

Avalon Peninsula Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat Executive Council



Activity Report 2008-09

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Message from the Chair

As Chairperson for the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council, I hereby submit the annual activity report for the 2008-09 fiscal year. On behalf of the council and in accordance with the *Guidelines for Annual Activity Reports for Category 3 Government Entities*, my signature is indicative of the Council's accountability for the results achieved.

During this past year, the council has focussed mainly on youth retention and attraction. Throughout our deliberations, we believe that the demographics and the importance of youth are dominant factors in creating a sustainable region. With the announcement by the Provincial Government to develop a Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy for the province, the council felt that the timing was right to provide advice into this important initiative.

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council also began deliberations on its other two priority areas - environment and infrastructure. We have begun to engage government, academia and community stakeholders to assist us in formulating our perspectives as we seek to refine our focus in these areas to develop policy advice.

We look forward to continuing our work in 2009-10.

Sincerely,



Kerry Murray, Chair
Avalon Peninsula Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat

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1. Overview of the Region



The population of the Avalon Peninsula is estimated to be 250,700 in 2009, or about 49.1 percent of the total provincial population. This share is expected to increase to over 52 percent over the next 15 years.

Employment on the Avalon Peninsula is estimated at 132,840 according to Census 2006, or 49.7 percent of total provincial employment. Employment in the region increased by almost 8.0 percent over the past five years, and by 13.5 percent over the past ten years.

Goods-producing industries, including primary activity, mining and oil extraction, construction, utilities and manufacturing accounted for 19.9 percent of employment in the region in 2005. This sector accounted for 26.8 percent of provincial employment. Industry level detail is provided in Chart 1.

Private sector services, excluding private education and health services, accounted for 50.5 percent of employment compared to 46.3 percent for the province as a whole.

Last, employment in public administration and services that are largely funded or delivered by the public sector, such as education, health care and social assistance, totalled 39,290 in 2005, or 29.5 percent of employment. This compares to 27.1 percent for the province as a whole.

Within the broad public administration and related services group, health care and social assistance services employment totalled 16,790 and educational services totalled 10,375. Federal, provincial, municipal and aboriginal public administration, including defence services, totalled 12,125. Industry level detail is provided in

Chart 1
Employment by Industry, 2005

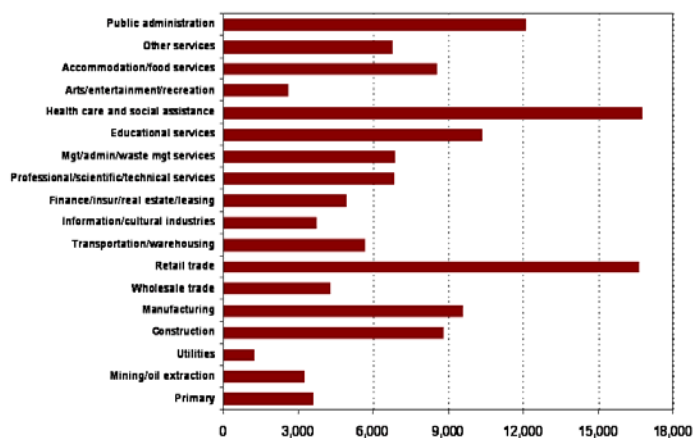
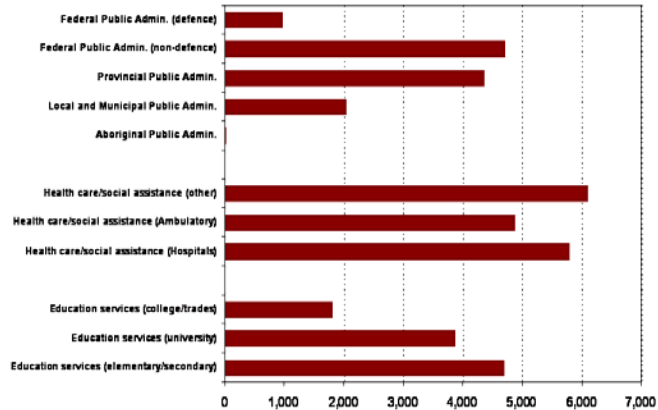


Chart 2.

