Dear [Name]:

Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (File # NR-214-2018)

On October 15, 2018, the Department of Natural Resources received your request for access to the following records/information:

In the 1980s there were remote diesel systems operating in over 70 Newfoundland and Labrador communities. Today there are approximately 20 or so communities still utilizing remote diesel systems. I am seeking studies, reports or briefing notes relating to the Department of Natural Resources’ strategy to further reduce that number if such a strategy exists.

On November 2, 2018, after our telephone conversation, the search was limited to one year previous to the request.

I am pleased to inform you that a decision has been made by the Department of Natural Resources, confirmed by the Deputy Minister, to provide access to the requested records. The records are attached.

We are providing access to the most information possible but have made redactions in accordance with Sections 29(1)(a) and 34(1)(a)(v) of ATIPPA, 2015 as follows:

29. (1)(a) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal advice, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for a public body or minister;

34. (1) (a) (v) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose information to an applicant if the disclosure could reasonably be expected to harm the conduct by the
government of the province of relations between that government and the following or their agencies: the Nunatsiavut Government.

As set out in section 42 of the Act you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the department’s decision to provide access to the requested information. A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner. Your request should identify your concerns with the department’s response and why you are requesting a review.

The request for review may be addressed to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
2 Canada Drive
P.O. Box 13004, Stn. A
St. John’s, NL A1B 3V8

Telephone: (709) 729-6309
Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500

Pursuant to section 52 of the Act, you may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court Trial Division within 15 business days after receiving the department’s decision.

Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five business days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information Requests website within one business day following the applicable period of time. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online.

For further details about how an access to information request is processed, please refer to the Access to Information Policy and Procedures Manual at http://www.atipp.gov.nl.ca/info/index.html.
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 709-729-0463 or rhynes@gov.nl.ca.

Sincerely,

Rod Hynes

Rod Hynes
ATIPP Coordinator
Decision/Direction Note
Department of Natural Resources

Title: Journey authorization for two NR officials to attend meetings in Labrador

Decision/Direction Required:
- Whether to approve travel for the Director of the Electricity and Alternative Energy and the Manager of Electricity Markets and Alternative Energy to travel to Nain, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Mary’s Harbour in mid-June 2018.

Background and Current Status:
- The Premier’s November 2017 mandate letter directs the Minister of Natural Resources (NR) to encourage “more diverse distributed energy generation by seeking opportunities to develop wind farms and small scale hydro, and prioritizing communities isolated from the primary power grid, such as coastal regions of Labrador."

- There are currently 20 regulated diesel-powered electricity systems along the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the five in Nunatsiavut Government (NG) territory.

Analysis:
- To meet the Minister’s mandate and to work to reduce diesel-fuel use in these communities, NR is expected to release an Expressions of Interest (EOI) for renewable energy solutions in 15 of these communities. NR supports the NG in its desired approach and has been working with the NG in areas of mutual interest, such as wood heat and in leveraging federal funding.

- The Energy Policy Branch staff has not previously visited off-grid diesel systems despite the proposed EOI, ongoing work with the NG, and the increasing interest in these systems from renewable energy proponents as a result of federal funding programs and initiatives aimed at reducing diesel use in rural and remote communities across Canada.

- The NG and the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) have encouraged NR staff to visit the region and to have the opportunity to meet in-person. In addition to NR’s ongoing work with the NG, NR and the NCC have also started discussions on areas of mutual interest, including renewable energy solutions to reduce diesel fuel use.

- NR staff would visit Nain for one day, Happy Valley-Goose Bay for one day, and Mary’s Harbour for one day. See Annex A for a draft agenda.

- A visit to Nain will provide NR officials with the opportunity to meet with the NG, including Neil Hawkes, the NG’s Energy Facilitator, and to tour a new solar-thermal installation on Nain’s community centre. If time permits, NR will also arrange a viewing of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro’s (NLH) diesel system.

- A visit to Happy Valley-Goose Bay will provide NR officials with the opportunity to meet with the NCC, including George Russell, the NCC’s Environment and Resource Manager, and to meet with the Labrador Affairs Secretariat (LAS) to discuss the proposed EOI and what it means for northerners and Indigenous in Labrador and to discuss the potential wood heat
strategy for the province. If time permits, NR will also arrange a viewing of NLH’s energy control center for some of Labrador’s diesel systems.

- A visit to Mary’s Harbour will provide NR officials with the opportunity to view one of the largest diesel systems in Labrador. Mary’s Harbour has also received interest from renewable energy proponents given its close location to other diesel-powered communities and because the highway to Mary’s Harbour is paved (proponents have advised NR that these two factors provide cost savings in developing renewable energy solutions).

- The cost of travel will be approximately $6,330 ($3,165 per person), which includes airfare, rental cars, meals, incidentals, and three night accommodations. Funds are available in the branch’s budget for the travel.

Alternatives:

Prepared by/Approved by: L. MacDonald /
Ministerial Approval:

May 15, 2018
Annex A: Tentative Agenda

- June 11
  o Depart for Nain
  o Meet with Nunatsiavut Government (including Neil Hawkes, Energy Facilitator)
  o Observe solar-thermal system
  o Observe diesel unit and discuss with NL Hydro staff

- June 12
  o Travel to Happy Valley-Goose Bay
  o Meet with NunatuKavut Community Council (including George Russell, Environment and Resource Manager)
  o Meet with Labrador Affairs Secretariat

- June 13
  o Depart for Blanc Sablon and travel to Mary’s Harbour
  o Observe diesel unit and discuss with NL Hydro staff
  o Depart for St. John’s
Decision/Direction Note
Department of Natural Resources

Title: Preliminary Assessment of a Newfoundland and Labrador Wood Heat Strategy

Decision/Direction Required:
- Whether to work with relevant partners to undertake a preliminary assessment of a provincial wood heat strategy, beginning with a June 1, 2018 kick-off meeting.

Background and Current Status:
- There are 20 regulated off-grid diesel-generated electricity systems in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2017, these communities used approximately 15 million litres of diesel. Given the cost of electricity and heating oil, many households in these communities use firewood as primary heat source. Available data suggests many residents use old inefficient wood stoves. New high-efficiency wood stoves reduce firewood consumption and chimney smoke.

- In 2016-17, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) provided funding for the purchase of approximately 30-40 high-efficiency wood stoves in the Nunatsiavut region and for the preparation of Nunatsiavut Construction’s Firewood Harvesting, Storage and Distribution in Nunatsiavut Report (the Report), which examines firewood accessibility in the region. The Report notes residents face challenges to access firewood, including: inadequate local dry wood supply; significant distances to travel on snowmobile to access dry wood (up to 100km round trip); lack of storage to season wood; and difficulty accessing wood (e.g. elderly).

Analysis:
- The challenges discussed in the Report also apply in other locations of the Province, including off-grid communities.