



SOUTHWEST COAST NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Table of Contents

03

Disclaimer

03

Executive Summary

05

Outline and Objectives

06

Part One: Tourism Development Plan

16

Part Two: Economic Examples

28

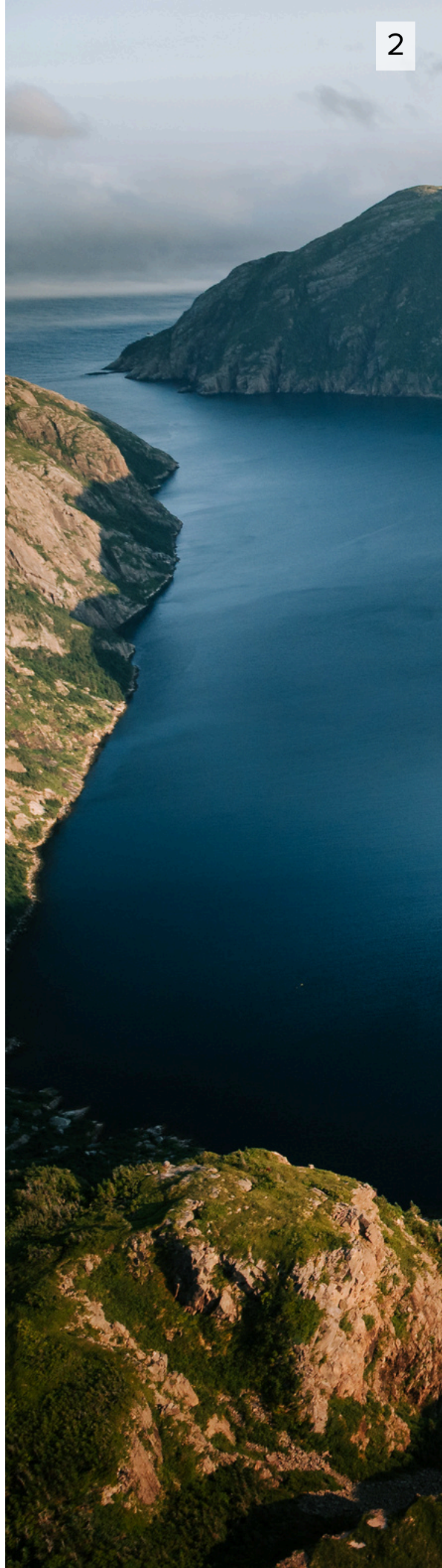
Part Three: Map of Regional Collaborators

29

Part Four: 10-Year Development Timeline

33

Works Cited





Executive Summary

DISCLAIMER

This document represents a snapshot of the project at this moment in its development. As the work continues to evolve, new insights, partnerships, and opportunities will naturally refine and expand the ideas presented here.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This development proposal outlines a bold and practical vision to support place-based, sustainable, and coordinated economic development of Newfoundland's southwest coast. Anchored by its glacial fjords—the region's defining value proposition—the proposal demonstrates that sustainability and economic development can advance together, in partnership with municipalities, government, community organizations, entrepreneurial stewards, and Indigenous Nations creating prosperity rooted in place, culture, and ecology.

The southwest coast is uniquely positioned to develop rapidly, benefiting from other provincial examples like Fogo Island or Gros Morne National Park. Those transformations unfolded over many decades through experimentation, investment, and patient brand development. The southwest coast can benefit from those established models, early-stage and ongoing coordination with communities and Indigenous Nations, a strong desire for sustainability-based tourism, and a newly formed foundation: the Saltwind Foundation, which will be the umbrella platform for revitalizing the region.

With modest infrastructure improvements and coordinated investment in access, branding, and community capacity, the region can achieve comparable results in one, rather than several, decades.

A 10-Year Development Plan, included at the end of this document, outlines how the region will progress through four distinct phases: from collaboration and access-building to destination recognition and long-term stewardship. Each phase is realistic, community-driven, and designed to leverage existing assets without requiring large-scale industrial development, which is incompatible with the region's most valuable asset, its fjords.

We are also creating a unique platform to bring private investment and opportunities to the southwest coast. Saltwind, a development-driven foundation similar to Shorefast on Fogo Island, will be built to attract significant capital from donors globally (a significant amount of capital has already been committed), which will generate development in the communities and region through private investment and through accessible capital streams for local entrepreneurs and businesses. This foundation is being created, and will be established in Q1, 2026.

Executive Summary

Recently, the Saltwind Community Steering Committee (SteerCo) was established with community members from Burgeo, Ramea, Grey River, and François to ensure that decisions made by the Saltwind Foundation are for the benefit of the towns and the people.

Newfoundland and Labrador is entering a new era of economic localization, and focusing on the redevelopment of its rural economies. This requires new thinking and new delivery models. Saltwind is a responsive platform built for purpose.

This proposal reflects the provincial and federal governments' new priorities of rural economic revitalization and fiscal responsibility. It envisions a model of sustainable growth that is small-scale, authentic, resilient, and that is a living example of how one of Newfoundland and Labrador's most spectacular landscapes can sustain thriving communities while safeguarding their natural inheritance for generations to come.

CONCERNS AROUND THE FISHING INDUSTRY

It is important to emphasize that sustainable place-based economic development does not mean closing the ocean to fishing. Our vision encourages protecting ecosystems while supporting sustainable use, ensuring that local industries, and especially small-scale and community-based fisheries—which have been and will remain the foundation of the regional economy—can continue to thrive under clear, collaboratively developed guidelines.

This proposal was developed with the vision that fishers remain active participants in the marine economy, benefiting from cleaner waters, healthier stocks, and increased tourism demand for seafood and marine experiences.



Executive Summary

OUTLINE AND OBJECTIVES

This development proposal has three objectives:

1. to provide a pathway and support for the creation of a platform of cooperation and coordination that will attract investment to the southwest coast in an efficient and results-driven manner;
2. to demonstrate the economic value of tourism in Newfoundland's southwest coast region;
3. to demonstrate the region's readiness to emerge as world class destination by leveraging the uniqueness of its fjords and other natural features.

This proposal demonstrates that sustainability is a foundation for long-term economic development, regional resilience, and fiscal efficiency.

This proposal examines how environmental and entrepreneurial stewardship can drive measurable economic returns for Newfoundland and Labrador by enhancing the province's competitive advantage in key sectors: tourism, coastal industries, and place-based enterprises. It emphasizes sustainability and local, regional, and homegrown businesses as an economic strategy that attracts investment, economic development, and generates meaningful and long-lasting employment.

Our purpose is to demonstrate the generational opportunity presented, how it aligns with provincial priorities, and the economic potential that place-based development represents for the region.

Ultimately, its purpose is to showcase the potential for sustainability based economic growth, the economic value tied to the region's natural beauty, to highlight the risks associated with initiatives like the expansion of open-pen aquaculture, and to demonstrate that the region is prepared to pursue rapid development within a short timeframe.

Key components include:

- **Tourism Analysis:** A detailed assessment of current offerings and growth potential tied to place-based economic development.
- **Economic Analysis:** An analysis of other jurisdictions, and the economic potential tied to its natural beauty.
- **Map of Regional Partners:** A clear overview of key partners, including government, Indigenous Nations, local municipalities, and community groups.
- **10-Year Development Timeline:** Outlining objectives, deliverables, and goals.

Together, these components provide a practical, evidence-based blueprint for advancing sustainability as a driver of regional economic opportunity.

