



# Partners in Progress

How Provincial and Municipal governments can work together to create vibrant, sustainable communities

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador's (MNL) mission is to empower and support local governments to build vibrant communities. But we can't do it alone. We need the cooperation and support of all orders of government to continue building a strong foundation for the future.

There is much work to be done. Communities have longstanding unaddressed infrastructure issues – wastewater and drinking water, in particular – that are beyond the capacity of individual municipalities to solve.

Climate change, fiscal limitations, and declining population trends further complicate the path to achievable solutions. These are complex, systemic issues without a quick fix.

MNL remains committed to working toward a future where every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador has access to clean, safe drinking water; where wastewater is no longer dumped, untreated and unfiltered, directly into the ocean; where rural residents can age with dignity in the communities they grew up in, with access to medical services; where the future of rural communities is not hampered by barriers to economic development and growth, including the widespread lack of reliable cellular service; where community leaders are enabled to contribute to a vibrant future, with supports to deal with increasingly virulent public discourse.

This is possible. It is achievable. With your support, municipal and provincial leaders can work together for a better tomorrow.



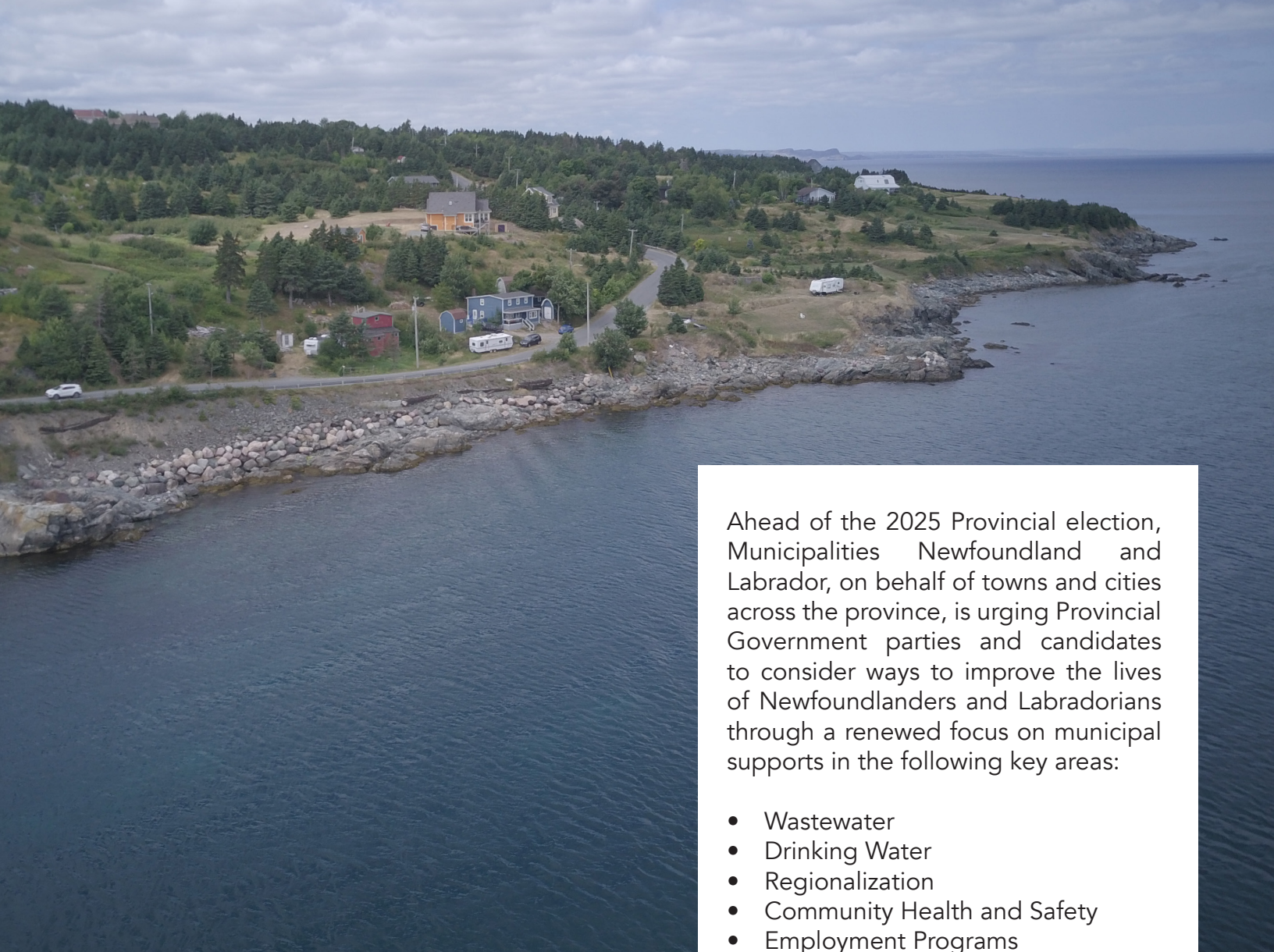
## The Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's earliest communities date to the 1500s, but formalized municipal government is relatively young, with all but two – the city of St. John's and the town of Grand Falls – being incorporated after 1949. These incorporations happened, primarily, to provide a mechanism to avail of new funding, and to manage taxation structures.

