



Environment and Local Government

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

Environment and Local Government **Annual Report 2022-2023**

Province of New Brunswick
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TRANSMITTAL LETTERS

From the Minister to the Lieutenant-Governor

Her Honour The Honourable Brenda Murphy
Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick

May it please your Honour:

It is my privilege to submit the annual report of the Department of Environment and Local Government, Province of New Brunswick, for the fiscal year April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Gary Crossman
Minister

From the Minister to the Lieutenant-Governor

Her Honour The Honourable Brenda Murphy
Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick

May it please your Honour:

It is my privilege to submit the annual report of the Department of Environment and Local Government, Province of New Brunswick, for the fiscal year April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Glen Savoie
Minister

From the Deputy Minister to the Minister

Honourable Gary Crossman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Honourable Glen Savoie
Minister of Local Government

Sirs:

I am pleased to be able to present the annual report describing operations of the Department of Environment and Local Government for the fiscal year April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,



Charbel Awad
Acting Deputy Minister
Environment and Local Government

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The Department of Environment and Local Government takes its role to protect and preserve our environment extremely seriously, working daily to ensure our goals are achieved. We provide programs and offer services that not only protect our environment but ensure New Brunswickers are informed on a wide range of issues from climate change to cyanobacteria to flood hazards.

Our work is enhanced by the invaluable role of our stakeholders. We appreciate our partnerships and benefit from them.

One of the highlights of fiscal 2022-2023 was the completion of our comprehensive 2016-2021 Climate Change Action Plan *Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy*. We are already experiencing the effects of climate change, that's why climate change is a top priority. The final progress report showed that 76 per cent of the actions were completed. It also showed progress in several areas, including in energy efficiency and renewable energy; transportation; waste management; industrial sources; government practices; development policies; managing natural resources; risks and damages; community partnerships and public education; and outreach.

In September 2022, we released our renewed action plan *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience*. The action plan features three pillars: government leadership and accountability, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change.

Through the renewed action plan, the province is positioning itself to attract clean investments, create good jobs and opportunities for businesses that take advantage of new technology, and market New Brunswick as a green hub through decarbonization. The government has committed to reaching net zero – removing as much carbon from the atmosphere as is emitted – by 2050.

We're already leading the country when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions reductions. We have reduced our emissions by 39 per cent below 2005 levels. There have been significant efforts to ensure our local governments are prepared for climate change. About 60 per cent of local governments have an adaptation plan in place.

Our Carbon Tax Fund supported many key projects, including: \$500,000 to work with First Nations to address energy efficiency and energy conservation needs; \$360,000 to study the impact of sea-level rise and more severe weather; and almost \$3M for the electric-vehicle incentive program.

Our long-standing Environmental Trust Fund provides financial support for projects throughout the province. In 2022-2023, approximately \$8,641,200 was provided for 234 application-based projects. The funding went to environmental research, education, and restoration; waste reduction and recycling; and climate change adaptation and mitigation. We are pleased to support innovative projects that encourage environmental initiatives in our communities to build a better New Brunswick. Each project makes a significant contribution to improving our environment, while creating jobs and helping our economy.

The climate is changing, and we see it in the severity of storms such as Hurricane Fiona, which caused significant damage to homes and properties in some coastal areas. When there is

unforeseen weather, the department helps citizens access free water testing kits, and provides other services such as debris collection or disposal.

The department's Hydrology Centre has one of the best forecasting systems in North America. The centre helps protect New Brunswickers and their property from flooding by using the latest technology. We work with our partners such as the Emergency Measures Organization, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and others to ensure New Brunswickers get accurate information as quickly as possible. Although we've not experienced significant flooding since 2019, every spring freshet generates concern. That's why the Hydrology Centre provides regular forecasts and updated information on its website. The Department of Environment and Local Government updated and expanded Internet-based maps that predict the future location, frequency, and depth of coastal and inland flooding in New Brunswick. These interactive tools are helping New Brunswickers make the best decisions about flood-proofing existing infrastructure and planning evacuation routes in the event of a flood. They're also valuable tools in developing land-use plans and climate change adaptation plans.

New Brunswick continues to have good air quality. We released two air quality reports in fiscal 2022-2023. The 2020 Air Quality Monitoring Results report showed the province's progress and continued commitment to improve air quality in the province. Meanwhile, the 2021 report showed improvement in achieving the Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards. The provincial network includes 10 air quality monitoring stations and five acid rain stations. As well, operators of large industrial facilities are required to participate in air quality monitoring as a condition of approval under the *Clean Air Act*. During the 2021 reporting year, there were 29 industry-operated stations, with 49 instruments, dedicated to continuously monitoring the ambient concentrations of industry-specific contaminants in nearby communities. Air quality monitoring in New Brunswick is a partnership between Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Department of Environment and Local Government under the National Air Pollution Surveillance Agreement. The data used for the annual air reports is also available online at the air quality data portal, which allows the public to view local air quality information in real-time. The portal displays data from all ambient monitoring stations in the province.

Public education is an important part of our mandate at ELG. We've developed public education and awareness campaigns around cyanobacteria, illegal dumping, drinking water quality, waste diversion and many other important and timely issues. The departments of Environment and Health partnered with communities and organizations and distributed 150 new cyanobacteria signs for installation at ponds, lakes, and rivers throughout New Brunswick. Cyanobacteria, which includes blue-green algae, are naturally occurring in many bodies of water. They are not normally visible, but under certain conditions, can increase in numbers to form visible surface blooms or benthic mats.

New Brunswick is a leader in solid-waste management and recycling in Atlantic Canada. We conducted public engagement, and regulation changes took effect for our packaging and paper products extended producer responsibility program. We are the first in Atlantic Canada to take such an important step toward waste reduction. Redemption centres are key to our recycling efforts. That's why the government increased handling fees by 11.8 per cent in the spring of 2022 to accommodate minimum wage hikes and other increased costs borne by redemption centres. In fiscal 2022-2023, in partnership with the Department of Health, we established the Pharmaceutical Products and Medical Sharps Program to ensure the safe and environmentally responsible

management and disposal of unused or expired household pharmaceutical products and medical sharps.

Authorizations staff completed an update of the Contaminated Sites Management Guidelines. The Department also undertook a file prioritization exercise of all open contaminated site files to ensure that potential risks to the environment and human health are addressed.

Stakeholder engagement was held on a solid waste action plan for New Brunswick. The plan's goal is to achieve a 40,000-tonne reduction in solid waste that is being landfilled in the province by 2030, based on the estimated 2018 solid waste disposal rate for the province.

The staff of Environment and Local Government are a dedicated and hardworking team, and they are continuously looking for ways to ensure responsible stewardship for our province.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gary Crossman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hon. Gary Crossman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Department of Environment and Local Government

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

What an exciting year it's been at the Department of Environment and Local Government. We made history in November 2022 when elections and byelections for 58 local governments and 12 new rural districts were held. For about 30 per cent of the population, it was the first time they could cast a ballot for a local representative in this manner, eliminating a democratic deficit that had existed for decades.

The newly restructured local governments and rural districts took effect on January 1, 2023. Also on this day, the mandates of the 12 Regional Service Commissions (RSCs) were expanded to require the delivery of services ranging from economic development, regional tourism promotion, community development, regional transportation, and cost-sharing for regional recreational infrastructure.

Stable and predictable funding is integral to the success of reform. The department announced a new funding mechanism for local governments, RSCs and rural districts that will see a set amount of \$75.6 million annually for 2023 to 2027.

This will ensure that communities needing support receive adequate funding, while those that are financially stronger receive less. Core funding will be redirected over the next five years and various provincial departments will also fund regional priorities of the RSCs through a variety of mechanisms including the 10-year agreements between WorkingNB and the RSCs to support economic and labour force development, and newcomer retention services.

Another highlight of fiscal 2022-2023 was local governance orientation. The department delivered a comprehensive program for new and returning local government councils, rural district councillors, and RSC CEOs and boards to provide the foundation required for their roles. Eight online sessions were held, with over 300 participants receiving valuable training on a variety of topics. There was also an in-person session at the end of March to bring together elected and non-elected officials. Local governments are the closest form of government to the people they serve. The importance of councils can't be overstated. Their decisions are key to providing and maintaining a variety of services including roads and streets, police and fire protection, recreation, solid waste, water, and waste-water services, just to name a few. These services are the basis of any community, large or small.

In September 2022, the province and our municipal stakeholders marked its first annual Municipality Week to celebrate the many accomplishments of local governments and to ensure their continued success.

The partnership our government has with local governance representatives such as local governments, regional service commissions, municipal associations, elected members, staff and volunteers across New Brunswick is an inspiration to me as the minister of Local Government.

The energy and enthusiasm generated around selecting names for the entities was another highlight. Many of the names for the new entities reflect strong ties to nature and history, including Maple Hills, Butternut Valley, and Belle-Baie. The entity names were set in regulation in the fall of 2022.

The Regional Collaboration and Community Planning Branch also held extensive engagement sessions on the proposed statements of public interest. The proposed topics are settlement patterns; agriculture; climate change; natural resources; and flood and natural hazard areas. It also updated its web pages and developed land use planning tools to help local governments and developers include affordable housing in their projects.

The department is pleased to partner with the federal government to administer the Canada-Community Building Fund. For 2019-2023, the total allocation for incorporated areas was \$258.9M and the total for unincorporated areas is \$64.6M. The program, formerly known as the Gas Tax Fund, is a permanent source of federal funding for infrastructure investments. While 80 per cent of the funding is allocated to local governments, 20 per cent is available for projects that benefit residents in the former local service districts. This funding is vital to maintaining and improving our infrastructure in a strategic way, based on the unique needs of each region and community.

A new category for fire halls was announced in fiscal 2022-2023 to help modernize fire departments across the province. We all know how vital fire services are, not only for saving lives but as community hubs. Fire halls are the hearts of their communities. The provincial and federal governments also announced \$16.9M for infrastructure projects, fire departments, and local governments with increased populations due to restructurings.

The Department provides an annual grant to the New Brunswick Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NB SPCA) to assist in fulfilling its legislative requirements under the *Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. We know how important animals and animal protection are to New Brunswickers. That's why the department approved increasing the annual funding to the NBSPCA by \$500,000 annually for a total of \$600,000.

