

*2006-07
Annual Activity
Report of the
Rural Secretariat,
Executive Council*

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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 2006-07 Annual Activity Report of the Rural Secretariat which details the activities of the secretariat from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007. This annual activity report was prepared under my direction and I am accountable for its preparation.



While the secretariat does not deliver programs and services, its efforts do enhance their delivery. During the year, the Rural Secretariat:

- provided a forum for citizens to discuss solutions to issues and provided leadership for our communities around change;
- advanced rural issues including, as appropriate, opportunities for cross-departmental policy development; and,
- worked with departments to engage citizens in a more collaborative manner on matters which directly impact their mandates. This includes the development of partnerships involving departments and agencies with complementary interests such as Innovation, Trade and Rural Development and the College of the North Atlantic;
- provided input and advice to departments on policy level strategies, initiatives, and actions;
- promoted an understanding of the linkages between larger and smaller communities necessary to create sustainable regions; and
- conducted and disseminated research relevant to rural areas.

I look forward to the continued work of the secretariat and its councils as we work collaboratively to strengthen rural communities and regions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Taylor', written in a cursive style.

TREVOR TAYLOR
Minister
MHA, The Straits and White Bay North

Organizational Overview

The Rural Secretariat focuses on the sustainable development of all regions of the province. It promotes information sharing, informed dialogue and collaboration within government and between government and communities. It facilitates horizontal thinking on regional issues and is focused on the long-term sustainability of all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador. The secretariat conducts research, develops processes and tools, and engages citizens to enhance the consideration of regional issues in public policy development.

To carry out its work, the Rural Secretariat has a permanent staff complement of 16 employees:

- Assistant Deputy Minister
- Director of Regional Partnership Development
- Director of Partnership Research and Analysis
- Manager of Partnership Administration
- 10 Regional Partnership Planners
- Policy Analyst
- Clerk Typist III

(See Appendix A for Organizational Chart)

Six of these positions are located at the Confederation Building in St. John's. The ten regional partnership planner positions are located throughout the province in each of the nine regions identified by the Rural Secretariat. Each region of the secretariat consists of larger and smaller communities that were selected based upon existing patterns of economic, social and community activity, as well as shared infrastructure.

Rural Secretariat Office Locations:

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

The secretariat provides management and support to the following committees in carrying out its mandate:

- Regional Councils: There are nine regional councils. Each council comprises men and women from larger and smaller communities within each region. Members were chosen for their backgrounds in social, business, labour, cultural and environmental development within a region and do not represent specific organizations. Councils meet four times per year. (See Appendix C for the mandate of the regional councils)
- Provincial Council: This council consists of representatives from each of the regional councils and other community representatives. The provincial council meets twice per year with Cabinet to discuss broad policy and program initiatives which will enhance the sustainable development of all regions in the province. (See Appendix C for the mandate of the provincial council)
- Deputy Ministers' Committee on Regional Development: Deputy Ministers meet to develop cross sectoral and cross departmental approaches to regional and rural issues, and to ensure that policy and programs are designed to be complementary. The Clerk of the Executive Council chairs the committee. The deputy ministers' committee meets with the provincial council and is engaged in the work of the Secretariat throughout the year.

Vision

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

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 government to work with local and regional partners to build strong and dynamic regions and communities.
- Ensure that regional concerns are considered throughout the provincial government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.

Lines of Business

The Rural Secretariat has two primary areas of focus:

Partnership Development: The Rural Secretariat engages citizens and coordinates the development of partnerships to focus on sustainable regional development and provide direct consideration of regional issues in the development of public policy.

Regional Impact Awareness and Action: The Rural Secretariat conducts research and analysis, and provides informed advice on opportunities and challenges in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Activities

The Transparency and Accountability Act requires all public bodies to take into account Government's publicly communicated strategic directions when preparing performance-based reports. There are two key directions related to the Rural Secretariat:

1. Regional Partnership Development
2. Assessment of Policy on Regional Sustainability

In accordance with the Transparency and Accountability Act, the secretariat tabled its Activity Plan for 2006-08. This plan outlined the goals and objectives of the secretariat for the past fiscal year, as well as the upcoming fiscal year. In keeping with the two strategic directions, the following outlines the progress of the Rural Secretariat during the first year of its activity plan, and identifies the indicators for progress during the next fiscal year.

Goal 1

Goal: By 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have implemented an effective forum for communication between government and citizens.