There were 161.3 persons employed in public administration and related services in 2005 per 1,000 people resident in the region in 2005. This compares to 142.7 persons per every 1,000 residents for the province as a whole. Industry level detail is provided in Chart 3.

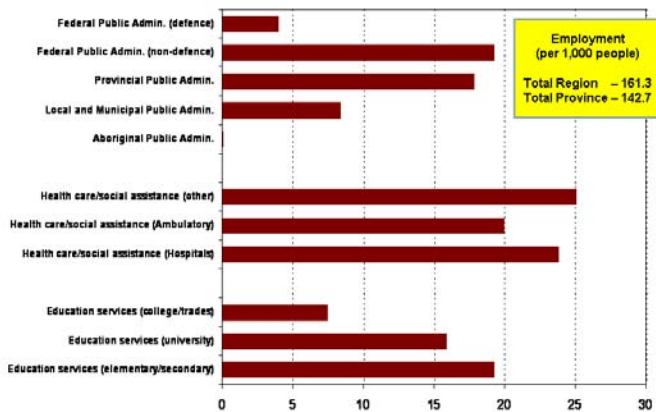
This ratio is aided by both a relatively high federal presence and because Memorial University's main campus is located in the region. After adjusting for these factors, the region's ratio declines to 122.1 persons compared to 116.5 for the province as a whole.

Chart 2
Public and Related Services Employment, 2005



The profile of employment in the region is also changing. In 2005, 80.3 percent of employment was considered full-time (30 or more hours per week) and 56.5 percent of employment was considered full-year (50 or more weeks worked per year). By comparison, 78.4 percent of employment was considered full-time in 1995, and 53.0 percent was considered full-year.

Chart 3
Per Capita Public and Related Services Employment, 2005



The potential labour supply is growing at a slower rate than employment. The labour force population (ages 15-64) was estimated at 174,300 in 1995 and 177,600 in 2005, representing growth of about 1.9 percent over the ten year period.

Faster employment growth relative to the labour supply resulted in a lower unemployment rate and higher incomes, and indirectly resulted in lower reliance on income support.

The regional unemployment rate declined from about 20 percent in 1995 to 10.5 percent in 2005, and personal income per capita, after adjusting for inflation and personal taxes, grew by 28.8 percent.

Total incidence of income support, or the percentage of people that received income support at some point during the year, declined from 16.8 percent in 1995 to 11.6 percent in 2005.

One of the key long term labour market challenges facing the region relates to how to meet

employment demand as the labour supply ages and declines over the next decade. Today, about 30 percent of those ages 15-64 are ages 50-64. This is expected to increase to about 35 percent over the next 15 years. Over the same period, the labour force age population is expected to decline by about 9 percent from about 178,900 to just over 163,100 persons.

Additional information, including gender-specific information and information for other levels of geography, can be found at www.communityaccounts.ca and www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural

2. Regional Council Overview

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council is comprised of 16 members – seven female and nine male. The council currently has representation from larger and smaller communities throughout the region, including ten members from communities of less than 5,000 people. The Council met four times in 2008-09.

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. Below is a summary of the expenditures for the region including both planner and council costs:

	<i>Avalon Budget 2008-09</i>	<i>Avalon Expenditures</i>
Transportation & Communication	36,500.00	25,205.16
Supplies	5,000.00	1,451.88
Purchased Services	2,500.00	6,082.49
Total Budgeted	44,000.00	32,739.53

The Rural Secretariat also funds two regional planner positions in the region, who among other duties, act as an information resource for the Council and facilitate the work of the Council. The planners for the Avalon Peninsula region are Jamilee Fitzpatrick and Michelle Yetman. Their regional offices are located in Placentia (Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development) and Carbonear (College of the North Atlantic campus).

Regional Council members	Community
John Adams	Harbour Grace
Sean Bishop	Carbonear
Paul Connors	Conception Bay South
Lorelie Dean	Conception Bay South
Bonnie James	St. John's
Sheila Lee	Riverhead, St. Mary's Bay
Des Linehan	Placentia
Anne Manuel	Torbay
Jay McGrath	Branch
Betty Moore	Clarke's Beach
Kerry Murray	Topsail
Bruce Pearce	St. John's
Bride Power	Marysvale
Maureen Sullivan	Calvert
Brendan White	Northern Bay
Dave Woodman	Harbour Main

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

3. Mandate

The Regional Council mandate is:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities of a region.
- To review key regional economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify policies and programs which either advance, negatively impact or 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 economic and social measures, and to encourage regional partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To nominate an individual to represent the region on the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

4. Lines of Business

The Council supports the Rural Secretariat's two lines of business.

