

2015-16

Office of Public Engagement
Executive Council



Annual
Report



Message from the Premier



The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to being open, transparent, and accountable to the people of the province. As Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and in my capacity as Minister responsible for public engagement, I am pleased to submit the 2015-16 annual report for the Office of Public Engagement.

This report outlines activities undertaken from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. During this time, the Office of Public Engagement led engagement activities; supported departments in engaging with the public; collaborated with a variety of stakeholders; promoted open government; and administered the province's *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA), 2015*.

To fulfill its engagement mandate, the Office of Public Engagement worked with government departments to plan and carry out well over 50 public engagement projects – including the Government Renewal Initiative engagement sessions and online dialogue, which engaged the public and stakeholders to generate ideas on how government can eliminate the province's deficit and establish a sustainable budgetary framework.

The Office of Public Engagement continued to administer two funding programs that allowed groups to better engage with and meet the needs of youth: the Community Youth Network funding program and Grants to Youth Organizations. In addition, the Office led and supported a number of engagement projects focused on youth.

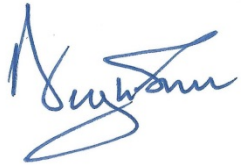
In terms of promoting open government and facilitating the administration of ATIPPA, 2015, the Office of Public Engagement supported departments in proceeding with numerous proactive online information and data disclosures in 2015-16, while helping government and other public bodies respond to an unprecedented increase in the number of access to information requests. The Office of Public Engagement took steps to strengthen departments' and other public bodies' knowledge of ATIPPA, 2015 as well as enhance their ability to meet legislated requirements pursuant to the Act.

More detailed information on the Office of Public Engagement's activities in 2015-16 is found in the pages that follow. These activities were accomplished through the work and dedication of all Office of Public Engagement employees and I thank them for their efforts this past year.

On August 17, 2016, the Provincial Government took steps to streamline the work of departments and agencies to deliver better management, more efficient planning and sound governance. As part of these changes, the public engagement function of the Office of Public Engagement merged with the Communications Branch to form the new Communications and Public Engagement Branch of the Office of Executive Council. I look forward to working with the Communications and Public Engagement Branch to build on the public engagement successes of 2015-16, and to embrace the opportunities and challenges that 2016-17 has to offer.

As the Minister responsible for public engagement, I am accountable for the actual results reported in this document. This annual report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dwight Ball". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a long, horizontal stroke at the end.

Dwight Ball
Premier

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1. Introduction

In 2015-16, the work of the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) reflected the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's broad commitment to engage with citizens and stakeholders in Newfoundland and Labrador and to increase the public's access to information both proactively and through the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*.

In support of its mandate, the OPE undertook activities and initiatives related to public engagement and collaboration, open government and the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*. Within its public engagement efforts, the OPE continued to give a particular focus to youth, notably by supporting the activities of the Premier's Youth Advisory Committee. In 2015-16, the OPE also supported the activities of the Provincial Council and nine Regional Councils. The work of these Councils is summarized in Appendix A. The Premier's Youth Advisory Committee has submitted its own annual report as a Category 3 entity under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

The OPE also worked to advance the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's commitment to openness, transparency and accountability. To achieve this, the Office of Public Engagement worked with departments to improve access to information and data, provide new and innovative ways to listen and involve the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, and bring government, partners, organizations and communities together through collaborative efforts. For more information, please visit the website <http://open.gov.nl.ca>.

As of March 31, 2016, the work of the OPE was delivered with a staff complement of 33 positions; 23 female, seven male and three vacancies. Twenty-three positions were located in St. John's and the remaining ten positions were located across the province in Carbonear, Placentia, Burin, Bonavista, New-Wes-Valley, Springdale, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Roddickton and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

To fulfill its mandate, the OPE had a budget of \$7,089,800, spending just over \$6,535,000 in 2015-16. A financial summary is provided in Section 8 of this report. The information that follows provides an overview of the mandate, lines of business and vision of the OPE and highlights its key accomplishments in fiscal year 2015-16.

