

# What We Heard

A summary of the input provided through the consultation and engagement process for the Active Living Action Plan.





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# Introduction

Active Living is an approach that values and includes physical activity and movement in everyday living, whether it be within our homes, our communities, our workplaces, or during the school day. It can be used as a tool to prevent disease, improve mental well-being, and improve connections to friends, family, community, and the environment. Active living comes in many forms and can range from actively commuting to work or school to playing on a soccer team.

Newfoundland and Labrador has some of the highest rates of physical inactivity, and some of the worst health outcomes in Canada (Statistics Canada 2019/20). Promoting active living through sport, physical activity and recreation is an opportunity for the province to enhance the overall physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being of our population.

The development of an Active Living Action Plan will support the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's goal of becoming one of the healthiest provinces in Canada by 2031.

## Engagement Process

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation's Recreation and Sport Division embarked on a multi-faceted consultation and engagement process to develop an Active Living Action Plan that will guide and stimulate coordinated policies, programs, and initiatives targeted at increasing physical activity to improve the overall health and well-being of our population.

The objective of the consultation process was to engage the sport, physical activity, recreation and healthy living sectors, Indigenous governments and organizations, and the general public to discuss active living priorities for the next five years.

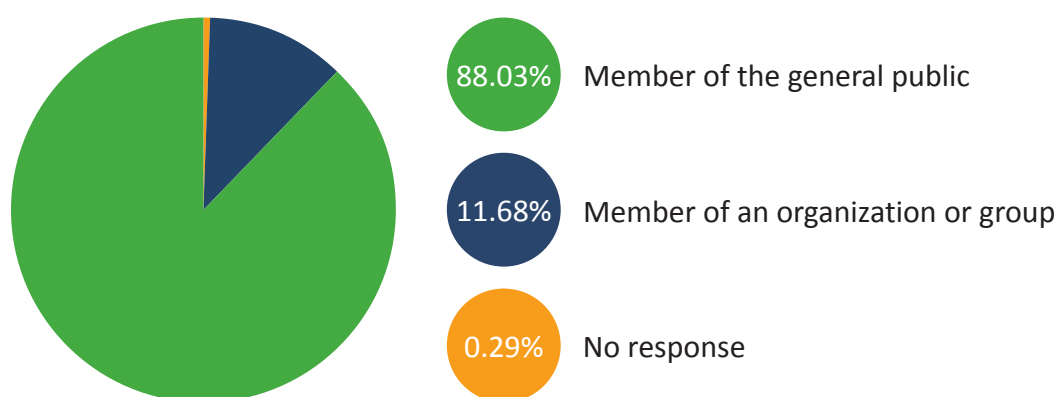
During the consultation process, held from May 31, 2024, to July 12, 2024, the Department invited public input via an online questionnaire, written submissions, as well as virtual and in-person consultation sessions.

# Participation

Fifty-two individuals participated in nine in-person sessions and forty-one individuals participated in three virtual sessions. A total of three hundred and fifty three individuals completed the online questionnaire, while one written submission was received by the Department.

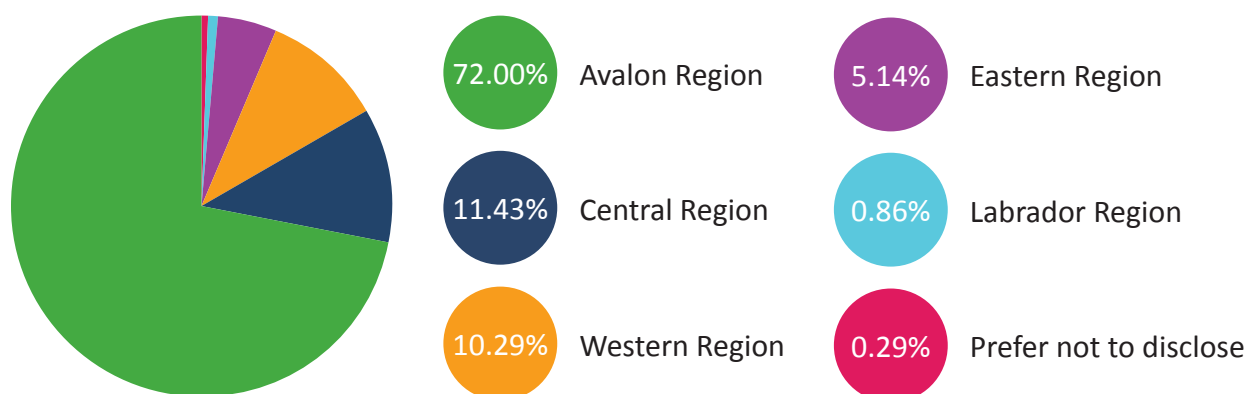
Specific to the online questionnaire, 88% of respondents were members of the general public, while approximately 12% were members of an organization or group [See figure 1]. Most of the respondents (72%) were located on the Avalon region, followed by Central (11%), Western (10%), Eastern (5%), Labrador (1%), and those who preferred not to disclose (less than 1%) [See figure 2]. In-person consultation sessions occurred in St. John's, Gander, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Graph: Select the option that best applies to you:



(Figure 1: Option that Identifies the role of the participant)

Graph: I am located in:



(Figure 2: Region of province where participants are located)

## What We Heard – Online Questionnaire, Consultation Sessions, and Written Submissions

The following focuses on the “What We Heard” information from participants during the multi-faceted consultation process.

There were three main questions posed to participants for their feedback and input:

1. What is **currently working** to advance sport, physical activity and/or recreation in the province?
2. What are the **current gaps** in programs, policies and/or practices that are limiting efforts to increase participation in sport, physical activity and/or recreation?
3. What **opportunities** will support increased sport, physical activity and/or recreation participation?

Five key themes emerged throughout the consultation process:

- Access
- Education/Awareness
- Funding
- Capacity Building
- Policy and Programming

### 1. What is currently working to advance sport, physical activity and/or recreation in the province?

#### Access

- Active living programs.
- Low-cost activities.
- Natural spaces.
- Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO) are supportive delivery agents for active living.

## **Education/Awareness**

- Availability of courses such as the National Coaching Certification Program offered through Sport NL and lifeguard and safe boating programs offered through the Lifesaving Society.
- Enhanced focus on outdoor activities for school-aged children.
- Educators have an increased awareness of the importance of active living.

## **Funding**

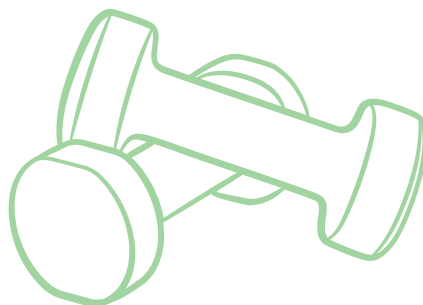
- Multiple funding opportunities available such as Active NL, Labrador Travel Subsidy, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) funding, Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) funding, Regional Wellness Coalition funding, athlete travel subsidies and the Bilateral Agreement on Sport Participation between the provincial and federal governments.

## **Capacity Building**

- Four provincial recreation and sport partners (Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Circle NL, Recreation NL, School Sports NL, and Sport NL) are essential to the provincial recreation and sport delivery system.
- Volunteer support in communities as well as engagement of municipal government supporting active living opportunities in communities.

## **Policy and Programming**

- Provincial government policies being developed to support active living including the Health Accord NL, the Daily Physical Activity Policy, and Physical Activity Tax Credit.
- Many programs developed to support active living including Play Unplugged, Rewild your Child, KidSport NL, You Go Girl, Jumpstart, Active Schools NL, Schools Sports NL and Recreation NL physical activity initiatives, and ParticipACTION.
- Newfoundland and Labrador Games.



## 2. What are the current gaps in programs, policies and/or practices that are limiting efforts to increase participation in sport, physical activity and/or recreation?

### Access

- Insufficient transportation to and from physical activity, sport, and recreation facilities.
- Reduced participation in afterschool programs due to a lack of accommodating bus schedules.
- Not enough accessible bathrooms/change rooms in aging recreation and sport facilities.
- Inadequate safe infrastructure for year-round active transportation pursuits such as safe bike lanes and multi-use trails.
- Lack of programming for individuals who identify as gender diverse.
- Limited access to schools for community use in some areas.
- Increased costs of fees and memberships.

### Education/Awareness

- Lack of promotion to define what active living means, the benefits of active living, and negative impacts that sedentary behaviour has on overall health and well-being.
- Websites are not easy to navigate, and active living information not always available.
- Insufficient prioritization of physical education (PE) classes.
- Disproportionate focus on organized sport and group activities which is not applicable to all residents.

### Funding

- Insufficient funding in the sport system to reduce the costs of sport programs, travel, and infrastructure enhancements.
- Lack of funding to maintain existing infrastructure.
- Lack of multi-year funding from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Slow grant approval processes.
- Need for more active spaces and places such as the creation of “third spaces” or communal spaces to be active.

