

Meeting Note
Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change

Drive Electric NL
February 3, 2026 from 1:00 – 2:00 pm; Mistaken Point Boardroom

Attendees: Hon. Chris Tibbs, Minister; David Thomlyn, Executive Assistant; Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister; Susan Squires, Assistant Deputy Minister; Jon Seary, Drive Electric NL; Joe Butler, Drive Electric NL

Background and Current Status:

- Drive Electric NL started in 2018 as a non-profit organization that promotes electric vehicle use.
- They received funding from National Resources Canada in 2022 (\$295,000) allowing them to open the Electric Vehicle Resource Centre in St. John's. Further federal and provincial funding was provided on a cost-shared basis in 2023 (\$264,600).
- ECC has executed three funding projects with Drive Electric NL since 2021 (\$215,000), including approximately \$45,700 in 2025-26 to enhance their website presence and host monthly information sessions with electric vehicles owners.
- The number of battery electric vehicles has increased by 1,700 percent, from 120 registrations in 2018 to 2,080 by September 2025. There were also 948 plug-in hybrid electric vehicle registrations in the province in September 2025.
- The provincial Electric Vehicle Rebate Program has funded over 2,400 incentives since 2012-22. This Program is scheduled to sunset in March 2026.
- The Federal Government paused its rebate program on January 12, 2025, before the March 31, 2025 end date, because funds were fully exhausted due to high demand.
- In 2023, the Federal Government built its 2035 target of 100 per cent zero-emission, light-duty vehicle sales into the **Electric Vehicle Availability Standard**, including interim targets of at least 20 per cent by 2026 and 60 per cent by 2030.
- In its Budget 2025 **Climate Competitiveness Strategy**, the Federal Government announced plans to make targeted regulatory adjustments in response to U.S. trade and policy challenges, including removing the 2026 target from the **Electric Vehicle Availability Standard** and initiating a review of the regulation.
- On January 16, 2026, the Federal Government announced a decision to allow up to 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles into the Canadian market.

- Over the past decade, the province has invested in electric vehicle charging infrastructure. By 2026, at least 46 public, high-speed charging stations will be operational, including three locations in Labrador.

Analysis:

- Drive Electric NL does not receive financial support funding from automotive dealers and advised it has no cash reserves nor project-based funding for 2026-27.

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- The number of applications to the provincial Electric Vehicle Rebate Program decreased over 2025. Of the remaining jurisdictions in Canada, ten, including the federal government, had no electric vehicle rebate program or the program they had has ended or will end by March 2026. The only remaining electric vehicle rebate programs are in Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and the Yukon.
- ECC has funding allocated for 2026–28 to create 12 new public, high-speed charging stations in partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. However, on December 10, 2025, the Public Utilities Board declined approval for the associated capital expenditures. ECC is working with Hydro to determine next steps, but the ruling will delay the initiative.
- Drive Electric NL may offer a demonstration ride to Minister.

Potential Speaking Points:

- The province is pleased with the work the Drive Electric NL has done to promote electric vehicles and reduce the province's greenhouse gas emissions.
- The department was disappointed with the Public Utilities Boards decision to not support the next phase of electric vehicle charger infrastructure. The province will revisit our ability to support charging infrastructure if this positions changes.
- We have not been consulted by the Federal Government during its ongoing review of nationally regulated electric vehicle sales targets or on Chinese vehicle imports.
- What actions has Drive Electric NL taken this year to identify funding sources to allow operations to be maintained beyond March 2026?

Prepared/Approved by: G. Crane/ S. Squires/ V. Snow
Ministerial Approval: Received from Hon. Chris Tibbs, MHA

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January 23, 2026

JAN 30 2026

Meeting Note
Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change
Econext
2:00 – 3:00 PM, January 26, 2026
Virtual

Attendees: Hon. Chris Tibbs, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change (ECC); Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister; Susan Squires, Assistant Deputy Minister; Tara Kelly, Assistant Deputy Minister; Laura Barron, CEO, Econext

Purpose of Meeting:

- Laura Barron, CEO of Econext, has requested this introductory meeting with Minister Tibbs to discuss government's priorities relating to sustainable development, as well as policy recommendations Econext recently shared with Premier Wakeham.