- **Partnership Development.** The Rural Secretariat engages citizens and coordinates the development of partnerships to focus on sustainable regional development and provide direct consideration of regional issues in the development of public policy.
- **Regional Impact Awareness and Action.** The Rural Secretariat conducts research and analysis, and provides informed advice on opportunities and challenges in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

5. Values

The core values explain the character of the organization. These values are paramount to the mandate and activities of the Council and are as follows:

Collaboration	to commit to working together effectively
Creativity	to seek and support new ideas and approaches
Empowerment	to assume responsibility for participating in discussions, making informed decisions and taking personal responsibility for their contributions
Inclusion	to acknowledge others' views and perspectives and exercise the right and opportunity to express their own
Recognition	to recognize and value the skills that each bring
Transparency	to share open and objective advice based on sound information and principles
Trust	to be open and supportive when partnering and to follow through on requests and commitments

6. Primary Clients

The primary clients of the Regional Council include the Rural Secretariat, the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat, and departments and agencies within the provincial government, among others.

The Council will also engage individuals, groups and organizations within the region as it carries out its work.

7. Vision

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council supports the vision of the Rural Secretariat:

Sustainable regions 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

The mission statement identifies the priority focus area of the council. It represents the key long-term objective that the council will be striving towards as they move forward. The priority focus areas support the strategic directions of the Provincial Government. The statement also identifies the indicators that will assist both the council and the public in monitoring and evaluating success. The council will report on its mission statement in its 2010-11 Annual Report.

The council's mission statement is as follows:

By 2011, the council will have participated in an ongoing community engagement process that will demonstrate the value of two-way communication between the Provincial Government and citizens.

9. Report on Performance

In its 2008-11 Activity Plan the council identified three goals. This section outlines each of these goals, its measure and indicators, and describes activities undertaken by the council to advance its achievement.

The activities and performance of the council with respect to each of the goals as outlined below, is in support of the Provincial Government's strategic directions for the Rural Secretariat (Appendix A). In particular, the council's performance allowed for the development of new partnerships with various stakeholders at the regional level, and provided a new regional forum to discuss citizens' perspectives on regional and rural sustainability. The council recognizes that these strategic directions are long-term in nature and believes that its activities in 2008-09 and beyond will further support these directions.

9.1 Issue 1: Retention and Recruitment of Youth

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council believes that the retention and recruitment of youth to the Avalon region is crucial to long-term sustainability. Council members feel that a comprehensive strategy is needed to address this issue. Government's announcement of the development of a youth strategy is an important step and allowed the council to give appropriate and timely input to the Provincial Government.

<u>Goal:</u>	By 2011, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will present policy advice on key youth issues providing an informed regional perspective to the provincial government.
<u>2008-09 Objective:</u>	By 2009, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have developed a policy advice document on youth issues.
<u>Measure:</u>	Policy document developed and submitted to the provincial government.

Indicator	Accomplishments 2008-09
Regional research compiled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council conducted a multi-pronged research initiative to develop an informed perspective. Information was compiled and reviewed which allowed the council to identify key themes for discussion (see below for detail). The next three bullets provide additional detail on three elements of this research phase. • The council met with stakeholders (youth, municipalities, community groups, and private sector) within the region to identify key issues and concerns relating to youth retention and attraction. • The council engaged the Memorial University of Newfoundland Harris Centre to identify strategies used in other jurisdictions to address youth retention and attraction. This included a review of the New Brunswick Tuition Rebate program and initiatives in various Scandinavian countries. • The council reviewed <i>The Effectiveness of Youth Strategies in Rural Newfoundland and Labrador</i>, completed by Dr. Donna Hardy Cox, School of Social Work, and Memorial University.
Engaged with provincial government departments with similar mandates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council met with the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment to discuss the process and timelines to develop its advice document. • Council met members of the Youth Retention and Attraction Working Group to identify areas to collaborate in developing the strategy. The groups are comprised of representatives from the Departments of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Education, Innovation, Trade and Rural Development, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, the Rural Secretariat, and the Women's Policy Office. The outcome of this meeting led to the Regional Council being identified as a resource to identify groups/individuals to invite to focused youth and community sessions, and the Regional Council being a focus group for discussion on Youth Retention and Attraction.

