

Environment and Local Government

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Environment and Local Government

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Province of New Brunswick
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TRANSMITTAL LETTERS

From the Minister to the Lieutenant-Governor

**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, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Gilles LePage
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

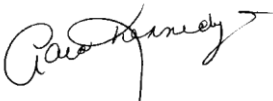
From the Minister to the Lieutenant-Governor

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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, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Aaron Kennedy
Minister of Local Government

From the Deputy Minister to the Ministers

Honourable Gilles LePage
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Honourable Aaron Kennedy
Minister of Local Government

Sirs:

I am pleased to present the annual report describing operations of the Department of Environment and Local Government for the fiscal year April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Charbel Awad
Deputy Minister
Environment and Local Government

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The Department of Environment and Local Government is deeply committed to protecting and preserving our environment, while working diligently every day to create sustainable and vibrant communities.

We offer programs and services that not only safeguard our air, land, water and climate, but also keep New Brunswickers informed about important issues.

As new Minister, I can confirm that great strides were made to implement initiatives aimed at building a healthier, more resilient future for all.

The year was marked by a number of significant achievements as the department invested in many environmental initiatives.

Amendments were made to the *Clean Environment Act* to modernize and improve New Brunswick's Contaminated Sites Program, and we released a new [Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management](#) for the province, as well as launched a new website for waste reduction and diversion.

In an effort to increase transparency and help clients understand regulatory requirements, the [Environmental Impact Assessment webpage](#) was amended to make clear which projects need to be registered for review.

The department also advanced 30 actions in New Brunswick's [Climate Change Action Plan](#). This included an investment of \$47 million through the Climate Change Fund to support actions to combat and respond to climate change. We will continue to work and advocate the importance of this fund for all New Brunswick.

I would like to thank the hardworking staff, stakeholders, partners, community members, and former Minister Crossman who have contributed to our mission.

Your hard work and passion inspire my team and I to continue pushing boundaries and seeking innovative solutions.

As we move forward, we must remain focused on our goals and continue to adapt to the evolving needs of our communities.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our shared vision for New Brunswick.



Honourable Gilles LePage
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Over the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Department of Environment and Local Government has embraced innovative solutions, navigated complex issues, and fostered collaboration across various levels of government and the community.

The intended outcome of local governance reform was to foster vibrant and sustainable communities that work together to enhance the quality of life for all New Brunswickers.

I am pleased with the department's accomplishments as we look back on the previous year.

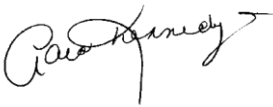
There were investments of \$75 million in Community Funding Grants for local governments, rural districts, and regional service commissions (RSCs).

A new *Local Governance Commission Act* was developed to allow for the creation of an independent body that will review, assess, and make recommendations or rule on matters affecting local governments across the province.

An implementation fund was developed with more than \$11.6 million provided to local governments and RSCs to help offset incremental costs incurred as a result of local governance reform.

The tremendous staff with the Local Government division truly are responsible for making these achievements possible. Their devotion and hard work are what propel this division forward.

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to our shared vision. Together, we will continue to build a future that reflects the values and aspirations of all our residents and communities.



Honourable Aaron Kennedy
Minister of Local Government

DEPUTY MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The Department of Environment and Local Government is making progress toward its objectives and striving for a brighter future for all New Brunswickers. Commitment to protecting the environment and strengthening local governance is of great importance.

I would like to commend the hardworking staff on both the environment and local government sides of the department. Their efforts in engaging communities and fostering dialogue have been crucial in driving the mission forward. A strong foundation has been laid collectively.

The department's dedication and hard work have also been instrumental in advancing initiatives. This year saw the release of a new [Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management](#) and the launch of a new website for Waste Reduction and Diversion.

Additionally, the implementation of a cooling tower program minimized the risk of Legionella contamination, and a progress report along with a five-year review of the province's water strategy was released. Of the 35 actions in the strategy aimed at sustainably managing New Brunswick's water, 14 have been completed.

To better support local governments across the province a Community Finance Information System was put into place to support the budgetary preparation process. Additionally, \$5.6 million was invested to help regional service commissions cover the costs associated with implementing new mandates and services.

The department also helped communities adapt to the ever-present threat of climate change and reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To date, approximately 59 per cent of local governments have completed adaptation plans and 50 percent have GHG mitigation plans in place for all or part of their territory.

These accomplishments are a testament to the dedication of our team and the trust of our stakeholders. Together, we have faced challenges, but our commitment to environmental stewardship and vibrant, sustainable communities has never wavered.



Charbel Awad
Deputy Minister

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Strategy and Operations Management

The Government of New Brunswick (GNB) uses leading business practices to develop, communicate and review strategy. This provides the public service with a proven methodology to execute strategy, increase accountability, and continuously drive improvement.

Government Priorities

Our vision for 2023-2024 was a vibrant and sustainable New Brunswick. To make progress towards this vision, we focussed on our government's priorities.

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

HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Department of Environment and Local Government focused on these government priorities:

- Amendments were made to the *Clean Environment Act* to modernize and improve New Brunswick's contaminated sites program.
- A new [Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management](#) was released and a new website was launched for Waste Reduction and Diversion.
- The [Environmental Impact Assessment webpage](#) was updated to improve transparency and clarify the projects requiring EIA registration, and to assist clients in navigating these requirements.
- To promote the safe operation of water circulation systems, the cooling tower program was implemented to minimize the risk of Legionella contamination.
- A progress report and five-year review of [New Brunswick's Water Strategy 2018 - 2028](#). Of the 35 actions in the strategy which aim to ensure our water is managed sustainably, 14 have been completed and 17 are in progress. The review concluded that all actions continue to be relevant and achievable by the conclusion of the strategy in 2028.
- More than \$70 million in funding grants were distributed to support community projects, environmental initiatives, infrastructure investments, and animal welfare.
- \$75 million in community funding grants were distributed to local governments, rural districts and regional service commissions (RSC).
- The Local Governance Implementation funding framework was developed as well as the Regional Services Support Fund application process. More than \$11.6 million was provided to local governments and Regional Service Commissions to help offset incremental costs incurred as a result of local governance reform. Seven new local government municipal plans or rural plans were approved as well as 39 local government municipal plans or rural plan amendments, two local government planning by-laws and two rural plan amendments or re-zonings for unincorporated areas.
- A new *Local Governance Commission Act* was developed to create an independent body to manage both the investigative and adjudicative aspects of local governance.
- Thirty actions in New Brunswick's [Climate Change Action Plan](#) were advanced, including an investment of \$47 million through the Climate Change Fund to support actions to combat and respond to climate change.
- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have been reduced by 39 per cent since 2005. We are on the pathway toward achieving the 2030 target of 10.7 Megatonnes (46 per cent below 2005 levels).

