



Rural Secretariat Executive Council Activity Plan 2011-14



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Message from the Minister

As Minister responsible for the Rural Secretariat and in accordance with the Provincial Government's commitment to accountability, I hereby submit the 2011-14 Activity Plan of the Rural Secretariat. This activity plan was prepared under my direction. I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of the goals and objectives contained therein, pursuant to section 7(4) of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. Careful consideration was also given to the strategic directions of the Provincial Government in the preparation of this Activity Plan for the period April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014.

Established in 2004, the Rural Secretariat is a unique and innovative Provincial Government entity that strives to advance the sustainability of rural Newfoundland and Labrador communities and regions. It does this by: engaging the public in deliberative dialogue about sustainability issues and challenges; supporting collaboration between and among rural stakeholders including governments; facilitating and conducting research that helps inform government policy- and decision-making; and assisting ten volunteer, advisory councils to develop policy-advice for submission to the provincial government.

Over the next three years, the Rural Secretariat will continue to develop creative and innovative ways to engage the public in dialogue about regional sustainability. In addition to supporting councils to conduct public engagement activities, the Rural Secretariat is available to assist departments to design and deliver their own public engagement initiatives. The Rural Secretariat will also continue to employ a wide range of innovative participatory engagement methods and approaches in its work including audience response polling technology, and interactive town-hall forums.

The Rural Secretariat will also continue to support citizens and stakeholders to collaborate more effectively with government on rural challenges. Rural Secretariat staff will work with all parties to enhance the regional inter-agency cooperation and communication essential for effective collaboration. They will work to support existing rural sustainability partnerships, networks and alliances. In conjunction with partners, and when collaboration opportunities or gaps are identified, they will facilitate the development of new collaborative structures and processes.

Over the next three years Rural Secretariat staff will continue to assist councils to identify research results that can inform council deliberations. Staff will support councils and other stakeholders to develop participatory, community-based research efforts that provide councils with the information and knowledge they need to effectively advise government on regional and rural policy matters. They will also participate in a host of

research efforts led by partner agencies such as Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic.

Finally, over the next three years Rural Secretariat staff will continue to support nine Regional Councils and one Provincial Council as they strive to develop useful, thoughtful and informed policy-advice for submission to decision-makers. By working closely with committed council volunteers from all nine Rural Secretariat regions, the Rural Secretariat will continue to make a unique and important contribution to the advancement of rural sustainability in this province.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

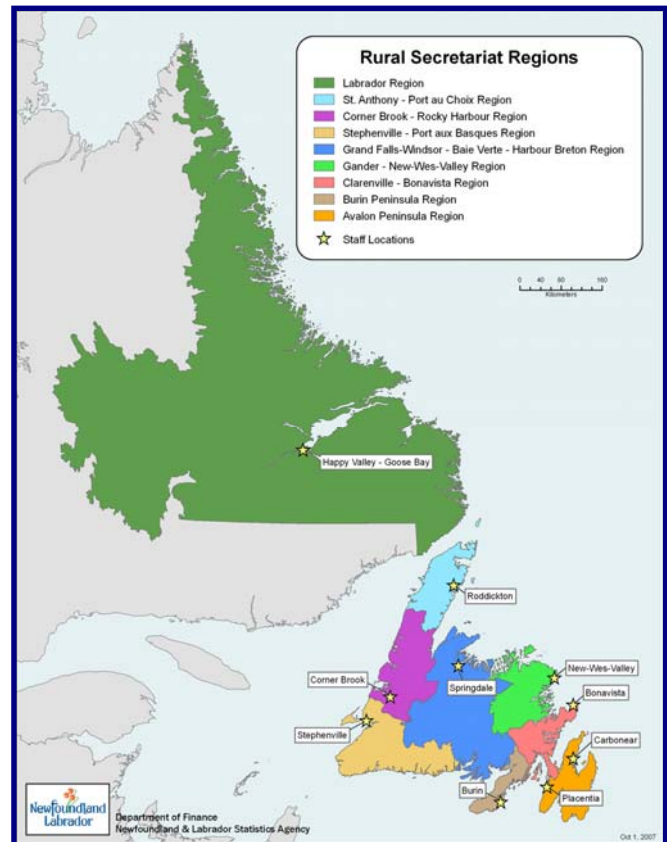
Honourable Susan Sullivan
Minister Responsible for the Rural Secretariat
Minister of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development
MHA, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District