Indicator	Accomplishments 2008-09
<p>Consensus developed by Regional Council on a policy advice document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions related to youth retention and attraction were held at the Avalon Council's four meetings in 2008-2009. • Key themes emerging from this research that informed the Council's perspective included the need for: (i) family friendly policies; (ii) access to services such as health care, education and child care; (iii) monetary and non-monetary incentives to attract and retain youth; (iv) the importance of economic and business development; (v) immigration; (iv) the importance of the image and perception of the Province; (vi) environmental protection; and (vii) importance of quality of life considerations. • Council completed a policy advice document which focused on issues it wished to be addressed in the YRAS as well as other points for consideration. • Council submitted the document to the Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment and to the Minister Responsible for the Rural Secretariat. • Key policy themes outlined in the advice document included: (i) enhanced "family friendly" policies such as increased capacity and flexibility of quality child care services in rural areas to meet a variety of parental work arrangements; (ii) tax policy incentives to youth that are linked to staying in the province; (iii) student debt reduction incentives to reward success, to reward students now making regular loan reduction payments, and to better "level" the cost of education for both rural and urban students; (iv) improved transportation and communication infrastructure and services; and (v) incentives to employers to increase labour demand. • The advice document also noted that the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy: (i) be aligned with existing strategies, policies and programs; (ii) be implemented in partnership with stakeholders; (iii) seek to reduce the rural and urban divide; and (iv) be linked to the development of a broader rural strategy.

Retention and recruitment of youth was identified by the council as a key element of its 2008-11 Activity Plan. This issue builds on the Provincial Government's formal announcement on June 5, 2008 that it would develop a Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy. In the context that

government will formally release the strategy in mid-2009, the council wishes to alter its planned work for 2009-10 and 2010-11.

In its Activity Plan, the council indicated that it wished to engage community stakeholders in 2009-10 regarding its advice document submitted in 2008-09. Council now feels that it would be more valuable to engage community stakeholders on how they can access and take advantage of programs, services and opportunities in the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy. The council feels this is a legitimate approach, particularly since its advice document is consistent with the elements put forward in the strategy. This approach will meet the integrity of the objectives and Goal as set out in the Activity Plan.

Based on these parameters, the council will work toward the following measure and indicators for its 2009-10 objective. To meet its 2010-11 objective and 2011 goal, the council intends to provide advice to the Provincial Government as to how strategy implementation can be tailored to meet the needs of the region.

2009-10 Objective:

By 2010, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have completed community engagement on the policy advice document.

2009-10 Measure:

- Conducted community engagement on YRAS Strategy document.

2009-10 Indicators:

- Number of community engagement sessions with stakeholders.
- Feedback documented.

9.2 Issue 2: Environment

The importance of environmental stewardship has been identified by the Regional Council. They have identified the need for investments to be made where necessary and regions need to reach a level of affordability on environmentally driven initiatives.

Goal:

By 2011, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have reviewed environmental issues, set priorities and provided policy advice to the provincial government.

2008-09 Objective:

By 2009, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have gathered information on regional environmental issues and strategies.

Measure:

Improved knowledge within the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council of environmental issues and strategies.