Objective: By March 31, 2007, the Rural Secretariat will have established processes to support the provincial and regional councils to initiate the development of preliminary regional vision documents.

Measure: Processes are established

Indicators	Results
Regional and local area information and targeted research is provided	Detailed socio-economic and socio-demographic data were distributed, which profiles the necessary economic, labour market, demographic and social factors impacting regions and rural areas. Emphasis was placed on information which allows for better understanding of the

	linkages between regional sustainability, economic activity and demographic structures.
Facilitation is provided	Rural Secretariat staff facilitated at least four meetings of each of the nine regional councils during the fiscal year Staff of the Secretariat facilitated two meetings of the Provincial Council during the fiscal year
Forum for communication is in place	Each Regional Council held at least four meetings during the fiscal year The Provincial Council held two meetings during the fiscal year

Best practices from other jurisdictions are shared	A comparative jurisdictional review of rural development and longer term visioning studies, exercises and practices was completed and the results shared. The review focused on sub-national jurisdictions including Canadian provinces, US states, UK regions and Australian states and regions
Analytical/information tools provided to support informed decision-making	Emphasis was placed on: An improved understanding of the policy framework and budgetary constraints faced by the province in policy and decision-making, Improved distribution of existing policy level strategies and ongoing consultation exercises to provide citizens with an overview of current priorities and initiatives

	<p>The ongoing development of a rural lens to ensure that the impacts of decisions on rural areas are assessed in a standardized, objective and comprehensive manner</p> <p>Development and implementation of a citizen engagement process, including the development of a citizen engagement guide</p>
Orientation supports provided	<p>The Provincial and Regional Councils received comprehensive orientations to their roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Councils were provided with provincial and regional demographic, social and economic data</p>
Confirmation that vision documents have been developed	Draft vision documents were developed by March 31, 2007.

Measure and Indicators for Fiscal Year 2007-08

Objective: By March 31, 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have supported the provincial and regional councils to make informed policy advice and recommendations to government.

Measure: Provincial and regional councils are supported.

Indicators: Regional and local area information and targeted research is made available to council members, government departments and community groups.

Citizen engagement process is continued.

Regional and provincial councils are supported to provide input into Government priorities.

Meetings of the regional and provincial councils are scheduled and facilitated.

Meetings are organized between Cabinet and the Provincial Council.

Meetings are organized between the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Regional Development and the Provincial Council.

Goal 2

Goal: By 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have advanced knowledge of regional perspectives in public policy development.

Objective: By March 31, 2007, the Rural Secretariat will have developed and communicated analytical tools and facilitated the enhanced use of Community Accounts.

Measures: Analytical tools are developed, supported and communicated.
Facilitated the enhanced use of Community Accounts.

Indicators	Results
Analytical tools are developed and communicated	Development of the rural lens continued and was finalized. During this period, senior officials and key policy development personnel were consulted to ensure that the tool would be objective, properly targeted and beneficial to departments.
Committee operationalized to facilitate the enhanced use of Community Accounts	<p>A committee comprised of representatives from the Rural Secretariat, the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency and the Harris Centre, MUN was established to facilitate the enhanced use of the Community Accounts.</p> <p>Emphasis was placed on the indicators used, a comparative review of other jurisdictions, and the needs of users. This committee concluded its work in September 2006. Its findings are</p>

	being considered and implemented, as appropriate, by the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency
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Measure and Indicators for Fiscal Year 2007-08

Objective: By March 31, 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have developed formal mechanisms to allow for the consideration of regional issues and trends in the development of government policies and programs.

Measure: Formal mechanisms are developed.

Indicators: Training on the use of the Rural Lens is provided to Provincial Government departments.

Advice is provided to Provincial Government departments on the use of the Rural Lens.

Rural Secretariat staff will have participated on interdepartmental committees and advanced regional perspectives.

Regional and provincial councils are supported.

Highlights and Accomplishments

Consistent with the two strategic directions of regional partnership development and, assessment of policy on regional sustainability, the following provides an overview of some of the accomplishments of the Rural Secretariat in 2006-2007.

Staff Development

Staff development continued to be a priority for the Rural Secretariat during the 2006-07 fiscal year. Employees of the Secretariat participated in a number of training sessions offered through the Centre for Learning and Development, as well as attended relevant conferences and information sessions within and outside the province.

