

Stephenville-Port aux Basques
Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat

Annual Activity Report
2005-06



Codroy Valley

Message from the Chair

As Chairperson for the Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council, I hereby submit the annual activity report for the 2005-06 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 and any variances explained herein.

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council was appointed in August 2005 and held its first meeting in October 2005. The contents of this report outline the council's activities for the remaining five months of the fiscal year.

Members of the regional council were appointed following an open nomination process. Individuals were chosen on a set of criteria which included their experiences of living and working in larger and smaller communities, a gender balance, a combination of younger and older individuals and with a variety of interests related to social, economic, environmental and cultural activities.

These first meetings served as an orientation to the council's role and responsibilities. The council members received regional specific information that enabled them to better understand the demographic, social, and economic challenges and opportunities within their region. Over the coming months, the council will work towards the identification of regional priorities and will initiate a citizen engagement process to begin to further refine these priorities.

Ultimately, through collaboration and cooperation, we hope that over time we can begin to build a sustainable region. Also, we hope to establish information tools and instruments that help to assess the impacts of program and policy changes on rural areas, and, to ensure that regional and rural issues are taken into consideration when policy and programs are being developed.

I look forward to the work ahead.

Sincerely,



Robin Davis,
Chair, Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat

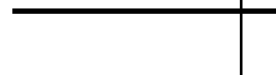
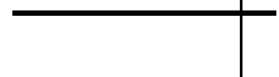


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Regional Council Overview

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Regional Council is comprised of fourteen members; eight female and six male. The council members have a variety of backgrounds and experiences that cut across an array of sectors that include the fishery, health care, social economy, private sector and education.

The council has representation from larger and smaller communities throughout the region:

| Name | Community |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Allister Hann | Burgeo |
| Eric Legge | Cartyville |
| Kelly Tompkins | St. Andrews |
| Audrey Gracie | Stephenville |
| Margaret Gaudon | Port au Port |
| Ruth Forsey-Gale | Robinsons |
| Calvin White | Flat Bay |
| Michelle Skinner | St. Georges |
| Susan Fowlow | Stephenville |
| Robin Davis | Stephenville Crossing |
| Jamie Warren | Channel - Port aux Basques |

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

Regional council members are committed to meeting four times per year. Their work is focused by three questions:

- What will your region look like in 15 years?
- What do you want it to look like (a vision)?
- What policy and program framework will be required to bridge the gap?

To date, council members have been engaged in discussions around question number one and to a lesser degree question number two by looking at the demographic, social and economic challenges as well as opportunities within the region.

It is through utilization of research and evidence that the regional councils promote discussions on the long-term future of regions. There are many different

groups/government departments/organizations that are looking at the short-term requirements and that is extremely important, however, members of the regional councils have been tasked with looking at the longer term and working to ensure we are on the right path. The regional councils promote a shared sense of responsibility between government, communities and industry for the future development of regions. Councils want to share information and challenge people inside and outside government to take a long, hard look at what is happening in our communities and regions. More importantly, councils want to explore where those changes are taking us. This requires a recognition that the status quo cannot be maintained and requires us to start thinking realistically about what our communities will look like in the future. We want to build viable communities within a sustainable region.

In addition to the regional councils, there is also a provincial council which has representation from each of the nine regional councils and some at large members. The provincial council will meet with the cabinet of government and senior departmental officials twice per year. Their role is to advise government on issues and/or concerns with regard to policy and program requirements especially as it relates to advancing social, economic, environmental and cultural sustainability within regions and the province (see Appendix D for the Provincial Council Mandate).

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques region will look differently in the future and we need to begin to plan today for future generations.

