

Climate Change Adaptation

ACTION PLAN

2025-2030





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Executive Summary

Temperature increases, sea ice decline, larger storms, periods of drought and heavier rainfalls, less snow cover – changes in all aspects of our climate have been recorded in each part of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the [2015 Paris Agreement](#), 195 countries, including Canada, committed to limit global warming to below 2°C, and ideally no more than 1.5°C, compared to average temperatures in the late 1800s, in an effort to stop changes in precipitation patterns, increases in incidence and frequency of extreme storm events, and rises in sea level. While efforts continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, governments, businesses, and citizens all over the world are striving to adapt to the impacts of climate change, implementing proactive measures to limit damage, and adjusting practices to accommodate change.

Building on the success of the 2019-2024 Climate Change Action Plan, this new Adaptation Action Plan outlines 31 governance, program, partnership, and awareness-raising actions. The actions are focused across five key elements – capacity building and partnerships, infrastructure and economic considerations, health and well-being, disaster and emergency preparedness, and nature and land use. This Adaptation Action Plan seeks to enhance the capacity of governments, stakeholders, and citizens to better understand climate change in a local context, improve decision making, and strengthen partnerships, including with Indigenous Governments and Organizations, to build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Introduction

The implications of a changing climate are widespread and varied, affecting people, ecosystems, the economy, and public services. Some impacts are reactive and are related to sudden events, such as flooding and wildfires, while others occur more slowly over time, such as sea level rise and shifts in ecosystems and wildlife.

This Adaptation Action Plan was developed during a period of historically high temperatures. Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and major storm events, wildfires, drought, and sea level rise. These events damage infrastructure, increase demands on health and emergency response services, and introduce invasive species and pests.

Government capacity to address these challenges is increasing. **Tools and resources** continue to be developed, such as local climate projections, flood risk mapping for inland (river) and coastal areas, flood forecasting, coastal erosion tools and guidance documents, asset management tools, and a climate lens to inform infrastructure decision making.

Risk assessments have been developed for sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries to better understand the risks associated with invasive species and pests such as Lyme Disease, green crab, and forest infestation.

Disaster and emergency planning has been enhanced to prepare for and respond to flooding, storm surge, severe weather, wildfires, and water supply issues. This includes working with cities, towns, and local service districts and local stakeholders to secure funding available under federal disaster financial assistance arrangements. New tools have also been implemented, such as a public safety radio system to allow emergency responders across Atlantic Canada to improve communication during emergencies and natural disasters.

Partnerships have expanded, including the establishment of new coordinated services. This includes, for example, the establishment of **CLIMAtlantic**, an Atlantic Canada-wide organization which focuses on building resilience while maintaining energy security. CLIMAtlantic has participated in projects at Memorial University and with industry organizations in the agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, and tourism sectors to build private sector knowledge and capacity to respond to climate change impacts.

This Adaptation Action Plan is informed by the Federal Government's 2023 **National Adaptation Strategy**, as well as ongoing work by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, the **Health Accord**, which recognized the climate risks facing the province, and provincial strategies and plans (e.g., 2023 **Fisheries Advisory Council Action Plan**, the 2022-26 **Tourism Strategy**, the 2023-28 **Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership**, and the 2021 **Risk Assessments for Resource Based Industries and Municipalities**).

The Adaptation Action Plan is informed by a public and stakeholder engagement process, and ongoing engagement with international, national, and local stakeholders. Input from the public included 174 questionnaire responses submitted through the EngageNL website and 13 written submissions. The stakeholder engagement process consisted of sessions with 24 environmental, health and industry associations, academic institutions, cities, towns, and local service districts, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations to gather perspectives on climate change.