2. Mandate

As outlined in its 2014-17 Activity Plan, the Office of Public Engagement was mandated to:

- create, support and deliver meaningful dialogue and public engagement opportunities that build capacity consistent with leading practices in this field in order to better connect the people of the province to their government;
- conduct and support research and evaluation activities to inform government policy and decision-making processes;
- work with internal and external partners to identify, build and support effective collaborative processes to address public policy issues of interest to stakeholder groups from community, business, labour and government sectors;
- administer and coordinate the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015* and promote new and innovative policies and practices regarding the proactive disclosure of government information and data that is informed by the citizens and stakeholders of the province; and
- administer the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*, including regulations approved under the Act.

3. Lines of Business

As outlined in its 2014-17 Activity Plan, the lines of business for the OPE were as follows:

Dialogue: The OPE demonstrates to the public and the public service best practices in public engagement through the development and implementation of effective engagement and dialogue activities. In keeping with the government's commitment to openness, the OPE supports government entities, external organizations and stakeholders across all sectors in the design and delivery of their own public engagement initiatives.

Collaboration and Partnership Support: The OPE recognizes that all forms of collaboration, including partnerships, are an important form of engagement. The OPE works to support, and participates in, collaborative efforts involving government, external organizations and stakeholders across all sectors, while also helping convene and provide partnership-brokering support to new collaborative efforts such as networks or alliances.

Research and Evaluation: The OPE supports and partners with government entities, academic institutions, and other partners and stakeholders on collaborative research efforts that are integral to understanding issues of importance to regions and the province as a whole. The OPE supports, convenes and partners in relevant evaluation activities with an emphasis on approaches that directly involve multiple stakeholders. The OPE is also responsible for the implementation of the Rural Lens, an analytical tool used by government departments to assess the rural implications of proposed policies and decisions.

Access to Information and Data and Protection of Privacy: The OPE is responsible for the overall administration and coordination of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*, as well as for promoting and supporting the proactive disclosure of information and data by departments. Administering the Act includes ensuring statutory requirements such as annual reports and legislative reviews are completed; collecting and maintaining statistics on access to information requests; providing guidance, assistance, training and advice on the application and interpretation of the Act to public bodies; and assisting public bodies with the protection of personal information. The OPE also provides leadership with regard to the proactive disclosure of information and data, including policy development, liaising with departments to facilitate online postings, and maintenance of the Open Information and Open Data webpages.

Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act: The OPE administers this Act and performs all necessary activities to carry out the requirements of its role respecting the legislation, and helps to raise awareness of the Act in partnership with the Office of the Citizens' Representative and the Labour Relations Board.

4. Vision

As per the 2014-17 Activity Plan, the vision of the OPE was excellence in public engagement and open government.

Excellence in public engagement will foster a vibrant and prosperous province where citizens and a variety of stakeholder groups, community agencies and academic institutions are supported and encouraged to work together and with government, to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Excellence in open government will lead to informed and engaged citizens, increased opportunities for the public to participate in government policy and decision making in a meaningful way, and enhanced collaboration among government, stakeholders and citizens.

5. Report on Performance

Issue 1: Public Engagement

A major theme emerging from an OPE-led engagement process on open government was that government needed to improve its public participation and collaboration efforts. As a result, the OPE looked to find ways to encourage collaboration with external partners, including the development of a Collaboration Incentive Fund to bring together stakeholders to achieve common goals through collaboration. Meaningful collaboration, whether formal or informal, can arise when entities with a common or complementary purpose agree to work together with the objective of achieving something no single entity working alone could achieve. Effective collaboration, with emphasis on multi- or cross-sector collaboration, is essential when addressing complex challenges.

The following is a report on the objectives and performance indicators for fiscal year 2015-16 as identified in the OPE’s 2014-17 Activity Plan.

Goal:

By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives to strengthen public engagement capacity within government and across other sectors.

2015-16 Objective:

By March 31, 2016, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives through the Open Government public engagement process to identify new capacity requirements and ways in which to better engage our external partners.

2015-16 Measure:

Undertaken initiatives through the Open Government public engagement process to identify new capacity requirements and ways to better engage our external partners.

