

# The Next Ten Years: Implementing a Strategic Plan for the Geological Services Division

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The Geological Services Division, like most geological surveys across Canada is facing many challenges, perhaps the most important being the eligibility of more than 70% of the division's professional staff for retirement between 2006 and 2012. Other challenges result from the evolving, and expanding geoscience needs of the division's clients. Historically, geoscience information generated by the division was used principally by the mineral and petroleum resources industries and university researchers. In recent years, however, the division's geoscience information is increasingly being used by other government departments and agencies, and private-sector companies and associations, to address an increasingly diverse number of issues pertaining to the environment, health and safety, economic development, tourism and culture, archeology, and provincial/municipal infrastructure. Another important challenge results from the relative maturity of the geoscience databases, including bedrock and surficial mapping, geochemical databases, mineral inventory databases, and detailed information regarding major mineral deposits. While many Canadian surveys struggle to complete their 1:250 000 scale bedrock map coverage and regional geochemical and metallogenic surveys, much of Nova Scotia has detailed geoscience coverage. Extensive work in the province over the past three decades, mostly through federal-provincial mineral development agreements, has generated a robust set of geoscience databases. As a result, there is much less need for large scale projects, however, there is increasing need for targeted projects designed to address specific questions or concerns. Another challenge faced by the division is the recent advance in digital technology that dictates an increase in human and fiscal resources be directed at providing clients with digital geoscience information and data, principally via the internet.

In response to these challenges, the division initiated an internal planning exercise in 2005 that led to the preparation of a strategic plan for the Geological Services Division entitled *The Next Ten Years*. The key objectives of the plan are to provide a comprehensive understanding of program priorities to provide guidance for future project selection, initiation of new program elements and hiring new staff, and to assist in developing decision-making procedures.

There have been several staff changes in the past year, including the departure and retirement of three staff members. Initiatives to address staffing challenges include the establishment of Emeritus Scientist positions, ongoing collaborations with university researchers and support for graduate students, and participation in internship programs.

One aspect of the strategic plan was the identification of important issues for Nova Scotians that require geoscience expertise currently absent from the division. These include: (1) provision of expertise on the geology of sedimentary basins to assist in the exploration for onshore hydrocarbons (coal, gas, oil) to mitigate energy issues; (2) water resource assessments to identify and protect potable water sources, (3) acquisition of geophysical expertise to support other geoscience programs, and (4) provision of advice and expertise on coastal erosion processes.

One factor that may have a significant impact on the future of the division is the availability of funding through federal-provincial programs such as future Targeted Geoscience Initiatives and the proposed federal Cooperative Geological Mapping Strategy. In addition, provincial funding initiatives, including cooperative arrangements with Regional Development Authorities and other departments in response to environmental and health issues (such as naturally occurring and anthropogenic metals in the environment) may also have an important effect on the division's activities and project plans.