1. Rural Secretariat Overview

The Rural Secretariat works to advance the sustainability of rural Newfoundland and Labrador communities and regions. Working with and through its nine citizen-based Regional Councils and one Provincial Council, the secretariat engages citizens, stakeholders, and communities in dialogue about the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

To achieve this, the secretariat works to ensure that citizen and stakeholder voices are considered by the Provincial Government in its decision-making and policy development deliberations.

The secretariat works with its councils to convene learning events, and implement community-based research projects, both of which inform the advice which councils develop and submit to government. The councils' activity plans and annual reports can be found at: www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/publications.asp



More broadly, the secretariat strives to advance collaboration within and between rural communities and regions of Newfoundland and Labrador. It supports collaboration between and among government departments and rural development stakeholders.

Within the Provincial Government, the Rural Secretariat raises awareness of rural issues among departments, participates on inter-departmental policy development committees that are addressing issues of importance to rural areas, and supports implementation of a Rural Lens policy assessment tool.

The work of the secretariat is coordinated by a permanent staff complement of sixteen. As of March 31, 2011, there were 10 female and four male staff. Staff included:

- Assistant Deputy Minister;
- Director of Regional Partnership Development;
- Director of Partnership Research and Analysis;

- Manager of Partnership Administration;
- 10 Regional Partnership Planners;
- Policy and Program Specialist; and
- Clerk Typist III.

An organization chart is included as Appendix B.

Ten positions are located in regional offices aligned with the nine regions of the Rural Secretariat. Regional offices are located in Carbonear, Placentia, Bonavista, Burin, New-Wes-Valley, Springdale, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Roddickton and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Most offices are co-located with the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development or the College of the North Atlantic.

The Rural Secretariat's 2011-12 budget is \$1.92 million. The Secretariat's budget funds the following:

- Salary and operating costs for the Rural Secretariat Provincial Office, Confederation Building;
- Salary and operating costs for Regional Partnership Planners and their offices;
- Operating costs for nine regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat;
- Operating costs for the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat; and
- Council and/or partner activities related to public engagement, collaboration and research.

2. Mandate

The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:

- Promote the well-being of rural Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at integrating economic, social, cultural aspects of rural and 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 rural concerns are considered throughout the Provincial Government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting rural Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.
- Promote awareness of provincial and federal programs and services regarding rural communities.

3. Lines of Business

The Rural Secretariat's four lines of business correlate with its strategic directions:

Citizen-based policy advice: The Rural Secretariat supports nine citizen-based Regional Councils, and one stakeholder-based Provincial Council, to develop policy and decision-making advice for submission to government. Typically, councils, with the support of Rural Secretariat staff, hold public engagement sessions involving citizens and/or stakeholder group representatives, and conduct community-based research activities, to inform the development of advice documents.

Collaboration: The Rural Secretariat understands that sustainability in rural Newfoundland and Labrador can be significantly advanced through more and better collaboration between and among rural stakeholders including governments. Sometimes the Rural Secretariat works to support existing rural collaborative processes such as partnerships. Other times they work to help convene new regional collaborative processes such as networks or alliances. The broad goal is to help build a strengthened 'culture of collaboration' in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Research: The Rural Secretariat collaborates with provincial partners on a number of formal research endeavors that help to improve understanding of the challenges facing, and opportunities available to, rural regions of this province. The Rural Secretariat also works directly with regional partners and councils on a host of community-based research initiatives: small regional-level data-gathering efforts that give those involved the information and knowledge they need to effectively advise the Provincial Government on regional and rural policy issues.

