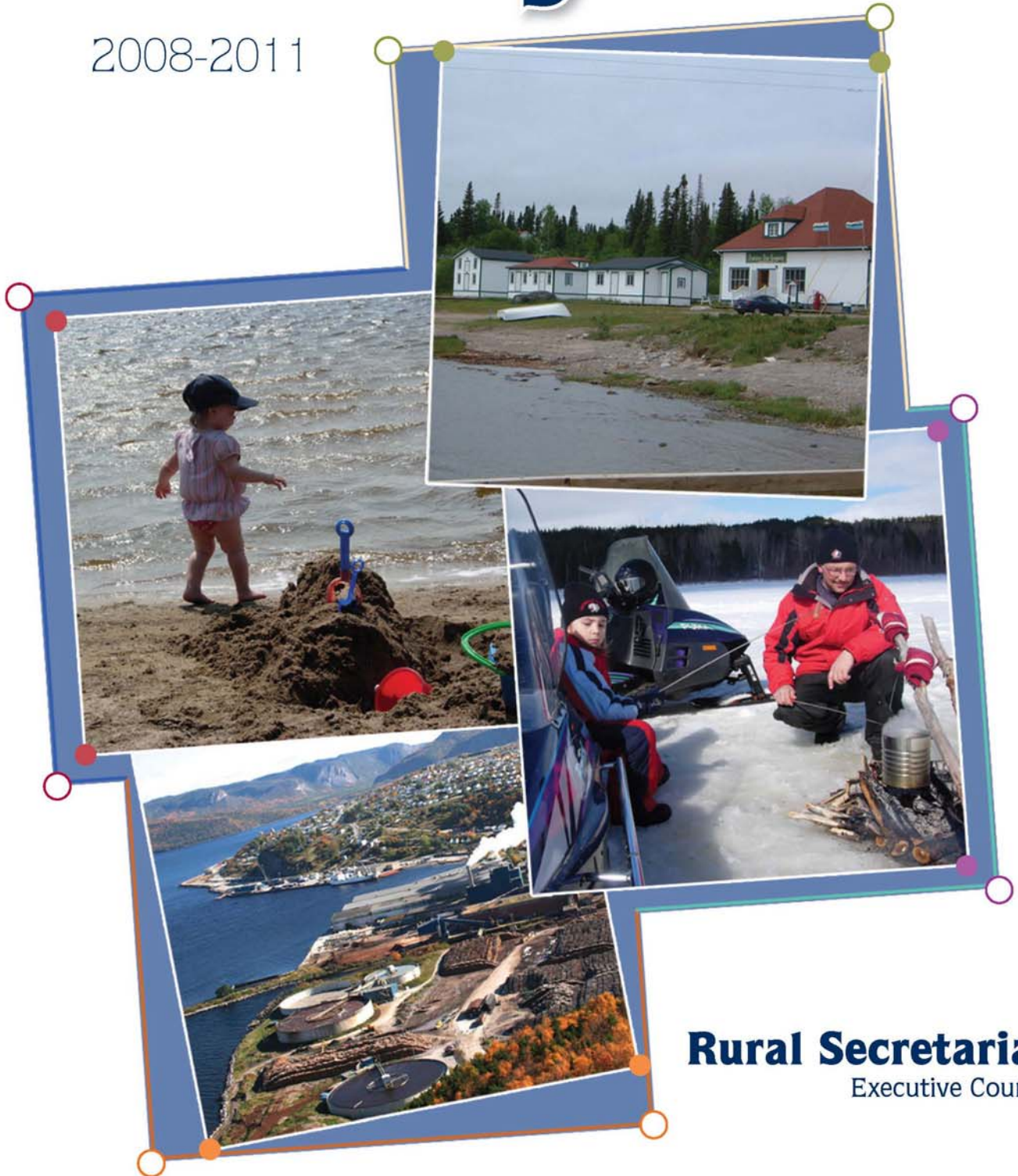


Activity Plan

2008-2011



Rural Secretariat
Executive Council

Message from the Minister

As Minister responsible for the Rural Secretariat and in accordance with government's commitment to accountability, I hereby submit the 2008-11 Activity Plan of the Rural Secretariat. This activity plan was prepared under my direction, and 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*.