Background:

- Econext is a not-for-profit organization seeking to accelerate clean growth in the province, focusing on activities in innovation, workforce, and net zero.
- First established in 1992 as the Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association, Econext has been working for over 30 years to support environmentally sustainable economic development in the province.
- With a membership of 200 businesses, research institutions, governments, and organizations across the province, Econext is a leading voice on the green economy.
- Econext recognizes that Newfoundland and Labrador has the resources required for clean growth opportunities and supports the province's goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

Agenda Item #1: Introductions and Round Table

Potential Speaking Points

- Thank you for meeting with me today. I appreciate the opportunity to have this introductory meeting to discuss our government's priorities.
- I understand that you recently shared policy recommendations with Premier Wakeham during the 2025 provincial election period, and I look forward to hearing more about those ideas today.
- I appreciate the thought and expertise that went into developing these recommendations. Many of these areas overlap with work already underway within my department and across government.

Agenda Item #2: Minister's priorities

- Econext would like to hear from ECC about upcoming priorities, challenges, and upcoming opportunities for collaboration.

Potential Speaking Points

- This government is committed to protecting the environment, while supporting economic growth.
- We agree with Econext that the green economy offers the opportunity to do both.
- Sustainable affordable energy is a priority for this government. We are going to develop a comprehensive 10-year Energy Plan which will guide the development of both renewable and non-renewable resources.
- Work want to work with local stakeholders to explore options to reduce reliance on diesel energy generation.
- Building community resilience to climate change impacts is an important area of focus for my department. We will look for ways to ensure that the province is as prepared as possible to respond to natural disasters, such as floods, storms, and wildfires.
- We will help develop long-term strategies while providing direct aid to residents affected by climate-related disasters.
- We want to improve the delivery of safe, potable drinking water. We will work with local leaders and communities to develop workable small-town solutions that match the area's needs.
- We are also working to promote environmental education and awareness through community programs and outreach.
- We are in the early stages of developing a climate change strategy that reflects these priorities.
- I look forward to future discussions on shared priorities, and how ECC and Econext can continue to work towards meeting economic and sustainable development goals in the province.

Agenda Item #3: Econext Recommendations

1. Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Action Plans

- Econext wishes to support the Department in the execution of action items aimed to reach greenhouse gas reduction targets, towards the goal of net-zero by 2050.
- Several recommendations have been brought forward from Econext to guide future goals and planning relating to mitigating climate change and helping Newfoundland and Labrador adapt to a changing climate.

Potential Speaking Points

- We will create a more attainable Climate Change Action Plan which will lead us in the pursuit of net zero.
- We want to make sure there are clear and achievable emission reduction targets, and report on them regularly.
- We also want to support communities in adapting to climate change and recovering from its impacts. ECC will help develop long-term strategies that consider support to those affected by climate-related disasters, including floods, wildfires, and severe storms.
- In developing future plans, we look forward to working with stakeholders to review an actionable way forward.

2. Waste Management

- Econext recommend that the province develop and implement a new provincial waste management strategy, with a particular focus on organic waste.
- Organic waste represents up to a third of all waste generated in the province and generates greenhouse gas emissions.
- The 2002 provincial waste management strategy committed to 50 per cent waste diversion by 2010, and in 2019 recommended an organic waste management strategy be developed. Due to the cost associated with the management of organic waste, these objectives have not been achieved.
- Econext recommends aligning the management of organic waste with the emerging clean fuels industry by creating biofuels from organic waste.