Downtown New Brunswick, a provincial organization, brings together 24 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to achieve the most prosperous downtowns possible. The department recognizes the importance of developing, revitalizing, and promoting downtowns to support sustainable future downtown growth opportunities. To assist, the government approved \$500,000 in annual funding to support Downtown New Brunswick with strategic development initiatives, capital projects, marketing, and events to sustain and promote downtowns throughout New Brunswick.

In conclusion, these accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without the excellent staff at ELG. It's evident that your dedication and commitment is what drives this department forward and it's what allows us to provide such excellent services to New Brunswickers.



Hon. Glen Savoie
Minister of Local Government
The Department of Environment and Local Government

DEPUTY MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The Department of Environment and Local Government continues to enrich the lives of New Brunswickers daily by offering important programs and services that not only meet their needs but also improve the province's natural environment and the local governance system.

Both the Local Government and Environment and Climate Change sides of the department had historic years in 2022-2023. The culmination of two years' of work to modernize our local governance system resulted in special elections being held in November 2022. New representatives and familiar faces were elected for 58 local governments and 12 rural districts. The new entities became official on January 1, 2023.

The final report for the Climate Change Action Plan – *Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy* showed that 76 per cent of the actions were completed. Our renewed climate change action plan – *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience* quickly followed and was released in the fall of 2022. We take climate change seriously, and it shows. We lead the country in greenhouse gas emissions reduction and are on-track to reaching net-zero by 2050.

The Climate Change Secretariat continues to assist local governments and rural districts as they strive to prepare their communities for the effects of a changing climate. About 60 per cent of local governments have an adaptation plan in place. With severe weather events occurring more often, we know how critical it is that infrastructure is updated to sustain future storms.

Our last significant flood was in 2019 but each spring freshet brings a risk of flooding on the St. John River and its tributaries. The Hydrology Centre uses the latest technology to keep New Brunswickers informed and safe. During River Watch, which launches annually in early March, we provide regular forecasts to ensure the public knows of any potential risk and can prepare.

We value the relationships we have with our partners and stakeholders. Their insight and experience help make this department so successful. Being transparent and engaging with the public and stakeholders is a priority.

Another departmental priority is ensuring local governments, regional service commissions (RSCs) and rural districts have consistent funding. We introduced a new funding mechanism that will see \$75.6M provided annually for 2023 to 2027. Government has also committed to funding up to \$40M over 10 years for RSCs to expand their services and meet their new responsibilities under the local governance reform to support their economic development, labour force development and newcomer retention services.

We know how important providing a solid foundation is to good governance. The department held orientation sessions for new and returning councils, rural district, and RSC members. More than 300 people took part in nine sessions.

Under our waste diversion program, regulation changes took effect that will enable our packaging and paper products extended producer responsibility (EPR) program to become reality. New Brunswick is the first province in Atlantic Canada to take this important step toward waste reduction and when implemented, will increase recycling opportunities, and divert material from landfills by putting the onus on large producers to reduce their packaging. Additionally, we increased handling fees by 11.8 per cent in the spring of 2022 to accommodate minimum wage hikes and other increased costs borne by redemption centres.

The department partners with the federal government to administer the Canada-Community Building Fund. For 2019-2023, the total allocation for incorporated areas was \$258.9M and the total for unincorporated areas is \$64.6M.

From protecting our watercourses and wetlands to ensuring our local governance system was modernized, this department's work touches so many aspects of our daily lives. It is an honour to be a part of this organization and to know the work we do together is making such a difference.



Charbel Awad
Acting Deputy Minister
Environment and Local Government

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Delivering for New Brunswickers - One Team One GNB

One Team One GNB is our vision as an organization and a collaborative approach to how we operate. It is our path forward, and it represents a civil service that is working collectively across departments, professions, and sectors. Together, we are learning, growing, and adapting, and discovering new and innovative ways of doing business. It is enabling us to achieve the outcomes needed for New Brunswickers, and we are working more efficiently and effectively than ever before.

As *One Team One GNB*, we are improving the way government departments:

- communicate with one another,
- work side-by-side on important projects, and
- drive focus and accountability.

Strategy and Operations Management

The Government of New Brunswick (GNB) uses a Formal Management system built on leading business practices to develop, communicate, and review strategy. This process provides the Public Service with a proven methodology to execute strategy, increase accountability and continuously drive improvement.

Government Priorities

Our vision for 2022-2023 is a vibrant and sustainable New Brunswick. To make progress towards this vision, we must focus on our government's priorities.

- Energize private sector.
- Vibrant and sustainable communities.
- Affordable, responsive, and high-performing government.
- Dependable public health care.
- World-class education.
- Environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Department of Environment and Local Government focused on government priorities with the following actions:

- Distributed over \$75M in funding grants to support community projects, environmental initiatives, infrastructure investments, animal welfare, and climate change projects in the province.
- Issued over 7,200 permits, licences, certificates, approvals, and exemptions supporting the regulation of activities impacting our air, land, and water. Conditions of 1,534 approval or permits were audited with an overall compliance rate of 88.5 per cent.
- Decreased New Brunswick greenhouse gas emissions by 39 per cent since 2005 and is on track to meet the reduction target of 10.7Mt or 46 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.
- Reduced the number of local governments from 104 to 77 and local service districts from 236 to 12 rural districts which increased the population residing in a local government from 70 per cent to 95 per cent.
- Eliminated the democratic deficit by introducing elected Rural District Advisory Committees (RDACs) in each of the 12 rural districts.
- Received 100 per cent of adaptation plans from all cities and higher risk local governments in coastal areas and along the lower St. John River floodplain and 60 per cent of 911 local governments which will help communities and regions to prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change.
- Expanded mandated services of Regional Service Commissions to include economic development, community development, regional tourism promotion, regional transportation, recreation infrastructure cost-sharing, and public safety committees.
- Released a renewed Climate Change Action Plan: *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience* focused on government leadership and accountability, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and climate readiness with 30 new incremental actions.
- Introduced new public-facing systems, including a registry for the NB Output Based Pricing System for greenhouse gas regulation, a GHG Emissions Interactive Dashboard for historical and forecast data exploration, and a Household Carbon Footprint Calculator to empower the public in reducing their emissions.
- Introduced new websites for Environmental Trust Fund, waste diversion, climate change, and land use planning among others, alongside public education campaigns promoting awareness on waste diversion, organic waste, private wells, drinking water protection, and cyanobacteria through various media channels.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

The information below outlines some of the department's priorities and how we measured our performance.

NEW BRUNSWICK STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 2023-2030

The traditional approach to solid waste management in New Brunswick has primarily focused on activities of collection, diversion, and disposal. This focus must now be broader and include a consideration for climate action i.e., reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Department of Environment and Local Government, with input from key stakeholders and other interested parties, developed a Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management in New Brunswick, 2023-2030, entitled *A Roadmap for Transforming our Waste into Materials for Tomorrow*. This plan charts a path forward that reimagines the way New Brunswickers view and manage "waste".

The vision of the plan is to reduce the amount of solid waste being disposed of and to create opportunities to transform it into materials for tomorrow. By 2030, it is intended that New Brunswick will achieve an annual 40,000-tonne reduction in solid waste being regionally landfilled and establish a foundation that enables the province to effectively work towards achieving further reductions in the future.

Why it is important

The reduction, management, and diversion of waste is one of the world's most pressing environmental issues. The "take-make-waste" economy, which has a linear approach to resource extraction, production, and consumption is no longer sustainable and requires a shift in the way we all view and manage waste.

There has been considerable accomplishments in the management of solid waste in New Brunswick over the past four decades. Our province's old, environmentally unacceptable dumps have been closed, and a sophisticated new system of six regional landfills designed to protect our environment are in place. The Department has made a good start with solid waste diversion, but we can do more.

We can broaden our focus to include climate action activities that will help promote the growth of a circular economy and reduce the amount of organic waste being regionally landfilled. Much of the infrastructure for solid waste diversion already exists across the province. An increasing number of businesses and industries are moving toward stewardship initiatives that position themselves as good corporate citizens.

New Brunswickers are interested in opportunities to recycle more and minimize solid waste. With this strong foundation in place, a clear vision and goal, as well as concrete actions and outcomes, our province is well positioned to be a leader in solid waste management.

Overall performance

This initiative is on track and meeting intended timelines. The feedback from the public, as well as other environmental organizations, has been very positive.

Recently, the work to champion the development and implementation of the plan was recognized internationally and received a Visionary Award from the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment that includes the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and the provinces of New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

Specifically, the council recognized that the actions and outcomes outlined within the plan had strong linkages, as it aims to increase the recovery of the materials found in marine debris and climate actions aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ultimately leading to improved marine ecosystem biodiversity.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

- Engaged extensively with key stakeholders to gain valuable insights, identify potential challenges, consider different perspectives.
- Developed a plan based on stakeholder feedback that involved multiple iterations of internal and external reviews to ensure it aligned with the needs of New Brunswick. Established tangible outcomes to ensure the plan's objectives were realistic and could be effectively implemented.
- Developed content related to an overview of solid waste management, waste diversion, organic waste, waste reduction in schools, and compiled other resources.
- Developed informative graphics and a website to present waste reduction and diversion in a visually engaging and easily digestible format.
- Released New Brunswicks Solid Waste Strategic Action Plan in May 2023.

CYANOBACTERIA PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

With support from the Climate Change Fund, the department was able to continue a public education and awareness campaign (initiated in 2021-2022) on the topic of Cyanobacteria which helped encourage New Brunswickers to lead active, healthy lifestyles while being informed on the potential health risks associated with cyanobacteria. The materials developed as part of the initial project included educational signage, a new website, infographics, and social media. Funding in 2022-2023 helped support the distribution of additional signage to partners, continued social media and additional web content.

Why it is important

Public education and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in fostering a well-informed and resilient community. Campaigns raise awareness about environmental challenges, encourage sustainable behaviours, and promote collective action, leading to better protection of natural resources, reduced environmental impact, and a healthy more resilient province.

Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) is a natural part of our water ecosystems and environment, and can be found in many ponds, lakes, rivers, and wetlands in New Brunswick. Blooms usually occur when temperatures get warmer, typically in the late spring and early summer, sometimes appearing quickly or overnight. Blooms may pose a risk as some cyanobacteria can produce toxins which can impact the health of humans and animals. The effects of climate change can contribute to an increase in the frequency and severity of bloom events. Canadian data has demonstrated that cyanobacteria blooms are also appearing earlier in the spring and later into the year.

When a cyanobacteria bloom is confirmed, a public health advisory is issued. Once issued, the advisory will remain in place indefinitely. Advisories help recreational water users make decisions on water use in the affected area. By educating the public about the risks, symptoms, and preventative measures associated with cyanobacteria exposure, New Brunswickers can make informed decisions about recreational water activities, and pet safety. This knowledge empowers individuals to protect themselves and the environment, contributing to overall public health.

Overall performance

In 2022-2023, the project continued and included the distribution of additional signage, continued social media and additional web content.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

- Secured funding from the Climate Change Fund in 2022-2023.
- Supported a working group to continue work on the initiative.
- Continued engagement with partners including groups internal and external to government including local governments, lake associations and watershed groups, First Nations organizations, the departments of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Health, and Indigenous Affairs.
- Distributed 65 educational signs with intent to install in 2023-2024.
- Provided updated web content to the new dedicated website [GNB.CA/Algae](https://gnb.ca/algae).
- Continued social media and news releases throughout the summer of 2022-2023

RENEWED CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (2022-2027)

In September 2022, New Brunswick released a renewed climate change action plan *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience*. The action plan presents the actions New Brunswick believes are necessary to address our climate change priorities and contribute our share towards broader national and international commitments.

The action plan features three pillars: government leadership and accountability, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change. Each pillar includes new incremental actions the provincial government is committing to undertake, and an overview of the ongoing work government will continue. The 30 new actions focus on the priority commitments needed to move climate action forward in New Brunswick. The actions in the plan are expected to achieve significant results and will keep us on the path to achieving our 2030 GHG reduction target.

Why it is important

New Brunswickers are experiencing the impacts of climate change firsthand. Extreme precipitation events increase the risk of flooding and erosion and cause significant damage to our properties and infrastructure. Rising sea levels impact the safety of coastal communities, and rising temperatures create more heat stress among the most vulnerable. In recent years, many extreme weather events have occurred such as severe winter storms, record-setting flooding, and post-tropical storms. These events have and will continue to take a substantial toll on the province.

Climate change has become an increasing concern among businesses and industries worldwide as a result of climate-related disruptions to business operations, supply chains, infrastructure and property – all leading to increased costs of maintenance and materials. New Brunswick is not immune to these concerns, and action is needed to mitigate the impacts.

It is imperative that New Brunswick aligns its response to climate change with efforts that enable sustainable economic development, protect vulnerable citizens, businesses, and communities, and support an equitable, diverse, and inclusive future for all New Brunswickers.

The new Climate Change Action Plan will put us on the continued trajectory towards our 2030GHG emissions target and ensure that we are taking the next steps to build resiliency to a changing climate in New Brunswick.

Explain the overall performance

This initiative is on track and progress will continue to be monitored over the five-year period of the Climate Change Action Plan.

As set out in the plan, all new actions have a clearly identified deliverable that government will track through implementation and progress reporting. Each new action has been assigned to a government department or agency to ensure its successful implementation.

An accountability framework is in place to oversee and track the execution of the 2022-2027 Climate Change Action Plan across government. This framework continues collaboration with 11 lead

departments and agencies to ensure effective implementation. A progress report to March 31, 2023, will be published by the end of 2023 to provide an update on achievements.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

- Established tangible outcomes to ensure the plan's objectives were realistic and could be effectively implemented.
- Developed an accountability framework to ensure strategic oversight over the implementation of the plan.
- Assigned lead departments to oversee specific action implementation and completion and required a project plan with key milestones and deliverables to be submitted.
- Established a monthly tracking schedule to monitor progress and identify any barriers to implementation. Progress for the 2022-2023 fiscal year will be reported in detail through an annual progress report anticipated by the end of 2023.
- Provided financial support from the NB Climate Change Fund to ensure successful action implementation.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE REFORM

Local governance reform was the process of adapting our local governance system from what we have into what we need. The reform process involved understanding the issues and challenges facing our local governance system and how they related to one another, considering options to address the issues, and implementing changes that would make a positive difference.

The vision and intended outcome of local governance reform was “vibrant and sustainable communities working together to enhance the quality of life of New Brunswickers.”

Local governance reform began in January 2021. 2021-2022 was a year of planning, engagement, assessment of options, communication of priorities and plans, and the kick-off of implementation. In 2022-2023, significant efforts were dedicated to ensuring a successful implementation of the new local governance system on January 1, 2023.

Why it is important

During the local governance reform process, it was made very clear that the status quo was no longer meeting the needs and desires of New Brunswickers. Doing nothing to change the status quo would have resulted in some communities losing infrastructure, reducing their services and service levels, and missing out on economic development opportunities.

The changes proposed in the plan for local governance reform, as articulated in the white paper, *Working together for vibrant and sustainable communities*, will allow larger tax bases to provide a higher and more sustainable level of service to residents. The changes will also enable more equitable cost-sharing of services, encourage greater collaboration, and reduce unproductive competition among communities in a region. The new structure will provide a better footing to take advantage of economic opportunities and address various environmental and social challenges.

Explain the overall performance

Components of the Local Governance Reform initiative concluded on January 1, 2023. The milestone initiatives are on track to meet the remaining outcomes.

The local governance structure moved from 104 to 77 local governments and from 236 local service districts to 12 rural districts. This increased the percentage of New Brunswickers living in a local governance entity from 70 per cent to 95 per cent. With reform, every New Brunswicker can now vote for a representative at the local level.

Mandated services of the Regional Service Commissions were expanded to include economic development, community development, regional tourism promotion, regional transportation, cost-sharing on recreation infrastructure, and a public safety committee.

Changes to our property tax and equalization structure were made to ensure that local governments are sustainable and that New Brunswickers only pay for the services they have access to.

Communities will pool their resources, share costs, and identify common priorities to offer good quality services.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

Three large legislative projects were undertaken:

- *An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform, 2022*, which received Royal Assent on June 10, 2022.
- *An Act Respecting Community Funding* which received Royal Assent on October 11, 2022.
- *An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform 2022, no 2* which received Royal Assent on December 16, 2022.

Multiple regulatory projects were required, including the creation of new *Rural Districts Establishment Regulation* and *Local Governments Establishment Regulation* under the *Local Governance Act*, as well as the significant amendments to the *General Regulation* and *Regions Regulation* under the *Regional Service Delivery Act*.

Transition facilitators collaborated with advisory committees to implement restructurings, determine new government types and names, establish taxation structures, define council composition, facilitate recruitment, design organizational structures, address labor relations matters, plan for structural changes, develop bylaws and transition budgets, and undertake various other essential tasks.

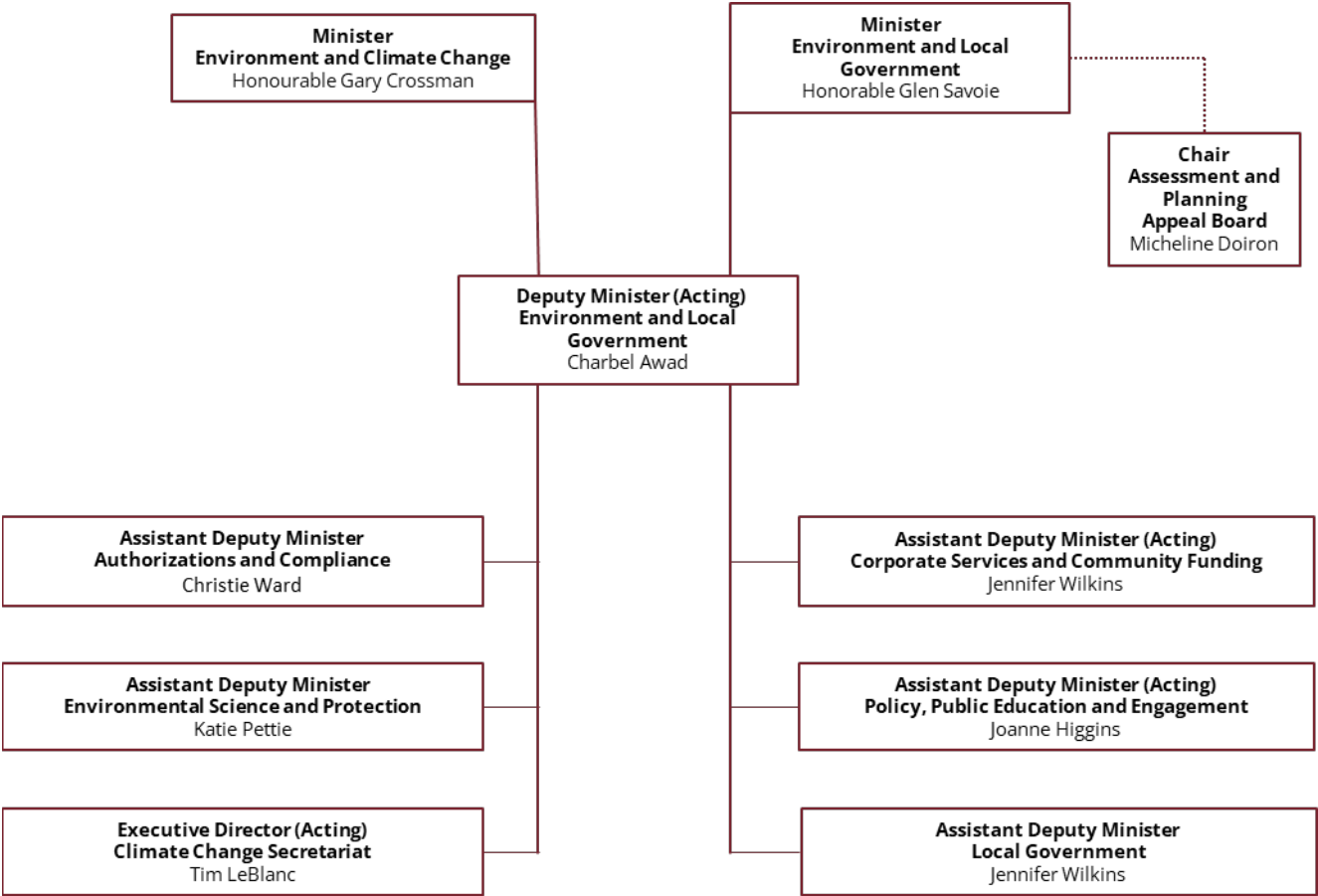
Established a team structure composed of dedicated project managers, policy analysts, points of contacts, cross-departmental partners, and external experts to effectively guide, support and monitor key components of implementation including but not limited to:

- recruiting Chief Administration Officers (CAOs) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs),
- transferring assets from local service districts to local governments,
- defining guidelines for regional strategy development,
- developing guidance documents for expanded mandates of RSCs,
- establishing cost-sharing guidelines for sport, recreation, and cultural infrastructure,
- implementing weighted voting for RSC boards,
- providing guidance on operational requirements,
- adjusting the Community Funding and Equalization Grant formula,
- coordination and development and approval of budgets,
- facilitating and supporting elections in newly restructured local governments,
- establishing rural district advisory committees (RDAC), and
- hosting Local Governance Orientation (LGO) 2023 for elected and non-elected officials on the new local governance framework.

OVERVIEW OF DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

The mandate of the Department of Environment and Local Government is to provide integrated stewardship through planning and management of land use, zoning development and waste management issues; ensure effective enforcement of, and compliance with, environmental legislation and regulations; and foster vibrant communities by providing effective consultation and liaison with local governments and regional service commissions on governance and service issues and providing the administration of Rural Districts (RDs).

High-Level Organizational Chart



DIVISION OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING APPEAL BOARD

The **Assessment and Planning Appeal Board** functions independently from the department, but for administration purposes, such as staffing and budget allocation, is aligned with the department.

The board is responsible for hearing appeals and rendering decisions on the following:

- Property assessment appeals under the *Assessment Act*,
- Appeals of land use and planning decisions under the *Community Planning Act*; and
- Appeals of local heritage review board decisions under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

The board conducts hearings through 11 regional panels, which are convened as and where required throughout the province. Each panel consists of a chairperson and two members appointed from the respective region. The chairperson of the Assessment and Planning Appeal Board may either act as chair or designate one of the three vice-chairs to act as chair for a hearing.

Highlights:

- There were 200 appeals filed under the *Assessment Act*. Of these, 126 were matters pertaining to residential properties and 74 were commercial properties.
- 184 assessment appeals were disposed of either through a hearing or withdrawal by the appellant prior to the hearing. 119 residential property assessment appeals and 65 commercial property assessment appeals were dealt with by the board.
- 66 residential property assessment appeals and 15 commercial property assessment appeals were outstanding and carried forward.
- 49 land use and planning appeals were filed and 35 were disposed of under the *Community Planning Act*. 25 were carried forward.
- No appeal was filed and carried forward under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

AUTHORIZATIONS AND COMPLIANCE DIVISION

The **Authorizations and Compliance Division** is responsible for the administration and management of regulatory programs and activities as well as responding to inquiries and concerns from the public related to departmental programs and environmental emergencies. The division consists of the Authorizations Branch, Waste Diversion Branch, Regional Operations and Compliance Branch and the Source and Surface Water Management Branch.

The **Authorizations Branch** has three core programs that are administered in the branch and include: Authorizations; Compliance Auditing; and Environmental Information.

Authorizations

The branch administers an authorizations program that includes managing and issuing licences, certificates, permits and approvals (i.e., authorizations), required under the *Clean Air Act*, *Clean Environment Act*, and the *Pesticide Control Act*, for various regulated activities having the potential to impact the province's air, land, and water environments.

Compliance Auditing

The branch also undertakes a strong Compliance Auditing program to assess compliance with the authorizations. For all non-compliance issues identified in the Compliance Auditing program, the branch applies the Department's Compliance and Enforcement Policy to compel compliance or to take enforcement action.

Environmental Information

The Environmental Information program is responsible for maintaining various databases to support the branch's core programs. These databases contain important environmental information on specific properties in New Brunswick. The *Fees for the Provision of Environmental Information Regulation* filed under the *Financial Administration Act* gives the Minister the authority to charge fees for the environmental information per property.

Highlights:

- Under the Authorizations program, the branch oversaw approximately 5,780 licences, certificates, permits and approvals. This includes 203 pesticide permits and licences; 1,963 pesticide applicator certificates; 1,276 petroleum storage tank site licences and approvals; 361 ozone depleting substances permits; and 1,276 air and water quality approvals.
- Under the Contaminated Sites Management Program, 58 new files were opened, and 69 sites were successfully remediated, and the files closed.
- Within the Compliance Auditing program, 1,534 approval or permit conditions were audited with an overall compliance rate of 88.5 per cent.
- Received and processed 1,531 requests for environmental information on specific properties in New Brunswick as part of the branches Environmental Information program.

The **Waste Diversion Branch** is responsible to develop, administer and shepherd provincial waste reduction and diversion programs for solid waste generated within the province. Currently, the branch regulates the following provincial waste reduction and diversion programs: Beverage Containers, Tires, Paint, Oil and Glycol, Electronics, Packaging and Paper Products, Pharmaceutical Products and Medical Sharps. The Branch is also responsible to manage the fulfillment of the actions and outcomes

contained within the Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management in New Brunswick, 2023-2030, entitled A Roadmap for Transforming our Waste into Materials for Tomorrow.

Highlights

- Amended the *Designated Materials Regulation* to enable a waste diversion program for Pharmaceutical Products and Medical Sharps using the extended producer responsibility approach.
- Amended the *Designated Materials Regulation* to support the conversion of the Beverage Containers program using the extended producer responsibility model.
- Initiated further amendments to the *Designated Materials Regulation* includes two new waste diversions programs (batteries, and lamp products), expand two existing programs to include more materials (electronics and oil and glycol) and modernize the Tire diversion program.
- Amended the *General Regulation* under the *Beverage Containers Act* to raise handling fees paid by beverage distributors to redemption centres for containers processed at their facilities.
- Released a new Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management for the province and launched a new website for Waste Reduction and Diversion for the province.
- Completed a survey on public awareness with waste diversion in the province.
- Completed a public education and awareness campaign on organic waste.

Section 4(8) of the *Beverage Container Act*, requires the minister to provide information on distributor compliance with their management plan, and the rate of redemption of refillable and recyclable beverage containers in the province. This information is presented below to fulfill this requirement. Under the Beverage Containers waste diversion program:

- 105 beverage container distributors were in compliance with their management plans and two distributors were determined to be noncompliant.
- over 97 percent of the refillable containers are being redeemed and approximately 72.5 percent of the recyclable containers are being redeemed, based on the annual amount of beverage containers being sold in the province and then redeemed at redemption centres in the province.

The **Regional Operations and Compliance Branch** provides local service delivery of departmental programs and an inspection program through six regional offices. It manages compliance activities related to the acts and regulations under the department's mandate. The branch is also responsible for the coordination of emergency management activities, including the department's Emergency Management Plan and on-call system.

Highlights

- Received 3,062 total occurrence files; a 19 per cent reduction from the previous fiscal year and a result of public education, increase in watercourse and wetland alteration permits, and defined reporting processes.
- 543 files came through the after-hours Emergency Response Program that works in conjunction with multiple provincial and federal government departments and agencies.
- 1,200 compliance verifications files that required site visits, inspections, or an audit to assess compliance to the *Clean Air Act* (9%), *Clean Environment Act* (35%), *Clean Water Act* (46%), *Local Governance Act* (9%) and respective regulations. Of these 908 (76%) were concluded, with the remaining still underway.
- Of the concluded compliance verification files, 86 required administrative actions under the Compliance and Enforcement policy. These administrative actions included 70 orders, 79 warnings, five schedules of compliance, seven tickets and no prosecutions.
- 956 incident reports from industries experiencing ozone depleting substances, spills of small magnitude (<20 litres), and wastewater by-pass events submitted because of regulation reporting requirements or certificate of approval conditions under the *Clean Environment Act* (76%), *Clean Water Act* (13%) and *Clean Air Act* (11%). Of these, 849 (89%) were concluded, with the remaining still underway.
- 729 property information inquiries requested guidance, advice, and direction on programs under the mandate of the department, 558 (77%) of which were related to the *Watercourse & Wetland Alteration Regulation* and the Department provided education and awareness. In total, only 37 (5%) inquiries were still under review and carried forward.
- Provided field support at approximately 50 registered sites with storm impacts for the Department of Justice and Public Safety in response to Hurricane Fiona.
- Upgraded reporting system to enable interactive data visualization with a primary focus on business intelligence.
- Collaborated with the Department of Justice and Public Safety and other provincial and federal government agencies on efficient and consistent regulatory approaches to environmental concerns including avian influenza.

The **Surface Water Management Branch** is responsible for municipal drinking water source protection, water well protection, watercourse and wetland alteration, wetland management, and coastal protection. The branch is mandated to allow suitable development in appropriate locations and to ensure that it is undertaken considering avoidance and minimization criteria. It has the responsibility for implementing programs to ensure, maintain and protect the quality and quantity of drinking water for future generations.

Highlights

- Issued 2,001 permits under the Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Program. Six were refused during this period.
- Processed 38 wellfield exemption applications; 13 were issued, four were refused, and 21 did not require an exemption.
- Processed 61 watershed exemption applications; 31 were issued, four were refused, six were closed, four did not require an exemption and 14 applications were still under review and carried forward.
- Issued 88 permits under the Water Well Construction program: 37 to water well contractors and 51 to water well drillers.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND PROTECTION DIVISION

The **Environmental Science and Protection Division** is responsible for the environmental review of major projects and monitoring the air and water resources of New Brunswick. It provides scientific assessment and environmental protection advice and reports on the state of the environment; develops programs and policies; and provides technical, scientific, and engineering support. This includes interpreting, evaluating and maintaining awareness of research and developments in science, engineering, and environmental health issues and initiatives on behalf of the department.