Additionally, the Regional Partnership Planners of the Rural Secretariat were provided with training specific to the facilitation of a citizen engagement process. This training was critical to the work of the Secretariat in engaging citizens throughout the province and bringing their voice to the decision-making process of government.

Citizen Engagement

In December 2006, Regional Partnership Planners, as well as regional council members, began a citizen engagement process. This process, which will continue in future years, was initiated to engage citizens throughout the province in a discussion about the future of regions. Each region is experiencing changes and this engagement process provides an opportunity for a two-way sharing of information that provides a more holistic picture of the opportunities and challenges within regions based on evidence. The process is meant to bring together individuals with a variety of perspectives and roles to share their ideas and challenge each others thinking.

During the 2006-07 fiscal year, the citizen engagement process included individual engagement sessions as well as small and larger group sessions. By March 31, 2007, almost 100 individuals were engaged in individual engagement sessions throughout the nine regions. Participants included seniors, youth, economic developers, entrepreneurs, volunteers, and municipal leaders.

Additionally, there were over 20 small and large group sessions held that included nearly 500 individuals. Themes discussed included were the role of the Rural Secretariat, the future of regions and the province, out-migration, diversification and collaboration.

Regional Councils

A Regional Partnership Planner works with each of the nine Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat. During the year these councils worked on vision documents that outlined the future they want to see for their regions. From this vision of the future, the council then identified the priority areas for action. To see the 2006-07 Activity Reports and council member listing for each of the nine regional councils please visit the Rural Secretariat website at <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/>.

Provincial Council

The Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat held two meetings during the fiscal year, as per its mandate. The first meeting was held in May 2006 and the second in November 2006. These meetings provided an opportunity for the Council to develop its work plan and to build working relationships among members of the Council.

Members of the council also participated in Dialogue Day 2006 which took place in Rocky Harbour. To see the 2006-07 Activity Report of the Provincial Council and the current membership listing please visit the Rural Secretariat website at <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/>.

Dialogue Day 2006

In October 2006, the Secretariat held its second Dialogue Day at Fisherman's Landing in Rocky Harbour. Attendees included two representatives from each regional council, including the provincial council representative, chairs of the regional councils, at large members of the Provincial Council, caucus and deputy ministers. This Dialogue Day provided an opportunity to hold a second meeting between Cabinet and regional council members where regional councils gave a synopsis of their work over the past year and identified some emerging themes.

Attendees had an opportunity to visit the Bonne Bay Marine Centre in Norris Point. This marine centre is a world-class teaching and research facility that is dedicated to expanding knowledge of marine ecology. It is one example of the many opportunities and talents that exist in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Presentations, Meetings and Media Inquiries

During the fiscal year, the Secretariat presented information to a range of organizations regarding the economic, labour market, demographic and social trends facing the province. These organizations included government departments, Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic, and various labour, community development, community service and related groups.

Each regional partnership planner was also actively sharing information within their regions during the fiscal year. Over 30 meetings were held and approximately 70 presentations were made by regions, both individually and jointly. Information was provided concerning policy development, demographic information, strategic initiatives of government, and presentations from Dialogue Day.

Deputy Ministers' Committee

The Deputy Ministers' Committee had an opportunity to meet with provincial council members at Dialogue Day 2006. The committee was engaged in the work of the Rural Secretariat during the fiscal year through meetings and updates.

Research and Related Activity

During the 2006-07 fiscal year, the Rural Secretariat continued to develop means and processes to facilitate the enhanced consideration of rural issues in policy, program and service decisions.

Specific initiatives included:

Rural Lens

The Secretariat finalized the development of a rural lens. The lens is a broad-based tool that will enable all Provincial Government departments and agencies to utilize a consistent, formalized approach to the assessment of rural impacts in the development of policies, program and services. It consists of a series of questions that clarify the policy objective, explore direct and indirect impacts, as well as explore implementation and communication considerations.

Community Linkages Survey

The Rural Secretariat, in partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency and College of the North Atlantic continued the development of a Community Linkages Survey (CLS). Work in 2006-07 included finalizing a draft questionnaire and sample frame, and included liaison with Statistics Canada. The CLS is designed to fill major data gaps required for rural-urban linkages and to allow for better targeting of regional and rural policy and program initiatives. It will be a household-based survey that will seek to identify rural-urban and rural-rural linkages between and among larger and smaller communities. For example, it will seek to determine where people live versus where they work, purchase goods and services, and access public services. It will also ask how these linkages may change over the next five years. It is intended that the survey will be complete during the 2007-08 fiscal year.