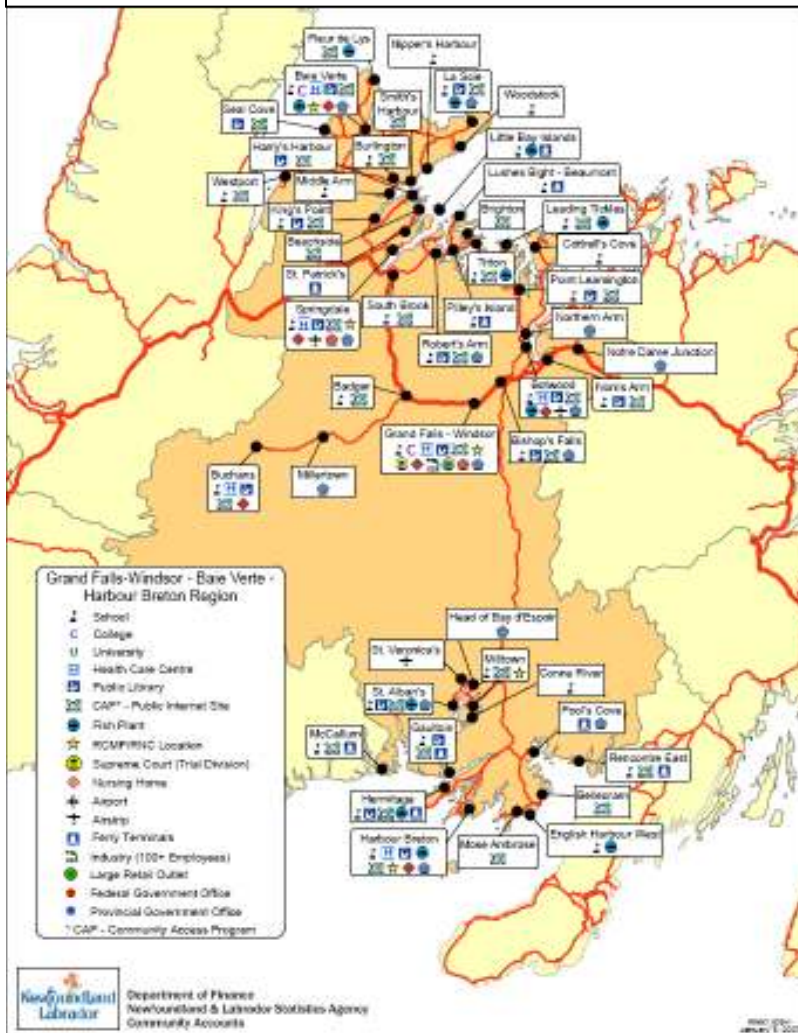
The Regional Council does not have a budget allocation. Meetings of the council and associated costs are funded through the budget of the Rural Secretariat. The Rural Secretariat also funds a staff position within the region, who among other duties, acts as an information resource for the council and is responsible for the facilitation of the work of the council. The staff person for the Stephenville – Port aux Basques region is Sam Organ. Sam works out of Stephenville.

Overview of the Region

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat region encompasses the Stephenville, Bay St. George South and Port au Port Peninsula areas extending to Codroy Valley and Port aux Basques area in the south, it also includes communities along the south coast from Isle aux Morts and extending as far east as the community of Francois.

The region consists of approximately 18,000 square kilometers and based on 2001 census data the population was 33,000. The region has a total of 69 communities with only one community having a population of more than 7,000 (Stephenville) and one with more than 4,000 (Channel-Port aux Basques). Over 14,300 or 43% of the region's population live in communities with less than 1000 people. In 2004 there were a total of 890 businesses in the region. Employment in all industries topped 13,000 and the top three industries by employment are Retail Trade, Agriculture / Fishing / Forestry / Hunting and Health Care and Social Assistance.

Summary Infrastructure Map for the Stephenville – Port aux



The Stephenville – Port aux Basques region, like other regions face challenges (ie. youth retention, fishery crisis, etc.), however, there is an abundance of strengths and opportunities upon which to build. Having a presence of Aboriginal and Francophone cultures, Stephenville Theatre Festival, Art Studios, and other heritage/cultural facilities in the region bodes well for future cultural development in the region. In addition, all these assets contribute immensely to building a strong and vibrant tourism industry in the region. The region is the gateway to the

province for vehicular traffic vis-à-vis the Marine Atlantic Gulf Ferries in the Gateway Town of Channel-Port aux Basques. Post Secondary Education is strong here: there are several campuses of the College of the North Atlantic including its Head Quarters, a Private College, and the Safety and Emergency Response Training (SERT) Center of the Marine Institute. As a result, there are an impressive number of training programs available. This is a very important and attractive asset for existing businesses, new business start-ups, business attraction, and business expansion. The fishery still continues to be an important sector and with the right strategy for recovery and management it will continue to be in the future. The region has a strong history in the agriculture sector with some of the richest sources of soil in the province. It also has some diversity in the sector that includes cranberries, potential for herb and small fruit development, and the meat industry. The Stephenville – Port aux Basques region is also home to one of the largest dairy farms in the country which has the capacity to

expand itself into the secondary production of yoghurts and cheeses. This is indicative of the enormous potential for growth and expansion in the agricultural sector in the region. There is considerable activity taking place already with regard to natural resources, however, there is ongoing exploration for more minerals as well as onshore oil. In addition, the region has an abundance of key infrastructures in the region such as a roads network, port facilities, marine infrastructure, airport, education and training facilities, and, health care facilities.