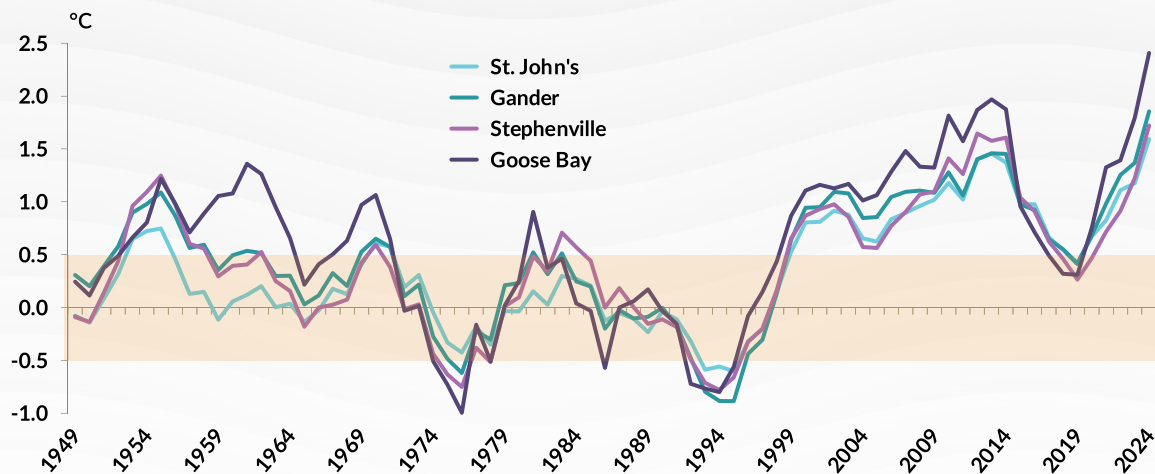
Climatic Changes in Newfoundland and Labrador

The province provides access to [climate data and tools](#) important for decision making processes in areas including infrastructure planning, economic development, business investment decisions, emergency response, and public health.

Temperature

Average annual temperatures have been at least 1.0°C higher than the historical norm for most of this century. On average across the province, all five of the warmest years on record have occurred in the past 26 years (1999-2024). Conversely, none of the ten coldest years on record have occurred in this century.

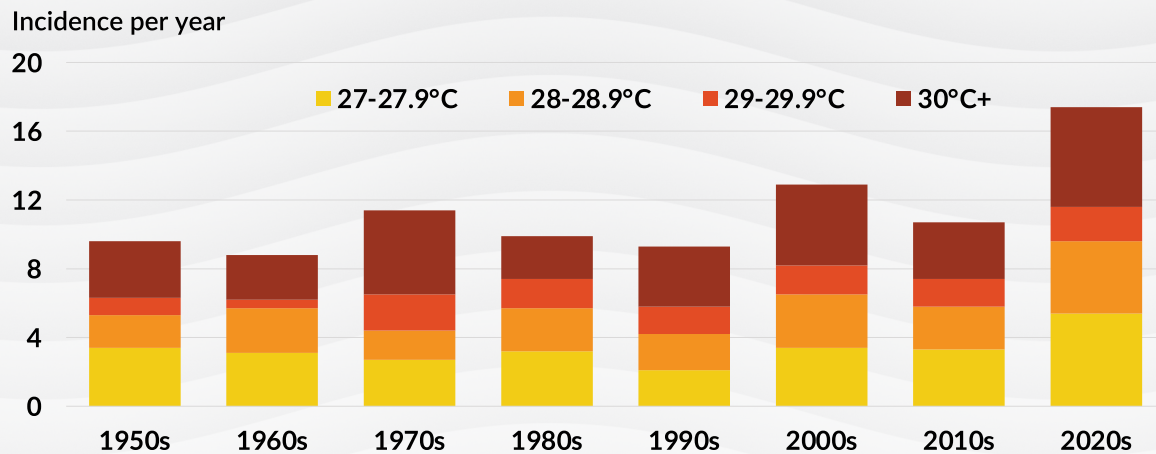
Temperature Aberration - 5 year moving average
Newfoundland and Labrador, 1947-2024
Historical Norm = 1971-2000



Source: Calculated from Environment and Climate Change Canada historical data from 1947 to 2024. Five year moving average, e.g., 2024 is average of 2020 to 2024.

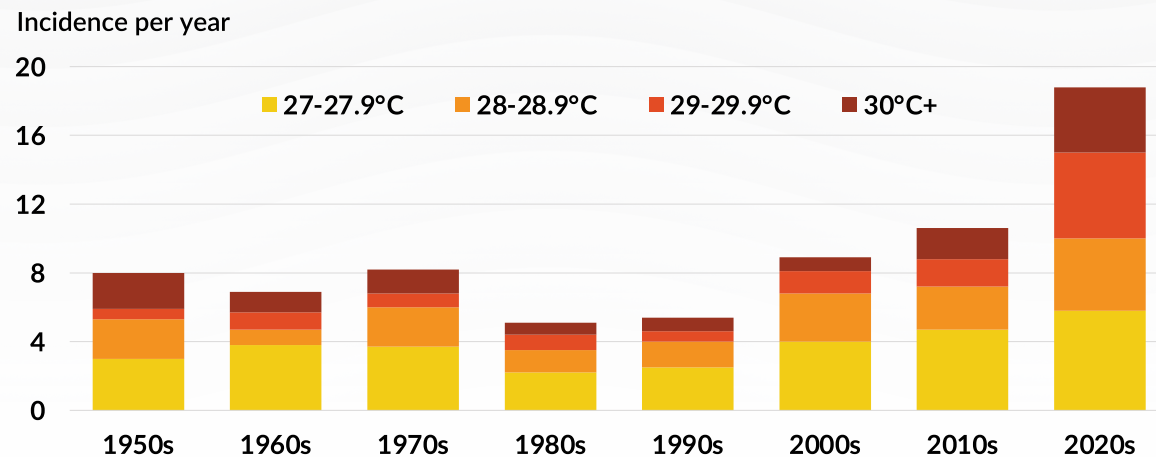
These changes are further manifested by changes in temperature extremes. In Gander, for example, the incidence of high temperatures (27°C and higher) increased from 6.7 days per year during the last half of the last century to 12.8 days per year in this century. In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the incidence of high temperatures similarly increased from 9.8 days per year to 13.7. Gander, in central Newfoundland, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, in central Labrador, are near areas that have been subject to major wildfires in recent years.