Demographic Projections

The Rural Secretariat is working in partnership with the Department of Finance (Economic Statistics Branch) to revise and update the population projections at the provincial and sub-provincial levels. Our role is to coordinate and implement regional and stakeholder consultations for the project and to coordinate the dissemination of information products at the conclusion of the project. Revised interim projections were released in 2006-07 and a new set of population projections will be released in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

University Linkages

The Rural Secretariat maintains strong linkages with the Leslie Harris Center of Regional Policy and Development (Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador), particularly with regard to the study of rural-urban linkages and dissemination of university research to regional stakeholders. The secretariat is participating in two related projects; *Memorial University Regional Inventory (MURI)* and *Mobilizing Knowledge for Sustainable Regions in Newfoundland and Labrador*.

The Rural Secretariat is a member of the steering committee for the MURI project. MURI is an internet-based database modeled after Community Accounts. It collects, records and monitors regional research-related activities that have been completed, are ongoing or will be undertaken by MUN. The long-term goal is to enhance regional development by facilitating linkages between researchers and economic development agencies, communities and other stakeholders. Work on MURI has commenced and the data is currently being entered into the database.

The Rural Secretariat is playing an active role in the *Mobilizing Knowledge for Sustainable Regions in Newfoundland and Labrador* project. Through its regional staff and citizen-based regional councils, the secretariat is assisting with the identification of research needs in regions. This initiative is identifying research that has been completed at MUN which can benefit regional policy and development. It will also enable research needs and gaps to be identified at the local level which can be forwarded to MUN for follow up and action. This information will be available through MURI.

Interdepartmental Initiatives

The Rural Secretariat participates in a number of interdepartmental initiatives which will impact on rural areas. Some examples of these initiatives include:

Policy Initiatives

- Labour Market Development – Lead agent: Human Resources, Labour and Employment
- Poverty Reduction Strategy - Lead agent: Human Resources, Labour and Employment
- Crime Prevention Strategy – Lead agents: Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency
- Labrador Transportation Strategy – Lead agent: Transportation and Works
- Integrated Hub Model and Bridging the Gap – Lead agent: Federal Rural Secretariat
- Aging and Seniors Committee – Lead agent: Health and Community Services
- Oceans Management – Lead agent: Fisheries and Aquaculture

Program and Project Initiatives

- Violence Prevention Initiative - Lead agent: Women's Policy Office
- Literacy Initiative – Lead agent: Education
- Government Broadband Initiative – Lead agent: Innovation, Trade and Rural Development
- Northern Strategic Plan – Lead agent: Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Advancing Rural Policy

One of the key roles for the Rural Secretariat is to ensure that the impacts of policy decisions on regions and rural areas are considered in decision-making. The introduction of the Rural Lens is a key opportunity to give effect to this role. As a mandatory tool for departments to use in seeking direction on major decisions, it will enhance the consideration of rural impacts and implication by ensuring they are considered objectively and comprehensively. The Rural Secretariat is also engaging with departments in a more coordinated manner of major policy priorities impacting rural areas. The challenge will be to ensure that rural impacts and implications are considered while promoting provincial and regional economic, labour market, demographic and social benefits.

Advancing Opportunities for Regional Sustainability

There is an increasing understanding of the intricate and complex linkages between regional sustainability, economic activity and the demographic structure. Advancing progress on each of these generally entails advancement of all of these. The challenge and opportunity is to better articulate, promote and disseminate information that identifies these linkages, as well as identifying the necessary elements (economic activity, government responsiveness, community ownership and responsibility) to achieve progress.

Priority Identification and Advancement

Visions have been developed which will guide the regions toward sustainability. An opportunity is presented for councils to identify priorities for their regions and provide advice for change. Communities and Provincial Government departments can begin to look 'outside the box' at new approaches. Once a priority is selected, the challenge is to identify a process that will be

successful in positively influencing change. The challenge is for this process to become more transparent to demonstrate that councils can provide value added input and advice that can impact change. This is an opportunity for councils and citizens to help shape the futures of their regions and the province.

Financial Summary

The Rural Secretariat budget includes funding to support the staff of the Secretariat, the maintenance of Community Accounts and travel for provincial and regional council members.