Public dialogue and engagement: In addition to supporting councils to conduct public engagement efforts, the Rural Secretariat also is available to assist other Provincial Government departments to design and deliver their own public engagement initiatives. The Rural Secretariat also periodically convenes special deliberative dialogue initiatives on themes deemed to be of particular importance to the rural sustainability of this province, often in partnership with rural stakeholder groups and other government departments.

4. Values

The core values explain the character of the organization. The core values of the Rural Secretariat are as follows:

Collaboration: We are committed to building a culture of collaboration within Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond

Creativity/innovation:	We strive to transcend traditional ideas, rules, and patterns, and to work together to create new ideas, relationships, and approaches
Inclusion:	We acknowledge difference and cherish the views and perspectives of all. We take steps to ensure all have an opportunity to express their views
Learning culture:	We accept that we have a lot to learn and relish the opportunity to learn more
Participation/engagement:	We believe citizen/stakeholder/community engagement is essential to the development of good public policy
Teamwork:	We provide support to one another, work co-operatively, respect differing views and strive to make our work environments safe and enjoyable
Honesty:	We are open and honest in all our dealings and maintain the highest integrity at all times
Excellence:	We strive for excellence and quality in everything we do

5. Primary Clients

The Rural Secretariat has two primary client groups: clients external to government (citizens, nine Regional Councils, one Provincial Council, community and regional organizations, and stakeholder groups) and clients within the Provincial Government (departments and agencies). It supports and brokers collaborative relationships within and between each of these primary client groups.

6. Vision

Vibrant rural regions and communities where collaborative organizations and engaged and informed citizens work closely with governments to advance rural sustainability.

7. Mission

By March 31, 2017, the Rural Secretariat will have worked with regional and departmental partners to improve the sustainability prospects of rural communities and regions.

Measure:

Work with partners to improve rural sustainability prospects

Indicators:

1. Supported partners to develop policy and decision making advice;
2. Supported partners in their use of innovative public engagement, collaboration and/or research methods/approaches.

The Rural Secretariat's continued collaboration and partnerships with individuals, groups and organizations, both internal and external to Government, assists in the improvement and advancement of the sustainability of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. In keeping with our mandate and strategic directions, we support our partners' innovative use of public engagement, collaboration, and research. In addition, we support the work of our nine regional councils and Provincial Council in their efforts to provide well-informed policy advice to Provincial Government departments.

8. Issues

Issue 1: Building Internal Capacity

Improving internal capacity is critical to achieving the mission and strategic directions of the Rural Secretariat. Over the next three years, the Rural Secretariat will invest in staff training and skill development to improve our overall capacity to initiate, design and deliver innovative collaboration, community-based research and public engagement initiatives, processes and projects. The Rural Secretariat will work with the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) to have staff accredited as partnership brokers through their Partnership Broker Accreditation Scheme (PBAS). Training will be provided to staff related to the design and implementation of community-based research activities. Staff will also receive advanced training related to the design and implementation of innovative public engagement initiatives. By strengthening the skills of our staff in these areas, the Rural Secretariat will be better equipped to encourage and support citizens, partners and stakeholders to work together to identify challenges and opportunities facing rural communities and regions, and ultimately to take action for rural sustainability.

Goal:

By March 31, 2014, the Rural Secretariat will have undertaken initiatives to improve internal capacity.

Measure:

Undertaken initiatives to improve internal capacity.

Indicators:

1. Regional Partnership Planners and provincial office staff completed training and/or participated in skill development activities related to community-based research methods, design and implementation.
2. Regional Partnership Planners and provincial office staff completed training and/or participated in skill development activities related to collaboration-brokering.
3. Regional Partnership Planners and provincial office staff completed training and/or participated in skill development activities related to public engagement.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2012, Regional Partnership Planners and provincial office staff will have completed training and/or participated in skill development initiatives related to community-based research.

Measure:

Staff trained/participated in skill developed activities related to community-based research methods, design and implementation.