Incidence of Daily High Temperatures Happy Valley-Goose Bay, by decade



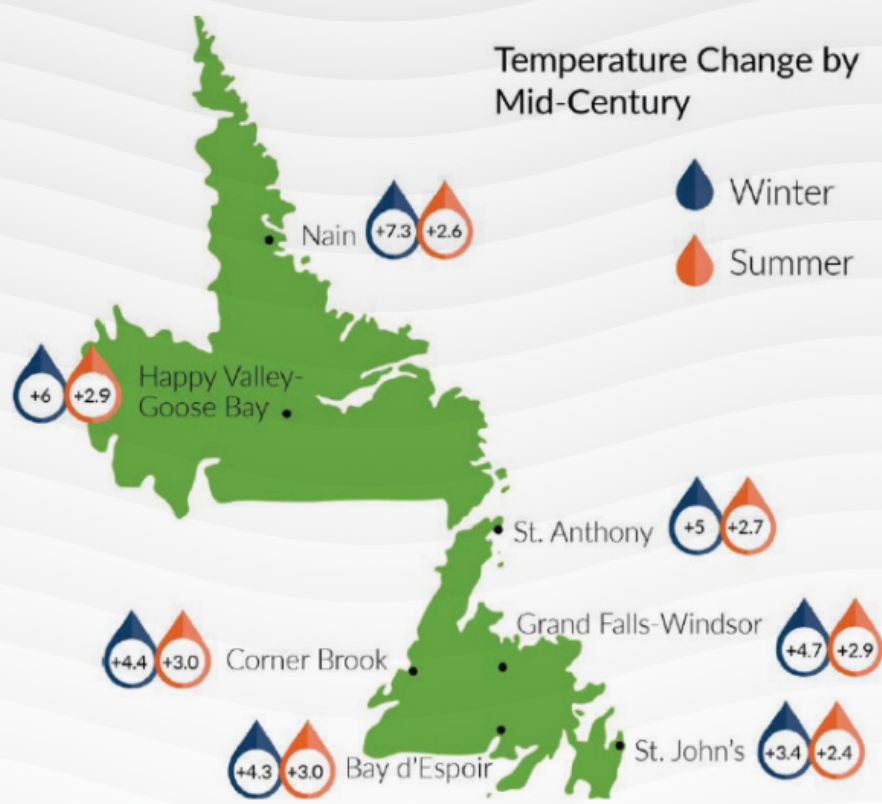
Source: Calculated from data published by Environment and Climate Change Canada

Incidence of Daily High Temperatures Gander, by decade



Source: Calculated from data published by Environment and Climate Change Canada

By mid-century, average temperatures are projected to increase by 3.3°C to 4.7°C. By the end of this century, average temperatures are projected to increase by 5.4°C to 7.3°C. These increases will be particularly felt in the north.