Part 1

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. PART ONE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

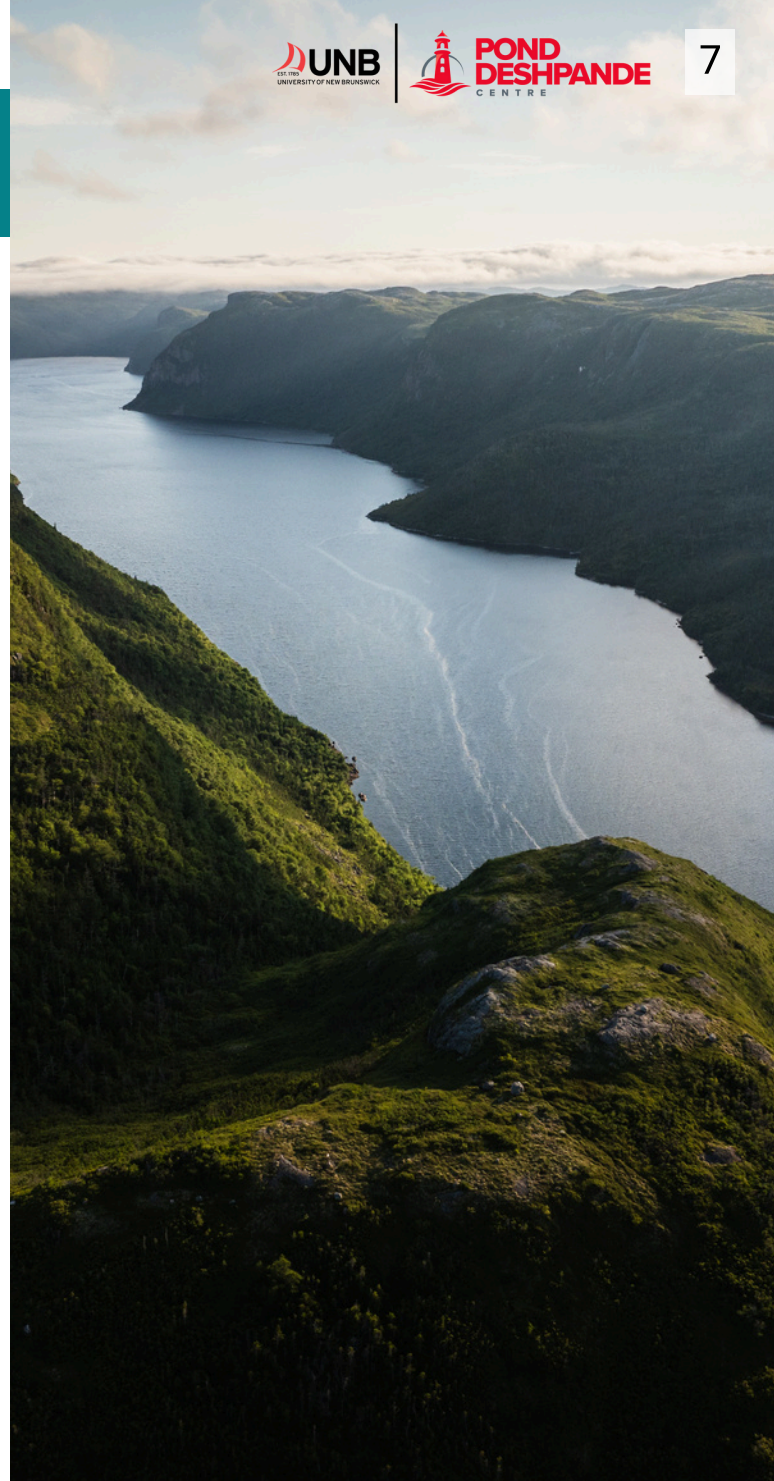
RARE, SIGNIFICANT, UNIQUE

The southwest coast of Newfoundland stands among the most extraordinary marine landscapes in Atlantic Canada: a place where ancient glaciers have carved deep inlets into rock. These fjords—unique on the Atlantic seaboard—are long, narrow coves where the sea meets river. From François to Burgeo, the sea is flanked by steep, towering cliffs and extend inland, where the ocean's saltwater mingles with freshwater from rivers and streams. These fjords **are the sculptural remnants of ice ages**—valleys once filled with moving glaciers that gouged through rock, leaving behind dramatic walls, deep basins, and calm, sheltered waters when the ice retreated.

Though there are many fjords along this coast, eight significant formations stand out:

- White Bear Bay
- Bay du Loup
- Bay du Vieux
- Grey River Bay
- Chaleur Bay
- François Bay
- Aviron Bay
- La Hune Bay

On this coast and in those areas, towering cliffs plunge into the fjords, where deep coastal basins give way to sheltered inlets alive with movement and sound. In these cold, nutrient-rich waters, life flourishes in rare abundance: Atlantic salmon return to their ancestral rivers, cod drift through the shallows, and humpback and minke whales surface against backdrops of mist and granite. Seabirds wheel overhead, and cold-water corals breathe beneath the waves. **This coast is not only beautiful, but also ecologically irreplaceable.**



For generations, its communities have drawn their livelihoods and their identity from the ocean. Fishing, hunting, and boatbuilding are not simply industries here, they are acts of inheritance that bind people to place. The aforementioned fjords are both a working landscape and a living memory, a rare convergence of natural wonder and cultural endurance. **To protect these waters is to safeguard one of Newfoundland's most spectacular wild sanctuaries and an environment that embodies the province's spirit: resilience, artisanship, and belonging.**

The region supports critical cold-water habitats, including:

- Atlantic salmon spawning rivers, notably the Conne, Bay du Nord, Little River, and White Bear River systems;
- Kelp and eelgrass meadows, which serve as nurseries for cod, herring, and invertebrates;
- Migratory corridors for humpback, minke, and killer whales, eagles as well as seabirds such as puffins, razorbills, and gannets.
- Cold-water coral and sponge communities that stabilize seafloor ecosystems;
- Leatherback turtles, lobsters, cod, eels, eelgrass, caribou, bears, moose etc.

According to Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Atlantic Zone Monitoring Program, the area exhibits high primary productivity driven by nutrient upwelling, making it vital to regional fisheries and biodiversity (Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2024).

Like other ecologically vital regions, the southwest coast faces the complex challenge of balancing ecological integrity with economic opportunity. Pressures from climate change, coastal erosion, shifting fisheries, and the growing interest in eco-tourism, adventure travel, small-vessel cruises underscore the need for proactive, future thinking, and visionary stewardship.

At this juncture, preserving this region through the development of its infrastructure, branding, and marketing represents a transformational opportunity: to conserve one of Canada's unique and extraordinary marine landscapes while increasing tourism, fostering economic growth, and improving regional livelihoods. Sustainable practices and forward thinking will safeguard the region's fjords, estuaries, seagrass meadows, and marine corridors, while supporting economic growth, opportunity, and development. This will not occur unless the fjords are protected. In particular, the expansion of open pen fish farming into White Bear Bay and Bay du Loup is incompatible with our economic vision.



THE RISK OF OPEN-PEN FISH FARMING

The fjords of Newfoundland's southwest coast are more than a landscape:

- They are wholly unique; there is nothing like them on the entire Atlantic seaboard;
- they are the anchor to the region's economic development;
- they are crucial to the region's tourism potential;
- they are vital to the region's identity; and
- they are a way of life.

The growing footprint of open-pen salmon farming threatens to alter these waters in ways that could permanently undermine both their ecological health and their cultural value. Open-pen operations discharge waste and chemicals directly into the marine environment, degrading water quality and smothering the sensitive seabed. They monopolize large stretches of coastline, obstructing travel routes, anchorages, and the natural beauty that defines these bays. For local boaters, tour operators, and small cruise vessels this means navigating around sprawling nets, losing safe access to sheltered inlets, and cleaning hulls fouled by organic waste and algae buildup. The fjords—once clean, open, and wild—risk becoming industrial zones rather than shared spaces for communities and visitors.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

Importantly, these fjords are critically significant for the Qalipu First Nation and Miawpukek First Nation. For generations, these fjords have been vital regions for hunting and fishing. They represent an important aspect of Indigenous people's connection to the land and sea.