- Communities were supported in their efforts to adapt to climate change and reduce GHG emissions. So far, approximately 59 per cent of local governments have completed adaptation plans and 50 percent have completed GHG mitigation plans for all or part of their territory.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

MODERNIZATION OF THE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS PROGRAM

The program was established in 1992 to protect the environment by diverting beverage containers from landfills, roadsides, and waterways. Approximately 75 per cent of beverage containers sold annually in New Brunswick have been diverted away from landfilling and litter.

The aging program was supported by an outdated legislative framework, the *Beverage Containers Act* and *General Regulation*. It needed to be modernized to extend more responsibility to beverage producers for managing and funding the diversion of the containers put in the marketplace. This modernization effort will result in an increased diversion from litter and landfilling and address any concerns with long term financial sustainability.

Why it is important

The program includes both non-alcohol and alcohol beverage containers and was designed as a “half-back” consumer deposit-refund system. In the “half-back” system half of the consumer deposit is refunded to the consumer upon redemption at one of 69 redemption centres in the province. The other half is split between funding the Environmental Trust Fund and the cost of recycling.

Over the past few years, the annual diversion rate has steadily been declining and struggling to achieve an overall diversion rate above 70 per cent; the “half-back” system is not enough to motivate consumer redemption. The cost of diversion has also steadily been increasing and will eventually reach a point where the recycling cost will outpace the revenues as a quarter of the consumer deposit will not be enough to cover the rising cost of recycling.

Overall Performance

The modernization of the program to the more modern extended producer responsibility (EPR) model has resulted in the transition from a “half-back” consumer deposit refund system to a “full-back” system for all eligible program containers. A container recycling fee has been added to cover the cost of recycling, which should ensure the program never reaches a point where recycling costs outpace revenues. Consumers are able to take advantage of more accessible and convenient return facilities, which should help increase return rates and diversion.

In addition to being the regulator, the department has taken on the role of overseeing Recycle NB as per the requirements under the *Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act* and leading any consultation and clarification on the intent of the regulation to producers, agents, service providers, and the oversight body. Recycle NB has taken on the role as oversight body for the program ensuring producers are compliant with regulatory requirements. Producers obligated under the program have registered with Recycle NB. Encorp Atlantic, the agent/producer responsible organization selected by producers to work on their behalf, have submitted, received approval from Recycle NB, and are implementing a stewardship plan that outlines how the program will be managed. Encorp Atlantic also negotiated and signed a service level agreement with redemption centres in the province.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

The modernization of the program to an extended producer responsibility model was achieved on target. It involved extensive stakeholder engagement; interdepartmental consultation and cooperation; comprehensive legislative and regulatory amendments; and government approval.

COOLING TOWER PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The goal of the cooling tower program is to promote the safe operation of water circulation systems (also referred to as cooling tower systems), to ensure appropriate maintenance and testing by owners to protect the health of New Brunswickers.

The *Water Circulation Systems Regulation – Public Health Act* was enacted to protect the public from potential outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease. Regulatory amendments that came into effect on June 1, 2023, introduced requirements for monitoring, sampling, cleaning, disinfection, and maintenance of cooling towers to minimize the risk of Legionella contamination.

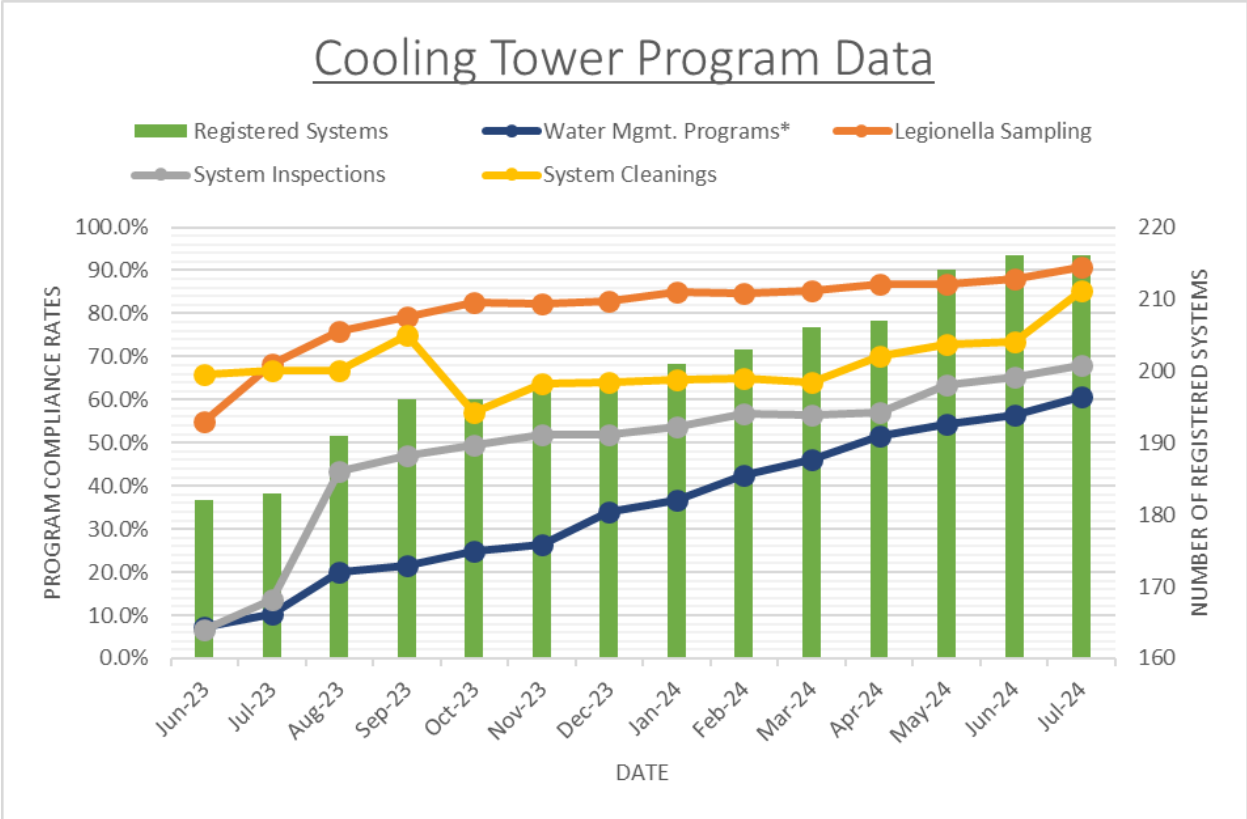
A registry, administered by GroveWare Technologies Inc., is used to administer the program and allows system owners to upload important regulatory data, as well as water management plans for each system. To support system owners, educational materials, tools, and training were developed and made available through the cooling tower registry. The registry also includes technical guidance, a registry user guide, and a recorded online training session on how to register cooling tower systems. There are 216 registered cooling tower systems.