Precipitation and Storms

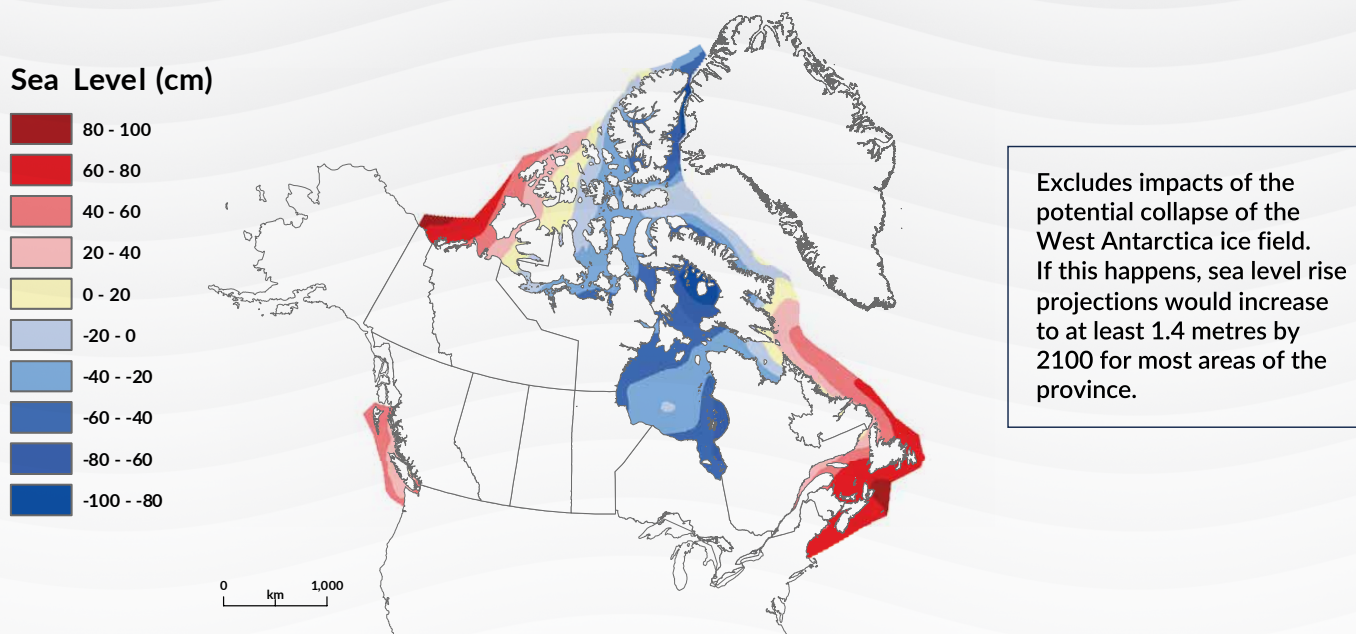
Temperature change is resulting in an increase in the incidence and severity of storms. During the previous century, on average, the island of Newfoundland was impacted by 9.8 tropical storms, hurricanes, and extratropical remnants per decade, and Labrador was impacted by 3.2 events per decade. To date in this century, the island of Newfoundland has been impacted by 15.2 events per decade (a 55 per cent increase) and Labrador was impacted by 3.5 events per decade (a nine per cent increase).¹ This will result in increases in the frequency and severity of stress incidents on land and infrastructure, bringing increased risk of infrastructure damage and the need for disaster and emergency response services.

¹ 2000-2023. These figures include tropical storms, hurricanes, and extratropical remnants during the June-December period only. Storms that impacted the province but did not make landfall and storms outside this period are excluded.

Sea Level Rise

Temperature change is also resulting in sea level rise, bringing risk of sea surge, coastal erosion, and saltwater inundation. Sea level rise around the island of Newfoundland is projected to be up to 0.8 metres by 2100 relative to the end of the last century.

Newfoundland and Labrador Projected sea level rise, 2100 relative to 1986-2005



Source: Geological Survey of Canada, open file, 2021, RCP8.5

Actions

Capacity Building and Partnerships

Building resilience and adapting to climate change is a policy priority internationally, nationally, and in Newfoundland and Labrador. Effective policy making requires building the foundational climate change knowledge and understanding necessary for evidence-based decision making. Government and residents must have access to the information, tools, and resources to empower the development and implementation of proactive and positive adaptation actions.

What We're Doing

The Provincial Government provides **foundational data** necessary to inform decision making for mid- and late-century. Data is publicly available for 28 locations in the province (plus Schefferville, Québec), and extreme precipitation projections are available for 21 locations. These projections are used to build tools and resources to inform decision making, such as publicly available flood risk maps, river flood monitoring systems, sea level rise, and coastal erosion information.

Academic institutions are providing climate change adaptation education and training, serving as vital hubs for conducting research, and driving innovation. This includes the College of the North Atlantic's new School of Sustainable Development, Memorial University's Marine Institute, and the Labrador-based Arctic and Subarctic Interdisciplinary Studies program, as well as public-private-academic partnerships such as with Memorial University as part of the Oceans Supercluster Initiatives.