Potential Speaking Points

- Managing waste effectively is important for this government.
- Organic waste remains a challenge as it remains a significant part of our waste stream.
- We will examine option for organics through our partnership with the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board.
- Organic waste as biofuel is very promising. I look forward to hearing more about Econext's ideas on how this could work in the province.

3. Electric Vehicles

- Econext is seeking to discuss the electrification of transportation and recommends the continuation of the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program and the addition of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- The provincial electric vehicle market has matured since 2018. The number of battery electric vehicles has increased by 1,700 percent, from 120 registrations in 2018 to 2,080 by September 2025. There were also 948 plug-in electric vehicle registrations in the province in September 2025.
- The Electric Vehicle Rebate Program has funded over 2,400 incentives since 2012-22. This Program will sunset in March 2026.
- Of the remaining jurisdictions in Canada, ten, including the federal government, have no electric vehicle rebate program or the program they had has ended or will end by March 2026. The only remaining electric vehicle rebate programs are in Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and the Yukon.
- The province has invested over the last ten years in electric vehicle charging infrastructure. By 2026, a minimum of 46 public-accessible high speed charging stations will be operational, including at three locations in Labrador.

Potential Speaking Points

- The province is pleased that the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program has assisted over 2,400 drivers purchase an electric vehicle and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.
- Funding for this program has been almost fully spent.
- Like most jurisdictions in Canada, the government will not continue the rebate program past March 2026.

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4. Environmental Assessment

- The province is working with the federal government to develop a co-operation agreement to implement a “one project, one review” approach for projects that required both provincial and federal environmental assessments. Econext is supportive of this approach.

Potential Speaking Points

- Government is working to identify how the concept of “one project, one review” could best apply in this province.

- There may also be opportunities to streamline regulatory processes outside of the environmental assessment process.
- We welcome suggestions from your organization on potential areas of regulatory overlap, either between provincial departments or with federal and provincial processes.

Agenda Item #4: Econext's Discussions with Other Departments

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Potential Speaking Points

- Thank you for bringing these recommendations forward. We look forward to supporting coordinated action across government on our shared goals.

Prepared/Approved by: S. Hawkins / R. Tooby/ S. Squires/ T. Kelly
Ministerial Approval: Received from The Hon. Chris Tibbs, MHA

January 23, 2026

40.1

JAN 23 2026

Information Note
Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change

Title: Cyanobacteria (Blue-Green Algae) in Newfoundland and Labrador

Issue: To provide information on cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) monitoring, reporting and status in Newfoundland and Labrador

Background and Current Status:

- Cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, are algae-like bacteria that naturally occur in many aquatic and terrestrial environments around the world. They live in a variety of habitats but are commonly found in warm, shallow, slow-moving freshwater. Certain conditions can cause cyanobacteria populations to increase rapidly, and can result in dense accumulations of cells, commonly known as blooms. Cyanobacteria blooms can be easily observed and are often a distinct blue-green colour.
- In temperate zones, blooms are most common in the summer and early fall, when surface waters are warmest. In addition to water temperature, key factors contributing to the growth of blue-green algae and the formation of a bloom is the water flow and the amount of available nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen.
- Cyanobacteria can quickly dominate a waterscape and outcompete other key species. Some species of cyanobacteria can produce toxins, or cyanotoxins, which are harmful or potentially lethal to humans and animals. The most common cyanotoxins in Canadian waters are microcystins, a family of toxins that includes over 250 known variants. Health Canada has established separate guidelines for drinking and recreational waters regarding cyanobacterial cell counts and total microcystins. Total microcystins include toxins dissolved in the water as well as those contained within the cell of the cyanobacteria. These guidelines are used to help support cyanobacteria management in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are other toxins produced by cyanobacteria; unfortunately, testing for these toxins is not widely available.
- The *Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality* states that total cyanobacteria cells should not exceed a density of 50,000 cells/mL and total microcystins not exceed 10 µg/L for recreational waters involving primary contact recreation (swimming or other activities with direct exposure to water). Cyanobacteria and their toxins are a major concern for drinking water in Canada; however, in Newfoundland and Labrador no blooms have been reported in drinking water supplies. Health Canada's *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* states that the seasonal maximum acceptable concentration of total microcystin is 1.5 µg/L.
- Water Resources Management Division (WRMD) is responsible for required monitoring for cyanobacteria blooms. Department of Government Services is responsible for any advisories and notification to potentially affected communities. Water sampling is conducted when a bloom is reported from the public or noted by Division staff while in the field. Samples are sent to an accredited laboratory for total cell count and microcystins for analysis. Results typically take 10 days to receive and are immediately sent to Department of Government Services to assess for any required advisories.