Why it is important

Cooling towers can harbour Legionella bacteria by providing an ideal environment for growth due to their warm temperatures and ability to aerosolize water droplets, which can then be inhaled by humans. Without proper regulation and maintenance of cooling towers, Legionella bacteria can proliferate and be dispersed into the air, potentially infecting people who come into contact with contaminated aerosols. These bacteria are responsible for causing Legionnaires' disease which is a severe form of pneumonia that can be life-threatening, especially for vulnerable populations such as the elderly or those with weakened immune systems.

Overall performance

The department has reported improvements in all tracked regulatory parameters since the implementation of the amendments in June 2023. This indicates the effectiveness of the program in enhancing cooling tower management and reducing health risks associated with Legionella.



*Note – Includes all water management programs contained within the registry.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

- Implementation of regulatory amendments.
- Creation of a Technical Guideline to outline regulatory requirements and best management practices.
- Development of a custom-made online registry designed to collect and track regulatory requirements as required.
- Development of a registry user guide to support clients in understanding how to use the registry and meet regulatory requirements.
- Development of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.
- Development of a one-page quick reference document for seasonal cooling towers.
- Facilitation of free online training sessions.
- Presentations to groups to promote education and awareness of the regulatory requirements.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE REFORM (LGR)

The intended outcome of the local governance reform (LGR) initiative was to foster vibrant and sustainable communities that work together to enhance quality of life for all New Brunswickers. This was addressed through the implementation of the white paper, *Working together for vibrant and sustainable communities*. The project initiatives for 2023-2024 supported the implementation of the next phase of the reform process as outlined in the white paper.

Why it is important

New and restructured local governments were created on January 1, 2023. At the same time, regional service commissions had to implement their expanded mandates. During 2023-2024, the Department focused on ensuring that elected officials and staff had the resources and support needed to settle into their new roles and establish proper governance processes to provide services to their residents.

Overall performance

Local governance reform implementation required investing in the expanded mandates of the regional service commissions (RSCs) and assisting newly restructured local governments in promoting their new communities. A new enhanced online portal was also necessary to support the budget process as the adoption of 2024 budgets was a first for newly restructured local governments.

Work began on the establishment of a new Local Governance Commission. The commission is an expert body that can review, assess, and make recommendations or rule on matters affecting the governance and administration of local governance structures.

A new regulatory land use planning framework was also established to provide a balance between development and societal priorities.

Investments in funding and resources

All 12 regional service commissions completed regional strategies and identified regional strategic priorities tied to their new mandates. Their new mandates include economic development, community development, regional tourism promotion, regional transportation, cost sharing on recreation infrastructure, and the creation of a public safety committee. The department supported their efforts through grants and the creation of the Regional Services Support Fund. Grants were also made available to support local governments in marketing and promoting their new communities, and to address key costs associated with local governance reform.

The 2024 budget process was the first time newly restructured local governments adopted a budget following local governance reform. Tools and guidance were provided to support the development and adoption of their annual budgets. The implementation of an external portal was made accessible to all local governments, enabling them to access and submit their budgets online for approval, access their tax rates, view their monthly payment schedule, and access various documents, policies, templates, training materials, etc.

Operationalizing of the new Local Governance Commission

The operationalizing of a new local governance body to provide support and assistance to local governments and regional service commissions began with Royal Assent of the *Local Governance Commission Act* in June 2023. In the months following Royal Assent, a transition facilitator supported the hiring and onboarding of staff and new chair, oversaw the development of policies and procedures, and identified appropriate office space for the Local Governance Commission.

Land-use Planning

To provide a balance between development and societal priorities as they relate to land-use planning, a new regulatory framework under the *Community Planning Act* on the topics of settlement patterns, agriculture, climate change, flood and natural hazard areas, and natural resources was necessary. With the addition of the *Statement of Public Interest Regulation* under the *Community Planning Act*, a balanced approach between the desire for development and protecting the natural environment now supports the managing of growth and development in the province. To assist in providing affordable housing to New Brunswickers, the department enabled local government's to use inclusionary zoning through the *Community Planning Act*.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

The following projects were undertaken:

- Creation of the Regional Services Support Fund as part of the Community Funding Grant for regional service commissions that supports regional strategic priorities tied to expanded mandates.
- Investment of \$5.6 million to help regional service commissions cover the costs associated with the implementation of their new mandates and services.
- Implementation of an external system (Community Finance Information System) to support the budgetary preparation process for local governments.
- Invested \$3.1 million to help newly restructured local governments cover the costs associated with marketing and signage to promote their new community names.
- Supported the operationalizing of a new Local Governance Commission.
- Established statements of public interest in a regulation under the *Community Planning Act* to create standards for land use planning.
- Established an inclusionary zoning regulation under the *Community Planning Act* to enable local governments to adopt inclusionary zoning.

DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ONLINE REPORTING TOOL FOR ACTIONS 19 AND 26 OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

The department remains committed to ensuring the province is taking action to combat climate change and transition to a resilient, low-carbon economy. In September 2022, a renewed Climate Change Action Plan: *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience* (CCAP) was released. The CCAP presents the actions necessary to address climate change priorities and New Brunswick's contribution toward broader national and international commitments.

The plan features three pillars: government leadership and accountability, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and preparing for climate change. Each pillar includes new incremental actions being undertaken, and an overview of the ongoing work. 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 greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target, and accelerate our transition to a strong, healthy, and resilient economy that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

Among the significant achievements under the action plan completed during 2023-24, Actions 19 and 26 are led by the Climate Change Secretariat.

New Brunswick communities play a crucial role in mitigating and adapting to climate change at a local level, and the current action plan recognizes this key role and sets objectives to ensure progress throughout the province.

The action plan sets three objectives for local GHG reduction plans (Action 19) and for local adaptation plans (Action 26). The objectives for each are:

- a) Annual progress reporting on development and implementation of the plans.
- b) 50 per cent of all local governments and rural districts are to have plans completed by 2025 and 100 per cent to have plans completed by 2030.
- c) Beginning in 2025, as plans are completed, implementation schedules are to be developed and actioned within one year.

To fulfill these objectives, an online reporting tool, "Local Government Climate Action Reporting Tool," was launched in March 2024. This tool enables communities to monitor and report annually on their progress in developing and implementing their climate change action plans.

Why it is important

This initiative provides a structured and consistent way for communities to report their progress in developing and implementing climate change action plans. By enabling annual reporting, the tool helps monitor progress, identify areas needing improvement, and ensure accountability in climate action efforts. Additionally, it promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration among local communities, supports informed policy development, and advances overall climate action efforts within the province. This coordinated approach is crucial for addressing the challenges of climate change effectively at the local level.

Overall Performance

The target for the reporting initiative is to have 100 per cent of communities report annually on the status of developing and implementing their climate change action plans. In the first year of the reporting tool's implementation (FY 2023-2024), approximately 66 per cent of communities submitted their reports.