The province is partnering with the Federal Government to enhance climate services available to stakeholders. In Atlantic Canada, **CLIMAtlantic** was established in 2021. This regional organization is complemented by staff within each province to work with local organizations, such as with cities, towns, and local service districts, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, industry associations, and others. In Newfoundland and Labrador, staff are located in St. John's and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Building capacity through organizations such as CLIMAtlantic provides an opportunity to institutionalize climate services as a core role for governments.

What's Next

Climate projections show that Indigenous communities in Labrador are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Warming temperatures, particularly in Labrador, are impacting winter transportation routes, access to cultural activities and food, and ice safety. Initiatives such as SmartICE look at these vulnerabilities with monitoring sites. The pace of change necessitates new, cross-sectoral partnerships with the Federal Government. It also necessitates, as identified in the Health Accord, enhanced coordination across the Provincial Government and with local partners and stakeholders.

Capacity Building and Partnerships 2025-2030	
1.1	Build on existing bilateral processes with the Federal Government by establishing a cross-sectoral roundtable to provide a forum to discuss climate change adaptation policy priorities.
1.2	Establish an Interdepartmental Adaptation Network, including agencies, boards, and commissions, to advance the adaptation action plan.
1.3	Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous Governments and Organizations with a particular emphasis on infrastructure vulnerabilities, supply chain vulnerabilities, and mental health impacts in remote and northern communities.
1.4	Support and strengthen public and private post-secondary institutions in the province to further develop climate change expertise in Newfoundland and Labrador.
1.5	Enhance support to climate services capacity-building processes, such as through CLIMAtlantic, to raise awareness of climate change adaptation and facilitate improved decision making by governments and stakeholders.
1.6	Incorporate climate change in the K-12 education system to inspire climate solutions, reduce climate anxiety, and promote climate action among youth.
1.7	Review and revise provincial climate change projections, including temperature, precipitation, and extreme precipitation projections.
1.8	Develop adaptation indicators to measure progress toward building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Infrastructure and Economic Considerations

Climate change has broad impacts on infrastructure. Vulnerabilities include transportation networks consisting of road, marine, air, and rail transportation, access to public services such as health infrastructure, and community infrastructure such as roads, dams, wharves, fire protection, recreational services, and water and wastewater systems. It also includes public and privately provided infrastructure such as electricity, energy supply (e.g., fuel at gas stations), and telecommunications, as well as historical infrastructure such as World Heritage Sites, national and provincial historic sites, and archaeological sites.

Infrastructure vulnerabilities impact economic activity. Supply chains, such as those provided by marine and aviation companies, are vulnerable to the increasing frequency and intensity of storm events. Service providers, such as those in the tourism sector, will need to adjust to warmer and milder winters, and warmer and longer summers. These infrastructure vulnerabilities impact resource-based industries, such as agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, and forestry, which must adjust to changing climatic conditions, resource availability, and invasive species and pests. Investors and financial lenders are increasingly factoring in valuation of climate risks in decision making. This will require businesses to seek workers with the skills and knowledge to plan for climate change and to build resilience.

Infrastructure vulnerabilities have significant implications for coastal communities.

Vulnerabilities are increasing, driven by damage from major storm events, sea level rise, and coastal erosion. A significant share of coastal infrastructure is aging and needs repairs and maintenance, including highway bridges and culverts, community dams, and water and wastewater systems. Further, a significant share of important private sector infrastructure, such as fish plants, fisheries infrastructure, and tourism-based activities, as well as municipal and community buildings, such as community centers, fire halls, recreational facilities, and religious buildings, are located adjacent to the coast.

Approximately 42 per cent of the population, or about 220,000 people, live within one kilometre of the coast. Further, many rural communities are linked by coastal roads that have limited vertical clearance from the ocean or that are in areas prone to sea surge and coastal erosion. Provincial legislation limits development on floodplains and limits the use of Crown land within 15 metres of the ocean; however, there are no limits on vertical clearance from the ocean, nor on the use of Crown land for discretionary purposes (e.g., residential construction).

What We're Doing

The Provincial Government is investing in coastal infrastructure protection. Through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, \$14 million was allocated between 2020 and 2023 for municipal coastal protection projects, such as construction and upgrades to breakwaters and sea walls, and stabilizing slopes near community infrastructure. This complements spending by the Provincial Government to upgrade roads, bridges, culverts, and port infrastructure to protect against climate change.

