John's, while the Assistant Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs and the Director of Labrador Affairs are located in Happy Valley–Goose Bay.

*The Deputy Minister of Labrador Affairs is shared with Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

** The Trail Inspector with Labrador Affairs is seasonal.

Issue One: Northern and Arctic Priorities

The Department of Labrador Affairs represents the Province on various Northern and Arctic policy initiatives. As global interest in the Arctic grows, driven by climate change, increased accessibility, resource development, scientific research, and geopolitical considerations, Labrador's strategic location is becoming increasingly significant. Changing environmental conditions are reshaping access to northern regions, shifting transportation, research, and economic corridors further east toward the Labrador coast.

This evolving landscape positions Labrador as an important contributor to Canada's northern agenda, offering unique perspectives, infrastructure potential, and strong community knowledge to support responsible development, environmental stewardship, and Arctic and Northern sovereignty. Through its participation on Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) committees, the Department helps ensure Labrador's priorities are reflected in both provincial initiatives and federal Arctic policy.

Since 2000, the Department has played a lead role for the Province in the Northern Development Ministers Forum (NDMF), which advances shared priorities among Canada's northern jurisdictions. The Department also represents the Province on working groups associated with the Government of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and the Arctic Cooperation Advisory Committee.

Given Labrador's position as an eastern gateway to the Arctic, along with its strong cultural, economic, and transportation connections across the North, the region plays a valuable role in supporting Canada's Arctic presence and strengthening northern collaboration.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have strengthened its role in Northern and Arctic priorities at the regional and national level.

Indicators:

- Supported Government on priorities of Northern and Arctic importance to the province;
- Strengthened relationships with Northern and Arctic partners through participation in conferences, meetings, and intergovernmental forums;
- Participated in initiatives that increase collaboration and cooperation between the Province and Northern stakeholders on a regional and national level; and,
- Provided input on provincial defense initiatives.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have increased its presence at Northern and Arctic platforms to further inform the Government on emerging opportunities and issues.

Indicators:

- Coordinated the Province's responses to Arctic and Northern initiatives through FPT committees, reflecting Labrador's geographic and strategic significance; and,
- Engaged in Northern and Arctic forums to reinforce Newfoundland and Labrador's role as an active Northern partner.
- Hosted the Northern Development Ministers Forum to highlight the importance of the North in Canada.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have identified priority areas for collaboration on Northern and Arctic policy initiatives.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have advanced recommended actions on priority areas related to Northern and Arctic policy initiatives.

Issue Two: Northern Strategic Plan

In October 2025 the incoming Government committed to, “Collaborate with Labradorians to develop a new Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador”. A strategic plan was first launched in 2007 as a long-term, horizontal initiative to strengthen social, economic, and infrastructure development in Labrador. Since then, the region’s circumstances and priorities have continued to evolve, creating a need to reassess Labrador’s current and emerging needs and priorities. To support this, government will work collaboratively with communities across Labrador to develop an all of government strategic plan. The plan will focus on a priority planning framework that reflects the region’s unique conditions, challenges, and opportunities. The informed input on priorities will assist Government in determining areas of importance to advance social and economic development in Labrador.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have developed and implemented a new Northern Strategic Plan that reflects the social and economic priorities of Labrador, supported by meaningful collaboration, evidence-based analysis, and a structured approach to long-term planning.

Indicators:

- Conducted meaningful engagement across Labrador with all stakeholders.
- Created a comprehensive and culturally informed plan that reflects the needs, priorities, and perspectives of communities, Indigenous partners, industry, and government stakeholders.
- Ensure the plan is developed and implemented with an all of government approach.
- Ensured the plan identified social and economic priority areas for Labrador.
- Developed a governance and performance-monitoring structure to support long-term implementation.
- Publicly reported on the progress of the plan.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have developed determined the development process for a Northern Strategic Plan.

Indicators:

- Completed environmental scan and socio-economic benchmark analysis.
- Identified a workplan for the development and implementation of the plan.
- Created interdepartmental working group to support the implementation of the plan.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have developed and publicly released the Northern Strategic Plan.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have assessed progress of the plan, reassessed priorities and publicly reported on actions and outcomes.