The gap between the target and actual performance suggests while a significant number of communities have engaged with the reporting tool, there is still opportunity for improvement in participation. Further efforts may be needed to encourage all communities to report, such as providing additional support, resources, and/or incentives to ensure comprehensive participation in future reporting cycles.

The 2023-2024 reporting shows progress towards achieving the 2025 target of 50 per cent of completed community adaptation and GHG reduction plans. As of March 2024, approximately 59 per cent of communities have completed an adaption plan. Similarly, approximately 50 per cent of communities have completed GHG reduction plans.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

Several initiatives and projects have been undertaken to achieve the outcome of full participation by communities in reporting on their climate change action plans:

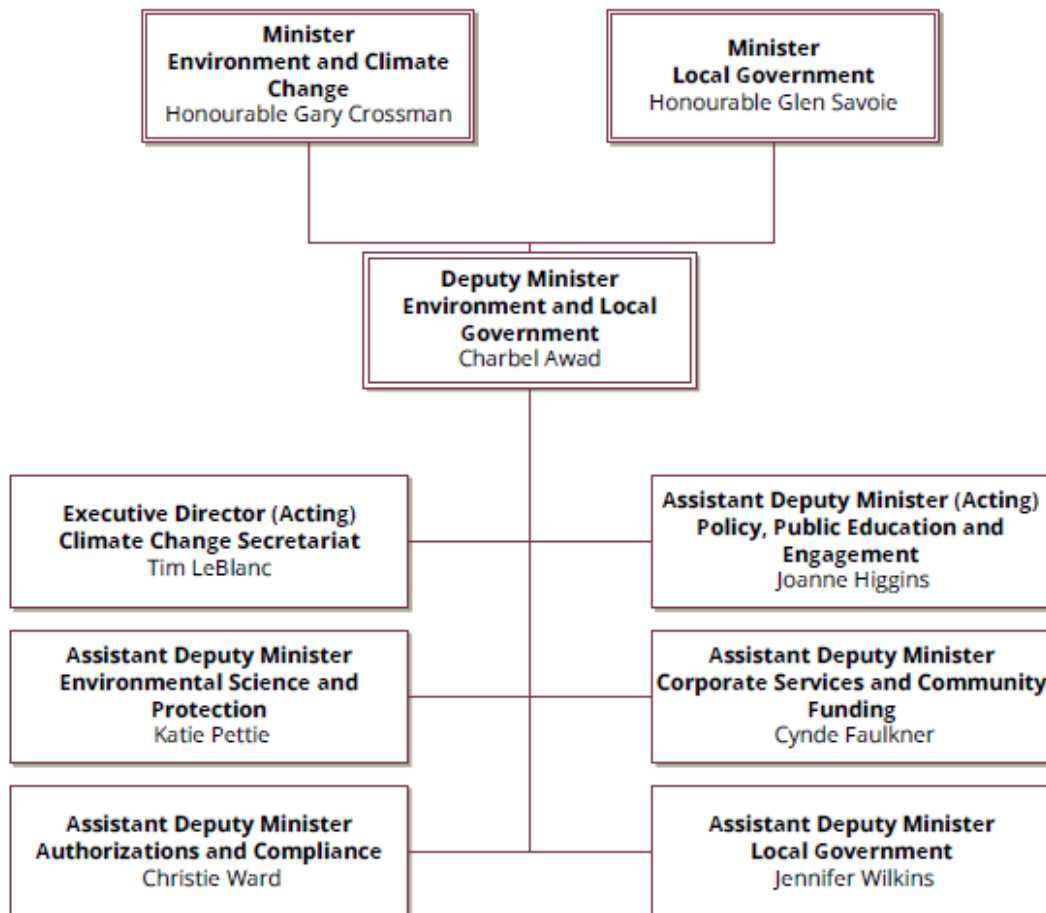
- **Engagement session:** An engagement session was held with communities to showcase the Local Government Climate Action Reporting Tool. This session aimed to familiarize communities with the tool's functionality, benefits, and reporting requirements, encouraging them to actively participate in the annual reporting process.
- **Development of resources:** To support communities in using the reporting tool effectively, resources such as a comprehensive guide and an FAQ document were developed. These resources provide detailed instructions and answers to common questions, helping communities navigate the tool and understand the reporting expectations.
- **Development and promotion of funding resources:** Efforts are ongoing to develop and promote funding resources for communities to aid in the development and implementation of their climate change action plans. Providing access to funding opportunities is crucial to ensuring that all communities, regardless of size or financial capacity, can actively participate in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

These initiatives are designed to ensure that communities are well-equipped to report on their progress and are supported in their efforts to reduce GHG emissions and build climate change resilience.

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 .

High-Level Organizational Chart



DIVISION OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

AUTHORIZATIONS AND COMPLIANCE DIVISION

The **Authorizations and Compliance Division** is responsible for the administration and management of regulatory programs and activities focused on the avoidance or reduction of environmental impacts throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning of various alterations, development and industrial projects and activities. Through the regulatory authorities provided under the *Clean Air Act*, the *Clean Environment Act*, the *Clean Water Act*, the *Pesticides Control Act*, the *Beverage Containers Act* and a portion of the *Local Governance Act* the division issues permits and approvals with conditions, conducts auditing and, in some instances, compliance checks throughout a project's lifecycle to ensure compliance. The division is also responsible for responding to inquiries and concerns from the public related to divisional programs and environmental emergencies, such as spills/release of contaminants into the environment.

The division consists of the Authorizations Branch, Waste Diversion Branch, Regional Operations and Compliance Branch, the Surface Water Management Branch (formerly Source and Surface Water Management Branch) and the newly created Compliance Support 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*, the *Clean Water Act*, and the *Pesticides Control Act*, for various regulated activities that have 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* 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 5,202 licences, certificates, permits and approvals. This includes 209 pesticide permits and licenses; 2,009

pesticide applicator certificates; 1,388 petroleum storage tank site licences and approvals; 374 ozone depleting substances permits; and 1,222 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 branch's Property-Based Environmental Information Program.

The **Waste Diversion Branch** is responsible for developing, administering and shepherding 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 for managing the fulfillment of the actions and outcomes contained within the Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management in New Brunswick, 2023-2030, *A Roadmap for Transforming our Waste into Materials for Tomorrow*.