Indicators	Accomplishments
<p>Developed and implemented a Collaboration Incentive Fund (CIF) which will build capacity for multi-sector collaboration</p>	<p>The CIF was developed by the OPE in response to a need identified during a public engagement process on open government, and was publicly announced in September 2015. Funded by the OPE, the CIF was designed to provide grants to organizations to support innovative collaborative efforts and strengthen regional sustainability by bringing together stakeholders from within and across various sectors. Twenty-one applications were received and 15 organizations with collaborative projects were awarded funding including for a total of \$184,810. Notable projects included a research initiative aimed at examining successful interventions in helping women escape violence in Labrador, a project to support collaboration among key partners</p>

	involved in developing a plan for the sustainable future of Fogo Island, and a project to expand the TEDx idea-sharing platform to youth in Newfoundland and Labrador. In total, over 70 external partners were brought together through the 15 funded projects.
<p>Developed tools such as a community-based research guide to support stakeholders and departments in creating and harnessing locally generated knowledge for the benefit of public policy and government decision making.</p>	<p>While a Community-Based Research Guide was drafted in 2015-16, focus turned to the Government Renewal Initiative. In helping implement this initiative, which called on all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to help define actions to address the province's financial challenges, the OPE focused on designing and delivering a series of province-wide public engagement sessions as a first step in this process. Notably, the OPE developed and published A Guide to Hosting Your Own Conversation: Our FISCAL Future (Guide). The Guide contained important information for community groups, local governments, stakeholders and others on how to plan and facilitate meaningful engagement activities in order to generate ideas about the province's financial situation.</p> <p>Additionally, the OPE participated in the development of the discussion document, Our FISCAL Future: Starting the Conversation. The discussion document provided information on the province's financial challenges and invited members of the public and other stakeholders to identify ways for government to save money, increase revenue and deliver services more efficiently.</p> <p>Both documents are available online at: Guide: http://gov.nl.ca/ourfiscalfuture/pdf/Guide-to-hosting.pdf Discussion Document: http://gov.nl.ca/ourfiscalfuture/pdf/discussion_doc.pdf</p> <p>The OPE also customized its online Dialogue App to generate additional discussions and ideas on how to address the province's financial challenges. The use of the Dialogue App for the Government Renewal Initiative resulted in 28,702 users, 498,319 page views, 1,831 submissions, and 4,491 comments.</p>

Objective 2016-17: By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have worked collaboratively with our external partners to initiate activities that allow all parties to enhance their respective internal capacities.

Measure 2016-17: Worked collaboratively with external partners to initiate activities allowing all parties to enhance their capacity.

Indicators:

- Enhance the ability of groups from various sectors to build and sustain effective partnerships and networks.
- Enhance the ability of groups from various sectors to design and deliver effective and appropriate stakeholder engagement activities.
- Ensure there are mechanisms in OPE's online engagement portal that allow users to find resources that improve their collaboration and engagement knowledge and/or practice.

Issue 2: Open Government

Government set, as part of its mandate, a commitment to restoring openness, transparency and accountability. The OPE worked to promote and advance open government practices in the province, including increasing access to information and data, engaging the public in new ways and encouraging greater levels of collaboration across sectors. Access to more information and data creates higher levels of awareness, allows citizens and stakeholders to make more informed decisions, and can spur innovation. Effective public engagement and collaboration approaches build trust, generate new and innovative ideas, and can provide government with the ideas and perspectives to inform decision making. The OPE supported departments in their open data and open information efforts, which has resulted in a number of datasets and proactive disclosures of information on the Open Data and Open Information websites. The OPE also supported departments with the design and delivery of their engagement activities and with partnership-brokering support.

Goal:

By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives to ensure citizens have increased access to the information, data and dialogue opportunities they need for meaningful participation in the development of Newfoundland and Labrador.

2015-16 Objective:

By March 31, 2016, the Office of Public Engagement will have expanded the amount of information and data available to the public through its proactive disclosure policy.

2015-16 Measure:

Expanded the amount of information and data available to the public through its proactive disclosure policy.

Indicators	Accomplishments
<p>Developed proactive disclosure guidelines and distributed to departments to assist them in releasing information</p>	<p>Proactive disclosure guidelines were developed. The OPE also worked on the creation and release of a 2015-16 Proactive Disclosure Plan, working with departments to identify new proactive disclosures in keeping with the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public’s right to access government information; • Publishing information in a timely manner; • Publishing information in a user-friendly manner (e.g. easy to find and understand); and • Making information available in an open format that is easy to access. <p>The Proactive Disclosure Plan was publicly released and is available online at: http://open.gov.nl.ca/information/default.html</p> <p>The OPE also provided guidance in its ongoing work with departments, including a presentation to departmental policy directors on proactive disclosure.</p>
<p>Developed and shared open data guidelines to support departments in releasing data in re-usable and machine-readable formats</p>	<p>Open data guidelines were drafted and distributed to departments to assist in their efforts to identify data for proactive disclosure, keeping in mind the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public’s right to access government data; • Releasing data in full, except under limited circumstances (e.g. protecting personal information); • Releasing data in a timely manner; • Releasing data in a machine-readable format; • Releasing data in an open format; • Datasets will be as close to the original raw data as possible, with limited exceptions (e.g. personal information); • Releasing data in accessible formats; • Releasing data under a free license; • Data must be relevant and have use to the public; • Data should be easy to access and find; • Any necessary notes that need to be added, such as how data was collected, errors in data, should be included; and • Names of files should use standard conventions.