The division consists of the Environmental Impact Assessment Branch, the Air and Water Sciences Branch and the Healthy Environments Branch.

The **Environmental Impact Assessment Branch** is responsible for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process to identify potential environmental impacts associated with activities and developments before they are undertaken so that such impacts can be avoided or mitigated to acceptable levels if the project is permitted to proceed. The EIA process is an interactive, iterative, and thorough review process that includes opportunities for public input and resolution of technical issues through dialogue with project proponents. In addition, the EIA process gives technical specialists from government agencies, as well as the public, stakeholders and First Nations, a chance to provide input throughout the process.

Highlights

- 35 projects were registered during the year; 21 projects were approved with conditions, and 73 projects remained in the determination review stage.
- Reviewed a variety of projects across several sectors, including water supplies, sewage treatment facilities, waste disposal, major residential developments, peat and gypsum extraction, and oil and gas well decommissioning.
- Launched the second operational phase of the online EIA Portal on February 21, 2023, for Technical Review Committee (TRC) members. All new EIA registrations are now being reviewed by the TRC in the portal.

- Continued the development of a process to assess financial securities as part of the EIA process.

The **Air and Water Science Branch** has the responsibility to monitor current environmental conditions; provide scientific services; and interpret, evaluate, and report on environmental conditions in New Brunswick. Through the Hydrology Centre, the branch also works with the Emergency Measures Organization and other partners to collect and interpret data for flood forecasting services to ensure the public safety of New Brunswickers.

Highlights

- Provided flood forecasting services during the Riverwatch season, released monthly water level reports were released, and provided flow and water level forecasting services for extreme weather events throughout the year.
- Carried out monitoring at 55 river stations and conducted recreational beach monitoring at 10 of New Brunswick's provincial park beaches.
- Published the 2020 and 2021 *Air Quality Monitoring Results Reports*.
- Converted seven of the 10 provincially operated ambient air quality monitoring stations to energy-efficient air-to-air heat pump systems.
- Deployed the mobile air quality monitoring unit for a one-year special study in St. Stephen, New Brunswick.
- Modernized flood forecasting services in collaboration with partners by making improvements to River Watch Mobile and flood forecast tables on the River Watch website.
- Initiated studies to better understand river dynamics in ice jam-driven flooding and develop ice jam models for future flood hazard mapping.
- Initiated work on two public education and awareness campaigns related to understanding the impacts of flooding in New Brunswick.

The **Healthy Environments Branch** is responsible for working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to coordinate, develop, plan, and manage environmental health programs; inform environmental health policy; provide scientific and engineering support and training to the department and its partners; report on the state of environmental health; and assess and anticipate new and emerging environmental health hazards as they apply to New Brunswick. The branch works as part of a multi-disciplinary team to achieve its objectives.

Highlights

- Continued to lead the Drinking Water Programs Team to ensure collaboration and communication across departments on drinking water.
- Provided technical scientific and engineering program support to the department and partner departments on various environmental issues and policy including drinking water, recreational water quality, on-site sewage disposal, air quality, and various regional issues.
- Developed and published new private well education materials, including social media posts, an educational video, and infographics to support public awareness and education.
- Continued cyanobacteria education and strengthened First Nations partnerships. A total of 150 signs have been distributed to date. The signs are bilingual (French/ English), and 27 have been translated into Mi'kmaq, Wolastoquey, and Passamaquoddy-Maliseet.
- Developed and published technical guidelines for Water Circulation Systems in response to Public Health's new *Water Circulation Systems Regulation* for cooling towers, to guide system owners on water management plans, proper maintenance, and sampling techniques to support the protection of public health from Legionnaire's disease.
- Implemented improvements to the Heat Alert and Response System that eliminated duplication for several departments and enables partners to focus efforts on improving the response to heat events.
- Provided technical, scientific, and engineering program support to the Department of Health in the development of a wastewater surveillance pilot project. Nine New Brunswick communities, including two first nations, are participating in this project with wastewater being tested for COVID 19, Influenza A & B, and RSV. Results are submitted weekly to the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).
- Initiated a review of the On-site Sewage Program in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Justice and Public Safety with the goal of providing recommendations regarding program improvements.
- Coordinated the completion of two climate change impact studies: one exploring mental health effects of flooding completed by the New Brunswick Institute of Research Data and Training, and the other surveying mosquito populations as potential West Nile Virus vectors in New Brunswick completed by the University of New Brunswick.

POLICY, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT DIVISION

The **Policy, Public Education and Engagement Division** has the responsibility to undertake research, policy and legislative development, consultation and relationship building, public engagement and education, as well as strategic project management, in support of government priorities and departmental objectives. The division also provides right-to-information services, appointment services, and legislative support.

The division provides these services to both the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Local Government and their respective teams.

The division consists of the Policy Branch, the Public Education and Engagement Branch, and the Strategic Initiatives Branch. Additionally, a dedicated policy team focused on Local Governance Reform was created to support this important transition.

The **Policy Branch** provides a range of policy related services, including research and policy development, regulatory and legislative development, information access, and legislative and appointment coordination. It also provides departmental and program advisory support in the form of legislative research, interpretation, and application. The Branch acts as the departmental liaison with the Office of the Attorney General on legal matters. It is responsible for the management of legal files within the department, facilitation of requests for legal opinions, and the review of contracts and memoranda of understanding.

Highlights

- Amendments to the Designated Materials Regulation to create an extended producer responsibility program for pharmaceutical products and medical sharps, and for empty beverage containers.
- The enactment of the Dog Control Regulation under the *Local Governance Act* to enhance the regulation of dogs in rural areas.
- Received 84 Right to Information requests and 42 Fee for Information requests in 2022-2023.

Additionally, the **Local Governance Reform (LGR) policy team** conducted research and provided policy, regulatory and legislative expertise to support the implementation of key project priorities in areas such as local governance transition, regional collaboration, local governance boundaries, land use planning, community funding and property taxation.

- Supported the development and passage of three large departmental legislative projects which enabled the transition of local governance entities.
- Updated the community funding model to gradually reduce unconditional grants and provided a new fund for regional service commissions.

- Supported the development of the necessary regulation changes giving effect to the reform project, including creating the new local government structures, aligning boundaries to reflect the new entities, updating processes and procedures for regional service commissions related to their new mandates and to making improvements in the operation of the Assessment and Planning Appeal Board.
- Provided advice, support and coordinated with other departments making legislative and regulatory amendments that result from reform, including the creation of the new heavy industrial property classification.

The **Public Education and Engagement Branch** coordinates the development and/or support of departmental public education and engagement initiatives aimed at capacity-building and behavioural change, oversees legislated consultative processes, devises options for non-legislated engagement, and supports stakeholder recognition and public outreach activities. It also liaises with the Department of Indigenous Affairs to oversee and support the department's First Nations engagement and consultation requirements.

Highlights

- Supported the First Nations Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) registration notification process. A total of 34 EIA notifications were sent to First Nations.
- Fostered a positive working relationship with First Nations, including assisting with ongoing information sharing.
- Led the development of various education and engagement initiatives related to climate change. This included educational materials such as updated web content, infographics, animated videos, and educational signage related to waste diversion, drinking water protection and cyanobacteria.
- Supported engagement activities on changes to land use planning, proposed statements of public interest and CAO onboarding under the Local Governance Reform initiative.

The **Strategic Initiatives Branch** provides focused leadership to complex strategic initiatives that are priorities of GNB. This includes the development and implementation of large, complex, multi-year policy initiatives and programs that will have far-reaching impacts across the province.

Highlights

- Supported Local Governance Reform in the development of two proposed new Regulations under the *Community Planning Act* – the new Statement of *Public Interest Regulation* and the new *Inclusionary Zoning Regulation*.
- Supported work of the Water Strategy including coordinating the department's presentations to stakeholders and updates to the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Stewardship.

CLIMATE CHANGE SECRETARIAT

The **Climate Change Secretariat** coordinates initiatives promoting the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the adaptation to impacts of climate change. It also focuses on initiatives related to education, awareness, and capacity-building. The secretariat is responsible for the development of New Brunswick's climate change action plans and coordinating their implementation. It engages most government departments and agencies to ensure that actions on climate change are integrated with governmental policies, programs, and day-to-day decisions. It also engages a range of local government and non-government partners and stakeholders to encourage lower carbon investments and practices and climate adaptation activities.

Highlights

- Released the final progress report for the Climate Change Action Plan (2017-2022) on July 5th, 2022, demonstrating that 86 of the 118 actions in the plan were completed (76%).
- Released a renewed Climate Change Action Plan *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience* in September 2022.
- Supported communities in their efforts to adapt to climate change. All cities and higher risk local governments within coastal areas and along the lower St. John River floodplain (19) and sixty per cent of local governments have completed adaptation plans.
- Reduced New Brunswick emissions by 39 per cent since 2005, surpassing legislated 2020 GHG target and on route to achieving the 2030 target of 46 per cent below 2005 levels.
- Allocated approximately \$52M under the Climate Change Fund to various climate change initiatives, including \$8M for low-income energy efficiency, \$8M for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, \$14M for climate resilient infrastructure, and \$3.8M to support climate change research and innovation.
- Launched a new climate change website to highlight actions New Brunswickers can take to reduce their carbon footprint, prepare for the impacts of climate change and champion climate change action within their community.
- Proposed Output-Based Pricing System for the 2023-2030 period, in response to strengthened national standards, which gained approval from the Government of Canada on November 22, 2022.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIVISION

The **Local Government Division** is the primary point of contact between the province and local communities. With a vision of fostering vibrant and sustainable communities, the division provides support and advisory services to local governments and regional service commissions and is responsible for the administration of Rural Districts (RDs).

The division consists of two branches: Community Finance, Local and Rural Governance Branch which includes the Rural Districts, Local Governance, and Community Finances Units and Regional Collaboration and Planning Branch, which includes the Regional Collaboration Unit and Provincial and Community Planning Unit.