Highlights

- Completed stakeholder engagement on converting and expanding the current provincial tire diversion program to using the extended producer responsibility model and including off-the-road tires.
- Provided guidance as required with the implementation of the packaging and paper products, the pharmaceutical products and medical sharps, and the beverage containers provincial waste diversion programs.
- Repealed the *Beverage Containers Act* and *General Regulation* to support the full implementation of the beverage containers program under the more modern *Designated Materials Regulation* using the extended producer responsibility model.
- Continued work to further amend the *Designated Materials Regulation* to modernize the language in the Regulation, add language to support the development and implementation of two new provincial waste diversion programs for batteries and lamps and expand the list of materials included in the electronics and oil and glycol programs.
- Completed the 2023 Progress Report for the Strategic Action Plan for Solid Waste Management in New Brunswick, 2023-2030, highlighting the progress made in the calendar year of 2023 with the 10 actions contained within the plan.

- Subsection 4(8) of the *Beverage Containers 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:
 - 104 beverage container distributors were in compliance with their management plans and no distributors were determined to be non-compliant.
 - More than 91 per cent of the refillable containers are being redeemed and approximately 68.4 per cent 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 3066 total occurrence files - roughly the same as the previous fiscal year with continued public education efforts.
- 721 files came through the after-hours Emergency Response Program, where staff work in conjunction with multiple provincial and federal government departments and agencies to address environmental emergencies.
- 760 compliance verification files required site visits, inspections, or an audit to assess compliance with *the Clean Air Act, Clean Environment Act, Clean Water Act, Local Governance Act* and respective regulations.
- Of the concluded compliance verification files, 254 required administrative actions under the Compliance and Enforcement policy. These administrative actions included 140 orders, 104 warnings, seven schedules of compliance, and three prosecutions.
- 1719 incident reports from industries experiencing ozone depleting substances, spills of small magnitude (less than 20 litres), and wastewater by-pass events submitted because of regulation reporting requirements or certificate of approval conditions under the *Clean Air Act, Clean Environment Act, and Clean Water Act*.
- 430 property information inquiries requested guidance, advice, and direction on programs under the mandate of the department.
- Implemented an aerial drone program and carried out 43 aerial drone flights to support compliance and enforcement efforts. This program enhancement has led to better decision-making and increased staff safety.

- Initiated improvements to the emergency management and response protocols, including streamlining communications channels within the department, and implemented efficiencies to the on-call and audit programs.

The **Surface Water Management Branch** is responsible for the Watercourse and Wetland Alteration (WAWA) permitting program, watercourse and wetland management, and protection of tidal watercourses and coastal wetlands. The branch is mandated to allow suitable development in appropriate locations and to ensure that it is undertaken considering avoidance and minimization criteria that reduces potential environmental impacts to wetlands and watercourses.

Highlights

- Reviewed and issued 1970 permits under the WAWA program, that permitted development within 30 metres of watercourses and wetlands with conditions to mitigate environmental impacts.
- Of the 1970 permits issued, a minimum of 185 projects were minimized or redesigned to meet departmental requirements. Three permits were refused during this period. The remaining projects met the departmental requirements of the *WAWA Regulation* and associated guidelines.
- 829 public property information inquiries were addressed regarding guidance and direction on requirements of the *Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Regulation*, including site visits by departmental wetland biologists to determine the presence and boundaries of wetlands.
- Roughly 560 reviews applying *Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Regulation* requirements were conducted for projects under other regulatory and planning processes (including Subdivision Plans, Land Use Plans, Licence of Occupation on Crown Lands, Environmental Impact Assessments, and Environmental Approvals to Construct and Operate.)
- Continued program improvements were undertaken including updated internal operational protocols to better define roles, responsibilities and procedures, improvements to the online application system, and updated public guidelines for working in and around watercourses and wetlands. Several other projects were initiated, including updating the bank protection (erosion control) guidelines and supporting the investigation of potential regulatory frameworks for the coast.

The new **Compliance Support Branch** provides the Authorizations and Compliance Division with operational support services such as project management and execution, data tracking and analytics, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support, enforcement file management (such as files going to prosecutions), and the development and delivery of training for departmental environmental and inspection staff.

Highlights

- Onboarded staff responsible for the support and management of divisional priority projects, GIS, enforcement file management, and training.
- Initiated the development of a new training program for departmental environmental and inspection staff.
- Improved departmental processes for the review and management of enforcement files (prosecutions).
- Continued to move the Understanding our Natural Carbon Sinks project (Action 16 of the Climate Change Action Plan) forward with respect to quantification of carbon within New Brunswick's wetlands. Wetlands are an important carbon sink and therefore a key contributor to New Brunswick's path to net-zero.
- Initiated a project to review potential regulatory frameworks for the coast and supported or managed an additional 18 divisional priority projects under various divisional programs.

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

- 14 projects were registered during the year; 18 projects were approved with conditions, and 47 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, major tourism development, and energy generation projects, including a solar farm, the Mactaquac Dam Life Achievement project and small modular nuclear reactors.
- The EIA [webpage](#) was updated to include clarifications regarding the types of projects that require EIA registration and review, and when proposed modifications to a project requiring EIA review need a new registration. The new information has resulted in increased transparency of the EIA process and more certainty for project proponents.

The **Air and Water Sciences 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 River Watch season and provided flow and water level forecasting services for extreme weather events throughout the year.
- Initiated the development of a 3-D visualization tool of inland and coastal flood hazard maps. Adding 3D visualization to the flood hazard maps will enhance the understanding of the impacts of flood extents and local water levels on buildings and other infrastructure.
- Continued development of a public education and awareness program related to understanding the impacts of flooding in New Brunswick. This work supports Action 22a under the Climate Change Action Plan which includes developing and beginning implementation of a New Brunswick flood education and awareness program by 2025.
- Initiated a study including a gap analysis of groundwater monitoring networks in New Brunswick in support of Action 22d of the Climate Change Action Plan which has the objective of establishing a drought index and public advisory reporting system by 2026.
- Carried out monitoring at 55 river stations and conducted recreational beach monitoring at 10 of New Brunswick's provincial park beaches.
- Operated and maintained the province's network of 10 continuous real-time ambient air quality monitoring stations.

- Published a special project report on an air quality evaluation conducted in the Utopia area of the local government of Eastern Charlotte.
- Continued operation of the mobile air quality monitoring unit for a one-year special study in St. Stephen.

The **Healthy Environments Branch** leads and supports environmental health programs by providing scientific and engineering advice, and by assessing and anticipating new and emerging environmental health hazards in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Branch work is guided by the ecological determinants of health and is key for New Brunswickers to continue to live in a safe environment and enjoy clean and reliable drinking water.