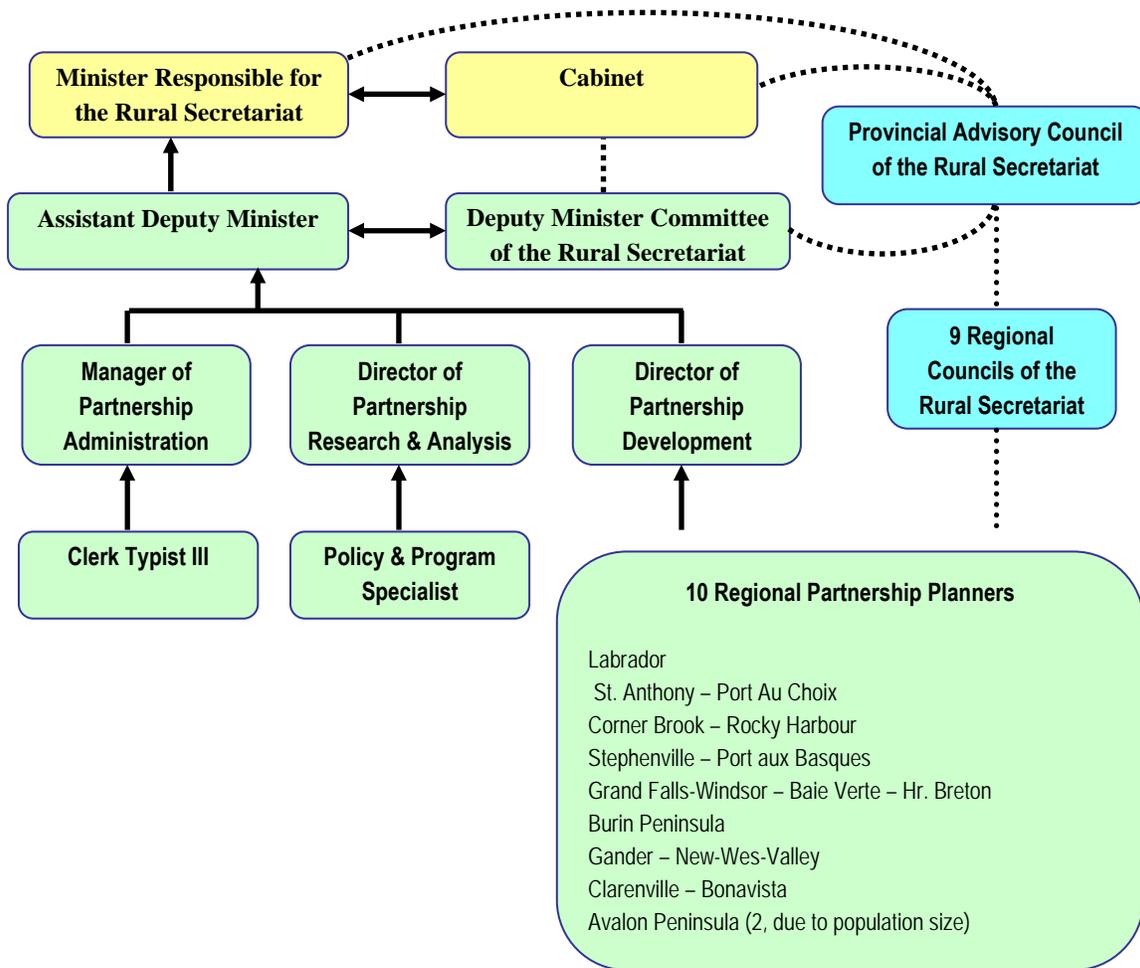
Fiscal Year 2006-07 (Unaudited)

	Actual Expenditures	Estimates Amended	Estimates Original
Salaries	1,413,856	1,414,500	1,227,000
Employee Benefits	9,839	10,400	4,000
Transportation & Communications	248,798	280,000	298,500
Supplies	26,483	31,000	50,000
Professional Services	22,800	22,800	173,000
Purchased Services	69,342	95,500	92,500
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	6,018	6,200	5,000
TOTAL	1,797,136	1,860,400	1,850,000

Expenditures and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended 31 March 2007.