The Rural Secretariat was established in 2004 and focuses on the sustainable development of the province's regions. It facilitates information sharing, informed dialogue and collaboration within regions. It encourages integrated thinking and shared decision making on regional issues. The Rural Secretariat engages citizens and stakeholders, through its Provincial and Regional Councils, in discussions with the provincial government about long-term regional sustainability.

The provincial government is committed to sharing information, building knowledge, and planning and working cooperatively with citizens and stakeholders to develop solutions to the challenges and opportunities that face rural areas. In November 2007, the Rural Secretariat hosted the *Visions to Actions – A Roadmap to 2020* conference. This event provided a forum for discussion of regional and rural issues with the Premier, Ministers and other key decision makers. During the event, meaningful discussion occurred between the provincial government, citizens and stakeholders on the opportunities and challenges facing rural communities. Issues discussed included providing a greater voice for youth, increasing economic activity, improving access to public services, advancing skills development, identifying infrastructure investment opportunities, and building community leadership and regional cooperation. These themes will be incorporated into the work of the provincial government as we move forward toward 2020.

Over the next three years, the Rural Secretariat will focus on two primary tasks. The first task will focus on supporting the work of its Provincial and Regional Councils. Councils are tasked with identifying key regional development priorities, and with providing policy advice and advice on key infrastructure and other investments necessary to advance these priorities. The second task will be to enhance the provincial government's consideration of regional and rural perspectives in the development of public policy.

As we move forward together, I look toward the future of our regions with great optimism.

Sincerely,



Minister Trevor Taylor
Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

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1.0 Departmental Overview

The Rural Secretariat is the focal point for collaboration on issues of importance to rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It facilitates regional and rural input into policy development and decision making, promotes improved cross-departmental analysis, and improved cross-departmental decision making in relation to policies that impact regions and rural areas. This work is coordinated by 16 staff (eight female and eight male):

- An Assistant Deputy Minister;
- A Director of Regional Partnership Development;
- A Director of Partnership Research and Analysis;
- A Manager of Partnership Administration;
- 10 Regional Partnership Planners;
- A Policy and Program Specialist; and
- A Clerk Typist III.

(See Appendix B for a complete Organizational Chart)

The Rural Secretariat has identified nine regions in the province, each of which includes larger and smaller communities and is based on existing patterns of economic and social activity. Factors such as population, economic and labour market activity, available infrastructure, and the number of communities, among others, were taken into account when identifying these regions. *(See Appendix C for a regional map).*

The Rural Secretariat is part of the Executive Council and has six staff located in the Confederation Building. The Regional Partnership Planners of the Rural Secretariat are located in 10 locations throughout the province.

Office Location	Region
Carbonear	Avalon Peninsula
Placentia	Avalon Peninsula
Burin	Burin Peninsula
Bonavista	Clarenville-Bonavista
New-Wes-Valley	Gander – New-Wes-Valley
Springdale	Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton
Stephenville	Stephenville – Port aux Basques
Corner Brook	Corner Brook – Rocky Harbour
Roddickton	St. Anthony – Port au Choix
Happy Valley-Goose Bay	Labrador

Additionally, the Rural Secretariat provides management and support to the following structure to carry out its mandate:

- **Regional Councils:** consists of individuals from larger and smaller communities with backgrounds in social, business, labour, cultural and environmental development. Councils meet at least four times per year. Each Regional Council has one member appointed to the Provincial Council. (*See Appendix D for the mandate of the Regional Councils*)
- **Provincial Council:** consists of a chair, one representative from each of the Regional Councils, as well as representation from 10 stakeholder groups (youth, business, labour, social, cultural, environmental, Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic, municipalities and aboriginal organizations). (*See Appendix E for the mandate of the Provincial Council*)
- **Deputy Ministers' Committee on Regional Development:** Deputy Ministers work with the Provincial and Regional Councils to support and advance their work, to develop cross-sectoral approaches to regional and rural issues, and to reduce duplication of policies and programs. The Clerk of the Executive Council chairs the committee.