Highlights

- 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.
- Led the Drinking Water Programs team to ensure collaboration and communication across departments on drinking water.
- To promote the safe operation of water circulation systems, the cooling tower program was implemented, which included regulatory requirements for monitoring, sampling, cleaning, disinfection, and maintenance of cooling towers, to minimize the risk of Legionella contamination. To date, there are 216 registered cooling tower systems.
- Implemented improvements to the Heat Alert and Response System to streamline heat alert delivery, while clearly defining departmental roles and responsibilities. The program improvements were presented to the Canadian Heat and Health Community of Practice, which is comprised of public health professionals from across Canada.
- A multi-agency working group completed a review of the On-Site Sewage Disposal Program for the purpose of making recommendations for improvement. As a result of this review, the technical guidelines for onsite sewage disposal systems are being reviewed with the goal of clarifying standards, along with streamlining the process for assessing new and non-conventional technology, and enhancements to the training and education program.
- Engaged the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training to complete the study, *Informing Climate Change Adaptation Planning on Health Effects of Extreme Heat Events in New Brunswick*. The goal of the study was to describe the distribution of the population vulnerable to extreme heat events. This information will help inform phase two of the study, which is to evaluate the current heat alert levels in New Brunswick.

- The source water protection team was transferred from the Source and Surface Water Management Branch to the Healthy Environments Branch to align with the Drinking Water Programs Lead and strengthen focus on the ecological determinant of health of drinking water.
- The Healthy Environments Branch continued to lead the protection of the province's drinking water sources through the *Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order* and the *Watershed Protected Designation Order*.
- Amendments to the *Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order* were made to strengthen the protection of drinking water sources by preventing new agricultural activities within a wellfield protected area.
- Processed 31 wellfield exemption applications; 15 did not require an exemption, 10 were issued, 2 were refused, and 4 were in progress.
- Processed 32 watershed exemption applications; 14 were issued, 3 were refused, 4 were withdrawn, 6 did not require an exemption, 1 resulted in a warning letter and 4 applications were still under review and carried forward.
- Issued 87 permits under the Water Well Construction Program: 36 to water well contractors and 51 to water well drillers.

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 consists of the Policy Branch, the Public Education and Engagement Branch, and the Strategic Initiatives Branch.

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

- Supported the development of three bills and nine regulations.
- Developed a new *Local Governance Commission Act* to create an independent body to manage both the investigative and adjudicative aspects of local governance.
- Developed new and amended regulations under the *Local Governance Commission Act* to establish the regions of the Assessment and Planning Appeal Tribunal, as well as the skills and qualifications of members.
- Supported the repeal of the *Beverage Containers Act* to enable the creation of an extended producer responsibility program for empty beverage containers under the *Designated Materials Regulation – Clean Environment Act*, effective April 1, 2024.
- Received 125 right to information requests and 35 fee for information requests. Responded to 92.8 per cent of right to information requests within the legislated deadlines, with an average completion time of 23.9 business days.
- Coordinated 20 appointments to agencies, boards and commissions.

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 14 EIA notifications were sent to First Nations.
- Led and supported the development of various education and engagement initiatives related to flooding, drinking water quality, recreational water quality, air quality and climate change. This included educational materials such as updated web content, updated public facing reports, animated videos, and educational signage.
- Supported engagement activities on statements of public interest under the Local Governance Reform initiative and on Actions 19 and 26 from the Climate Change Action Plan.

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 the Provincial and Community Planning Branch in the creation and adoption of two new Regulations under the *Community Planning Act* – the new *Statement of Public Interest Regulation* and the new *Inclusionary Zoning Regulation*, which both came into effect October 1, 2023.
- Released a progress report and five-year review of New Brunswick's Water Strategy. Of the 35 actions in the strategy, 14 have been completed and a further 17 actions are in progress. The review concluded all actions continue to be relevant and achievable by the conclusion of the strategy in 2028. The branch provided support to the other divisions in the work on the remaining actions.
- Supported the Air and Water Sciences Branch in the research and development of options for a new integrated watershed management program for New Brunswick, one of the actions of the Water Strategy.
- Provided support to the Surface Water Management Branch in the development of options for the protection of coastal areas.
- Supported the Authorizations Branch in the implementation of the Auditor General's 2022 recommendations to formalize and improve the contaminated site management program. This included modernizing the *Clean Environment Act* to incorporate new aspects of the program and to bring it into alignment with the other Maritime provinces. A bill to amend the Act received Royal Assent in December 2023.

CLIMATE CHANGE SECRETARIAT

The **Climate Change Secretariat** leads 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 Plan and coordinating its implementation. The secretariat engages most government departments and agencies to ensure 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

- Worked with 10 government departments and agencies to advance the 30 actions in New Brunswick's Climate Change Action Plan [*Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience*](#).
- Reduced New Brunswick GHG emissions by 39 per cent since 2005, on the path to achieving the 2030 target of 10.7 Megatonnes (46 per cent below 2005 levels).
- Committed \$47 million through the Climate Change Fund to support climate change initiatives including: \$10.6 million to help increase the number of electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, \$23 million for clean energy and energy efficiency initiatives, \$14 million for resilient infrastructure, and \$1 million to increase climate change education through training and programming.
- Began collecting compliance obligations under the provincial Output-Based Pricing System for large industry that exceeded greenhouse gas (GHG) emission limits.
- Supported communities in efforts to adapt to climate change and reduce GHG emissions. So far, 60 per cent of local governments have completed adaptation plans and GHG mitigation plans for all, or part, of their territory.
- In partnership with CLIMAtlantic, provided advice and information on climate impacts and adaptation best practices to more than 500 people and organizations through presentations, workshops, and training sessions.
- Updated *Guidelines for GHG Management for Large Emitters in New Brunswick* with incorporation of Energy Management requirements.

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.

- 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

- Continued to provide support and assistance to local governments and rural districts in the budgeting and financial aspects following local governance reform.
- Distributed \$75 million in Community Funding Grants to local governments, rural districts and, in collaboration with the Regional Collaboration Unit, to the regional service commissions.
- Implemented the Community Finance Information System, an online portal which modernized local government and rural district budget and submission process for the 2024 municipal budget cycle.
- Updated the 2023 *Local Government and Rural District Statistics for New Brunswick* report to reflect changes implemented through local governance reform.

The **Local Governance Unit** fulfils a provincial support and liaison function with three municipal associations, local governments, the New Brunswick Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NBSPCA) and Downtown New Brunswick. 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 control matters. The unit also provides support and guidance to Business Improvement Areas, including disbursing their funding. The unit is the liaison with the Provincial-Territorial Officials Committee on Local Government for the coordination of provincial-territorial meetings for the Table of Ministers Responsible for Local Government.

Highlights

- Provided guidance and support to local governments related to the implementation of local governance reform.
- Conducted a data session for stakeholders that provided an overview of GeoNB reviewing newly restructured boundaries, creating basic maps, opening ZIP files, identifying subunits and addressing civic addressing.
- Increased the annual funding for the NBSPCA from \$100,000 to \$600,000 to support enforcement activities related to animal protection.

- Established annual funding for Downtown New Brunswick in the amount of \$500,000 to support strategic development initiatives, capital projects, marketing and events to sustain and promote downtowns throughout New Brunswick.
- Supported and promoted *Municipality Week* in New Brunswick in collaboration with local government partners to celebrate the important role local governments play in the everyday lives of their residents and to support their continued success.