Mandate

The mandate of the Regional Councils 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.
- 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.

Highlights and Accomplishments

The council was appointed in August 2005. During the remaining five months of the fiscal year, the council met three times.

The first meeting of the council was held during the Dialogue Day of the Rural Secretariat Marble Mountain, Steady Brook. This meeting served as an introduction to the role and responsibilities of the council. This meeting also provided an opportunity for the council to meet directly with Cabinet.

Two more meetings were held during the remainder of the fiscal year; one in December, 2005 in the Codroy Valley and one in February, 2006 in Cape St. George. Up to this time the council was presented with information on economic, demographic and social challenges and opportunities within the region.

In addition to the above noted information, regional council members also delved into topics that included the following:

- Looked at the realities and issues facing the region
- Discussed regional thinking and what it means to think regionally
- What is regional sustainability and how do you achieve it
- What is expected of council members
- What regional council members will not be expected to do
- Developed some initial steps to help guide the process
- Five key themes were proposed as a point of discussion for developing a regional vision – Demographics; Private Sector Growth; Skills Development; Infrastructure and Public Programs and Services.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Collaboration

Collaboration, as the Council defines it, requires a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to make decisions that will maximize benefits for the whole and not just a piece of the whole. This kind of collaboration provides opportunities and benefits that would not otherwise be possible. It also poses a challenge for individuals to step out of their ‘comfort zones’ and look at issues differently.

Long-term thinking

Long-term thinking will continue to be both an opportunity and a challenge. Thinking long-term, in the context of the work of the council, provides an opportunity to set a shared goal for the region and to, collectively, define the steps required to achieve the goal. Thinking long-term will also be challenging for individuals and groups when there are immediate issues surfacing within regions.

Citizen Engagement

There is an opportunity through this process for citizens to directly influence public policy development. This citizen engagement process is a purposeful, deliberate process to engage citizens in a two-way conversation with government decision-makers. This process is not limited to the citizens that sit on the councils of the Rural Secretariat, rather there is a process for the broader citizenship to engage in a discussion about the future policy directions of government. The challenge will be to truly open our minds, listen to each other and discuss issues in a respectful manner.

Vision Development

The vision document that is being developed by the Council is not intended to achieve a final form, but rather the intention is for it to continue to be a working document. The vision document will identify what we want to see 15 to 20 years out. Today that time frame is 2022-2027. In five years time, that time frame will be 2027-2032. As priorities are accomplished new priorities will be identified. This will provide an opportunity for us to be informed about what is moving and changing in our regions, where the next opportunity will be and where the next challenge will be. It will also provide a challenge for all involved to have faith in the process and realize that it will take time until these priorities are accomplished. It takes time to make significant change and it is important for this council to remain focused on the future, even in the midst of immediate challenges.

Appendices

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.

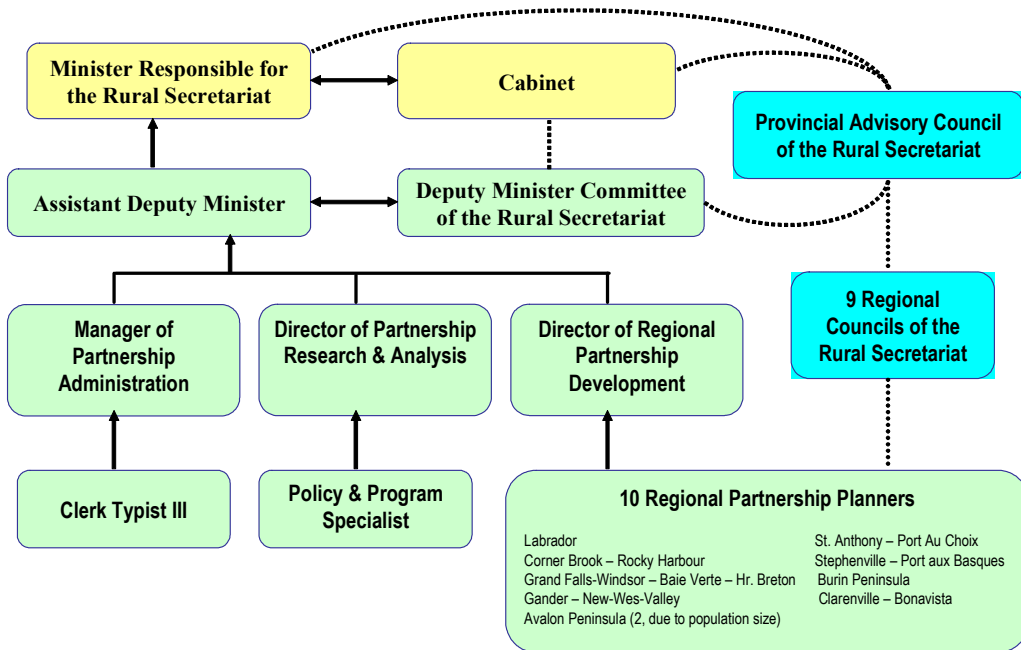
2. Title: Assessment of Policy on Regional Sustainability