To accomplish its mandate, the Rural Secretariat budget funds:

- Operating costs for nine Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat,
- Salary and operating costs for 10 Regional Partnership Planners and their regional offices,
- Operating costs for the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat, and
- Salary and operating costs for six staff in the Rural Secretariat Office, Confederation Building.

The Rural Secretariat's budget for 2008/09 is \$1.489 million.

2.0 *Mandate*

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 the provincial 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, and
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.

3.0 *Lines of Business*

The lines of business of the Rural Secretariat are as follows:

Partnership Development: The Rural Secretariat coordinates the development of partnerships that focus on sustainable regional development and provides direct consideration of citizens' and stakeholders' priorities, perspectives and expectations in the development of public policy, infrastructure and other financial decisions, and other provincial government action that impacts regions and rural areas.

Formulation and provision of policy advice and analysis with respect to regions and rural areas: The Rural Secretariat coordinates research and analysis on regional and rural socio-economic issues, provides advice and analysis on legislative, financial, policy, program and service delivery matters that impact regions and rural areas. It also influences and informs cross-departmental analysis and evidence-based decision making with respect to regional and rural challenges and opportunities.

4.0 Values

The core values explain the character of the organization we promote and the action statements guide behaviour. It was decided that the actions which need to be enhanced during the next three years could be articulated as follows:

Collaboration	Each person is committed to working together effectively.
Creativity	Each person seeks and supports new ideas and approaches.
Empowerment	Each person is responsible for participating in discussions, making informed decisions and taking personal responsibility for their contributions.
Inclusion	Each person acknowledges others' views and perspectives and has the right/opportunity to express their own.
Learning Culture	Each individual is recognized and valued for the skills that they bring and is encouraged to continue to learn.
Transparency	Each individual gives and shares open and objective advice based on sound information and principles.
Trust	Each person is open and supportive when participating in partnerships and follows through on requests and commitments.

5.0 Primary Clients

The primary clients of the Rural Secretariat include its citizen-based Regional and Provincial Councils, community organizations, stakeholders such as Regional Economic Development Boards, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, organized youth, federal departments and agencies, and departments and agencies within the provincial government, among others. On a broader basis, the client base of the Rural Secretariat includes all the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. Within the provincial government, for example, the Rural Secretariat works with all departments in fulfilling its mandate and achieving its vision.

6.0 *Vision*

The vision of the Rural Secretariat is of sustainable regions with healthy, educated, prosperous people living in safe, inclusive communities.

7.0 *Mission*

The mission statement identifies the priority focus area of the Minister over the next two planning cycles. It represents the key longer-term result that the Minister and the Secretariat will be working towards as they move forward on the strategic directions of the provincial government. The statement also identifies the measure and indicators that will assist both the entity and the public in monitoring and evaluating success.

By 2011, the Rural Secretariat will have implemented effective tools and processes required to ensure the consistent and formalized consideration of regional impacts in the development of public policy.

The differing circumstances between rural and urban areas have been well documented locally, nationally and internationally. To effectively address these differing circumstances, the Rural Secretariat will provide a forum for open communication between citizens, stakeholders and the provincial government, which will facilitate the communication of regional and rural priorities directly to government.

The Rural Secretariat will also work within the provincial government to advance regional priorities by developing the analytical tools required for the consistent and formalized consideration of regional and rural impacts in decision making processes. As a result, regional priorities will inform public policy so that all regions and rural areas can enhance their long-term sustainability.

Measure 1: Regional priorities are communicated and advanced within the provincial government

Indicators: Regional and Provincial Councils are established and supported to identify regional and rural policy and development priorities, and to provide input and advice to the provincial government with respect to these priorities

Citizen engagement process is implemented to enhance communication between the provincial government and citizens

Departments are supported to ensure that regional and rural impacts are considered in decision making processes

8.0 *Strategic Considerations*

The Rural Secretariat is tasked with focusing public dialogue on long-term, broad-based opportunities and challenges in regions and rural areas. While citizens, stakeholders and interests view these opportunities and challenges in differing ways, six overarching regional and rural themes can be identified: increasing economic activity, advancing skills development, improving access to public services, identifying infrastructure and related investment opportunities, and building community leadership and regional cooperation. The sixth issue, youth retention, is a common theme throughout each of the previous five themes.