Infrastructure planning tools are being developed. In 2023, the Provincial Government published an [Atlas of Storm Surge and Wave Climates](#) to provide insight into the patterns and characteristics of storm surges and waves along the province's coastlines. The Atlas is a valuable tool for researchers, decision makers, and planners involved in coastal management. It builds understanding about the impacts of sea level rise and extreme weather events, to support informed decision making and effective planning for flood risk mitigation. The Atlas complements existing tools and resources, such as guidance and videos on how to use coastal erosion data.

In 2022, the province's [flood mapping](#) began, including coastal flood mapping for communities along the coast. Hurricane Fiona (2022) demonstrated this vulnerability when it caused coastal flooding in seven communities with significant damages.

In 2020, the province developed the Churchill River Flood Forecasting System following the 2017 flooding event on the Lower Churchill River, which affected Mud Lake and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. This is one of three [flood forecasting systems](#) in the province, building on flood forecasting systems for the Badger River and Humber River. These systems use daily weather, river ice coverage, streamflow, and water level data to predict daily water level and 72-hour water flows.

A provincial level climate change [risk assessment](#) was completed in 2021, in partnership with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and industry organizations in the agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors. This work complemented studies completed with these organizations, as well as Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador to assess vulnerabilities related to coastal and river-based tourism products, and with MiningNL to assess mining adaptation issues.

Climate change is considered in development plans for large industrial facilities. For example, development plans and rehabilitation and closure plans for new mines must consider climate change impacts that may affect operations.

What's Next

The province continues to build climate-resilient infrastructure, share climate projections, and develop tools for decision making. Climate-resilient infrastructure, businesses, communities, and homes can reduce disruption to economic activities, inter- and intra-provincial air, marine and rail passenger and freight services, and demand for disaster and emergency services.

Infrastructure and Economic Considerations 2025-2030	
2.1	Work with the Federal Government and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to maximize access by communities in Newfoundland and Labrador to federal funding to plan for and construct climate-resilient infrastructure.
2.2	Strengthen industry partnerships and environmental assessment processes to adapt to climate change, including industry and business planning, addressing infrastructure vulnerabilities, consideration of supply chain vulnerabilities, and impacts on workers resulting from extreme heat and invasive species and pests.
2.3	Work with the Federal Government and other provinces and territories to enhance wildfire monitoring capacity and wildfire infrastructure.
2.4	Continue to invest in flood risk mapping initiatives that incorporate future climate projections, with an increased emphasis on coastal erosion and coastal flooding vulnerabilities, river flood forecasting systems, and related tools and resources to inform infrastructure decision making.
2.5	Develop a publicly available cost-benefit analysis tool that evaluates proactive infrastructure adaptation options at a municipal and local level, and work with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to disseminate the tool to cities, towns, and local service districts and stakeholders across the province.
2.6	Work with professional organizations, such as the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Insurance Bureau of Canada, to raise awareness of climate change considerations in infrastructure decision making.
2.7	Develop approaches, standards, and guidelines regarding the construction and expansion of buildings and community infrastructure for residential, commercial, and discretionary purposes in floodplains and coastal areas.
2.8	Explore adaptation options for communities experiencing significant adverse impacts due to climate change and other environmental events.

Health and Well-Being

There is a direct link between climate change and the social determinants of health. This includes, for example, access to clean water and food security. People living in poverty and those in vulnerable circumstances, such as those who are experiencing homelessness or who are unsheltered, face increased risk due to climate change. Further, climate change is affecting northern and Indigenous communities at a faster rate. These communities have the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity in the province. People living in poverty often do not have the resources to adapt to the changing climate and are often most in need during emergencies, such as hurricanes and forest fires. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has stated that rising temperatures are related to increased cases of mental illness and increased suicide rates.

Climate change is already impacting health outcomes as average maximum temperatures continue to rise. Utility surveys indicate that 57 per cent of homeowners do not have an air exchanger or heat recovery unit in their homes, and 60 per cent do not have a heat pump that can control indoor cooling. Changes in temperature extremes can increase the risk of heat exhaustion, respiratory issues, and cardiovascular diseases, reduce air quality, and increase mental health issues.

Health is impacted by increasing wildfires, which reduce air quality and increase invasive species and pests. Increases in temperatures can have adverse impacts on the quantity and quality of drinking water and water available for agricultural purposes.

For Indigenous populations in the north, rising temperatures increase the risk of mental health issues as traditional food availability, traditional recreational activity, winter transportation networks, and ice safety are adversely impacted.

What We're Doing

The province provides access to [climate data](#) important for decision making regarding health infrastructure and preparing for risks to public health.