Across Canada, scientists and coastal residents have raised similar concerns. Open-pen salmon farms have been linked to declining marine biodiversity, the spread of parasites and disease to wild salmon, and the contamination of seafloor habitats. These impacts are now so widely recognized that the federal government has committed to phasing out open-pen salmon farming in British Columbia by 2029, citing its harm to marine ecosystems and public confidence. **If Canada can take bold steps to protect the Pacific coast, why should we not show the same care for the Atlantic? Our coastlines are our identity—living symbols of who we are and what we stand to lose.** Managing them through sustainable growth, not destructive commercialization, is how we ensure that the fjords remain clean, accessible, and alive for generations to come.

- Open-pen fish farms discharge large volumes of untreated waste directly into coastal waters, leading to nutrient loading, oxygen depletion, and the formation of sludge that smothers seabed habitats (Milewski, 2001; Hamoutene, 2014).
- High densities of farmed salmon foster outbreaks of parasites and disease, which spread to wild salmon populations and threaten their survival (Rooney, 2018; Pohle et al., 2001).
- Escaped farmed salmon can compete with wild fish for habitat and food, weakening local genetic stocks and altering ecological balance (Living Oceans Society, 2015).
- Benthic and microbial studies in Atlantic Canada show long-lasting degradation beneath farm sites, with slow or minimal recovery even after fallowing periods (Verhoeven et al., 2018).
- Public access and recreation are also affected: boaters report fouled hulls, navigation barriers, and reduced access to traditional routes and anchorages near aquaculture zones (Living Oceans Society, 2015).
- Recognizing these harms, the Government of Canada announced the phase-out of open-net-pen salmon farming in British Columbia by 2029, shifting toward closed-containment and sustainable alternatives (Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 2024).





LODGING

Leveraging the beauty of place through development, branding, and marketing will catalyze new investments in small-scale, locally owned accommodations across the region. Currently, lodging assets are limited to a handful of motels, inns, and bed-and-breakfasts in Burgeo and Ramea. More is needed.

Thoughtful development could extend the visitor season, increase domestic and international awareness, and attract higher-value visitors seeking immersive, nature-based experiences. This, in turn, would encourage the development of new lodges, cabins, campgrounds, hotels, inns, and motels as well as expansions to existing properties. Moreover, with increased marketing and infrastructure investment driving increased visitation via land and sea, **the region could conservatively double local accommodation capacity within five to seven years, creating new revenue streams and year-round employment opportunities.**

CURRENT REGIONAL ASSETS: LODGING

Currently, accommodation options in the southwest coast region are few but distinctive, reflecting the area's remote character and authenticity. Visitors come for quiet, connection, and exploration. The inns, motels, and bed-and-breakfasts that do exist are locally owned and rooted in community, offering gracious hospitality and first-hand knowledge of the coast. Staying in the communities of the regions is part of the experience itself: an immersion in Newfoundland's maritime culture. Leveraging sustainability creates new opportunities for the creation of accommodations: motels, hotels, campgrounds, inns, bed and breakfasts, and Airbnb's.



Current regional accommodations are listed below:

Name	Type	Website
Burgeo Haven (Inn on the Sea)	Bed & Breakfast / Inn	https://www.burgeohaven.com/
Four Winds Inn	Inn / Bed & Breakfast	https://www.fourwindsinn.ca/
Gillett's Motel	Motel	http://www.explorenewfoundlandandlabrador.com/Hotels-Motels/gilletts-motel.htm
Reach Road Efficiency Units	Efficiency units / guest rentals	(No dedicated official site)
Arctic House	Vacation home / short-term rental	http://www.arctichouse.ca
Comfort with a View	Vacation home / guest house	https://www.booking.com/hotel/ca/comfort-with-a-view.en-gb.html

The region also has between 50-55 homes which operate as Airbnb's in some capacity.

The Sandbanks Provincial Park offers 30 camp sites, and more can be developed.



ASSETS: TOURISM PROVIDERS

Place-based development will catalyze authentic, locally owned, and environmentally responsible tourist operators. Currently, small operators provide guided kayaking, whale- and bird-watching, hiking, and salmon angling. These experiences attract high-value, low-impact visitors and generate meaningful economic activity in rural communities.

Current tourism operators are listed below:

Name	Offerings	Website
Four Winds Inn (Ramea)	Inn offering guided kayaking, whale watching, fishing, birding, and hiking tours	fourwindsinn.ca/activities
Sunset Adventures (Burgoe)	Guided kayak and coastal tours	facebook.com/SunsetAdventuresBurgoe
Breton Chalet & Suites: Boat Tours (Harbour Breton)	Scenic boat tours, whale and bird watching experiences	bretonchaletandsuites.ca/boat-tours
Grey River Lodge (Grey River)	Remote fishing and hunting lodge with guided expeditions	greyriverlodge.com
Silver Bullet Lodge (Grey River region)	Atlantic salmon fly-fishing lodge offering multi-day guided trips	silverbulletlodge.com
Young's Tourism & Fishing Lodge (Grey River)	Guided Atlantic salmon and trout angling packages	youngsoutfitting.com/packages

BEYOND GUIDED TOURISM

The region's natural assets already support a growing independent travel market. The combination of accessible beaches, informal trails, and small ferry-linked communities offers visitors the freedom to explore at their own pace through hiking, birdwatching, kayaking, sailing, and photography. Sustainability, increased tourism, and development would encourage the formal creation of interpretive trails (trails are currently being developed), lookouts, and visitor centers, expanding the region's appeal to travelers while maintaining its reputation for wilderness and solitude. This development will also increase the region's ability to attract small cruise vessels to the area.

INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS TO THE SOUTHWEST COAST

Reaching Newfoundland's southwest coast—stretching from Burgeo to Ramaa, Grey River, and Francois—is a journey that reveals both the region's isolation and its untapped potential. Access today is limited, unreliable, and fragmented.

ROAD ACCESS

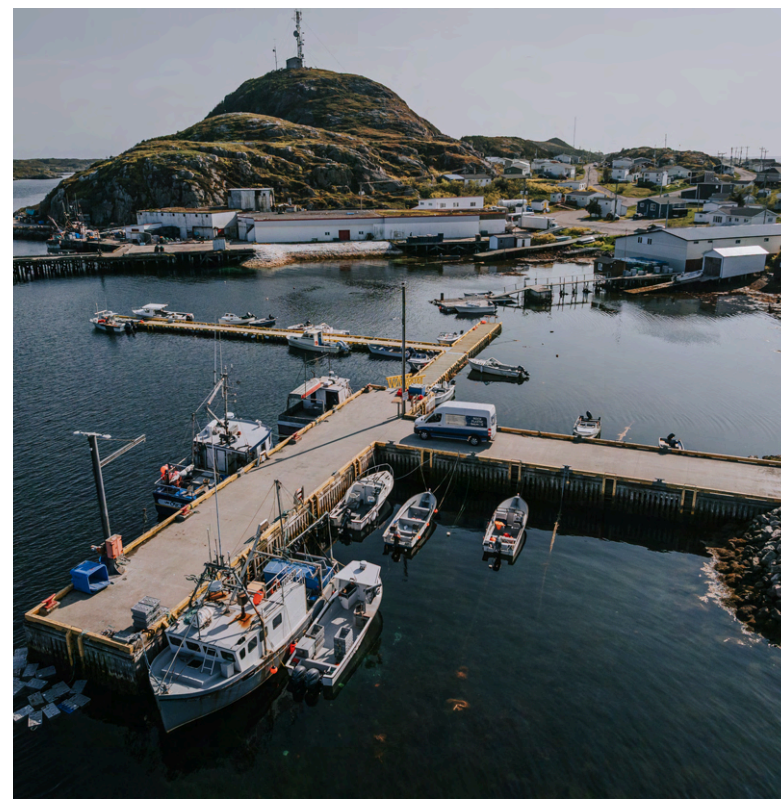
Most visitors arrive via the Trans-Canada Highway and connect to the southwest coast through Route 480 (Caribou Highway), to Burgeo. This is a long road that winds through remote terrain.