The **Rural Districts Unit** administers the delivery of services in unincorporated areas (referred to as rural districts) of the province. The unit ensures the delivery of services such as fire protection, solid waste collection and support for emergency measures 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 \$1 million small capital loans program for rural district projects.

Highlights

- Held a provincial fire conference, hosting 122 attendees from across the province to network and share information of importance to the fire service. There were 67 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 fire incident responses.
- 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, facilitating asset transfers, assisting local governments, and providing information on reform to residents.
- Actively supported Rural District Advisory Councils.

The **Regional Collaboration and Planning Branch** 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

- Approved seven new local government municipal plans or rural plans. Also approved 39 local government municipal plans or rural plan amendments, two other local government planning by-laws and two rural plan amendments or re-zonings for unincorporated areas.
- Led the adoption of the *Statement of Public Interest Regulation* and the *Inclusionary Zoning Regulation*, both under the *Community Planning Act*. The unit worked with stakeholders to consider the proposed content of these regulations.
- Supported the New Brunswick Housing Corporation with the development of the NB Housing Strategy: Housing for All.
- Presented updates on land use planning at the New Brunswick Association of Planning AGM and the New Brunswick Land Surveyors and Geoscientists AGM, also presented Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) workshops and presentations to various stakeholder groups.

The Regional Collaboration Unit fulfils a provincial support and liaison function with the 12 regional service commissions (RSCs) and is responsible for proactively developing strategic relationships with provincial departments and agencies and regional stakeholders. The unit is responsible for the administration of the *Regional Services Delivery Act*, 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 RSCs with the implementation of their newly expanded mandates.
- Coordinated the review of RSC Regional Strategies with key government partners and supported the development of a CEO assessment tool.
- Supported the development of the *Regional Services Support Fund Regulation*.
- Collaborated with the Community Funding Branch on developing the Local Governance Implementation Funding framework as well as the Regional Services Support Fund application process.
- Worked closely with the Department of Social Development to develop the Social Focus Mandate for the Capital Region, Fundy and Southeast RSCs.

- Continued to provide guidance on the implementation of minimum operational requirements including the establishment of service delivery models, creation and operations of committees, and recruitment of resources to support the delivery of RSC 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 Regional Services Support Fund, as well as the provincial Environmental Trust Fund. The division provides technical support and engineering advice to communities in addressing infrastructure concerns as they relate to the applicable funding programs.

The division consists of the following branches: Corporate Finance and Administration, Performance Excellence Process, 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 government'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 government 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 **Performance Excellence Process Branch** is responsible for strategic planning and alignment within the department. The branch leads strategy, organizational performance and continuous improvement efforts using Lean Six Sigma, and Project and Change Management methodologies. It serves as a focal point for the development of evidence based operational standards and practices as well as ensures the alignment of the department's strategy and effort with the government's accountability reporting process.

Highlights

- Lead portfolio oversight of the department's mandated priority projects including reporting at government's accountability meetings.

- Supported local governance reform and other priority initiatives 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 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, government 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

- Addition of new functions to support the Canada Community Building Fund and Small Communities Fund in the Gas Tax System.
- Development of a Climate Change Portal to allow local governments to submit greenhouse gas information and adaptation plan progress supporting the Climate Change Action Plan – Actions 10 and 26.
- Replacement of the legacy application for the River Ice Observation Reporting System.
- Modernization and enhancement of the Remediation Sites Management System.
- Modernization and enhancement of the Pesticide Control Act Administration System.

The **Community Funding Branch** administers funding programs that help create vibrant and sustainable communities. The Canada Community Building Fund and the Small Communities Fund are federal/provincial funding programs that help communities build, replace, or improve municipal infrastructure that help deliver vital services in communities across the province. The Environmental Trust Fund is an application-based program that provides funding to local governments, education institutions, First Nations and non-profit organizations for environmental projects that meet the criteria of the *Environmental Trust Fund Act*. The Regional Services Support Fund and local governance reform funding enable regional service commissions and local governments to deliver newly established services.

Highlights

- Under the Environmental Trust Fund Program, a total of more than \$9.3 million was awarded to support 219 projects benefitting the natural environment.
- Through the Canada Community-Building Fund, approximately \$39.2 million was transferred to local governments to support strategic infrastructure investments contributing to more vibrant and sustainable communities.
- More than \$24.1 million was spent on community infrastructure projects benefitting unincorporated areas.
- Through the Small Communities Fund, three projects were completed and a total of more than \$2.3 million was transferred to local governments.
- More than \$11.6 million was provided to local governments and regional service commissions to help offset incremental costs incurred as a result of local governance reform.
- More than \$10.8 million was approved through the Regional Services Support Fund to contribute to the costs associated with implementing regional strategies.

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 the Mosaik program, which aims to remove barriers to employment for newcomers to New Brunswick and alleviate the negative effects of skills shortages within government.
- Implemented new leadership onboarding to help address training gaps in the department. The new program will have direct positive impacts on retaining current leaders and continue to grow in their leadership career with the province.
- Continued to support the executive development programs for Emerging Executives (1 graduate), Evolving Leaders (5 graduates and 3 in progress) and the new Aspiring Leaders (6 currently registered). The department has also supported employees through the Public Services Management Program with the University of New Brunswick and Université de Moncton.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

EXPENDITURES	MAIN ESTIMATES	APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE OVER/(UNDER)
Corporate Services					
- Senior Management	1,104.0	-	1,104.0	933.0	(171.0)
- Corporate Services	1,578.0	-	1,578.0	2,027.4	449.4
- Community Funding	182.0	22.1	204.1	271.4	67.3
Policy, Public Education and Engagement	1,313.0	-	1,313.0	1,286.1	(26.9)
Local Government					
- Local Service District Expenditures	20,597.0	-	20,597.0	20,687.9	90.9
- Community Funding and Equalization Grant	73,001.0	-	73,001.0	73,067.2	66.2
- Municipal and Rural Community Property Tax Warrant	-	12,000.0	12,000.0	11,929.5	(70.5)
- Community Finances	1,027.0	-	1,027.0	842.2	(184.8)
- Local & Regional Governance	7,702.0	-	7,702.0	2,267.3	(5,434.7)
- Regional Collaboration	313.0	-	313.0	325.0	12.0
- Provincial and Community Planning	205.0	-	205.0	207.7	2.7
- Local Governance Reform	7,529.0	-	7,529.0	12,585.2	5,056.2
Assessment Planning and Appeal Board	335.0	-	335.0	331.5	(3.5)
Authorizations and Compliance					
-Regional Operations and Compliance	3,325.0	147.3	3,472.3	3,189.6	(282.8)
- Authorizations	3,627.0	135.8	3,762.8	3,624.2	(138.6)
- Surface Water Management	750.0	12.3	762.3	611.9	(150.4)
- Waste Diversion	465.0	12.5	477.5	522.6	45.1
Environmental Science and Protection					
- Environmental Impact Assessment	1,200.0	-	1,200.0	1,389.1	189.1
- Air and Water Sciences	3,113.0	47.2	3,160.2	2,904.4	(255.8)
- Healthy Environments	532.0	11.3	543.3	1,045.6	502.3
Climate Change Secretariat	1,652.0	12.8	1,664.8	1,427.3	(237.4)
Total Ordinary Budget	129,550.0	12,401.3	141,951.3	141,476.1	(475.2)
Total Capital (Local Service Districts)	1,000.0	-	1,000.0	770.5	(229.5)
Regional Development Corporation					
- Canada / New Brunswick Infrastructure Program - RDC				621.3	
- Canada / New Brunswick Infrastructure Program - Capital Projects				62,900.3	
Total Funding Provided by Regional Development Corporation				63,521.7	