The 2022 Plan [Our Path to Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador](#) was developed in collaboration with Indigenous Partners. While the plan applies to all residents of the province, it includes resources for Indigenous partners to support community-led, land-based wellness programming, raise awareness of historical trauma and the social and cultural contexts of communities, and embed culturally safe and accessible wellness services.

The **Health Accord** recognized the varied climate risks facing the province and recommended that government take an aggressive and proactive approach to addressing the climate emergency through increased awareness, focused planning, aligned resources, and effective accountability mechanisms.

What's Next

Fifteen action items in the Health Accord are addressed across this Adaptation Action Plan and the 2025-30 Climate Change Mitigation Action Plan. A climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation assessment will be completed in 2025.

Health and Well-being 2025-2030	
3.1	Continue to enhance air quality monitoring systems.
3.2	Consistent with the 2023 Drinking Water Safety Action Plan, update and develop, as necessary, standards, policies, and guidelines to protect drinking water to reflect the current state of practice, including to account for the impacts of climate change.
3.3	Continue to enhance mental health services to address climate change impacts and stressors.
3.4	Continue to modify health system infrastructure to withstand changing climate conditions and extreme weather events.
3.5	Work with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to incorporate climate change adaptation considerations in operating policies, procedures, protocols, and guidance.
3.6	Work with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to develop a heat alert and response system, including mechanisms to maximize information dissemination to vulnerable populations and guidance for partners and stakeholders.
3.7	Implement a climate change health impact assessment as a component of health in all policies approach.
3.8	Explore opportunities to raise awareness of climate-related health impacts and proactive actions that can be undertaken at the regional, community, and local level.

Disaster and Emergency Preparedness

The policy approach of this Adaptation Action Plan is to proactively invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, services, and programs to reduce future vulnerabilities. Reduced vulnerabilities will, in turn, reduce cost pressures on the health system, private sector insurance providers, and other public and private sector providers to respond to, and recover from, disasters and emergency situations.

Climate projections indicate that the frequency and intensity of extreme events will continue to increase. In turn, this will increase the risk that climate-related incidents and disasters will continue to be experienced. In Newfoundland and Labrador, incidents and events in recent years include, for example, Hurricane Fiona, flooding at Mud Lake, Gambo, and other communities, storms that have impacted major highways on the west coast of Newfoundland, and wildfires in central Newfoundland and in central and western Labrador.

What We're Doing

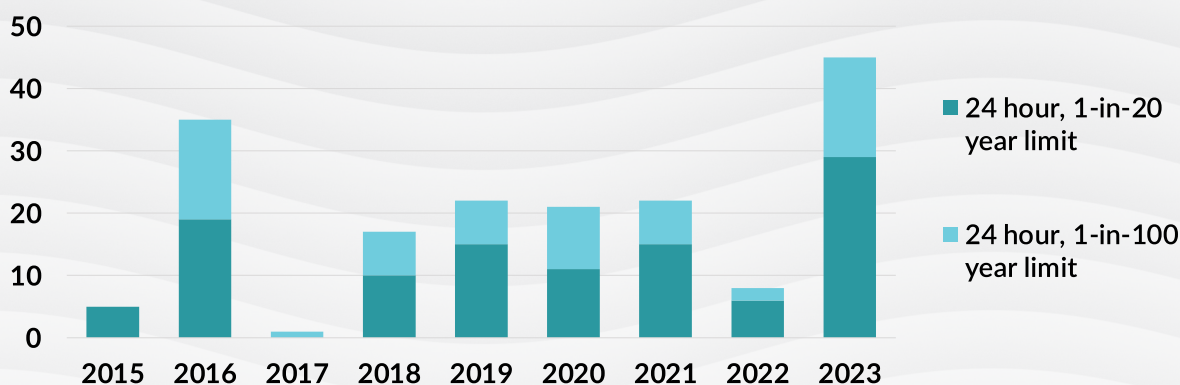
The province provides access to [climate data](#) important for decision making regarding disasters and emergency response. The province is increasingly incorporating this data into decision making as the number of storms increase in intensity and frequency. To date in this century, the island of Newfoundland has been impacted by 55 per cent more and Labrador has been impacted by nine per cent more storms per decade than the previous century.

The province shares alerts related to flooding, hurricanes, fire risk, and earthquakes. The [provincial flood alert system](#) issues warnings when projected precipitation in the coming 12 or 24 hours exceeds historical norms. Between 2015 and 2023, for example, there were 176 24-hour flood alerts issued by the provincial flood alert system. Of these, 25 per cent were issued in 2023 and 43 per cent were issued in three year period of 2021-2023.