<p>Supported departments in identifying and preparing information and data for proactive disclosure</p>	<p>OPE worked with departments to identify new proactive disclosures and identify a timeframe for release through the 2015-16 Proactive Disclosure Plan which outlined new proactive disclosures on a quarterly basis. Through these efforts, departments identified and released 41 new datasets and more than 160 updated or new information disclosures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulated fuel prices; • Top 100 baby names; • NL Prescription Drug Program Claim Data; • 2014-15 Departmental Salary Details; • Lands Act Review: What We Heard; and • 2014-15 Student Aid Statistics.
<p>Tracked and reported on the number of proactive disclosures by departments</p>	<p>OPE tracked proactive disclosures by department on a weekly basis through weekly open information and open data reports. Information in these reports is based on proactive disclosures departments included on the Open Government website. For the 2015-16 fiscal year, 41 datasets were released and posted on the Open Data website. A total of 163 proactive disclosures of information were released and posted on the Open Information website.</p>

Objective 2016-17: By March 31, 2017, the Office of Public Engagement will have undertaken initiatives to promote and enhance collaborative efforts that bring government, community, business and other entities together.

Measure 2016-17: Undertaken initiatives to promote and enhance collaborative efforts that bring government, community, business and other entities together.

Indicators:

- Collaborate with other departments and external stakeholders on initiatives such as laying a foundation for a Global Network of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, identified as a priority in the December 2015 mandate letter provided to the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement.
- Incorporate a feature into the online engagement portal where organizations, including government departments, with common or complementary interests can network.

6. Additional Highlights

In addition to the points raised in Section Five, the following additional highlights are worthy of mention and are consistent with the OPE's mandate.

Implementation of recommendations from the ATIPPA Review Committee

Eighty of the 90 recommendations of the ATIPPA Review Committee have been implemented or substantially completed. Included in the recommendations implemented:

- The 65 legislative recommendations relating to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* came into force in 2015;
- Updating the cost schedule to eliminate most costs and increase the free time for requests;
- Developing various guidance materials including the ATIPPA Guide for Municipalities; and
- Creating an online application for government department ATIPP requests.

Customer Service Certification Training for Government Department ATIPP Coordinators

The ATIPPA Review Committee noted in their report that “the essence of the duty to assist is to exhibit the qualities that are inherent in good customer service.” To ensure government is upholding its duty to assist ATIPP request applicants, government department coordinators were provided with customer service certification training through the Institute for Citizen Centred Service.

Privacy Certification Training for Government Department ATIPP Coordinators

The ATIPPA Review Committee noted in their report that “the upgrading of the professional qualifications of ATIPP Coordinators is a realistic goal” and the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) “is responsible for developing and launching the only globally recognized credential programs in information privacy.” To ensure government department coordinators are provided opportunities to upgrade professional qualifications, 28 government department coordinators were provided with privacy certification training through the IAPP.

Development of Municipality ATIPP Coordinator Training

Various training materials were developed and municipal-specific training was provided by the ATIPP Office to municipalities throughout 2015-16 on their access and privacy obligations.

ATIPP Training and Support

Part of the ATIPP Office's mandate is to provide guidance and assistance to public bodies that are subject to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*. One of the ways that the ATIPP Office does this is through access and privacy training and presentations with public bodies (e.g., ATIPP Coordinator training, general access and privacy training, employee onboarding and Communities of Practice). During the 2015-16

fiscal year, the ATIPP Office completed 70 training sessions and presentations with some 1,400 attendees from government departments, agencies and other public bodies.