The Rural Secretariat is building a process that allows provincial government departments and the Provincial and Regional Councils to discuss these issues. To do this, the Rural Secretariat is pursuing both a *deliberative dialogue* and a *generative dialogue* with citizens and stakeholders and within the provincial government. Deliberative dialogues are structured interactions that take place with targeted groups, such as the Provincial and Regional Councils, over an extended period of time. Generative dialogues involve interactions with multiple players, such as the approach used in cross-sectoral and interdepartmental policy initiatives, to develop a greater level of understanding and awareness about an issue and each player's role. In this way, the players are able to buy-in to the issue and generate new methods, collaboration and solutions that go beyond existing approaches. Dialogue on rural sustainability is increasingly occurring at all levels – with the Provincial and Regional Councils, citizens, stakeholders and the provincial government.

From a citizen's perspective, the process provides a forum for rural perceptions, realities, challenges and potential solutions to be openly discussed, debated and deliberated upon. It involves the bringing together of a diverse group of citizens and groups from differing backgrounds with differing priorities and perspectives, differing bases of information and knowledge, and differing expectations of the provincial government. Many have been impacted by economic, labour market, demographic, social, environmental and cultural change, and many wish to see the provincial government respond to change in tangible ways.

From the provincial government's perspective, the process better ensures that regional and rural concerns and priorities are considered in policy, program, service and budgetary decisions. Through the application of the Rural Lens in decision making processes, the provincial government is better able to identify, in a proactive, objective and systematic manner, the full range of positive and negative impacts of decisions on regional and rural areas, and promote the use of evidence in decision-making. The Lens also facilitates the ability of the provincial government to build capacity to better understand regional and rural issues and identify cross-departmental impacts of decisions. Through focused regional and rural input and analysis, the provincial government is better able to understand the impacts of decisions on citizens, employers, communities, community organizations, public institutions such as school and hospital boards, and other stakeholders.

9.0 *Strategic Issues*

In consideration of the provincial government's strategic directions (Appendix A) and the Rural Secretariat's mandate and financial resources, the following two issues have been identified as priorities for the next three years. The goals identified for each issue outline expected results at the end of the three year period and the objectives outline the annual focus. The identified measures and indicators will be used to monitor progress. Gender-based differences will be considered where applicable.

Issue One: Support to Provincial and Regional Councils

The provincial government established nine Regional Councils in 2005 and a Provincial Council in 2006 to ensure citizens' and stakeholders' priorities, perspectives and expectations are identified and considered in decision making processes that impact regions and rural areas. Each Regional Council has developed a long term vision for its region, each Council (including the Provincial Council) has identified its main development priorities for discussion with the provincial government, and each is engaging with citizens and stakeholders to inform, validate and challenge its directions. The Rural Secretariat is responsible for supporting the work of the Provincial and Regional Councils. More particularly, it seeks to ensure that mechanisms are developed and implemented to build knowledge and capacity among citizens and stakeholders, to allow for focused and informed interaction among citizens, stakeholders, Councils and the provincial government, and to allow for the provision of citizens' and stakeholders' input and advice.

Goal By 2011, the Rural Secretariat will have developed and implemented effective mechanisms which will have allowed the Provincial and Regional Councils to fulfill their mandates

Measure Mechanisms are developed and implemented

Indicators Formal dialogue between provincial government departments and Councils on Regional policy and development priorities will have been established

Meetings, forums and other opportunities for informed and focused interactions will have been scheduled to allow for focused dialogue among citizens, stakeholders, Councils and the provincial government with respect to regional and rural development priorities

Activities will have been completed to transfer knowledge and build the capacity of Councils to provide input and advice to the provincial government

Broad based citizen and community engagement processes will have been Continued

Objectives: By March 31, 2009, the Rural Secretariat will have developed new, and strengthened existing, mechanisms to allow for focused and informed interaction among citizens, stakeholders, Councils and the provincial government.