AIR ACCESS

The nearest airport, Deer Lake Regional Airport is several hours' drive from the fjord corridor. Seasonal weather, limited flight availability, and high costs restrict access for both domestic and international visitors. There are currently no direct air links serving the region, which severely limits its ability to attract higher-value tourism or to connect visitors quickly to coastal communities.

MARINE ACCESS

Along the coast itself, marine transportation remains the lifeline—and the greatest opportunity. The Ramea–Burgeo–Grey River–Francois ferry provides essential service but operates on limited schedules and is vulnerable to weather delays. It is a round bottomed boat that cannot operate in winds over 20 knots, and needs to be replaced with a more weather resistant vessel. Docking infrastructure is aging, and few harbours are equipped to accommodate tour vessels or small cruise ships that could anchor the region's marine tourism potential.



THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT

The beauty and ecological significance of the southwest coast deserves a renewed and coordinated effort that matches its potential. Strategic investments and partnerships with municipal, provincial and federal governments would not only fast-track tourism development—it would strengthen community resilience, support emergency response, and reduce regional inequities.

One way Newfoundland and Labrador can “rejuvenate rural economies” and “make NL the tourism capital of Canada,” is by connecting to one of the province’s most breathtaking regions.

Improving awareness, partnerships, collaboration and stimulating homegrown businesses on southwest coast means opening opportunity: for sustainability, for tourism, and for the communities and the people who have long called these shores home.

INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIP AND TOURISM

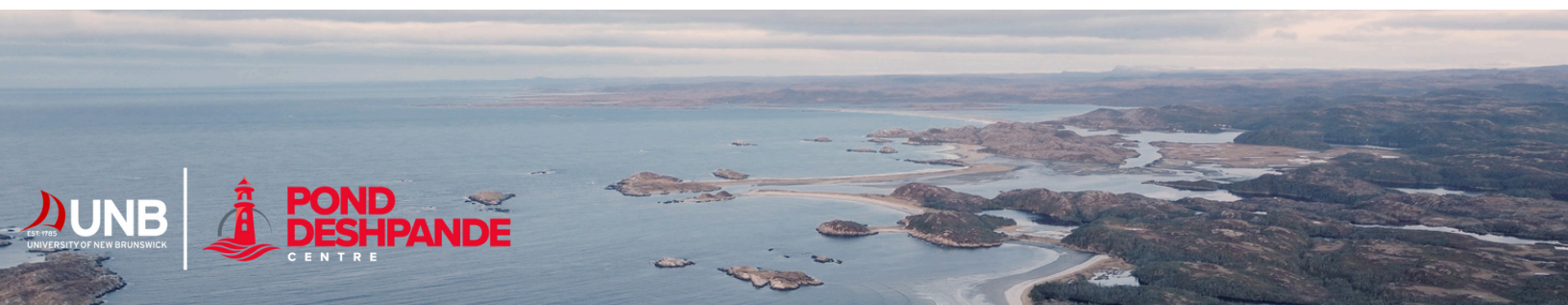
There is also a significant opportunity to strengthen Indigenous-led cultural tourism through collaboration with the Miawpukek First Nation and Qalipu First Nation. Both Nations have deep historical and contemporary ties to the region, offering visitors a chance to experience the coast through the culture and practices of the Indigenous people who live there. Nationally, the Indigenous tourism sector generated \$3.7 billion in GDP and supported nearly 55,000 jobs in 2023, demonstrating its scale and growth potential (Conference Board of Canada, 2025). Locally, initiatives like Jipujij’kuei Kuespem Park already showcase Indigenous-led outdoor and cultural programming.

Improving access, encouraging place-based regional development, and conserving the region’s natural assets will be (and is being) conducted in collaboration and in conversation with the Qalipu First Nation and Miawpukek First Nation. Collaborating with those communities—supporting Indigenous storytelling, land-based learning, traditional artisanship and craft, and salmon fishing—ensures Indigenous peoples are partners, not participants, in shaping the region’s economy. Aligning with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada’s and the Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association visions for authentic, community-based experiences, this collaboration will position the southwest coast as a model for reconciliation-driven, sustainability-centred tourism in Canada.

The Qalipu First Nation and Miawpukek First Nation already have an enormous economic impact, and bring significant funding into the province. Their collaboration is essential for this vision, and for the region to thrive.

FOLLOWING PROVINCIAL EXAMPLES: FOGO AND GROS MORNE

This form of place-based development and branding are not without precedent. The model has already proven successful elsewhere in the province: Fogo Island’s transformation from a declining to an internationally recognized tourism and social enterprise hub demonstrates the global appeal of place-based, development.



Similarly, Gros Morne National Park has anchored decades of regional growth through its National Park and UNESCO World Heritage statuses, while small-scale, locally owned accommodations have thrived within and around its protected ecosystems. By conserving, branding, and marketing the southwest coast—the fjords, wilderness, and culture, the region can position itself as Canada’s next great story of rural revitalization, economic and tourism development, and be a contemporary example of how sustainability fuels entrepreneurship, industriousness, and long-term prosperity.

EXTENDING STAYS AND DEEPENING IMPACT

This will allow for a coordinated regional strategy to extend visitor stays and enhance local economic impact. There are significant private investment opportunities in the region, which will be supported by the Saltwind Foundation. To date, proposals for expanded docks and marinas, as well as for new cafes and restaurants are being reviewed. Investment through the Saltwind Foundation will also enable:

- developing multi-day travel itineraries that connect Burgeo, Ramea, François, and Grey River through ferry and boat links;
- expanding cruise, whale watching, and fjord viewing via boat;
- expanding hospitality and accommodations: restaurants, lodges, camps, hotels, etc.;
- expanding infrastructure; and
- promoting bundled experiences that combine guided kayaking, salmon fishing, hiking, and Indigenous cultural programming.

Enhanced transportation infrastructure including roads, ferries, marinas, scheduling, signage, and visitor information would encourage longer visits, while leveraging provincial and federal programs for business start-ups will encourage new ventures in hospitality, lodging, trails, crafts, guiding, and marine transport. By fostering partnerships between local entrepreneurs, investors, and Indigenous Nations the region can create immersive, high-value experiences—keeping tourism dollars circulating within coastal communities and building long-term regional resilience.

LOOKING AHEAD

For local guides, outfitters, and operators, the Saltwind Foundation is an opportunity to expand and diversify their offerings. Improving access to the region, improving branding and marketing (which is underway) will draw visitors interested in guided kayaking, hiking, whale watching, and Atlantic salmon angling—activities that are already significant in the region. Development will encourage structure, safety standards, and training opportunities that enable small operators to scale sustainably, while new entrants can access funding to launch businesses in interpretation, cultural tourism, and outdoor recreation.

With modest infrastructure improvements and coordinated promotion, the region could support a significant increase in guided tour capacity within a decade, generating lasting local employment and reinforcing the southwest coast as one of Atlantic Canada’s premier tourist destinations.



Part 2

ECONOMIC EXAMPLES

TOURISM:

Tourism is one of Newfoundland and Labrador's most powerful tools for economic growth and job creation, generating over \$1.1 billion annually and supporting more than 20,000 jobs provincially (Government of Canada, 2024; Government of NL, 2023). As a labour-intensive, locally anchored sector, tourism directly addresses one of the province's most persistent challenges: regional unemployment, particularly in rural and coastal communities where few industries provide steady, year-round work. Currently, Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the country's highest unemployment rates, at 10.2% (Government of NL, 2025).