Indicators:

1. Training event held for regional planners and provincial office staff related to community-based research methods, design and implementation;
2. Staff coached and mentored by experts in the community-based research field;
3. Staff supplied with current literature/documents related to the community-based research field.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2013, Regional Partnership Planners and provincial office staff will have completed training and/or participated in skill development initiatives related to collaboration-brokering.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2014, Regional Partnership Planners and provincial office staff will have completed training and/or participated in skill development initiatives related to public engagement.

Issue 2: Communications

The Rural Secretariat recognizes the importance of effective internal/external communication. Over the past several years the Rural Secretariat has made major strides in revamping and focusing our vision for the organization and its role in supporting regional and rural sustainability. We have enhanced our ability to engage and partner with regional and provincial community organizations. However more needs to be done to enhance visibility and awareness of the role and potential of the Rural Secretariat. As such, over the next three years the Rural Secretariat will: participate better and more often in regional and rural partner events which will help to enhance visibility and raise awareness of the Rural Secretariat; expand its use of technology-driven participatory communication tools and approaches which will make internal and external communication easier; and develop written Rural Secretariat information and process- guideline materials for distribution to existing and potential partners, and which will help to clearly convey the Rural Secretariat's role and potential, including how stakeholders might engage its staff. By strengthening both internal and external communication, the Rural Secretariat will be better able to support and broker meaningful relationships with its primary client groups working for rural and regional sustainability, as outlined in our strategic directions.

Goal:

By March 31, 2014, the Rural Secretariat will have improved internal/external communications.

Measure:

Improved internal/external communications.

Indicators:

1. Increased/enhanced participation in regional partner events;
2. Expanded use of technology-driven participatory communication tools/approaches;
3. Development/distribution of written process and guideline materials to partners.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2012, the Rural Secretariat will have improved its communication through participation in regional partner events.

Measure:

Improved communication through participation in regional partner events.

Indicators:

1. Participation in regional partner events where information about the Rural Secretariat can be presented, and where discussions related to its role, values, process, offerings and areas of emphasis can be held;

2. Participation in regional partner events where workshops/learning sessions demonstrating the knowledge/expertise of the Rural Secretariat - and which generate discussion about the Rural Secretariat - are held.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2013 the Rural Secretariat will have improved its communication through expanded use of technology-driven participatory communication tools/approaches.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2014 the Rural Secretariat will have improved its communication through the development and distribution of written process and guideline materials.

Issue 3: Innovation and best practices

The Rural Secretariat is continually striving to find new and effective ways of supporting regional partners, stakeholders and citizens committed to rural sustainability. Over the next three years, the Rural Secretariat will host and/or support activities that model innovation and best practices in community-based research, public engagement and collaboration. Specific topics for such activities will be identified by our partners, stakeholders and councils. They will reflect provincial, regional and/or sub-regional level issues, challenges and opportunities of relevance to those interested in rural sustainability.

Goal:

By March 31, 2014, the Rural Secretariat will have hosted and/or supported activities that model innovation and best practices in community-based research, public engagement and collaboration.

Measure:

Hosted and/or supported activities that model innovation and best practices in community-based research, public engagement and collaboration.

Indicators:

1. Modeled/demonstrated innovation and best practices in community-based research with emphasis on participatory-action approaches.
2. Modeled/demonstrated innovation and best practices in public engagement with emphasis on interactive technology-enhanced town hall meetings.
3. Modeled/demonstrated innovation and best practices in collaboration with emphasis on partnership and network brokering.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2012 the Rural Secretariat will have hosted and/or supported activities that model innovation and best practices in community-based research with emphasis on participatory-action approaches.

Measure:

Hosted and/or supported activities that modeled innovation and best practices in community-based research with emphasis on participatory-action approaches.

Indicators:

1. Informed and educated partners about innovative and creative community-based research approaches and activities.
2. Modeled or demonstrated community-based research activities in conjunction with partners.

Objective 2:

By March 31, 2013 the Rural Secretariat will have hosted and/or supported activities that model innovation and best practices in public engagement with emphasis on interactive technology-enhanced town hall meetings.