Measure Mechanisms are developed and strengthened

Indicators Jurisdictional reviews will have been completed to explore processes used in other jurisdictions with respect to citizens' input and advice to decision making processes pertaining to regions and rural areas

Processes for the provincial departmental engagement with Councils, including defining and clarifying roles and relationships, will have been established

Councils will have been encouraged and supported to engage in dialogue with the provincial government on key regional and rural policy and development priorities

Support for citizen and community engagement processes will have been strengthened

Meetings and forums for focused dialogue on regional and rural priorities will have occurred

By March 31, 2010, the Rural Secretariat will have worked with provincial departments, based on information provided by Councils, to advance identified regional and rural development priorities

By March 31, 2011, the Rural Secretariat will have advanced learning and development opportunities with Councils to build their capacity to provide input and advice to the provincial government to inform its decision making processes with respect to regions and rural areas.

Issue Two: Regional and Rural Considerations in Policy Development

Rural areas throughout the province are adapting to a complex mix of economic, labour market, demographic and social change. These changes impact men and women differently, and are reinforced by changing environmental conditions and by changing cultural and social values. Moreover, the ability of the provincial government to manage or influence the pace of change is limited in some circumstances. For example, the provincial government cannot control economic or labour market conditions in other jurisdictions, energy prices, international trade policy, or currency exchange rates. It can, however, seek to maximize the framework conditions, such as skills training, fiscal capacity, infrastructure investments and the delivery of public services, that are necessary for long term regional and rural sustainability. Through mechanisms such as the Rural Lens, the Rural Secretariat will seek to build the capacity of the provincial government to ensure that decision making processes identify, consider and are informed by regional and rural considerations.

Goal: By 2011, the Rural Secretariat will have supported enhancements to provincial government decision making processes pertaining to the consideration of regional issues and trend information.

Measure: Enhancements to existing processes are supported

Indicators: Expanded use of analytical tools (e.g. Rural Lens) will have been encouraged

Partnerships and collaboration with other provincial government departments and agencies will have been strengthened

Focused regional and rural information and planning sessions will have been delivered to provincial government departments, and to Councils, citizens and stakeholders

Objectives: By March 31, 2009, the Rural Secretariat will have supported further

implementation of analytical tools to enhance regional and rural decision making

Measure: Further implementation of analytical tools

Indicators: Full implementation of the Rural Lens will have occurred
The Community Linkages Survey will have been implemented
Regional socio-economic and demographic profiles for Rural Secretariat regions will have been enhanced

By March 31, 2010, the Rural Secretariat will have delivered general and focused information and education sessions with provincial government departments and agencies pertaining to the importance of economic, labour market, demographic, social, cultural and environmental trends

initiatives

By March 31, 2011, the Rural Secretariat will have implemented further to proactively support provincial government departments and agencies to assess regional and rural impacts in the development of policies, programs and services, strategies and plans, and infrastructure and related investments.

Appendix A: Strategic Directions

1. Title: Regional Partnership Development

Outcome Statement: Stronger and more dynamic regions.

Components of Strategic Direction	Applicable to Other Entities Reporting to the Minister	This direction is addressed:		
		in the entity's activity plan	in the entity's operational plan	in the branch/divisional work plans of the entity
1. Partnership Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Regions • Between Government and Regions (i.e. Regional Councils) • Inter-Departmental (e.g., Deputy Ministers' Council) • Inter-Governmental (e.g. ACOA, Federal Rural Secretariat) 		X		
2. Forum for informed discussion and priority identification that links economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of regional sustainability.		X		
3. Research and indicator development (e.g. Community Accounts)		X		

2. Title: Assessment of Policy on Regional Sustainability

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

Components of Strategic Direction	Applicable to Other Entities Reporting to the Minister	This direction is addressed:		
		in the entity's activity plan	in the entity's operational plan	in the branch/divisional work plans of the entity
1. Public policy responsiveness.		X		
2. Regional perspectives which can inform the development and implementation of public policy		X		
3. Rural Lens implementation		X		

Other Strategic Directions for Minister Taylor include:

3. Regional Diversification and Regional Growth

Outcome: Diversified and strengthened regional economies

4. Innovation

Outcome: An innovative culture

5. Small and medium sized enterprise business supports

Outcome: An environment supportive of enterprise establishment and growth

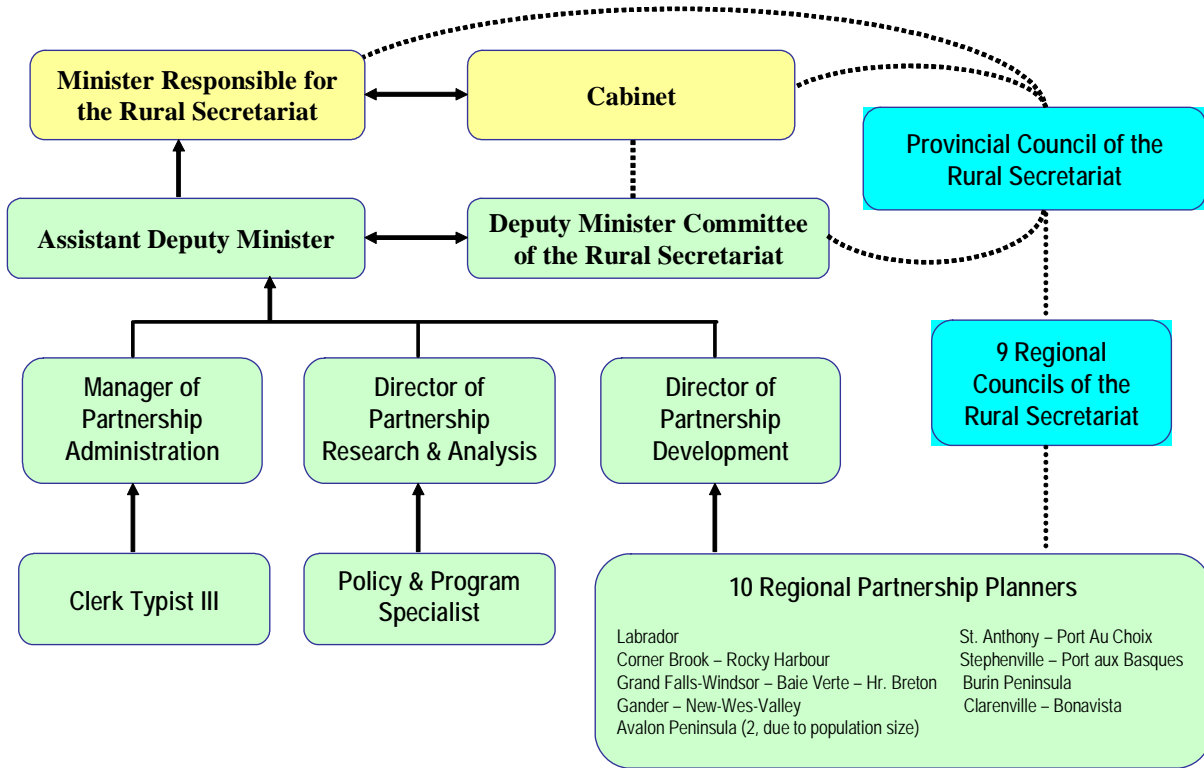
6. Business promotion, trade and export development

Outcome: Increased business promotion, trade and export

7. Business, industry and economic intelligence

Outcome: Improved understanding of and response to significant long-term economic and competitiveness issues

Rural Secretariat Structure



Appendix D

Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat

Regional Council Mandate:

- 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 serve as a sounding board in their region for new or proposed initiatives.
- To nominate an individual to represent the region on the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

Appendix E

Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

Provincial Council Mandate:

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing the province.
 - To 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.
 - To 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.
 - To 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.
 - To meet twice annually with the provincial Cabinet and deputy ministers to advance regional development priorities.
 - To 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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PHOTO CREDITS:

Top Right

North West River

Photo Compliments of Taracetta Butt

Middle Left and Right

Central Newfoundland

Photos Compliments of Tanya Noble

Bottom Left

Corner Brook

Photo Compliments of Daniel Baldwin



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