URock 2015

The 2015 URock Awards were held at the Glacier on May 14, 2015. Eight awards were presented to youth and youth-based organizations for their outstanding volunteer contributions. The 2015 recipients were Courtney Jones, Torbay; Meagan Sampson, Stephenville; Nitish Bhatt, St. John's; Brittany Tibbo, Holyrood; Mackenzie Dove, Clarenville; Megan Glover, Bay Bulls; Mallory Basha, Corner Brook; and, the Youth Leadership Council of Choices for Youth. The event was hosted by Mike Fardy, and featured live performances by Jenna Maloney, Stompbox, and City on the Coast as well as community booths from volunteer organizations. Award recipients each received an electric guitar, customized by students of the graphic design program at College of the North Atlantic. For more information about the URock Volunteer Awards, please visit the website (www.nlyouth.ca).

InvolveNL

In October 2015, the OPE launched InvolveNL, an online resource to help volunteers and non-profit organizations connect throughout the province. InvolveNL supports province-wide volunteer and organization efforts by providing information on government programs and resources through a single, accessible website. Through InvolveNL, volunteers and organizations throughout the province are able to easily find information on many topics including funding, planning and training.

Volunteer Week

Volunteer Week was celebrated from April 12-18, 2015 with the theme of "The many faces of volunteering". This was the first year that OPE staff represented the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on the Community Sector Council NL Volunteer Week Committee. The OPE spearheaded a number of initiatives including the distribution of Volunteer Week grants to organizations throughout the province, as well as recognition certificates signed by the Premier and the Minister for volunteers with ten or more years of volunteer experience. The OPE also participated in various community events recognizing Volunteer Week, including a reception at Government House.

Engagement Activities

The OPE's engagement activities in 2015-16 included 58 unique projects, over 140 sessions and events, and more than 4,000 participants. The OPE served 24 internal clients and 35 external clients, providing engagement support on a variety of projects such as: working with the Department of Finance on the provincial engagement process on Our FISCAL Future; assisting the Department of Advanced Education and Skills on their Workforce Development roundtables; and assisting the Department of Health and Community Services with a number of targeted engagement events. Additionally, the OPE provided engagement expertise to community or stakeholder-led initiatives, including: working with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Grenfell Campus, Memorial University on a community-based workshop on the designing of a buffer zone/special management zone around Gros Morne National Park; supporting the multi-year research project, Too Big to Ignore, in the planning and delivery of a community event on the theme of

local fisheries and the role they play in food security and community sustainability; and working with Gros Morne Summer Music on the delivery of the Liminus Workshop focused on the creation of a centre for sustainability and art in western Newfoundland.

Collaborative Community-Based Research

In 2015-16, the Collaboration Incentive Fund awarded funding for three collaborative community-based research projects:

- MUN Grenfell Campus – to produce a regional sustainability decision support tool (or *report card*) for the public and stakeholders to better understand and work towards regional sustainability in the Clarenville – Bonavista region. This is a follow-up to Phase 1 and 2 research projects.
- Violence Prevention Labrador – conduct research on successful interventions in responding to women escaping intimate partner violence, in order to inform the development of a judicial response model that meets the needs of Labrador women in rural and remote communities.
- Exploits Valley Community Coalition – to complete a feasibility study and business plan for a non-profit Shared Space Initiative in Grand Falls-Windsor.

For a full listing of community-based research projects and reports from previous years please visit: <http://www.ope.gov.nl.ca/rural/whatweredoing/research.html>

Grants to Youth Organizations

Each year, the Grants to Youth Organizations program supports a broad range of youth-based initiatives, youth centres and youth leadership entities to develop and deliver activities related to self-reliance, leadership and citizen development. These grants:

- Address an identified need within the community or region;
- Effectively engage youth and youth-serving agencies; and
- Enable the sponsoring agency to develop stronger collaborative relationships within the community and with regional partners.

There were 37 grants approved in 2015-16 with a total value of about \$742,625.

Community Youth Network

The OPE continued to support the 34 member organizations of the Community Youth Network in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2015-16, \$2,547,398 in operational funding was disbursed to these organizations.

This year, nine of the Community Youth Network member organizations celebrated their 15-year anniversaries; they are located in the following communities: Happy Valley – Goose Bay; St. John's, Southern Labrador/Strait of Belle Isle; Grand Bank; Green Bay; Harbour Grace; Harbour Breton; Botwood; and Stephenville.