- WRMD has a webpage dedicated to cyanobacteria that contains information on frequently asked questions, guidelines, annual reports and other reports developed by the Division: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eccc/waterres/watermonitoring/cyanobacteria/>

Analysis:

- The first confirmed cyanobacteria bloom in Newfoundland and Labrador was in the Three Island Pond watershed in September 2007 with four ponds affected by the bloom. An extensive monitoring program of the watershed was conducted in 2007 and into 2008 to capture the extent of the issue. The bloom was noted in 2008 but was less intense than observed in 2007.
- Since 2008, the Division has received reports of 0-4 blooms annually, the majority of which occur on the Avalon Peninsula. All reports were followed up on by the Division and reported on the Division's webpage.
- The most severe cyanobacteria bloom reported in Newfoundland and Labrador was in the Forest Pond watershed (near the communities of Victoria and Salmon Cove) in 2021. The incident included blooms in both Forest Pond and Salmon Cove Pond (aka Big Pond) as well as a fish kill in Forest Pond. The possible contributing factors to the bloom were identified as: (1) high temperature and low water flows, (2) Victoria wastewater treatment plant, and (3) adjacent farmland. Extensive sampling was conducted throughout the bloom with a confirmation of cyanobacteria in the waterbodies that exceeded the recreational guideline but no detection of toxins from the bloom. The likely cause of the fish kill was the result of the warm water, high pH and impairment of respiration due to density of the bloom. The bloom dissipated naturally in approximately 3-4 weeks.
- Following the 2021 cyanobacteria bloom in Forest Pond, a meeting with the Town of Salmon Cove, the Town of Victoria, Minister and officials from the Department and the MHA for the area to discuss next steps. It was recommended that the two Towns submit a joint application to Department of Municipal Affairs for a study to evaluate the cause of the bloom and recommendations of potential mitigation measures. This report was requested by only the Town of Victoria and jointly funded by Municipal Infrastructure Division of then-Department of Municipal Affairs (now with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure) and the Town. The report was finalized in 2024. The main conclusion of the report was that the treatment plant was one of the contributing factors, but the plant was not designed for nutrient removal and as such is operated properly. Options were provided to improve the wastewater treatment facility to reduce the risk of cyanobacteria blooms. There has been no movement on the recommendations to date.
- Forest Pond did not experience a bloom in 2022 but did experience a bloom in 2023. This bloom was moderate without exceedance of the recreational guidelines in comparison to the extensive bloom in 2021. The Water Resources Management Division, in response to concerns from local residents, installed a real-time water monitoring station at Forest Pond in 2023 to obtain in-depth results to determine the conditions that occurred during the bloom. This equipment was also installed in 2024 and 2025. The the real-time equipment was able to conclude that during a bloom or significant algae activity there is an increase in dissolved oxygen and pH due to photosynthetic activities of the algae. There was no full bloom reported in 2024 and 2025, however, instrumentation indicated that algae concentrations had

increased but subsided prior to a full bloom occurring. It has been concluded that a bloom will likely be observed prior to reaching recreational guidelines.