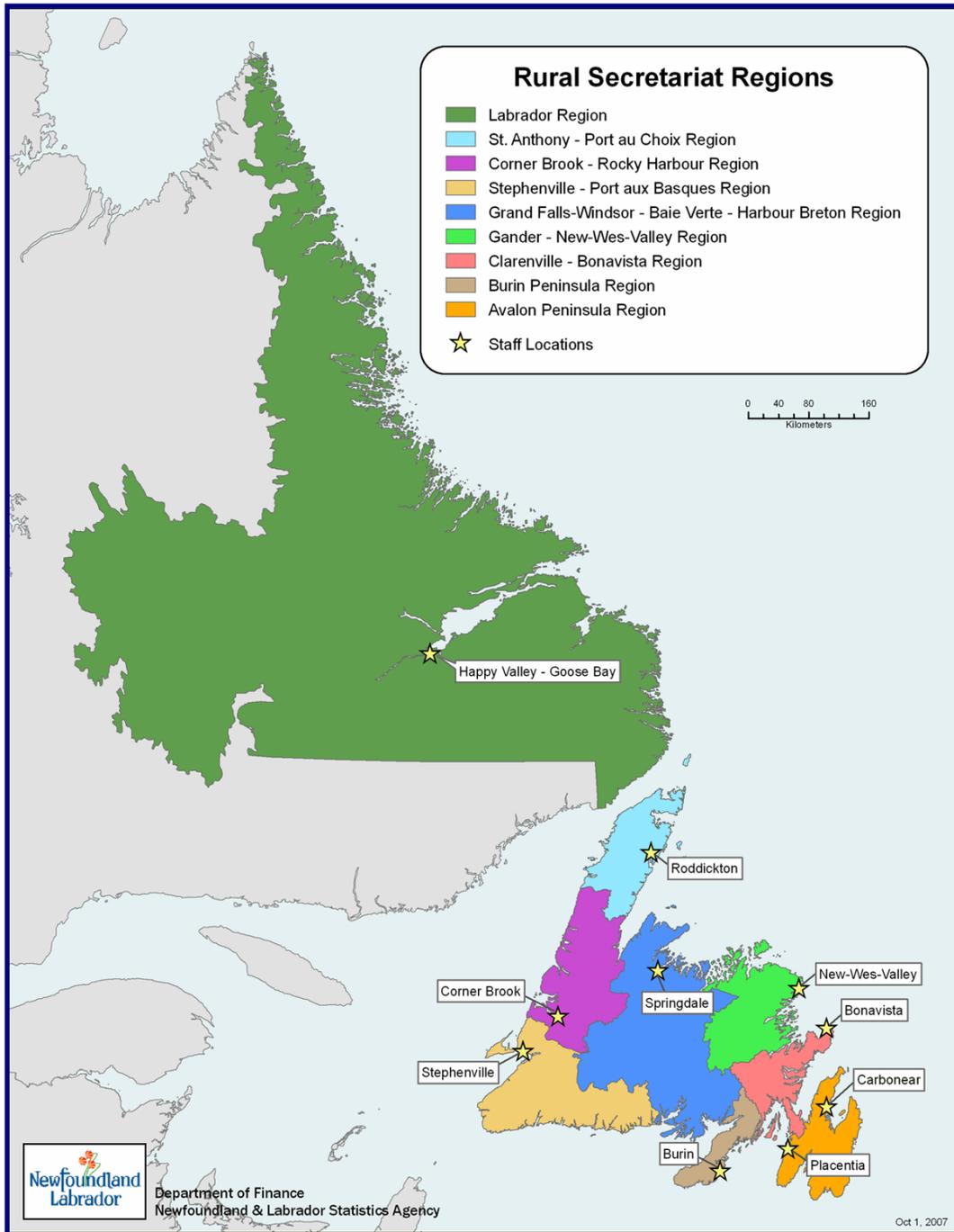
Appendix A

Rural Secretariat Organizational Structure



Appendix B

Rural Secretariat Regions - Map



Appendix C

Mandate of the Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat

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

Mandate of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

- 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.
- 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.

COVER PHOTO CREDITS:



Looking Out Over Bare Mountain, Clarendville
- Paul Tilley



Lighthouse - Point Amour – Tourism, Culture
& Recreation



Croque Waterfront – Natasha Way



Corner Brook – Daniel Baldwin



Mooring Cove – Greater Lamaline Area
Development Association



Change Islands – Lynn Pardy



Westport – Linda Brett



Port aux Basques – Zone 10 Regional
Economic Development Board



Bay Roberts – The View Along the Shoreline
Walk – Mary Snow



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