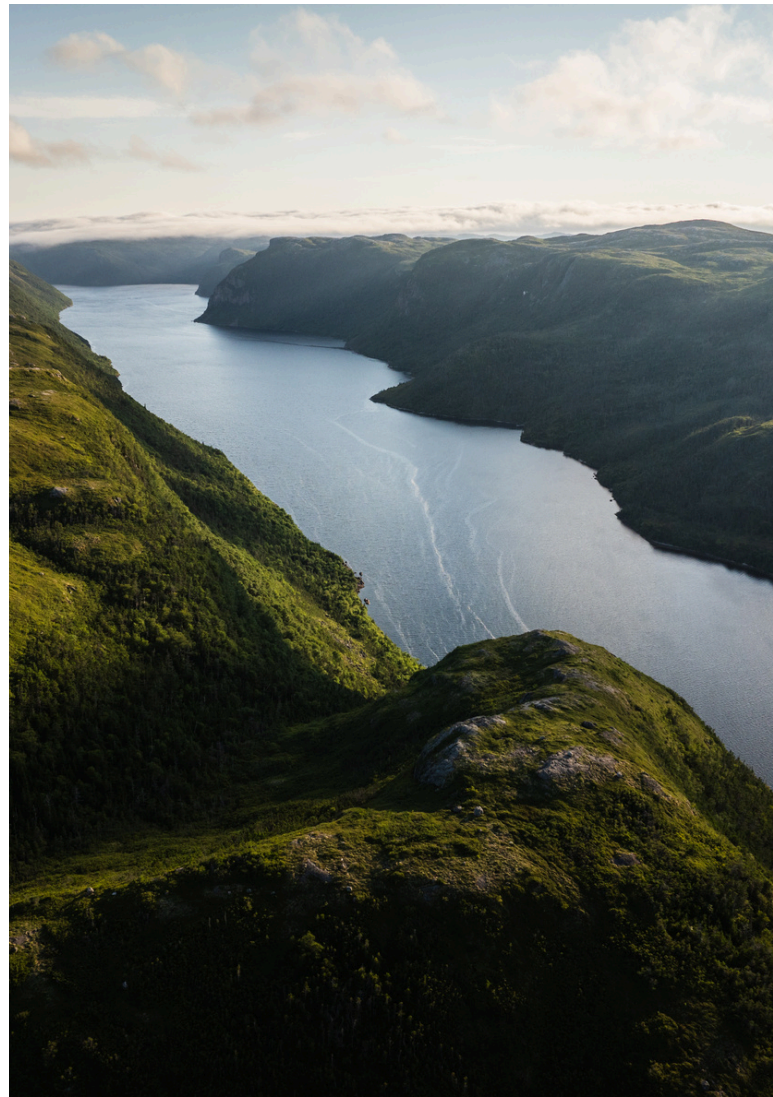
The sector's growth stimulates a wide range of local enterprises: from accommodations and restaurants to boat operators, cultural interpreters, and Indigenous tourism initiatives, creating opportunities that keep wealth and talent in the province. Expanding tourism aligns squarely with many of the government's priorities:

1. "rebuild a stronger economy,";
2. "rejuvenate rural Newfoundland and Labrador,";
3. "make NL the tourism capital of Canada.,"; and
4. "making real progress on Truth and reconciliation" (Progressive Conservative Party NL, 2025)

By leveraging partnership, investment, and entrepreneurship, the government can meet its promises and can continue to secure tourism as a core driver of inclusive, sustainable growth.

TOURISM DATA:

- In Quarter 3, 2024, non-resident visitor spending in Newfoundland and Labrador was \$108 million from U.S. visitors + \$13 million from overseas visitors (roughly \$121 million total) for that quarter (Statistics Canada, 2024)
- The federal government in 2024 restated that the NL tourism industry contributes \$1.14 billion annually to the provincial economy (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, 2024)
- According to the 2024 Economic Scan for Newfoundland and Labrador, non-resident tourism spending rose 12% in 2023 (vs 2022) as part of broader consumption growth (Service Canada, 2024).
- Tourism in NL reached "recovery" in 2023, with visitation numbers returning to pre-pandemic (2019) levels (Government of NL, 2023).



LOCAL AND REGIONAL SUCCESS STORIES

FOGO ISLAND

Fogo Island stands as one of Newfoundland and Labrador's most compelling examples of how place-based, community-driven economic development can transform a region. Once heavily dependent on cod fishing, the island was hard hit by the 1992 cod moratorium, which decimated its primary industry and triggered widespread outmigration. In the face of this decline, Fogo's response was to rebuild its economy based on its culture, landscape, and people.

Central to this transformation was the creation of the Shorefast Foundation. Shorefast's guiding principle—"economic nutrition"—demonstrates that rural communities can thrive by aligning social, cultural, and ecological values with economic activity (Shorefast, 2023). The flagship project, the Fogo Island Inn, was designed as a cultural and economic catalyst: a locally built, locally owned enterprise that reinvests all profits back into community initiatives.

Every aspect of the Inn reflects Fogo Island's sense of place: locally crafted furniture, traditional quilt designs, community art, and the use of community "hosts" who guide visitors through the island's seven outport communities (Fogo Island Inn, 2025). The Inn now attracts travelers from around the world, contributes to local economic activity, supports dozens of year-round jobs, and enables secondary enterprises in art, design, food production, and boatbuilding. **Shorefast businesses, like the Inn, have generated more than \$235 million for the NL economy from 2013-2024 (Shorefast Report, 2024).**

Fogo Island offers a clear lesson: when development grows from a community's geography, culture, and knowledge, and when it is supported by thoughtful collaboration among local, provincial, federal, and Indigenous partners—it can produce sustained prosperity, economic growth, and opportunity.



LOCAL AND REGIONAL SUCCESS STORIES

GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK

Gros Morne National Park stands as one of Newfoundland and Labrador's clearest examples of how sustainability can drive long-term economic renewal. Before becoming a national park and UNESCO world heritage site, Gros Morne faced the same economic pressures that define much of rural Newfoundland: declining fisheries, limited infrastructure, and population outmigration and loss. **The creation of Gros Morne National Park catalyzed economic growth rooted in its landscape, its cultural authenticity, and in sustainable tourism.**