- New and smaller Provincial Sport Organizations require funding to build capacity.
- Inadequate funding for emerging Provincial Sport Organizations.

### **Capacity Building**

- Lack of human resource capacity in rural, remote, northern, and isolated communities.
- Insufficient support at the municipal level for paid staff and funding.
- There is no longer Provincial Government Recreation and Sport Consultants in the region supporting specific community needs and concerns.
- Decline in volunteer capacity.

### **Policy and Programming**

- Lack of public input in provincial policy and program development.
- Liability insurance for groups and organizations is becoming too expensive.
- Limitations to the Physical Activity Tax Credit as only those who can afford to put their child in a sport or recreational activity benefit from the credit.
- Reduced participation in lower cost/free programs because of athletes prioritizing more expensive and/or private opportunities.
- Limited programming for the older adult population. Programs need to be designed with older adults at the table.

## **3. What opportunities will support increased sport, physical activity and/or recreation participation?**

### **Access:**

- Provide universal access for all individuals including paved paths for users of strollers, walkers, or wheelchairs.
- Restructure bus schedules to accommodate those who stay later for after-school activities.
- Create a volunteer database.
- Establish low-cost access to gyms and other fitness facilities.
- Expand and improve the understanding and awareness of the Community Use of School Policy through NL Schools.



### **Education/Awareness:**

- Increase conversations about the importance of active living whether it be within communities, schools, workplaces, and at home.
- Use of “social prescribing” where healthcare providers may connect patients with non-medical resources in their communities to be more active.
- More training for health care providers on the role that physical activity plays in preventing chronic disease.
- Promote the Health Care Physical Activity Toolkit.
- Include more kinesiologists within the health care system.
- Implementation of learn to run, swim, bike and/or skate programs in schools.
- Working with municipal governments to have a stronger focus on active living.

### **Funding**

- Increase funding for the sector including recreation positions, athlete travel, and core operational funding to groups and organizations.
- Create new infrastructure focused on accessible recreation instead of just sport.
- Establish a lottery fund to increase access to funds that go back to the sector.
- Develop sidewalks and paved bike-paths that are snow-cleared to ensure active transportation is an option year-round.
- Dedicate a grant stream to support purposefully built communities and municipal planning to support more active transportation.
- Offer multi-year funding for programs and organizations.
- Allocate a small portion of the healthcare budget to the sport, physical activity, and recreation sector.
- Host the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).

### **Capacity Building**

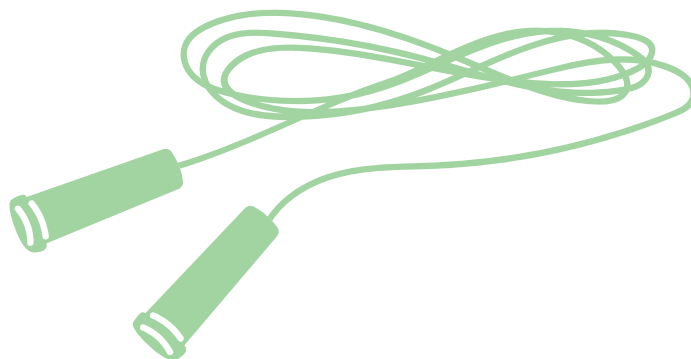
- Improve collaborations and partnerships with groups and organizations such as Family Care Teams, and Memorial University Varsity Program.
- Renew the Regional Recreation Directors Program that was created by the Provincial Government.

## Policy and Programming

- Establish a Volunteer Tax Credit.
- Implement flexible workplace policies to allow more physical activity during the workday.
- Expand eligible expenses for the Physical Activity Tax Credit.
- Allocate a portion of the Municipal Gas Tax revenues to use towards active living programs or infrastructure.
- Create more land-based activities and cultural traditions/practices of groups to ensure that there are programs inclusive to every person of our diverse population.
- Promote and build new sport programs to support newcomers.
- Re-evaluate current policies that may prevent increased active living opportunities.
- Establish policies that ensure designing and planning for new infrastructure is mindful of active living.
- Expand seniors/intergenerational programming to create social connection.

## Conclusion

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation would like to thank those who participated in the engagement and consultation process to develop an Active Living Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. The input provided by various individuals, groups and organizations will help the Department consider ways to increase active living in our Province to become one of the healthiest provinces in Canada by 2031.



**Available in Alternate Formats**

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