- A bloom was reported in Paddy's Pond in 2025 which was confirmed to exceed the recreational guideline, however, no toxins were detected. Low water levels were the likely cause of this bloom. In addition, Paddy's Pond is used extensively for recreational purposes and open to the TransCanada Highway which could also be contributing factors. The bloom dissipated naturally during the early summer after 2-3 weeks.

Action Being Taken:

- Water Resources Management Division continues to investigate and sample when a bloom is reported to the Division. This will continue into 2026.

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Prepared/approved by:
Ministerial Approval:

H. Khan / T. Kelly / V. Snow
Received from Hon. Chris Tibbs, MHA

January 26, 2026

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JAN 30 2026

Meeting Note
Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change
Retail Council of Canada
09:30 AM to 10:30PM, January 29, 2026
ECC Executive Boardroom

Attendees:

- Hon. Chris Tibbs, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change
- Jim Cormier, Atlantic Director, Retail Council of Canada
- Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister
- Tara Kelly, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment

Purpose of Meeting:

- Jim Cormier requested this meeting on behalf of the Retail Council of Canada (RCC) to discuss the NL Government's strategy regarding environmental stewardship programs, particularly extended producer responsibility (EPR).

Background:

- RCC is a non-profit, industry-funded association representing more than 45,000 store fronts of all retail formats across Canada, including department, specialty, discount, and independent stores, and online merchants.
- Retail is the Newfoundland & Labrador's largest private sector employer and over 14% of the province's workforce works in retail.
- EPR programs hold producers of products financially and physically responsible for managing their products and packaging at the post-consumer, end-of-life stage, shifting responsibility for recycling from government and tax-payers to the private sector.
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB) oversees three EPR programs for waste paint, used oil and glycol, and electronic products. These programs improve recycling rates, reduce litter, create conditions to incent efficiency, and reduce the costs of end-of-life management.

Agenda Item 1: Roundtable Introductions

- Founded in 1963, RCC is a non-profit, industry-funded organization representing retail companies across Canada. RCC coordinates advocacy, communications, and education campaigns on behalf of its member companies.
- The RCC Atlantic Stakeholder Group is comprised of retail leaders operating in the Atlantic provinces, providing an opportunity for them to network and share ideas and best practices. The group also provides members with information concerning trends and issues impacting retailers in Atlantic provinces, keeping them up to date with guidance and direction concerning government regulations and legislation impacting their businesses.

Potential Speaking Points

- Thank you for this introductory meeting. I appreciate the opportunity to meet you and discuss environmental stewardship in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly extended producer responsibility.

- Retail plays a significant role in our province's economy. We recognize the importance of working closely with industry partners like RCC as we advance environmental policy.

Agenda Item 2: NL Government's EPR Strategy

- In 2021, MMSB developed a model for a province-wide EPR program for printed paper and packaging, shifting costs from municipalities to producers. Newfoundland and Labrador is one of only two provinces without an EPR program for printed paper and packaging.
- If Newfoundland and Labrador were to implement an EPR for printed paper and packaging, amendments to the **Waste Management Regulations** under the **Environmental Protection Act** are recommended to establish the legislative framework, define producer obligations, and ensure no reduction in current recycling services when the regulation comes into force.
- Under the proposed approach, producers would fund and manage printed paper and packaging collection and processing through Producer Responsibility Organizations, with stewardship plans outlining infrastructure, communications, and system performance. Small producers and charities will be exempt.

Potential Speaking Points

- We understand the importance of ensuring that any new program is designed in a way that is efficient, fair, and workable for the retail sector.
- Our objective for any EPR program remains to have a modernized, effective EPR system that aligns with national standards while being tailored to the unique context of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- We want to ensure that any program supports waste reduction, encourages recycling, and delivers environmental benefits across the province without creating unnecessary administrative burden.
- We share a commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable waste management, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue as we look into the feasibility of EPR programs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Prepared/Approved by: S. Hawkins / R. Tooby / V. Snow
Ministerial Approval: Received from The Hon. Chris Tibbs, MHA

January 22, 2026