Objective 3:

By March 31, 2014 the Rural Secretariat will have hosted and/or supported activities that model innovation and best practices in collaboration with emphasis on partnership and network brokering.

Appendix A: Strategic Direction

1. Title: Rural Newfoundland and Labrador

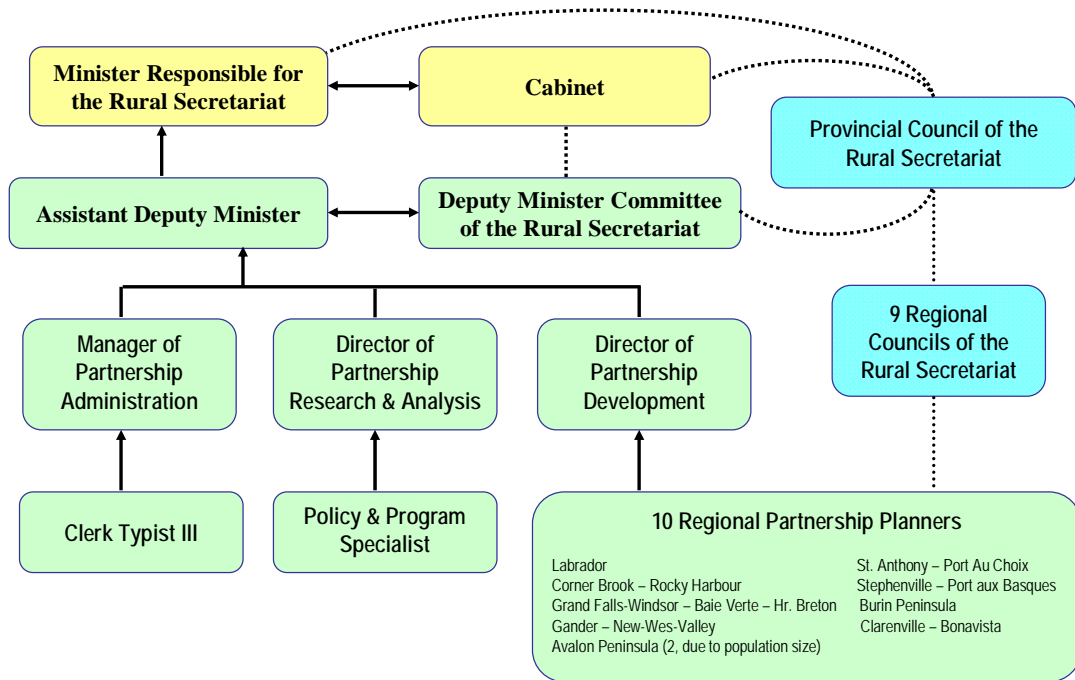
Outcome Statement: A sustainable rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Rural Secretariat in the areas of:

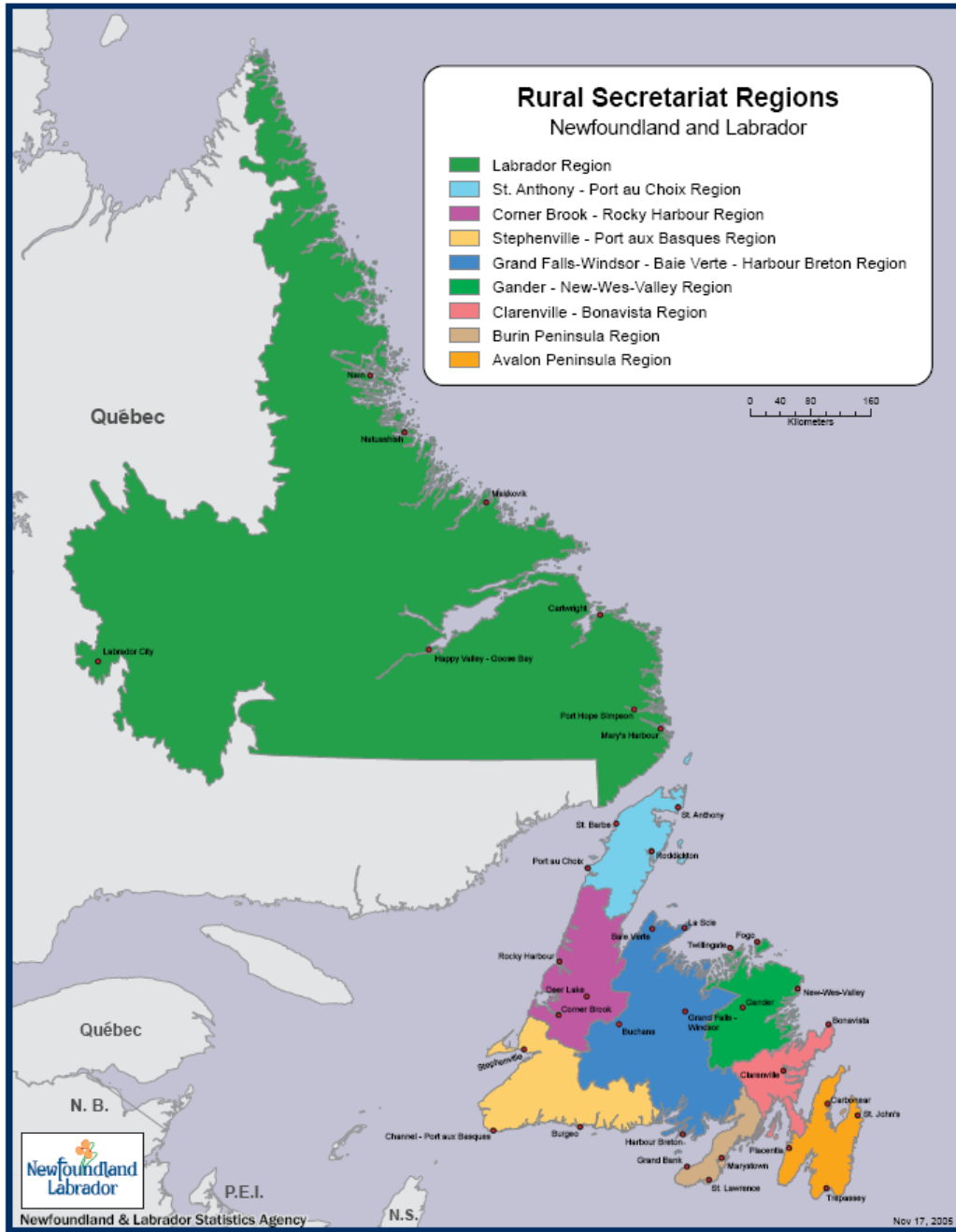
- Citizen-based policy advice
- Public dialogue and engagement
- Collaboration
- Research

Focus Areas/Components of the Strategic Direction	This Direction is:			
	to be addressed by entities reporting to the department	addressed in the department's activity plan	addressed in the department's operational plan	addressed in the branch/divisional work plans of the entity
1. Citizen-based policy advice		X		
2. Public dialogue and engagement		X		
3. Collaboration		X		
4. Research		X		

Rural Secretariat Structure



Appendix C: Map of Rural Secretariat Regions



Appendix D: Mandate of the Regional Councils and the Provincial Council

Mandate of the Regional Councils

The Regional Council's mandate is to:

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

Mandate of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

The Provincial Council mandate is:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing Province.
- To review key economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, Employment Income usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify and advise the provincial government on policies and programs which either a) advance, b) negatively impact or c) need to be developed to encourage the necessary change over the five year period.
- To advance cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about the economic and social measures, and to encourage government and community partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To serve as an external sounding board for government for the development of strategies, policies, programs and budget issues that will effect Provincial and Regional sustainability.

Photo Credits



Courtesy of Greg Wood



Courtesy of Wayne Perry



Courtesy of Baxter Keen



Courtesy of Jenny Rockett



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