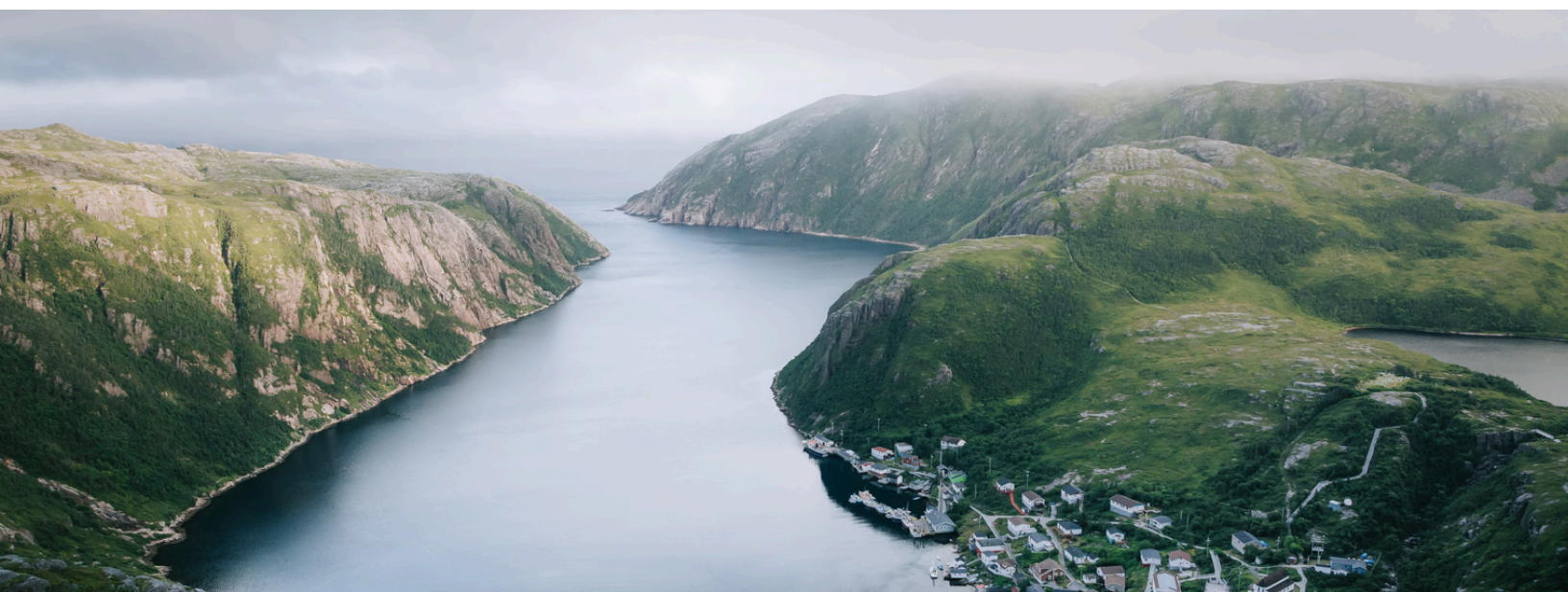
Over five decades, Gros Morne has evolved into an international destination. Gros Morne:

- Welcomes 250,000 visitors annually (Government of NL, 2025)
- Has recently received \$1.6 million in federal investment (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, 2024)
- Supports hundreds of jobs directly through Parks Canada and indirectly through a web of small businesses like inns, craft shops, tour operators, artists, and cultural institutions.

It does so by interpreting and showcasing the region's natural and human heritage. Investments in park infrastructure, trail systems, and interpretation have not only attracted tourists but also improved year-round quality of life for residents.

Particularly significant is Gros Morne's collaborative management model. In it, Parks Canada works with municipalities, Qalipu First Nation, Miawpukek First Nation, and local entrepreneurs to align sustainable goals with community priorities. Initiatives such as the Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST)—which trains tourism professionals from across Canada within the park—demonstrate how the park functions as a national learning laboratory for place-based development (Parks Canada, 2019).

Gros Morne's success proves that protected areas can be powerful economic drivers when they are embedded in local identity and partnership. For the southwest coast, it provides a tested blueprint: **combine sustainability with community participation, and the result is an economy that sustains people and place for generations.**



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE SOUTH SHORE?

The stories of Fogo Island and Gros Morne demonstrate that **successful regional transformations in NL can come from investments in place, culture, and sustainability.**

Both regions show that when communities harness their natural and cultural assets—supported by thoughtful design, local ownership, and strategic government partnership—tourism and sustainability become economic engines.



TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT: FOGO ISLAND & GROS MORNE

1950s – 1960s: Foundations and Crisis

- 1954–1967 – Resettlement and Fisheries Decline: Both regions face severe population loss as Newfoundland’s resettlement program and fishery downturn force families to abandon isolated outposts.
- 1960s – Fogo Island “Fogo Process”: A pioneering community film project by the National Film Board gives Fogo residents a collective voice, sparking the creation of community cooperatives and setting the stage for later local empowerment (National Film Board, 1968).
- 1969 – Gros Morne National Park Established: Following negotiations between the federal and provincial governments, Gros Morne is designated as a national park reserve to protect the region’s unique geology and cultural landscape.

1970s – 1980s: Building Identity and Infrastructure

- 1973 – Gros Morne National Park formally opened to the public, initiating federal investment in roads, trails, campgrounds, and interpretation centres.
- Late 1970s – Early Tourism Growth: Small local operators begin offering boat tours, craft sales, and hospitality services around both regions.

1980s – Sustainability and Community Development:

- Gros Morne becomes a model for collaborative park management with surrounding towns, balancing ecological protection with cultural heritage interpretation.

1990s: Economic Collapse and Reinvention

- 1992 – Cod Moratorium: The collapse of the cod fishery devastates both Fogo Island and Western Newfoundland. Outmigration surges; unemployment spikes.
- Mid-1990s – New Partnerships: Parks Canada expands cultural programming at Gros Morne (music festivals, craft cooperatives), while Fogo leaders explore alternative community-based development models.

2000s: Reinvestment and Recognition

- 2001 – Gros Morne designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognized for its geological significance and exceptional scenery.
- 2006 – Shorefast Foundation founded by Zita Cobb on Fogo Island, aiming to build a new, locally rooted economy based on culture, ecology, and design.
- 2007-2008 – Federal/Provincial Investments in Gros Morne Infrastructure: Trail and interpretation improvements strengthen the park’s status as an anchor of Western NL tourism.



TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT: FOGO ISLAND & GROS MORNE

2010s: Global Attention and Sustainable Tourism

- 2013 – Fogo Island Inn opens, a 29-suite, locally built, community-owned hotel reinvesting all profits into Shorefast’s charitable initiatives.
- 2010s – Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) expands training across Atlantic Canada, making the park a hub for experiential and sustainable tourism.
- 2018 – Fogo Island cited by National Geographic as one of the world’s best examples of geo-tourism, spotlighting its community ownership model.

2020s: Maturity and Model for Others

- 2021-2024 – Shorefast reports over \$235 million in economic activity generated through community enterprises, reinvested locally.
- 2023 – Gros Morne welcomes approximately 250,000 visitors annually, generating an estimated \$60 million in local spending and supporting hundreds of jobs.

While Fogo Island and Gros Morne evolved over decades of experimentation, learning, and incremental investment, the southwest coast is poised to move more quickly. It benefits from the groundwork laid by these earlier successes and their proven models of community-led tourism, the frameworks for collaborative park governance, and the growing public appetite for authentic, sustainable travel.

With strategic coordination and early investment in infrastructure, branding, and community readiness, the region can achieve in ten years what took others thirty. The lessons of Fogo and Gros Morne provide not only a roadmap but a head start. A 10-year development plan, included at the end of this report, outlines the steps required to translate this opportunity into measurable growth, ensuring that by 2035, the southwest coast will stand as Newfoundland and Labrador’s next great story of renewal, identity, and shared prosperity.



OTHER EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Prince Edward Island offers another example of how a small jurisdiction can leverage natural, coastal, and cultural assets to build a thriving tourism economy. In 2024, PEI welcomed 1.71 million non-resident visitors who:

- generated \$520.7 million in direct visitor spending;
- produced \$87.9 million in provincial tax revenue;
- contributed approximately 6 % of PEI's GDP; and
- supported 8,900 full-time across the island (Atlantic Business Magazine, 2025; Government of PEI, 2025).

Prince Edward Island's rise as one of Canada's most successful tourism destinations is the product of strategic vision, consistent investment, and strong brand coherence. The province has spent decades cultivating a tourism identity rooted in its natural beauty, small-island charm, and cultural heritage. Under the province's "Growing Tourism Together" strategy, Tourism PEI and the Tourism Industry Association of PEI (TIAPEI) aligned government, private operators, and local communities around a shared development plan emphasizing infrastructure, experiential tourism, and capacity building (Tourism PEI, 2024). PEI's focus on sustainable growth and consistent storytelling has given it strong brand recognition and exceptional visitor loyalty, positioning the island not just as a summer getaway, but as a nationally recognized, high-value tourism brand synonymous with hospitality, authenticity, and place-based experience.