The Youth Engagement Division of the OPE collaborated with Community Youth Network, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to develop a Youth Engagement Strategy for municipalities. Meetings were held throughout the year and a strategic planning day scheduled for March 2016 was postponed due to inclement weather. This initiative is ongoing and the strategy will be finalized in 2016-17.

Getting the Message Out

The OPE delivered 154 Getting the Message Out presentations to students in 13 economic zones throughout the province. These engaging, peer-to-peer presentations gave 3,826 young people aged 13-25 an opportunity to learn more about entrepreneurship, career and civic engagement opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Premier's Youth Advisory Committee

Over the past year, the committee worked in collaboration with government departments to provide input and advice on the development of government programs and services important to young people in the province. As part of this work, committee members supported the second iteration of the Bridge the gAPP mental health app and the launch of Outlook 2025, and served as a focus group for the Population Growth Strategy and an assessment of high school graduation requirements. The committee's 2015-17 Activity Plan, is available online at http://www.ope.gov.nl.ca/publications/pdf/YAC_Activity_Plan_2015-17.pdf

Young Women's Leadership

In July 2015, the OPE worked closely with the Women's Policy Office to develop a toolkit of resources that enabled community organizations to engage young women in an interactive workshop intended to encourage them to consider their own leadership and civic engagement potential. Community Youth Networks, the YWCA, and Women's Resource Centres delivered a total of 19 workshops to young women throughout the province.

#YouthCount Democratic Literacy Kit

The OPE developed and released the #YouthCount Kit in September 2015. Intended to support the ability of community organizations and educators to increase young people's awareness of the democratic process in advance of provincial and federal elections, the #YouthCount Kit includes workshop guides and resources that span five topic areas: government structure; candidate nomination and election; diversity; voting; and political engagement. The Kit was directly distributed to over 750 community organizations, and was independently downloaded over 200 times from NLYouth.ca.

7. Opportunities and Challenges

A number of opportunities and challenges are anticipated over the upcoming fiscal year as the Communications and Public Engagement Branch of Executive Council delivers on the engagement mandate of the former Office of Public Engagement. These include:

Opportunities

Global Network

The Communications and Public Engagement Branch will begin the development of a Global Network of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians located throughout the world. Such a network will allow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to share their experiences and knowledge as global citizens and to leverage them into opportunities. This initiative supports government's broader commitment to engage with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Public Engagement Technology

The integration of new technologies into the Communications and Public Engagement Branch's array of engagement tools and techniques helps ensure inclusive, comprehensive and best practice engagement. The expiry in 2016-17 of a contract with an online engagement software provider is an opportunity for the Communications and Public Engagement Branch to consider the strengths and weaknesses of its current approach to online engagement and to consider areas for improvement. To that end, the Branch is exploring a new online engagement platform in 2016-17 that would allow it to continue bringing new innovations into its online public engagement work.

Challenges

Open Government

The Communications and Public Engagement Branch continues to work on the development of an openness plan for government that reflects government's commitment to transparency, accountability and engagement and demonstrates the value of open government activities, while respecting the difficult financial position of the province. The challenges associated with this plan will include working within the fiscal forecast, while taking into account both the limited availability of departmental resources and the expense involved in system upgrades required to advance open data.

8. Financial Summary

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are unaudited and based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016. Audited financial statements are a requirement at the government level and are made public through the Public Accounts process; however, the OPE is not required to provide a separate audited financial statement.

Executive Support	Department Original Budget 2015-16	Amended 2015-16	Actual 2015-16
Salaries	429,500	429,500	389,665
Employee Benefits	600	1,400	1,368
Travel & Communication	48,400	47,400	17,697
Supplies	4,100	4,300	4,267
Professional Services	0	0	0
Purchased Services	50,900	50,900	17,944
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	1,100	1,100	829
Total Expenditure	534,600	534,600	431,770

Public Engagement	Department Original Budget 2015-16	Amended 2015-16	Actual 2015-16
Salaries	1,409,000	1,415,500	1,414,631
Employee Benefits	3,000	3,000	998
Travel & Communication	180,200	180,200	142,040
Supplies	27,900	27,900	9,826
Professional Services	0	0	0
Purchased Services	78,200	78,200	52,395
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	3,200	3,200	1,535
Grants	3,733,400	3,733,400	3,680,326
Total Expenditure	5,434,900	5,441,400	5,301,751