The **Community Finances Unit** is responsible for providing advice and guidance on the financial aspects of local governments, Rural Districts and regional service commissions. The branch provides support for accounting, capital borrowing, budgeting, and financial reporting services to communities. It provides secretariat services to the Municipal Capital Borrowing Board and administers the long-term borrowing of local governments and commissions through the New Brunswick Municipal Finance Corporation.

Highlights

- Supported the budgeting and financial aspects of the local governance reform.
- Distributed \$75 million in Community Funding Grants to the local governments and rural districts.
- Implemented the Community Finance Information System (CFIS) which contributed to a successful 2023 budget review process.
- Supported the local governance reform transition facilitators in preparing and developing the 2023 budget of the 62 restructured entities.

The **Local Governance Unit** fulfils a provincial support and liaison function with four municipal associations, local governments, the New Brunswick Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NB SPCA) and Downtown New Brunswick (DNB). The unit works with its stakeholders, and responds to general inquiries regarding local governance matters, the application of the *Days of Rest Act*, as well as animal protection and dog control matters. The unit also provides support and guidance to Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), including disbursing their funding. The unit provides advice and guidance on the administration of the *Control of Municipalities Act* which authorizes the appointment of a supervisor to oversee the day-to-day operations of a local government when a supervisor is required. The unit is the liaison with the Provincial-Territorial Officials Committee (PTOC) on Local Government for the coordination of provincial-territorial (PT) meetings for ministers responsible for local government.

Highlights

- Provided guidance and support to local governance reform transition facilitators and lead the GIS team in the digitizing of outer and ward boundaries for the new local governments and rural districts.
- Conducted onboarding sessions for the chief administrative officers (CAOs) of the 77 local governments.
- Conducted eight Local Governance Orientation training sessions for over 300 local governances elected and non-elected officials, and one in-person training session covering topics of interest at the local level.
- Provided a one-time funding grant to the NB SPCA in the amount of \$385,000 to assist in urgent operational needs.
- Hosted in partnership with stakeholders the first Municipality Week in New Brunswick to celebrate the important role of local governments and to support their continued success.

The **Rural Districts Unit** administers the delivery of services in unincorporated areas (referred to as rural districts or “RDs”) of the province. The unit ensures the delivery of services such as fire protection, solid waste collection and support for emergency measures in RDs through its regional offices. In carrying out its responsibilities, the unit works with Rural District Advisory Councils, volunteer fire departments, regional service commissions and recreational councils. It also administers a \$1M small capital loans program for RD projects.

Highlights:

- Held a provincial fire conference, hosting 144 attendees from across the province to network and share information of importance to the fire service. There were 31 rural districts (RD) fire departments and 35 municipal fire departments represented.
- Worked closely with the Office of the Fire Marshal in the administration of the fire service to keep fire department members and the public safe during the pandemic.
- Procurement of fire apparatus and maintenance of infrastructure in continued support of the fire service.
- Supported local governance reform by analysing and facilitating changes to services, participating in technical review committees, facilitating asset transfers, assisting transition facilitators, and providing information on reform to residents.
- Helped establish and actively support Rural District Advisory Councils.

The **Regional Collaboration and Planning Branch** was established in January 2023 and includes the Regional Collaboration unit and the Provincial and Community Planning unit.

The **Provincial and Community Planning Unit** is responsible for the administration of the *Community Planning Act* and associated regulations to guide development in New Brunswick. The unit also provides leadership, support, guidance and training to departmental staff, regional service commissions, local governments, professional associations, municipal associations, and the public.

Highlights

- Five new local government municipal plans or rural plans were approved and three rural plans for unincorporated areas were approved. There were also 59 local government municipal plan or rural plan amendments approved and eight rural plan amendments or re-zonings for unincorporated areas approved.
- Lead changes to the *Community Planning Act* to require a minimum level of land use planning standards across the province. The branch works with Regional Service Commissions and local governments to ensure they meet the minimum standards.
- Development of proposed Statements of Public Interest and a proposed Guide for practitioners with continued engagement from provincial departments, rights holders and stakeholders.
- The *Community Planning Act* is leading the adoption of a regulation on inclusionary zoning. The branch worked with stakeholders to consider the proposed content of such a regulation.

The **Regional Collaboration Unit** was established in January 2023 fulfils a provincial support and liaison function with the 12 regional service commissions (RSCs) and is responsible for proactively developing strategic relationships with regional stakeholders. The unit is responsible for the administration of the *Regional Services Delivery Act* and provides advice on matters of governance and administration to regional service commissions and responds to general inquiries regarding their mandates.

Highlights

- Provided guidance and supported RSC transition facilitators throughout the transition period during the local governance reform process.
- Coordinated the recruitment of Regional Service Commission CEOs.
- Supported the development of Terms of Reference for the newly formed Public Safety Committees.

- Established guidelines for the identification and development of cost sharing agreements for recreational and cultural infrastructure.
- Coordinated and supported the development and approval of RSC budgets for 2023.
- Developed guidance documents on expanded mandates including (community development, economic development, regional tourism promotion) and provided guidance on the development of regional strategies.
- Provided guidance on the implementation of minimum operational requirements including the establishment of a service delivery model, creation of committees, and recruitment of resources to support the delivery of expanded mandates.

CORPORATE SERVICES AND COMMUNITY FUNDING DIVISION

The **Corporate Services and Community Funding Division** provides departmental services including financial management, performance excellence, human resources, and information management as well as oversight of information technology development and support services provided by Service New Brunswick. The division also administers the Canada Community Building Fund, the Small Communities Fund, the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, as well as the provincial Environmental Trust Fund. The division provides technical support and engineering advice to communities in addressing their infrastructure concerns as they relate to the applicable funding programs.

The division consists of the following branches: Corporate Finance and Administration Strategy and Performance Excellence, Information Management Services, Community Funding, and Human Resources.

The **Corporate Finance and Administration Branch** coordinates the financial planning, budgeting, and interim financial statement processes, provides financial information, analysis and advice to departmental staff, executive management, and central agencies, and provides purchasing and vehicle management services. The branch provides accounting services that include ensuring transactions are accurately reflected in GNB's financial statements, maintaining the departmental Financial Information System index, reconciling asset and liability accounts, and collecting and depositing revenue. The branch also provides general office and administrative support services.

Highlights

- Provided financial analysis and support to key GNB priorities including Local Governance Reform and the Climate Change Fund.
- Continued working with the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) team on the planning and implementation of additional modules for the new ERP system.

The **Strategy and Performance Excellence Branch** leads the adoption of GNB's formal management system within the department including the development and use of the department's strategy map.

The branch undertakes and facilitates various projects using Lean Six Sigma, Project and Change Management methodologies, serves as a focal point for the development of operational standards, practices and guidelines, and ensures the alignment of the department's strategy and effort with the GNB accountability reporting process.

Highlights

- Lead portfolio oversight of the department's mandated priority projects including reporting at the GNB Accountability Meetings.
- Supported the department's Local Governance Reform initiative through project management and facilitation support.
- Led various continuous improvement projects aimed to improve key department programs, services, and processes.
- Provided support, coaching and training to ELG personnel regarding process improvement and project management practices, including providing our first yellow belt training.

Information Management Services

The **Information Management Services Branch** is responsible for providing departmental Information Management, Information Security, Records Management, and Geographic Information System services. The branch provides consultation and operational support to departmental staff in these areas and ensures the department is aligned with and contributes to GNB initiatives and strategies. The branch provides oversight on Information Technology projects and matters to ensure the work carried out supports and aligns with the department's priorities and strategies.

Highlights

- Supported the boundary digitisations and legal maps for the newly restructured local governments (77), rural districts (12), wards (339) and the new RSC boundaries (12) which came into effect on January 1, 2023.
- Implemented several new systems to support the department's priorities including the:
 - NB Output Based Pricing System which is used to assist in the regulation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from our large emitters.
 - GHG Dashboard to explore NB's historical emissions data for nine economic sectors.
 - Household Carbon Footprint Calculator to help the public learn how to reduce individual emissions.

The **Community Funding Branch** administers the federal Canada Community Building Fund and the Small Communities Fund. The goal of these federal/provincial investment programs is to build,

replace, or improve local government infrastructure that help deliver vital services in communities across the province. The branch also manages New Brunswick's Environmental Trust Fund. This application-based program provides funding to local governments, education institutions, as well as private and not-for-profit organizations for environmental projects that meet the criteria of the *Environmental Trust Fund Act*. The projects are funded from revenues that result from the *Beverage Containers Act* and the fees associated with the recycling of containers.

Highlights

- Under the Environmental Trust Fund Program, a total of over \$12 million was awarded to support 240 projects benefitting the natural environment.
- Through the Canada Community Building Fund, nearly \$40.9 million was transferred to local governments to support strategic infrastructure investments contributing to more vibrant and sustainable communities.
- Over \$20 million was awarded to 83 community infrastructure projects benefitting unincorporated areas.
- Through the Small Communities Fund, eight project were completed and a total of over \$2.1 million was transferred to local governments.

The **Human Resources Branch** provides support and expert advice to management and staff across the department. It oversees programs and processes in all areas of human resources including workforce planning, staffing and recruitment, classification, official languages, employee and labour relations, workplace health, safety and wellness, and employee and organizational development.