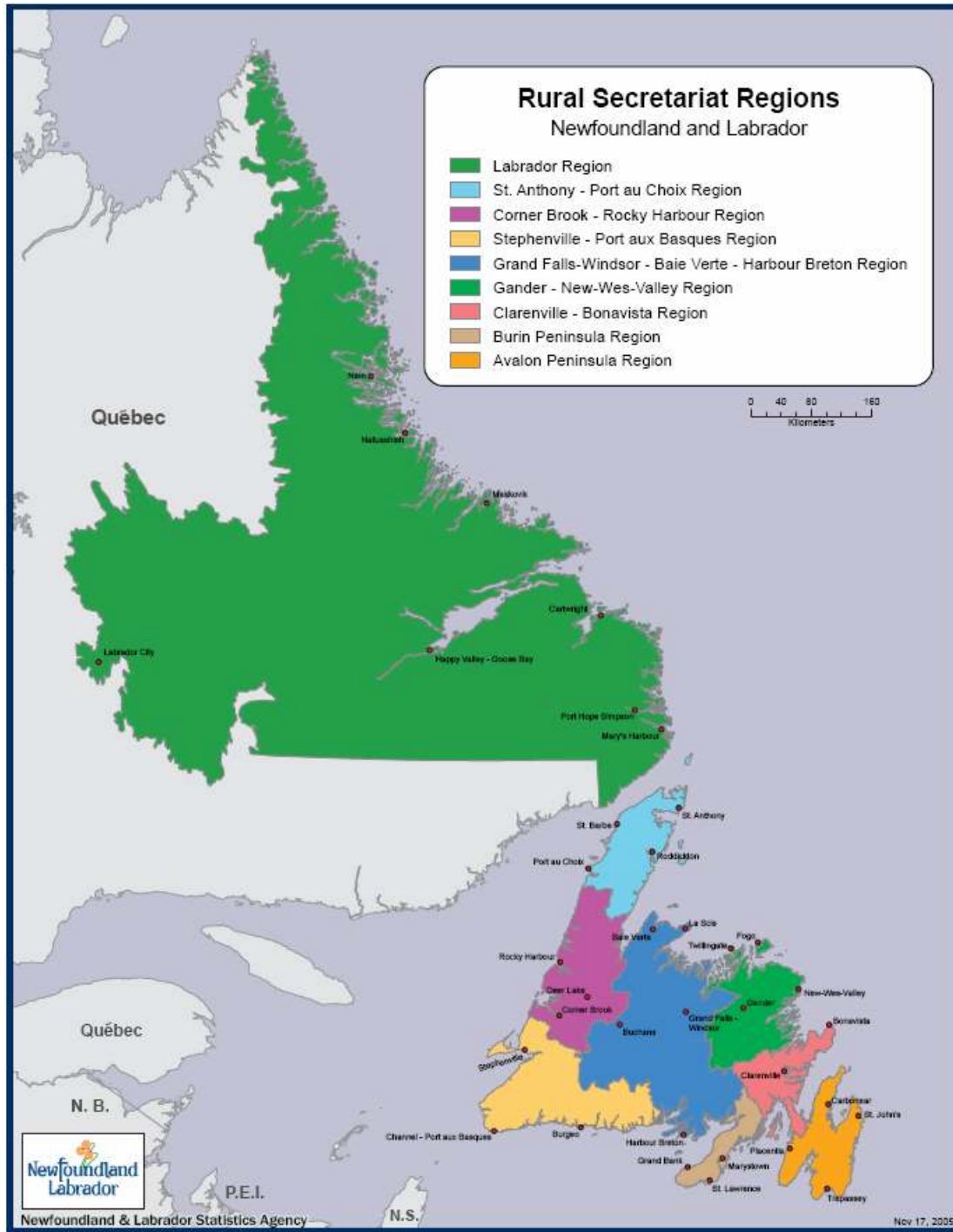
Outcome Statement: Improved Government understanding of and response to significant and long-term regional issues.