Policy, Planning and Research	Department Original Budget 2015-16	Amended 2015-16	Actual 2015-16
Salaries	464,700	463,700	328,688
Employee Benefits	1,000	1,000	75
Travel & Communication	51,800	47,600	2,373
Supplies	7,100	9,200	9,048
Professional Services	69,500	69,500	0
Purchased Services	31,400	31,400	5,392
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	1,100	3,200	3,163
Total Expenditure	626,600	625,600	348,739

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP)	Department Original Budget 2015-16	Amended 2015-16	Actual 2015-16
Salaries	379,000	379,000	347,053
Employee Benefits	800	800	0
Travel & Communication	5,900	14,800	14,779
Supplies	4,000	4,000	1,334
Professional Services	100,000	3,100	0
Purchased Services	3,500	91,500	91,404
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	500	500	94
Total Expenditure	493,700	493,700	454,664

Appendix A: Regional Councils & Provincial Council Accomplishments

A decision was made in Budget 2016 to dissolve the Provincial Council and the nine Regional Councils. Normally, as Category 3 entities under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, these Councils would have submitted their own annual reports. Given these changes, a decision was made to include a summary of the Regional Councils' and Provincial Council's accomplishments in 2015-16 as per the objectives contained in their 2014-17 Activity Plans. The Councils' Activity Plans and Annual Reports are available online at: <http://www.ope.gov.nl.ca/publications/index.html>.

Regional Council	Accomplishments
Avalon Peninsula	In 2015-16, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council explored and discussed access and availability of mental health services information in Newfoundland and Labrador. During ongoing mental health and addictions engagement sessions hosted by the All Party Committee on Mental Health, the Avalon Peninsula Regional Council learned about 211 Service and the potential positive impact such a service could have on individuals and families in the province who are experiencing and suffering from mental health and addiction issues. As a result, the council submitted an advice document to the Minister of Health and Community Services recommending that a provincial 211 information service be further explored as a viable option to bring those in need of mental health and other services closer to the agencies delivering those services.
Clareville – Bonavista	Due to a vacancy in the Clareville - Bonavista Regional Planner position, an advice document was not submitted. However, the Clareville-Bonavista Regional Council did partner with Memorial University on a community-based research project which resulted in the creation of a community sustainability report card for the region. The report card was completed and shared throughout the region by the researcher from MUN.

Regional Council	Accomplishments
<p>Burin Peninsula</p>	<p>The Burin Peninsula Regional Council was keenly aware of the fiscal challenges facing Newfoundland and Labrador and the important decisions that need to be made by government to ensure the province moves forward in a positive and sustainable manner. In light of these fiscal challenges, the council discussed the three questions outlined in the Our Fiscal Future Discussion Document and submitted their responses in an advice document. This was submitted to the Minister of Finance in March 2016.</p> <p>The Burin Peninsula Regional Council was invited to participate in a focus group for a research project being conducted by Ashley Manning as part of her Doctoral thesis. <i>All Hands at the Table</i> explores food security in rural and urban coastal foodscapes. The title of the project speaks to the collaborative nature of this community-based research study. The council was pleased to participate in this study. For more information on this project, please visit www.allhandsathetable.com.</p>
<p>Gander – New-Wes-Valley</p>	<p>The Gander – New-Wes-Valley Regional Council met three times in 2015-16 and submitted two advice documents.</p> <p>The council designed an engagement process to engage with citizens regarding ‘Regional Sustainability Priorities’. The comments collected were summarized in a document entitled, Regional Sustainability Priorities: The Voice of Our Citizens. This document and an advice letter were submitted to the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement on March 20, 2016.</p> <p>On May 8, 2015, the council submitted an advice letter to the Newfoundland and Labrador Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission regarding the proposed electoral districts.</p>