Highlights

- The department hired one employee from GNB's Mosaik program, which aims to remove barriers to employment for newcomers arriving to New Brunswick and alleviate the negative effects of the skills shortages within GNB.
- Implemented new internal staffing guidelines to help address global recruitment challenges. Increases in Employee retention and new hiring will have direct positive impact on retaining existing staff and hiring new staff.
- Supported the Executive Development programs for Emerging Executives (one graduate) and Evolving Leaders (four graduates and three in progress).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

EXPENDITURES	MAIN ESTIMATES	APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS *	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE OVER/ (UNDER)
Corporate Services					
- Senior Management	506.0	556.7	1,062.7	1,110.1	47.4
- Corporate Services	1,569.0	147.1	1,716.1	1,547.0	(169.1)
- Community Funding	169.0	13.6	182.6	173.5	(9.1)
Policy, Public Education and Engagement	1,118.0	227.7	1,345.7	1,464.6	118.9
Local Government					
- Local Service District Expenditures	68,377.0	65.6	68,442.6	51,290.9	(17,151.7)
- Community Funding and Equalization Grant	68,846.0	-	68,846.0	69,599.3	753.3
- Municipal and Rural Community Property Tax Warrant	-	-	-	-	-
- Community Finances **	2,646.0	23.2	2,669.2	2,310.2	(359.0)
- Local & Regional Governance	1,244.0	62.9	1,306.9	1,777.4	470.5
- Local Governance Reform	10,004.0	-	10,004.0	10,190.7	186.7
Assessment Planning and Appeal Board	317.0	5.4	322.4	326.8	4.4
Authorizations and Compliance			-		
- Regional Operations and Compliance	3,140.0	185.1	3,325.1	3,238.5	(86.6)
- Authorizations	3,020.0	1,111.3	4,131.3	3,348.8	(782.6)
- Source and Surface Water Management	595.0	133.8	728.8	970.2	241.4
- Waste Diversion	365.0	24.1	389.1	134.9	(254.2)
Environmental Science and Protection			-		
- Environmental Impact Assessment	1,137.0	150.1	1,287.1	1,217.6	(69.5)
- Air and Water Sciences	2,519.0	50.8	2,569.8	2,409.5	(160.3)
- Healthy Environments	499.0	20.7	519.7	494.5	(25.2)
Climate Change Secretariat	1,585.0	48.2	1,633.2	1,302.4	(330.8)
Total Ordinary Budget	167,656.0	2,826.3	170,482.3	152,905.3	(17,577.0)
Total Capital (Local Service Districts)	1,000.0	-	1,000.0	477.1	(523.0)

EXPENDITURES	MAIN ESTIMATES	APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS *	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE OVER/(UNDER)
Regional Development Corporation					
- Canada / New Brunswick Infrastructure Program - RDC				562.7	
- Canada / New Brunswick Infrastructure Program - Capital Projects				61,936.6	
Total Funding Provided by Regional Development Corporation				62,499.3	

Special Purpose Account

PROGRAM	CARRY OVER FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	REVENUE	TOTAL FUNDING	EXPENDITURES	CARRY OVER TO NEXT YEAR
Environmental Trust Fund	40,900.0	8,200.0	49,100.0	12,200.0	36,900.0
Climate Change Fund	16,500.0	36,000.0	52,500.0	42,900.0	9,600.0

REVENUES	MAIN ESTIMATES	ACTUAL	VARIANCE OVER/(UNDER)
Return on Investment	20.0	34.2	14.2
Licences and Permits	3,434.0	3,184.6	(249.4)
Sale of Goods and Services	316.0	363.4	47.4
Miscellaneous	-	0.1	0.1
Total Ordinary	3,770.0	3,582.2	(187.8)

* Appropriation Transfer for central salary draw and in-year supplementary funding

Note: Figures are draft and may vary slightly from information subsequently published in Supplementary Information Volume 2 Public Accounts.

SUMMARY OF STAFFING ACTIVITY

Pursuant to section 4 of the *Civil Service Act*, the Secretary to Treasury Board delegates staffing to each Deputy Head for his or her respective department(s). Please find below a summary of the staffing activity for 2022-2023 for Department of Environment and Local Government .

NUMBER OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES AS OF DEC. 31 OF EACH YEAR		
EMPLOYEE TYPE	2022	2021
Permanent	221	206
Temporary	25	31
TOTAL	246	237

The department advertised 19 competitions, including 16 open (public) competitions and 3 closed (internal) competitions.

Pursuant to sections 15 and 16 of the *Civil Service Act*, the department made the following appointments using processes to establish merit other than the competitive process:

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
Specialized Professional, Scientific or Technical	An appointment may be made without competition when a position requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a high degree of expertise and training a high degree of technical skill recognized experts in their field 	15(1)	0
Equal Employment Opportunity Program	Provides Aboriginals, persons with disabilities and members of a visible minority group with equal access to employment, training and advancement opportunities.	16(1)(a)	0
Department Talent Management Program	Permanent employees identified in corporate and departmental talent pools, who meet the four-point criteria for assessing talent, namely performance, readiness, willingness and criticalness.	16(1)(b)	4

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
Lateral transfer	The GNB transfer process facilitates the transfer of employees from within Part 1, 2 (school districts) and 3 (hospital authorities) of the Public Service.	16(1) or 16(1)(c)	6
Regular appointment of casual/temporary	An individual hired on a casual or temporary basis under section 17 may be appointed without competition to a regular properly classified position within the Civil Service.	16(1)(d)(i)	2
Regular appointment of students/apprentices	Summer students, university or community college co-op students or apprentices may be appointed without competition to an entry level position within the Civil Service.	16(1)(d)(ii)	0

Pursuant to section 33 of the *Civil Service Act*, zero complaints alleging favouritism were made to the Deputy Head of Department of Environment and Local Government and zero complaints were submitted to the Ombud.

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

BILL #	NAME OF LEGISLATION	DATE OF ROYAL ASSENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
110	<p><i>An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform, 2022</i></p> <p>chapter-31.pdf (gnb.ca)</p>	June 10, 2022	<p>This Act amended <i>An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform</i>, the <i>Assessment and Planning Appeal Board Act</i> and <i>An Act to Repeal an Act to Comply with the Request of The City of Saint John on Taxation of the LNG Terminal</i> to address issues identified during the early stages of the transition. The key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a requirement for a code of conduct for rural district advisory committee members; • Clarify provisions around by-elections in local governments; • Prescribe accountability requirements for third parties who enter into agreements with RSCs; • Provide authority for an RSC to transfer an application for a variance or a rezoning to the affected local government during the transition; • Improve administration and efficiency of the Assessment and Planning Appeal Board until the establishment of a municipal commission; and • Amend the end date for provisions related to community funding and the LNG Terminal to end in 2022 instead of 2030.
120	<p><i>An Act Respecting Community Funding</i></p> <p>chapter-40.pdf (gnb.ca)</p>	October 11, 2022	<p>This Act repeals and replaces the <i>Community Funding Act</i> to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a new equalization formula; • Amend the calculation of the tax base to reflect that local governments can set non-residential tax rates between 1.4 and 1.7 times the residential rate; • Create a regional services support fund for which RSCs can apply to fund 50% of activities related to their regional strategy; and

BILL #	NAME OF LEGISLATION	DATE OF ROYAL ASSENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradually eliminate the unconditional core funding to local government entities and reallocate those monies to the regional services support fund. <p>The Act also amended <i>An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform</i> to provide authority for the province to require a phase-in of any increases in the tax rates in parts of newly restructured entities.</p>
16	<p><i>An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform, 2022, no. 2</i></p> <p>Chap-56.pdf (gnb.ca)</p>	December 16, 2022	<p>This Act amends the original <i>Act Respecting Local Governance Reform</i>, introduced in 2021 to clarify amendments pertaining to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost-sharing of regional facilities: mandated service to be provided by RSCs and review mechanism to ensure facilities receive appropriate consideration; Regional strategies: cost-sharing for regional infrastructure to be added as a planned service; Approvals for the development of new roads in restructured entities; Provision of additional time to review and amend municipal/rural plans; An override to have all plans continue to apply in annexed areas until they are updated by a local government. <p>The Act also repeals the <i>Greater Saint John Regional Facilities Commission Act</i> as it no longer aligns with the new mandate of RSCs.</p>

NAME OF REGULATION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
Dog Control Regulation – <i>Local Governance Act</i> 2022-36.pdf (gnb.ca)	August 1, 2022	This new regulation under the <i>Local Governance Act</i> replaces the Provincial Dog Regulation under the <i>Municipalities Act</i> , with the following improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the daily fine for non-compliance with a court order related to a dog bite complaint. • Clarification of dog licence expiry dates. • Modernization of notification requirements which apply when a dog is seized. • The addition of a new provision to allow a dog control officer to seize and impound a dog that has allegedly bitten a person until a complaint to a Judge of the Provincial Court is made and resolved. • The creation of prescribed category B ticket able offences for various offences.
Rural Districts Establishment Regulation – <i>Local Governance Act</i> 2022-45.pdf (gnb.ca)	January 1, 2023	A new regulation was developed to create twelve rural districts for the administration of local services in unincorporated areas. The regulation sets out the name of the district, a map of the territorial limits, the composition of the advisory committee and the territorial limits of each ward.
General Regulation – <i>Regional Service Delivery Act</i> 2022-84.pdf (gnb.ca)	January 1, 2023	Amendments were made to the <i>General Regulation</i> to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require the Southeast, Fundy and Capital region RSCs to plan, integrate and coordinate services related to homelessness, poverty and mental health. • Establish the parameters for weighted votes assigned to RSC members. • Establish cost apportionment parameters for particular services. • Setting the requirements of regional strategies.

NAME OF REGULATION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance on the identification of regional infrastructure and a default cost-sharing formula.
Regions Regulation – <i>Regional Service Delivery Act</i> 2022-46.pdf (gnb.ca)	January 1, 2023	Replaced the <i>Region Boundaries Regulation</i> to reflect changes in the local government structures and regional service commission composition related to local governance reform.
Local Governments Establishment Regulation – <i>Local Governance Act</i> 2022-50.pdf (gnb.ca)	January 1, 2023	A new regulation was created to annex, amalgamate and incorporate various entities as new local governments and to continue those that were not affected by a restructuring. For restructured entities, the regulation sets out information about the addition of unincorporated territory in the case of an annexation, and any changes to council composition and electoral wards. For amalgamations and incorporations, the regulation also contains information about first council and wards for a first election.
Designated Materials Regulation – <i>Clean Environment Act</i> 2022-73.pdf (gnb.ca)	October 24, 2022	Amendments to create an extended producer responsibility program for pharmaceutical products and medical sharps.
Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Regulation – <i>Climate Change Act</i> 2022-83.pdf (gnb.ca)	January 1, 2023	<p>Amendments to support the implementation of New Brunswick's Output-Based Pricing System for 2023-2030. Specifically, the changes allow for</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Incremental increases of \$15/year in: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the purchase price of fund credits per tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent of greenhouse gases for 2023-2030, and, the dollar amount used to calculate an unfulfilled compliance obligation. The repeal and substitution of the tables in Schedule A to reflect updated performance standards used to calculate emission limits for regulated facilities.