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.

Rural Secretariat Structure





Mandate of the Rural Secretariat

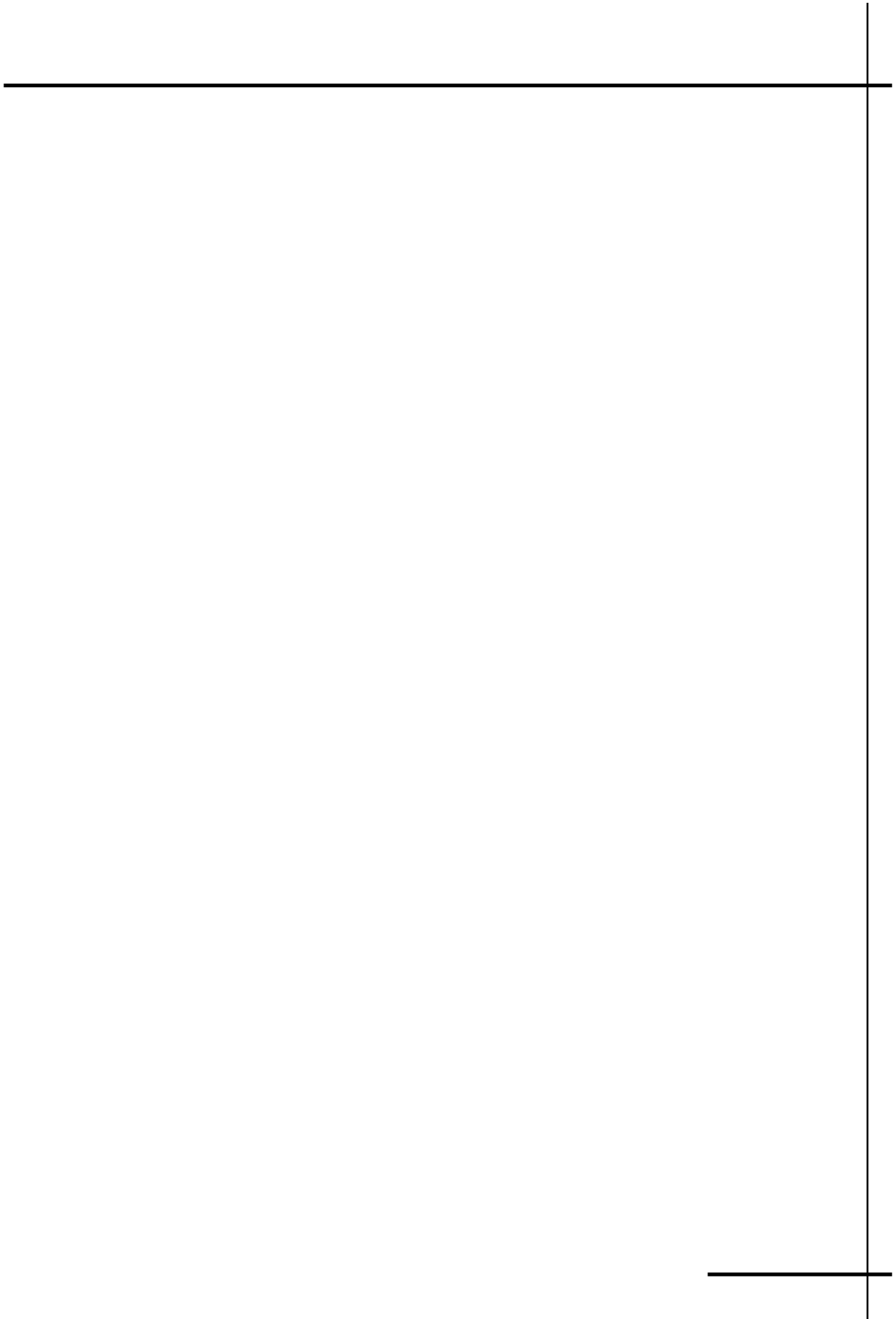
The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:


- 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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