This shows that even a relatively small region can generate significant economic return from tourism when it capitalizes on its place-based assets. For the southwest coast, the PEI example offers useful insights for setting realistic targets for visitor volumes, spend levels, and employment growth in a sustainable tourism model.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

SAGUENAY-ST. LAWRENCE MARINE CONSERVATION AREA

Canada already has strong precedents for how sustainable marine development can fuel regional growth. The Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park in Quebec demonstrates how a well-designed sustainability strategy can protect critical ecosystems while also driving significant economic and tourism benefits. Through co-management, strategic investment, and clear branding, the Saguenay region has transformed its natural assets into a sustainable source of jobs, revenue, and local pride.

- The conservation area and its communities receive over 1 million visitors annually;
- In 2010, estimated regional spending per year was over \$160 million;
- Generates \$3.16 in government revenue for every \$1 invested in management; and
- Supports hundreds of jobs in guiding, accommodation, transportation, and conservation sectors. (Office of the Auditor General, 2010; Government of Quebec 2025).

Located where the Saguenay River meets the St. Lawrence Estuary, the conservation area spans over 1,200 km². Over two decades, the park has become a cornerstone of the Saguenay region's tourism economy. Tourism is encouraged by whale watching, kayaking, and its natural beauty. The park's whale-watching industry alone generates significant annual revenue and supports hundreds of jobs in the region. The surrounding communities, like Tadoussac and Baie-Sainte-Catherine, have evolved into year-round tourism hubs, supporting small businesses in guiding, accommodation, interpretation, and marine transport.



REGIONAL BRAND VALUE, THE POWER OF PLACE

The region's brand and identity are one and the same. Like the other successful tourist regions: Fogo Island, Gros Morne, PEI and Saguenay-St. Lawrence the most powerful brands are grown from place. Each of these destinations has built its reputation by linking authenticity and place with experience.

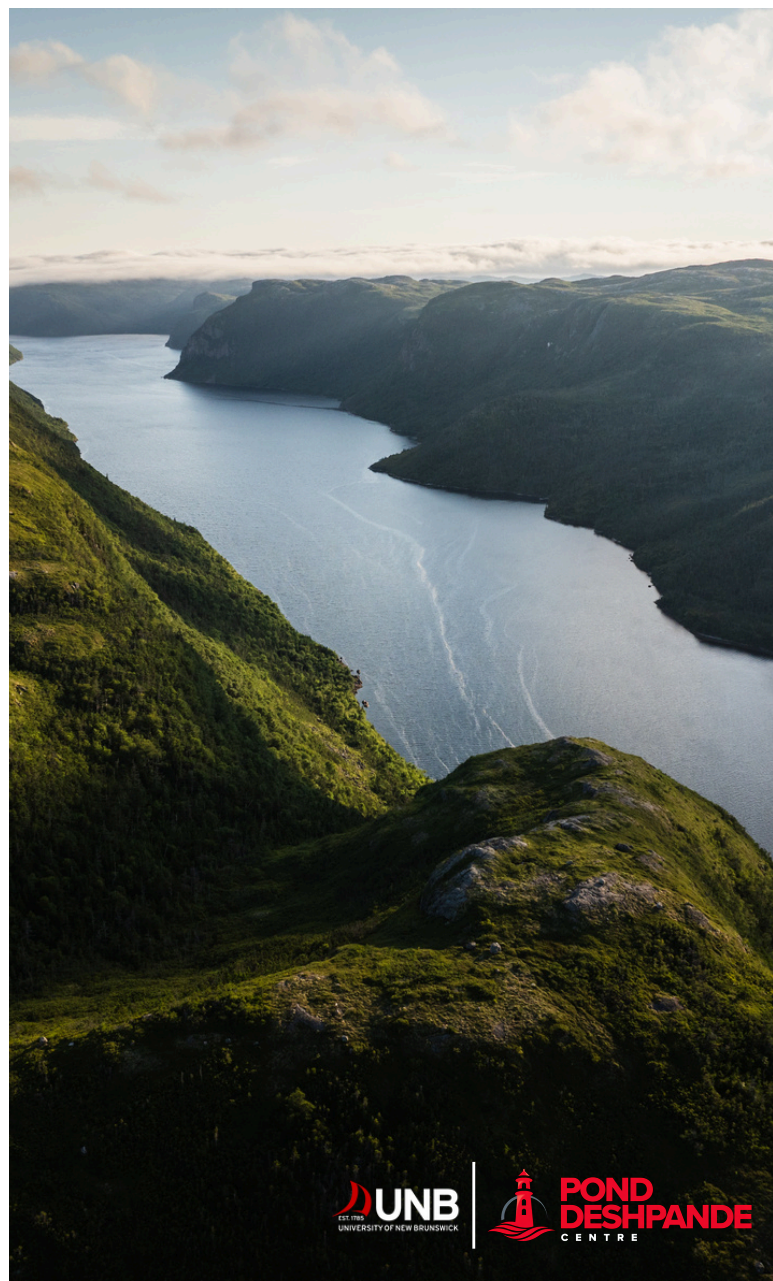
The examples cited: Fogo Island, Gros Morne, PEI, and Saguenay all succeed because of their own distinct value propositions. Fogo Island represents cultural renewal, a place where community, art, and design revived a once-declining economy through local ingenuity. Gros Morne is defined by geological wonder and a UNESCO World Heritage site where visitors come to witness nature and beauty. Prince Edward Island offers cultivated charm and hospitality, gentle landscapes, coastal heritage, Green Gables, and ease of access. Saguenay–St. Lawrence embodies the harmony between nature and livelihood, where whales, rivers, and people coexist through co-management and marine stewardship.

The southwest coast, and particularly its fjords, are globally unique and offer an unparalleled opportunity to develop a unified brand of sustainability and adventure—one that celebrates Newfoundland's wild, fjord-lined landscapes while inviting visitors to engage with its communities and culture.

By emphasising the region's wilderness, ruggedness, cultural richness and, now, its protection, the region can extend Newfoundland's existing tourism identity beyond Gros Morne and Fogo, transforming the southwest coast into a symbol of sustainable, world-class travel.

A landscape of glacial fjords, salmon rivers, whales, and outport culture—remote, untouched, and authentic. Its appeal is rooted in raw beauty, ecological integrity, and the living connection between people and sea. It represents adventure, authenticity, and sustainability.

A coherent brand strategy should weave together sustainability, community, and culture: the natural assets of the fjords, local stories, Indigenous histories, and the economic opportunity created by sustainable tourism. In so doing, the region can become a national symbol of renewal, demonstrating how protecting place and promoting prosperity can go hand in hand.



CONCLUSION

The economic stories of Fogo Island, Gros Morne, Prince Edward Island, and Saguenay-St. Lawrence all demonstrate that sustainable tourism works when it begins with place and people. These regions have proven, when aligned with local identity and supported by strategic investment, sustainable place-based initiatives can become a long-term economic engine.

For Newfoundland and Labrador, this proposal for the southwest coast is more than an environmental initiative—it is an economic development strategy grounded in community participation, partnership, and resilience. In so doing, the province can strengthen its tourism brand, create jobs, and diversify its rural economy while safeguarding its natural environment.

Finally, like other successful models of sustainable place-based economic and tourism development such as Fogo Island, Gros Morne, Saguenay, or PEI —**the southwest coast cannot pursue both open-aquaculture and nature-driven tourism at once; the two are fundamentally incompatible. Tourism depends on clean water, unspoiled coastlines, and open access to the sea, while aquaculture transforms those same spaces into industrial zones marked by waste discharge, visual barriers, and ecological risk.** The success of every comparable destination has come not from industrial expansion, but from protecting the integrity of its natural environment.



An aerial photograph of a coastal village nestled in a fjord, surrounded by steep, green mountains. The village features a cluster of houses and a small harbor. The text 'Part 3' is centered above the main title.