Action is ongoing to improve disaster and emergency preparedness. Since 2019, this action has included working with the Federal Government on flood insurance and disaster assistance programs. These federal initiatives complement the [Newfoundland and Labrador Disaster Financial Assistance Program](#). The provincial program provides financial assistance to homeowners, renters, small businesses, not-for-profit organizations and cooperatives, local authorities, and the public sector for uninsurable loss and damage caused by an eligible disaster.

Provincial Flood Alert System Outcomes 2015-2023

Number of alerts issued



Source: Calculated from data published by the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Water Resources Management Division.

Action is ongoing with cities, towns, and local service districts and stakeholders to enhance capacity to respond to disasters and emergencies. This includes working with regional health, transportation, and community service organizations to improve response coordination. This work was aided by implementation of a new province-wide radio system in 2023 to improve communication among emergency responders and with government.

What's Next

Disaster and emergency responses must be a step ahead of the increasing number and range of weather events and related incidents. Extreme storm events, such as Hurricane Fiona on the southwest coast of Newfoundland (2022), and wildfire evacuations, such as in Churchill Falls and Labrador City (2024), highlight the need for increased capacity at the local level and enhanced and coordinated emergency and medical services.

Disaster and Emergency Preparedness 2025-2030

4.1	Explore policy approaches to implement the proposed national flood insurance system in Newfoundland and Labrador.
4.2	Work with the Federal Government to improve alignment between the Newfoundland and Labrador Disaster Financial Assistance Program and the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements program.
4.3	Work with Federal Government and local partners and stakeholders to develop a provincial emergency management policy.
4.4	Build capacity to work with partners and stakeholders, such as cities, towns, and local service districts, to enhance their awareness and capacity as it relates to disaster and emergency preparedness, including populations that may need additional considerations during emergencies.

Nature and Land Use

Newfoundland and Labrador's natural heritage is an integral part of our history, economy, and culture. However, climate change is altering ecosystems, and affecting wildlife and plant distributions, as well as land use decisions. For example, warmer temperatures can lead to shifts in vegetation patterns, affecting habitats for both terrestrial and aquatic species. This can disrupt food systems, and alter industry practices, recreational activities, and traditional ways of life. Understanding how climate change affects these interconnected ecosystems aides in developing effective adaptation initiatives.

Ecosystem health and biodiversity are inextricably linked to climate change, and can enhance climate resilience, such as through nature-based climate solutions (NBCS). NBCS include conservation, restoration, and improved management initiatives and practices that address ecosystem health and biodiversity while sequestering greenhouse gas emissions. From a climate change perspective, NBCS benefits are realized over an extended period, often many decades, limiting their applicability in making progress toward short term greenhouse gas reduction targets.

What We're Doing

Provincial estimates indicate that on average, about 145 hectares per year are converted to forest land and sequester about 2,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

There are **60 protected areas** in the province, including 54 managed by the Provincial Government and six by the Federal Government, covering about 28,200 km², or 7.0 per cent of land in the province. There are a further three federal marine protected areas adjacent to the province, covering about 11,600 km².

What's Next

In 2020, the Provincial Government, through Wilderness Ecological Reserves Advisory Council, released a **Protected Areas Plan** for the island of Newfoundland. Currently, 10 sites from this plan are undergoing public engagement for consideration of interim protection.

Nature and Land Use 2025-2030	
5.1	Work with stakeholders to continue implementation of the province's protected areas plan for the island of Newfoundland and increase the number of other effective conservation measures (OECMs).
5.2	Continue to work with the Federal Government, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, and stakeholders regarding the investigation of protected areas.
5.3	Work with Federal Government and industry stakeholders to identify opportunities to enhance nature-based climate solutions in the province.

Next Steps

This Adaptation Action Plan sets the course to increase the ability to adapt to the changing climate, especially as it relates to infrastructure, economic disruptions, health and well-being, and disaster and emergency preparedness.

Even if all greenhouse gas emissions stop today, the climate would continue to change over the coming decades due to high levels of emissions already in the atmosphere. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions over time, the province has also developed a new Mitigation Action Plan. The 2025-30 Mitigation Action Plan outlines 23 governance, regulatory, financial, and awareness-raising actions to ensure that the 2030 reduction target is achieved, sets a new greenhouse gas reduction target for 2040, and establishes foundational measures to achieve the new 2040 target and net zero by 2050. It also outlines actions that will assist other jurisdictions to achieve their greenhouse gas reduction objectives.

The Provincial Government will monitor and report on the progress related to actions outlined in this Adaptation Action Plan in 2028 and 2030.