Indicator	Accomplishments 2008-09
Information gathered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council felt that it needed to develop a broad understanding of environmental issues globally, nationally and provincially prior to formulating a position on environmental issues affecting the region. • The council engaged the Memorial University of Newfoundland Harris Centre to identify research related to environmental issues, and met with researchers from Department of Geography to gain an understanding of their research perspectives. Discussions with researchers focused on adaptation and mitigation with respect to climate change specific to the Avalon Peninsula. • The council reviewed research reports such as <i>Climate Change Impacts on Coastal Communities</i>; and <i>The Effects of Global Change / Kyoto Agreement</i>. • The council identified other researchers within Memorial University to contact on environmental issues and concerns. Contact will be made with these researchers, as appropriate, in 2009-10.
Engaged with Provincial Government departments in identifying environmental issues and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council reviewed information from the Department of Environment and Conservation on the approach to adapting to climate change. • The council received a presentation from Department of Transportation and Works on provincial infrastructure priorities (see Goal 3). This presentation included a focus on linkages between infrastructure improvements and environmental change. • This work allowed the council to begin to identify regional specific environmental matters. On a preliminary basis, the primary issues focused on sea water intrusion, fresh water flooding, and water related infrastructure in and outside municipalities.

Based on these accomplishments, the council will work toward the following measure and indicators for it 2009-10 Objective.

2009-10 Objective: By 2010, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have identified key priorities to advance to the Provincial Government.

2009-10 Measure:

- Identify environmental priorities for the Avalon Peninsula Region.

2009-10 Indicators:

- Further research conducted
- Environmental priorities refined.

9.3 Issue 3: Infrastructure

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council has identified infrastructure as a key component to meeting the economic and social needs of the region and to enhance regional sustainability. The Regional Council believes that infrastructure investment has to be strategic and based on regional strengths. As well, they believe that infrastructure investments need to be linked to private sector development, skills development and public services.

Goal: By 2011, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have reviewed infrastructure issues and set priorities.

2008-09 Objective: By 2009, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have developed a full understanding of what infrastructure encompasses.

Measure: Clarification of Regional Council's understanding of infrastructure.

Indicator	Accomplishments 2008-09
Presentation on the scope of infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The council felt that it needed to develop a broad understanding of infrastructure issues prior to formulating a position on infrastructure issues affecting the region. Through the steps outlined below, Council gained a better understanding of the range of public infrastructure and the process by which decisions are made with respect to infrastructure investment.• The council received a presentation from Department of Transportation and Works on the provincial infrastructure strategy and priority areas for infrastructure investment on the Avalon Peninsula. Council also held discussions with Department of Transportation and Works on areas of concern with respect to infrastructure.• The council were informed of the various components that encompass infrastructure including: health, education, transportation (roads, airports, and ferries), justice, municipal Infrastructure, public buildings, social housing, telecommunications, and energy.

Based on these accomplishments, the council will work toward the following measure and indicators for its 2009-10 Objective.

2009-10 Objective:

By 2010, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council will have conducted research, including a jurisdictional analysis, and identified key priorities.

2009-10 Measure:

- Identified key infrastructure priorities for the Avalon Region.

2009-10 Indicators:

- Current strategies reviewed, including transportation and broadband.
- Identify infrastructure available within the region through a jurisdictional analysis
- Infrastructure priorities identified.

10. Additional Highlights

The Avalon Peninsula Regional Council is seeking to broaden public dialogue on long-term opportunities and challenges facing the region. It aims to provide input and advice to the Provincial Government on these opportunities and challenges. This is a long-term process that will require ongoing collaboration with citizens, stakeholders and interests in the region.

The council feels that its performance in 2008-09 has allowed it to make advancements in this process. It is providing an open and transparent means for rural perceptions, realities, opportunities, challenges and potential solutions to be discussed, debated and deliberated. It has brought together citizens, stakeholders and interests from differing backgrounds with differing priorities and perspectives, differing bases of information and knowledge, and differing expectations. It has built confidence, leadership and trust, and it has broadened public awareness of issues.

In addition to the points raised in Section 9, two additional highlights and accomplishments are worthy of mention. These are consistent with the Rural Secretariat's strategic directions and mandate, and will serve to inform the work of the council in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Three Regional Council members attended a learning event hosted by the Rural Secretariat on October 15, 2008. Building on the annual Dialogue Day events from 2004 to 2007, this event was facilitated by Dr. Rupert Downey of the University of Victoria and focused on community-based research. This learning event was followed by the *Knowledge in Motion '08* conference hosted by the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Development of Memorial University (MUN Harris Centre). This conference focused on the importance of linking university research to community development needs and priorities and how to translate knowledge to inform public policy and decision making.

The Regional Council continued its community engagement process. The focus of community

engagement shifted in 2008-09 from previous years. In 2008-09 there was increased emphasis on engagement with established stakeholders and organized groups in the areas of youth retention and attraction.

11. Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

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. Council feels that these challenges and opportunities can be categorized along three 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 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-sectoral 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 provide advice to government to advance efforts to provide such supports.

Regional communications

The council understands that a range of non-governmental organizations in rural areas provide advice to government on a range of policy matters. In large part, these organizations are focused on particular agendas, needs and interests, such as and among others, regional economic development, environmental awareness and protection, social policy advancement and municipal governance. The challenge for council is to openly and positively communicate its mandate and role to other regional stakeholders and interests, and to position itself as an objective, informed and influential advisory body that can assist other stakeholders. The opportunity for Council, through new and strengthened relationships with regional stakeholders, is to ensure that a broad range of perspectives are considered as it identifies regional priorities, provides advice to government and fosters collaboration.

Appendix A: Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions

1. Title: Regional Partnership Development

Outcome Statement: Stronger and more dynamic regions.

Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Regional Council in the areas of:

- Partnership Development
 - Within regions
 - Between government and regions
- Forum for informed discussion and priority identification that links economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of regional sustainability.

2. Title: Assessment of Policy on Regional Sustainability

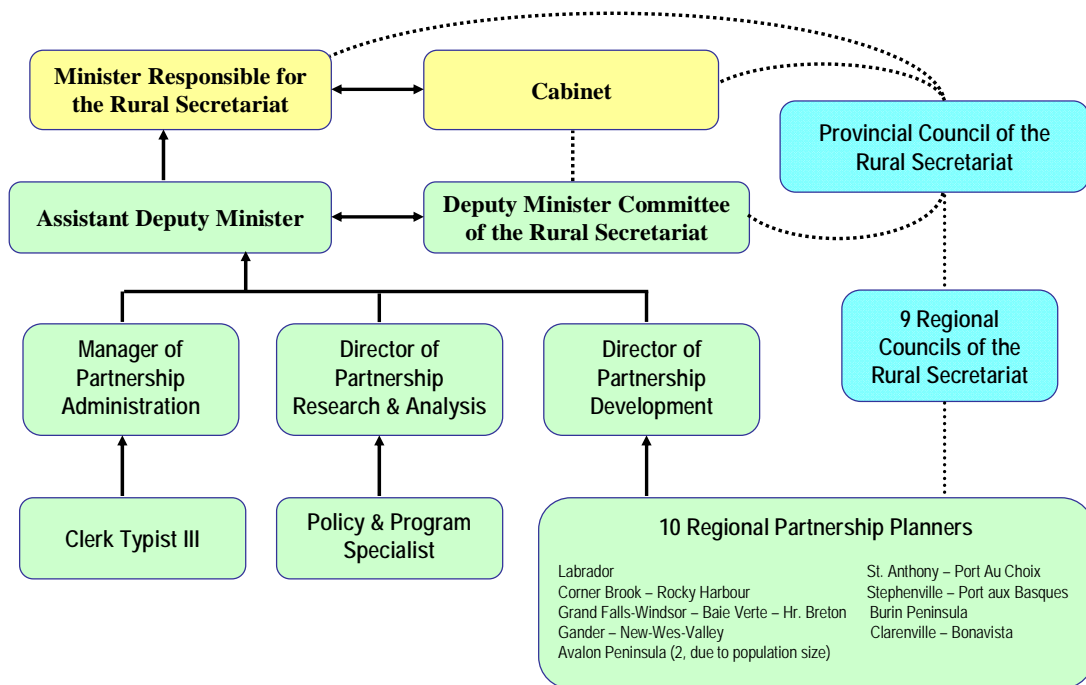
Outcome Statement: Improved Government understanding of and response to significant and long-term regional issues.

Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Regional Council in the areas of:

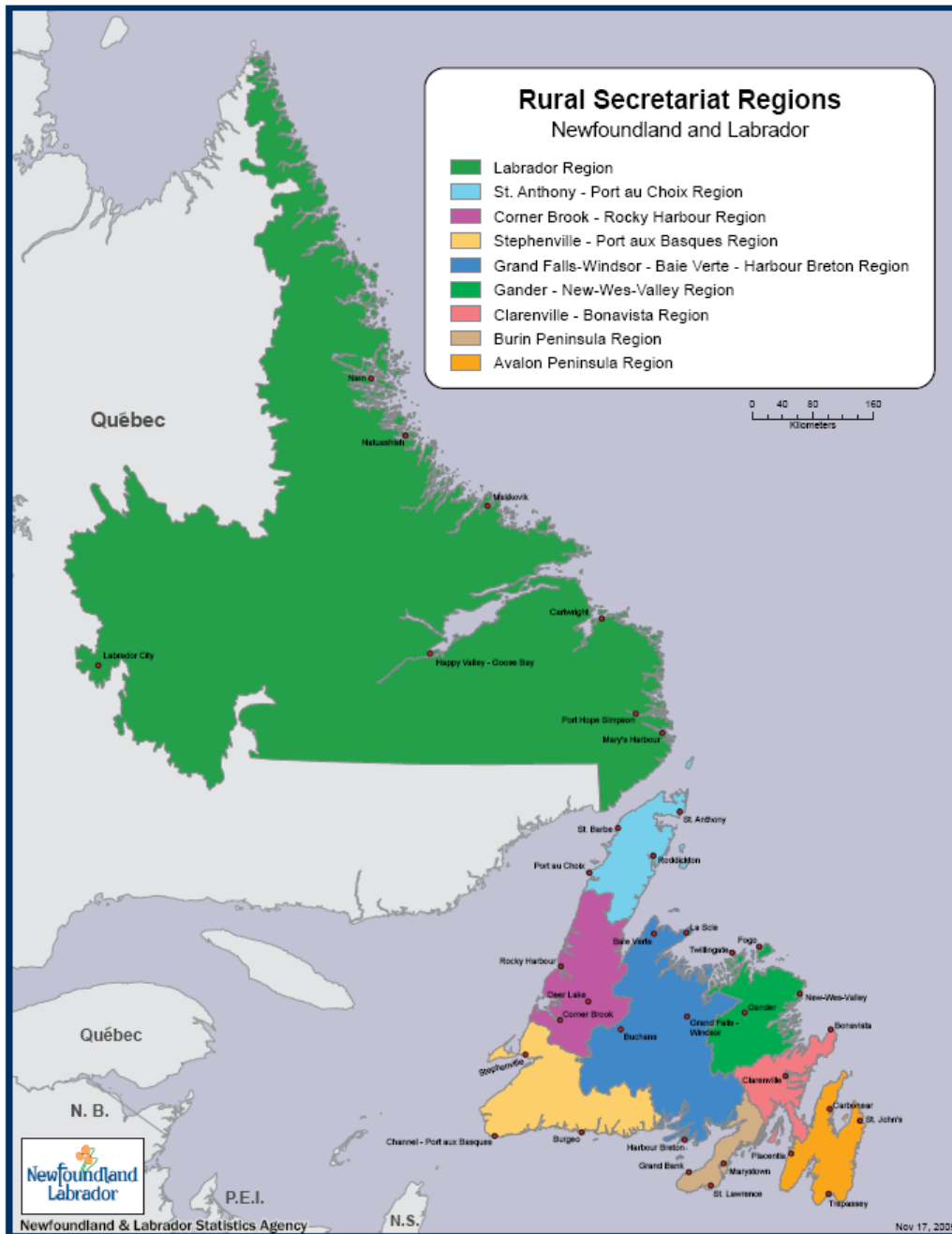
- Regional perspectives which can inform the development and implementation of public policy

Appendix B: Organizational Structure

Rural Secretariat Structure



Appendix C: Map of Rural Secretariat Regions



Appendix D: Mandates of Rural Secretariat and Regional Councils

Mandate of the Rural Secretariat

The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:

- Promote the well-being of all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of 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 regional concerns are considered throughout the provincial government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.

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 the province.
- Review key provincial economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- Identify and advise government on policies and programs which either advance, negatively impact or need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five year period.
- Advance cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about economic and social measures, and to encourage government and community partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- Meet twice annually with the provincial Cabinet and deputy ministers to advance regional development priorities.
- Serve as an external sounding board for government for the development of strategies, policies, programs and budget issues that will affect provincial and regional sustainability.

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