Regional Council	Accomplishments
	<p>Additionally, the council designed an engagement process to explore how to strengthen economic development in the Gander – New-Wes-Valley Region. A discussion guide and questions were prepared and five engagement sessions (in-person and teleconference) were held. Twenty people participated in total.</p>
<p>Grand Falls-Windsor – Harbour Breton – Baie Verte</p>	<p>The Grand Falls-Windsor – Harbour Breton – Baie Verte Regional Council submitted three advice documents in 2015-16.</p> <p>The first was related to healthy aging in rural communities. The council reviewed current research and made its recommendations based on this and the financial restraints facing government. This advice was submitted to the Minister for Seniors, Wellness and Social Development on June 20, 2015.</p> <p>The second advice document focused on mobile phone coverage in rural areas. Communication “dead zones” in rural areas pose a safety risk and hinder business development in the tourism and aquaculture industries. The council submitted a letter on January 18, 2016, asking the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development to advocate for an extension of wireless services along highways and in rural communities.</p> <p>Finally, the council advised government of the potential benefit of implementing a provincial 211 information and referral service. Members of the council believe a one-stop portal, 211 Information and Referral Service has significant potential in assisting rural individuals and families to access appropriate services in a timely manner. This advice was submitted in March 2016 to the Ministers for the Departments of Health and Community Services; Education and Early Childhood Development; Advanced Education and Skills; Service NL; Seniors, Wellness and Social Development; and Transportation and Works.</p>

Regional Council	Accomplishments
<p>Corner Brook – Rocky Harbour</p>	<p>Due to a vacancy in the Corner Brook - Rocky Harbour Regional Planner position, the council met only on one occasion in 2015-16, in addition to joining three conference calls. During these meetings they discussed existing research endeavors related to enhancing healthcare access through Nurse Practitioner models, and also worked to identify future research topics. In addition to this, the council met via teleconference to discuss and provide feedback on the Government Renewal Initiative – providing input on measures to reduce the provincial deficit. Its feedback was submitted to the Minister of Finance in March 2016.</p>
<p>Stephenville – Port aux Basques</p>	<p>The Stephenville - Port aux Basques Regional Council met on three occasions in 2015-16. During these meetings, the council initiated a research project on Career Development, targeted towards students in the region, with the hypothesis that students are underprepared and overwhelmed when faced with decisions related to careers and post-secondary education. With assistance of staff from the OPE and the Coordinator of the <i>Réseau de Développement économique et d'Employabilité de Terre-Neuve et Labrador</i>, as well as support from Community Youth Network Coordinators and local teachers, 18 focus groups were held with students in grades 8-12 reaching a total of 154 students. Focus groups occurred between September 16, 2015 and February 26, 2016. Results from these sessions were compiled into a final research report, and circulated with partners and relevant interest groups. During the course of this project the council corresponded regularly, providing feedback, input and advice.</p> <p>In addition to this, the council met to discuss and provide feedback on the Government Renewal Initiative – providing input on measures to reduce the provincial deficit. Its feedback was submitted to the Minister of Finance in March 2016.</p>

Regional Council	Accomplishments
<p>St. Anthony – Port au Choix</p>	<p>The St. Anthony - Port au Choix Regional Council met four times in 2015-16: two in person meetings and two conference calls. During these meetings, the council discussed the work they had completed in past years and decided that it was time to revisit some of its earlier advice documents. From this review, council members developed an advice document on regional economic development, focusing on transportation, fishery, forestry and tourism. This document was submitted to the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development in March 2016.</p> <p>Further to this, as a part of the Government Renewal Initiative, the council discussed the three questions outlined in the Our Fiscal Future Discussion Document. The council prepared a letter outlining its responses to the three questions. This was submitted to the Minister of Finance in March 2016.</p>
<p>Labrador</p>	<p>The Labrador Regional Council met three times over the past fiscal year and discussed many issues facing the region. The council partnered on a community-based research project exploring regional collaboration. The findings from this project and the council's recommendations on ways to enhance regional collaboration were outlined in an advice document submitted to the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement in March 2016.</p> <p>The council also prepared an advice document which highlighted its recommendations in support of the Justice for Women project as well as the Purple Heart Campaign. This advice was submitted to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety in March 2016.</p>
<p>Provincial Council</p>	<p>The Provincial Council submitted advice to government on the future of the Regional and Provincial Councils outlining the value of citizen perspectives in government decision making and policy development. The council saw this time as an opportunity to have an open dialogue with</p>

Regional Council	Accomplishments
	government to reflect on the past, build upon the solid foundation that has been established and make recommendations for the councils going forward. The Provincial Council recommended that the current structure, role and mandate of Regional and Provincial Councils be enhanced. An advice letter outlining these recommendations was sent to the Premier in February 2016.