Part 3

MAP OF REGIONAL COLLABORATORS

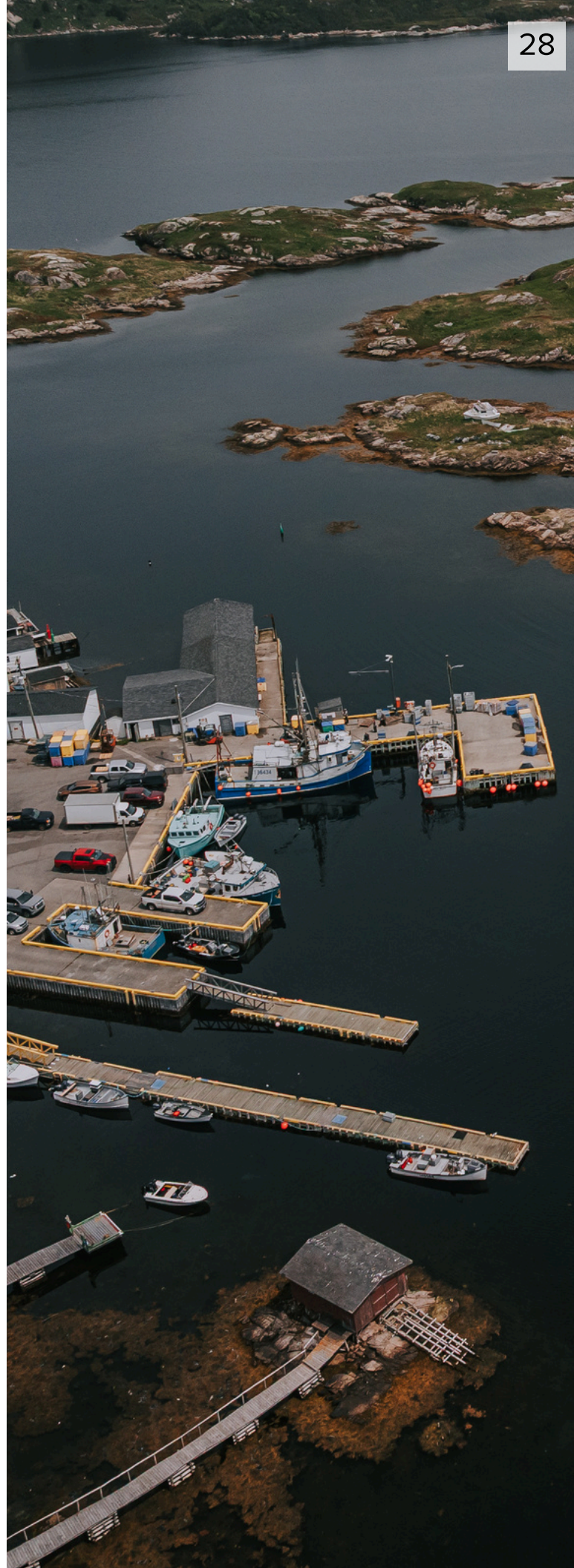
PROPOSED GOVERNANCE OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The success of regional development will depend on collaboration, consensus, and trust among all partners. Establishing a governance structure that reflects local and Indigenous voices and shared decision-making is essential to ensuring economic growth and community prosperity.

Crucially, this initiative calls for further collaboration between Indigenous rights holders and local communities and businesses, organizations such as the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), provincial, municipal governments, and the Saltwind Foundation. Together, these groups can ensure that collaboration and shared decision-making form the foundation of a management framework that protects communities by strengthening their economies and preserving their ecology.

A partnership and governance model for the region consists of representatives from:

- Local communities (Burgeon, Ramea, Grey River, Francois);
- Miawpukek First Nation and Qalipu First Nation;
- Provincial Government; and
- Private sector and philanthropic representatives





Part 4

10-YEAR DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

PART FOUR: 10-YEAR DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

VISION

To build a thriving tourism economy rooted in the region's fjords, culture, and community which creates meaningful employment, attracts visitors, and strengthens local communities without compromising the ecology that defines the southwest coast.

PHASE 1 (2025–2026): COLLABORATION AND FOUNDATIONS

This phase focuses on bringing people together, defining a shared vision, and laying the groundwork for development. The goal is to move deliberately and collaboratively, ensuring local voices guide every next step.

Key Actions:

- Establish a regional foundation to facilitate and encourage public and private investment (the creation of the Saltwind Foundation is underway);
- Conduct community design sessions to identify tourism potential and infrastructure gaps;
- Create a tourism strategy for sustainable tourism; and
- Launch a communications and marketing campaign



This phase is already well underway. Work has already started in both Burgeo and Ramea, and sites have been evaluated to build marinas in each town as well as a restaurant and lodging in each. Communications and marketing is also underway, with websites being updated to include full logistics details for how to get there, ferry schedules, housing opportunities with locals and standalone, etc.

This is all being funded privately while the Saltwind Foundation is being built, and will be ready for the 2026 tourist season. Additionally, a working group with Gros Morne tourist operators has been established to identify “clustering” opportunities for Gros Morne visitors in the southwest coast region. An Operating Committee for Saltwind has been formed, which is the forum through which design and investment decisions will be curated and agreed upon.

Estimated Investment: \$500,000 – \$1 million (planning, engagement, branding).

Outcomes:

- Agreed regional roadmap and governance model.
- Establish partnerships with local entrepreneurs and craft producers.

PHASE 2 (2027–2029): ACCESS AND EXPERIENCE BUILDING

This stage transforms planning into tangible visitor experiences. The focus is on small-scale infrastructure, improving access, and helping communities create authentic, place-based tourism products.

Key Actions:

- Upgrade ferry terminals and docking points to enable small-vessel tourism (whale watching, kayaking, salmon tours, small cruise vessels).
- Establish micro-grants (\$25k–\$100k) for community inns, outfitters, and cultural enterprises.
- Develop trailheads, viewpoints, and signage.
- Pilot community homestay and guiding programs in partnership with Saltwind.

Estimated Investment: \$3–\$5 million (total, multi-partner funding).

Outcomes:

- Reliable visitor access via existing routes.
- 10-15 new local tourism ventures established.
- Annual visitation rises gradually to ~20,000 visitors.



With early ventures in place, this phase builds identity and visibility. It focuses on creating a unified regional brand and expanding the depth of experiences that make the fjords distinct and memorable.

Key Actions:

- Build a new, mainstream, and destination hotel in Burgeo (like Fogo, with the scale to be determined) to “anchor” the coast for high end tourism.
- Market the region collaboratively with the help of Saltwind
- Expand guided experiences: whale watching, coastal hikes, storytelling tours, Indigenous cultural activities.
- Build partnerships with academic and environmental community groups for research tourism (marine and climate studies).

Estimated Investment: \$2–\$4 million.

Outcomes:

- Growing reputation as a boutique, sustainability-based destination.
- Year-round employment for ~100 residents.
- Increased local capacity and ownership of tourism assets.

The final phase ensures that growth remains balanced and regional benefits endure. It focuses on reinvestment, local governance, and protecting the natural character that makes the region unique.

Key Actions:

- Develop sustainability standards for marine use, accommodation, and visitor conduct.
- Support ongoing training and mentorship for local guides and entrepreneurs.

Estimated Investment: \$1–\$2 million (operations, training, monitoring).

Outcomes:

- Self-sustaining tourism economy.
- Enhanced sustainable use of fjords and marine ecosystems.
- The region recognized as a model for small-scale, community-led, place-based economic renewal.

By 2035:

- 100+ local jobs supported.
- \$10–15 million in total annual economic activity.
- Strong community ownership and benefit through the Saltwind Foundation.
- A global reputation for authentic, low-impact, sustainably led tourism.



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