Today, we have 269 incorporated municipalities in the province, plus an additional five Inuit Community Governments, and another approximately 300 or so communities in unincorporated areas and local service districts.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL), as a non-profit membership association, was formed in 1951 to represent the interests of incorporated local governments. Today, MNL's membership includes all 274 municipalities. Our advocacy work is based on our six strategic advocacy pillars, in addition to resolutions brought forth by the membership at our Annual General Meeting.





Ahead of the 2025 Provincial election, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, on behalf of towns and cities across the province, is urging Provincial Government parties and candidates to consider ways to improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians through a renewed focus on municipal supports in the following key areas:

- Wastewater
- Drinking Water
- Regionalization
- Community Health and Safety
- Employment Programs
- Legislative Reform
- Harassment

## Recommendations:

- Develop a 10- to 20-year provincial infrastructure strategy focused on innovation, tailored to NL's geography and inclusive of the financial/technical realities of small municipalities.
- Promote right-sized, sustainable infrastructure solutions by supporting informed decision-making across a range of options.
- Adopt a regional approach to address shared municipal infrastructure challenges and improve service delivery.
- Establish early, consistent, and collaborative communication between the Province and municipalities on infrastructure planning and decision-making.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of municipal funding tools, recognizing that property tax alone is insufficient to meet modern infrastructure and operational demands.
- To address harassment-related challenges, additional tools and supports are required for the sector, including access to enhanced training, Employee Assistance Programming, and a dedicated anti-harassment campaign.
- Provide a timeline for updates to the three Cities Acts governing St. John's, Mount Pearl, and Corner Brook

# The Issues

## Wastewater



There are currently 94 municipalities in dire need of wastewater treatment infrastructure upgrades. These communities have wastewater systems that still dump untreated effluent directly into the ocean, placing them in direct contravention to the federal

Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations.

These communities are unable to bear the cost of infrastructure upgrades on their own, and require the financial support of provincial and federal orders of government.

## Community Health and Safety



The lack of **policing services** in rural areas, including vacant positions, under-resourced departments, and a lack of police presence, continues to be a point of contention for our members.

**Fire departments**, a municipal responsibility, are severely under-resourced and continue to lack appropriate levels of support from the Province. Fire departments continue to rely on community fundraising to purchase essential equipment. The safety of our communities should not be funded by bake sales and card games. Our members have identified fire departments as a prime example of the benefit of regional approaches to service delivery.



**Cell phone service** across the province is inconsistent at best, and in some areas completely non-existent. These are populated areas and travel corridors, not remote wilderness. As we saw in recent wildfires,

residents are unable to contact help or notify family members due to a lack of available cellular service.

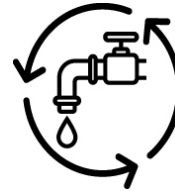
## Harassment



Municipal council members and administrators continue to report excessive harassment. This has led to resignations of council members in some towns, while other towns have had to close the town office due to a staff shortage following harassment-induced resignations. Additionally, Code of

Conduct processes and ATIPP requests have been weaponized, creating an undue burden on municipal resources.

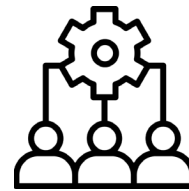
## Drinking Water



On any given day, more than 100 municipalities are under a boil water advisory. A not-insignificant portion of these towns have longstanding infrastructure issues, including multi-year

boil water advisories.

## Regionalization



To create truly sustainable communities, municipalities require from the province a coordinated, planned execution of regional approaches, with municipalities at the decision-making table. MNL encourages the Province to return to the table and to continue developing a formalized, planned approach to municipal cooperation within a regional framework.

## Job Creation Partnerships (JCP) and Community Enhancement Employment Program (CEEP)



The JCP and CEEP programs need reform, as they continually fail to meet the needs of municipalities.

The project application and approval process is lengthy, often resulting in project approval occurring after the proposed start date. This delay leads to municipalities abandoning projects.

## Cities Acts Updates



MNL expresses gratitude for the much-needed updates to municipal legislation in the form of the Towns and Local Service Districts Act.

There is still work to do, though, as the three Cities Acts governing St. John's, Mount Pearl, and Corner Brook still require an update.



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## About MNL

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) is a membership-based advocacy organization representing the 269 incorporated municipalities and five Inuit Community Governments in the province.

MNL's advocacy work is guided by six Strategic Pillars, as well as by resolutions put forth by members at the Annual General Meeting.

## Our Mission

Empower and support local governments to build vibrant communities

MNL provides the sector with a collective path towards achieving sustainability. We help members make informed decisions about where the future is going. We provide tools to help them respond today and into the future. We provide the sectoral memory necessary to assess the adequacy of proposed solutions. We use our research and policy capacity to show stakeholders what is possible and probable and to ensure municipal councils have the legislative and financial capacity to follow that path.