NAME OF REGULATION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
Designated Materials Regulation – <i>Clean Environment Act</i> 2023-20.pdf (gnb.ca)	April 1, 2023	Amendments to create an extended producer responsibility program for empty beverage containers.
Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order – <i>Clean Water Act</i> 2023-16.pdf (gnb.ca)	April 1, 2023	Amendments to designate wellfields which supply drinking water to residents of Memramcook, Miramichi, Edmundston and Île-de-Lamèque.

The acts for which the department was responsible in 2022-2023 may be found at:
<http://laws.gnb.ca/en/deplinks?subjectnumber=6>

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACTIVITIES

Introduction

In 2022-2023, the department of Environment and Local Government continued to fulfill its obligation under the *Official Languages Act* and was committed to actively offering and providing quality services in both Official Languages. Below are associated activities that were carried out on an ongoing basis during the year.

Focus 1

New Brunswickers will continue to have access to service of equal quality in English and French throughout the province.

Activities that took place to meet the objective of Language of Service and ensure employees have a good understanding of the Language of Service Policy:

- Required employees to complete the Language of Service module through the GNB Knowledge Centre. Managers are to ensure the modules are completed and verified annually during the performance review period. A completion rate report is provided yearly to managers.
- Active offer reminder is sent yearly to all staff. Additionally, staff are provided with tools and coaching offered by Official Language Coordinator to assist employees in providing the appropriate level of service.

- Ongoing consultation and discussions between human resources consultants and managers to ensure the department best meets the linguistic profile requirements. Linguistic profiles are completed and reviewed on a needed basis.

Focus 2

An environment and climate that encourages, for all employees, the use of the Official Language of their choice in their workplace:

Activities that took place to meet the objective of Language of Work and ensure employees have a good understanding of the Language of Work Policy:

- Required employees to complete the Language of Work module through the GNB knowledge Center every two years. Managers are to ensure the modules are completed and verified annually during the performance review period. A completion rate report is provided yearly to managers.
- New employees are provided an opportunity to state their preferred language of work for communication purposes through the employment acceptance form. A Language of Work Quick Reference Guide is offered to new employees through the employee orientation package.
- Ensured employees received their performance review in the language of their choice. Managers also review the Language of Work and Language of Service policies with their employees to ensure they understand their right to work in their language of choice, as well as their obligation to provide an active offer and service in both Official Languages.
- Provided second-language training to employees who met the requirements of the department's Second-Language Training Policy. Nineteen employees received second language-training in 2022-2023.

Focus 3

New and revised provincial government programs and policies will take into account the realities of the two Official Linguistic communities.

Activities that took place to meet the objective of promotion of Official Languages:

- Through the department's onboarding program, new employees are required to familiarize themselves with the *Official Languages Act* by completing mandatory modules through the GNB Knowledge Centre.
- Employees are required to review the *Official Languages Act* during the annual performance management process.

Focus 4

Ensure Public Service employees have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the *Official Languages Act*, relevant policies, regulations, and the province's obligations with respect to Official Languages:

Activities that took place to meet the objectives of knowledge of the *Official Languages Act*:

- Ensured orientation was provided to all new employees, which included information about the *Official Languages Act* and the policies and regulations governing their interactions with respect to Official Languages. Employees are also asked to sign and send confirmation to Human Resources upon completion.
- Current employees are required to review the Official Languages policies as part of their annual performance review process.
- Continued reminders to all employees of their responsibility to provide an active offer of service in both Official Languages.
- The department's Official Languages coordinator attended quarterly meetings established through Finance and Treasury Board to remain knowledgeable and proactive on all activities regarding Official Languages.

In 2022-2023, the department received one Official Languages complaint, however the complaint has not yet been resolved.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Section 1 – Includes the current reporting year and the previous year.

The Department of Environment and Local Government received 24 recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

NAME AND YEAR OF AUDIT AREA WITH LINK TO ONLINE DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
	TOTAL
2022 V2 Chapter 2: Contaminated Sites - Department of Environment and Local Government https://www.agnb-vgnb.ca/content/dam/agnb-vgnb/pdf/Reports-Rapports/2022V2/Chap2e.pdf	15
2022 V2 Chapter 3: Environmental Trust Fund- Department of Environment and Local Government agnb-vgnb.ca/content/dam/agnb-vgnb/pdf/Reports-Rapports/2022V2/Chap3e.pdf	9

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN – CONTAMINATED SITES
2.47 Ensure contaminated site files proceed through the contaminated sites management process in a timely manner.	A database update is planned with new tracking features for staff to ensure files proceed through the process in a timely manner.
2.48 Update the remediation standard operating procedures to require Engineers enter the report processing date in the remediation database (to allow the Department to monitor file progress through the contaminated sites management process).	The Standard Operating Procedures have been updated to require Engineers enter the report processing date in the remediation database.
2.54 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a plan and establish a timeline to process all outstanding open contaminated site files; and Periodically review the plan against actual results to ensure work will be completed according to the timeline. 	The department has conducted a file prioritization exercise and have sent compliance letters to all high priority open files. The Department continues to work on a program to process the remaining open contaminated site files.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN – CONTAMINATED SITES
2.56 Develop and implement a monitoring program for contaminated site files with a conditional closure.	The department has developed and implemented an inspection program to monitor conditional closures.
2.60 Ensure the screening decision and reasons for screening spills as an occurrence or contaminated sites management file is documented.	The department has implemented updated forms for inspectors to document the reasons for transferring files from the occurrence system to the contaminated sites program.
2.61 Standardize the information recorded in the Occurrence Database by Regional Inspectors across the Province	Inspection forms for key program services were developed and implemented. System enhancements have been made to standardize information.
2.64 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and approve the Small Spill Policy to be consistent with the Remediation Program Standard Operating Procedures; and • Update the Remediation Program Standard Operating Procedures to ensure a consistent assessment process is followed by Regional Inspectors across the province when contamination is reported. 	Update of the Standard Operating Procedures is underway to ensure a consistent assessment process is followed by Regional Inspectors. An update of the Small Spills Policy is also underway.
2.69 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create performance targets for the contaminated sites management process and compare actual results against targets to measure performance on a regular basis; and • Publicly report on the performance metrics of the contaminated sites management process 	The department has conducted a jurisdictional review to gauge what others have for performance targets for their contaminated sites management programs. This information will be used to develop new performance targets for NB, which will be reported on publicly.
2.72 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create performance targets for the occurrence process and compare actual results against performance targets on a regular basis; and • Publicly report on the performance metrics of the occurrence process 	System enhancements have been implemented. Internal reports and a process for monitoring is in development and performance targets are to be determined.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN – CONTAMINATED SITES
2.75 Update the New Brunswick Guideline for the Management of Contaminated Sites to reflect the changes to the Remediation Program in 2018.	The New Brunswick Guideline for the Management of Contaminated Sites has been updated.
2.78 Ensure all necessary information on the contaminated sites management process is located in one place with clear indications of where supplementary information is located.	The department is working on an updated website that has all relevant information available.
2.90 Develop a program to identify and address orphan contaminated sites.	The department is developing a new regulation for contaminated sites that will include mandatory timelines for the clean-up of contamination.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN – ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND
<p>3.35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a single authority with the responsibility for overseeing the administration of the Environmental Trust Fund (ETF); and Develop Terms of Reference document to clarify and define the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the Advisory Board. 	The department has conducted a strategic review of the Environmental Trust Fund that includes clearer definitions on roles and responsibilities. The proposed changes are scheduled to be adopted in 2023-24.
<p>3.40</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategy and annual plans for the ETF, with clearly defined objectives, performance measures and targets; and link the annual budget to program objectives as part of ongoing annual planning. 	The department's strategic review has resulted in improved objectives and budget processes which will be implemented for the 2024-25 fiscal year.
3.45 Map the priority areas to the uses of the fund established in the Environmental Trust Fund Act to ensure project and funding decisions contribute directly to achieving the ETF mandate.	All priority areas for 2022-23 were linked to the <i>Environmental Trust Fund Act</i> .

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN – ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND
3.49 Develop a plan outlining how and under what circumstances the Department will use the accumulated surplus of the ETF.	The department has prepared a plan for the accumulated surplus that begins in the 2023-24 fiscal year.
3.62 Develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an evidence-based, standard evaluation method for all project and funding decisions. • detailed definitions for eligibility criteria, linked to program objectives; and • guidance for how the criteria should be interpreted and evaluated. 	<p>The department has conducted a review of the project evaluation process and the recommended changes will be implemented for the 2024-25 fiscal year.</p> <p>Clearer definitions of the evaluation and eligibility criteria will be published ahead of the November 2023 call for applications.</p>
3.64 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient guidance to applicants to complete the online funding application; and • Identify information that will be assessed to determine eligibility. 	Improved guidance will be provided to applicants for the November 2023 call for applications.
3.74 Review and evaluate what has been achieved with the ETF and make this information available to the public such that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental results of past projects are summarized and reported; • comparative information and explanations for variances are presented; and • ETF reporting provided by the Department is consolidated in a central, easy to access location. 	The department conducted a strategic review of the ETF reporting. The department plans to improve access to project information through the use of a new web-based platform.
3.76 Measure and report the expected and actual results for all projects funded by the ETF.	The department will publish results for all ETF projects in its annual ETF impact report.
3.80 Expand ETF reporting and include geographic information in order to increase transparency.	As the department improves reporting on the Environmental Trust Fund, geographic information will be included.

Section 2– Includes the reporting periods for years three, four and five.

The Department of Environment and Local Government did not receive any recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General dating back to – and including – the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

REPORT ON THE PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE ACT

As provided under section 18(1) of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, the chief executive shall prepare a report of any disclosures of wrongdoing that have been made to a supervisor or designated officer of the portion of the public service for which the chief executive officer is responsible. The Department of Environment and Local Government received zero disclosures of wrongdoing in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.