Special Purpose Accounts

PROGRAM	CARRY OVER FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	REVENUE	TOTAL FUNDING	EXPENDITURES	CARRY OVER TO NEXT YEAR
Environmental Trust Fund	36,830.4	3,537.7	40,368.1	9,700.3	30,667.8
Climate Change Fund	9,563.8	62,440.6	72,004.3	48,067.5	23,936.8
Regional Services Support Fund	-	3,290.0	3,290.0	-	3,290.0

REVENUES	MAIN ESTIMATES	ACTUAL	VARIANCE OVER/(UNDER)
Return on Investment	20.0	40.5	20.5
Licenses and Permits	3,434.0	3,477.4	43.4
Sale of Goods and Services	316.0	322.2	6.2
Miscellaneous	-	45.8	45.8
Total Ordinary	3,770.0	3,885.9	115.9

* 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 2023-2024 for Department of Environment and Local Government.

NUMBER OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES AS OF DEC. 31 OF EACH YEAR		
EMPLOYEE TYPE	2023	2022
Permanent	221	221
Temporary	25	25
TOTAL	246	246

The department advertised 18 competitions, including 11 open (public) competitions and 7 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)	9
Lateral transfer	The GNB transfer process facilitates the transfer of employees from within	16(1) or 16(1)(c)	5

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
	Part 1, 2 (school districts) and 3 (hospital authorities) of the Public Service.		
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)	15
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
45	<i>Local Governance Commission Act</i> Chap-18.pdf (gnb.ca)	June 16, 2023	The new <i>Local Governance Commission Act</i> creates an independent body in New Brunswick to manage both the investigative and adjudicative aspects of local governance. The Assessment and Planning Appeal Board has been renamed as the Assessment and Planning Tribunal. The tribunal operates under the Local Governance Commission's organizational umbrella but remains independent and performs related adjudicative functions.
2	<i>An Act to Repeal the Beverage Containers Act</i> Chap-29.pdf (gnb.ca)	December 13, 2023	This Act repeals the <i>Beverage Containers Act</i> to enable the creation of an extended producer responsibility program for empty beverage containers under the Designated Materials Regulation – <i>Clean Environment Act</i> , effective April 1, 2024.
6	<i>An Act to Amend the Clean Environment Act</i> Chap-33.pdf (gnb.ca)	December 13, 2023	This Act enables the modernization of the contaminated sites management program and strengthens the regulation-making authority required for the modernization of the Designated Materials Regulation – <i>Clean Environment Act</i> .

NAME OF REGULATION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
<i>Regional Services Support Fund Regulation – Community Funding Act</i> 2023-35.pdf (gnb.ca)	June 29, 2023	New regulation that establishes parameters for approving 50 per cent of the funding of activities related to a regional service commission’s strategy, as well as the terms and conditions for commissions to maintain eligibility.
<i>Tax Rate Differential Regulation – Local Governance Act</i> 2023-36.pdf (gnb.ca)	June 29, 2023	New regulation that sets the parameters within which a local government may close the gap in tax rates for shared services established during local government restructurings, including fixing a maximum increase of \$0.05 per \$100 of assessed value annually and setting exclusions on the increases.
<i>General Regulation – Beverage Containers Act</i> 2023-34.pdf (gnb.ca)	July 7, 2023	Amendments to increase handling fees paid by beverage distributors to redemption centres.
<i>General Regulation – Assessment and Planning Appeal Board Act</i> 2023-48.pdf (gnb.ca)	August 9, 2023	Amendments to update a reference to the new <i>Regions Regulation</i> under the <i>Regional Service Delivery Act</i> (which replaced the old <i>Region Boundaries Regulation</i>) because the five regions from which members are appointed are based on the regional service commission boundaries.
<i>Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation – Clean Environment Act</i> 2023-51.pdf (gnb.ca)	September 18, 2023	Amendments to ensure environmental impact assessment reviews continue for major residential developments in areas not serviced by existing water and wastewater systems owned or operated by a local government, or by a water or wastewater commission.
<i>Inclusionary Zoning Regulation – Community Planning Act</i> 2023-52.pdf (gnb.ca)	October 1, 2023	This new regulation allows local governments to adopt a by-law that requires developers to provide a certain percentage of new multi-unit developments as affordable housing.
<i>Statement of Public Interest Regulation – Community Planning Act</i>	October 1, 2023	This new regulation establishes a land-use planning framework on planning matters of public interest, including settlement patterns,

2023-53.pdf (gnb.ca)		agriculture, climate change, flood and natural hazard areas, and natural resources.
<i>Skills and Qualifications Regulation – Local Governance Commission Act</i> 2023-64.pdf (gnb.ca)	November 20, 2023	This new regulation establishes the skills and qualifications of members of the Local Governance Commission and the Assessment and Planning Appeal Tribunal.
<i>Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order – Clean Water Act</i> 2024-13.pdf (gnb.ca)	April 1, 2024	Amendments so that only existing agricultural activities are permitted in a designated wellfield protected area.

The acts for which the department was responsible in 2023-2024 may be found at: <https://laws.gnb.ca/en/bycategory/cs?categoryId=departmentId&itemId=environment>

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACTIVITIES

Introduction

In 2023-2024, 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 Centre every two years. Managers are to ensure 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. Twenty-four employees received second language-training in 2023-2024.

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 2023-2024, the department received two Official Languages complaints. The complaints have 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 did not receive any recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

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

NAME AND YEAR OF AUDIT AREA WITH LINK TO ONLINE DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS	
	TOTAL	IMPLEMENTED
2022 V2 Chapter 2: Contaminated Sites – Department of Environment and Local Government Chap2e.pdf (agnb-vgnb.ca)	15	11
2022 V2 Chapter 3: Environmental Trust Fund – Department of Environment and Local Government Chap3e.pdf (agnb-vgnb.ca)	9	4

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 disclosure(s) of wrongdoing in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.