Issue Three: Medical Transportation Assistance

Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those living in rural and remote communities, often face significant barriers in accessing medically necessary, Medical Care Plan (MCP) insured services that are not available in their home communities. These barriers include long-distance travel requirements, limited availability of specialized services, and the financial burden associated with out-of-community care. Improving access to medically required travel and reducing the associated financial burden are critical to ensuring equitable access to health care across the province.

To address these challenges, Labrador Affairs administers two key programs: the Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP) and the Medical Transportation Supports (MeTS) Program. Together, these programs support residents in accessing medically necessary care by offsetting or covering eligible travel costs.

The MeTS Program provides up to 100 per cent coverage of eligible medical travel costs for Income Support clients and Community Support clients receiving home support, financial benefits, or subsidized long-term care. Support may be provided through advance funding, direct travel arrangements, or reimbursement following travel for MCP-insured services.

MTAP is a cost-shared, post-travel financial assistance program available to eligible MCP beneficiaries who do not qualify for MeTS. It helps offset the cost of travel required to access specialized insured medical services unavailable in a patient's home community.

Given the province's geography and the continued reliance on travel to access specialized care, strengthening these programs is essential. The Medical Transportation Assistance Branch is focused on modernizing policies, improving service delivery, and enhancing client experience to reduce barriers and ensure more equitable, timely, and affordable access to medically necessary care.

GOAL:

By March 31, 2029, Labrador Affairs will have strengthened equitable access to medically necessary care for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador by modernizing programs, expanding coverage, improving client experience, and enhancing the efficiency of medical travel supports.

Indicators:

- Implemented and maintained clear, modernized, and aligned policies for MTAP and MeTS to ensure program clarity, fairness, and consistency.
- Improved public awareness and understanding of medical travel supports through enhanced online presence, clearer guidance, and accessible information.
- Enhanced program efficiency and client experience through improved application and claims processing, faster turnaround times, and integrated online tools.
- Utilized client feedback and program performance data to support continuous improvement and responsiveness to emerging medical travel needs across the province.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have advanced the transition of MTAP to 100% coverage of eligible costs, within set caps and deductibles, for approved specialized MCP insured medical services, as outlined in policy.

Indicators:

- Developed and implemented updated MTAP application and claim forms, including new online functions designed to streamline submissions and improve user experience.
- Included clear, detailed guidelines and step by step instructions on each application and claim form to support clients in completing submissions accurately.
- Improved the MTAP section of the Department of Labrador Affairs website to enhance navigation, accessibility, and clarity of information for clients and service providers.

- Introduced policy and program enhancements to the MeTS program to improve alignment with MTAP and ensure consistency in coverage and client experience.
- Communicated the transition toward full eligible cost coverage and improved benefits through updated online content, targeted outreach, and stakeholder engagement.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have collaborated with the Department of Health and Community Services to explore opportunities for practical solutions to reduce the need for medical travel while ensuring timely, patient centered access to care.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Labrador Affairs will have transitioned the MTAP application and claim submission process to an online platform to enhance processing efficiency and provide faster, more accessible service to clients.

Annex A: Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions are the articulation of desired physical, social and economic outcomes and normally require action by more than one government entity. These directions are generally communicated by government strategic directions, platform documents, Throne and Budget Speeches, policy documents, and other communiques. The Transparency and Accountability Act requires departments and public bodies to take into account these strategic directions in the preparation of their performance-based plans. This action will facilitate the integration of planning practices across government and will ensure that all entities are moving forward on key commitments.

The strategic directions that are relevant to the Department of Labrador Affairs are provided below. Each direction is comprised of a number of components or focus areas. These focus areas will be addressed through the various planning processes of the Department of Labrador Affairs.

Title: Socio-economic development

Outcome: Enhance the social and economic development for Labrador

This outcome supports the Department's vision of a strong, sustainable and vibrant Labrador, where all people have the opportunity to prosper and contribute to their communities, regions and the province. This will require focus in the following areas:

- Program administration
- Stewardship and advocacy
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Provincial Government policy and program delivery responsive to Labrador interests

BUSINESS PLAN 2026-2029

Title: Access to specialized health care services

Outcome: Provide timely access to transportation assistance and reduce the financial burden experienced by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians accessing specialized health care services.

This outcome supports the Department of Labrador Affairs' vision where all people have the opportunity to prosper and contribute to their communities, regions and the province.

This will require focus in the following areas:

- Engagement and consultation
- Program efficiency
- Provincial Government policies, programs and services collaboration