

Now incorporated and backed by strong inaugural board, Co. Innovation Centre is poised to unlock generational opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador

(St. John's, NL — January 19, 2026) — Co. Innovation Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador (COIC) is solidifying the foundation needed to drive long-term economic advancement for Newfoundland and Labrador. COIC officially incorporated as an independent, not-for-profit organization effective January 1, 2026, under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act.

The incorporation formalizes COIC's evolution into a standalone, federally incorporated organization with a clear mandate to serve as Newfoundland and Labrador's industry-led hub for cross-sector innovation, commercialization, and economic competitiveness. Federal incorporation strengthens COIC's governance and independence while enhancing its ability to engage national and international partners, access broader funding, and support industry across sectors and jurisdictions.

"Newfoundland and Labrador is well-positioned at this moment — with deep expertise in oceans, remote operations, mining, energy and defence, as well as our strategic geographical advantages such as the gateway to the Arctic, proximity to Europe, access to critical minerals, and deep-water ports", explains the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Chair, COIC Board of Directors. "COIC is focused on accelerating the competitiveness of Newfoundland and Labrador's industries and being an incorporated not-for-profit with a strong board helps us do that."

COIC has established a strategic Board of Directors to provide governance oversight and guide the organization through its next phase of growth as Newfoundland and Labrador's cross-sector, industry-led innovation hub. The Board reflects COIC's mandate as a cross-sector platform for collaboration and commercialization, with members bringing expertise across priority sectors including energy, oceans, mining, defence, and economic development.

As [previously announced in Fall 2025](#), the Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr. serves as Inaugural Chair of the COIC Board of Directors. COIC's Inaugural Board of Directors includes:

- The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr., (Chair), Senior Business Advisor, Stewart McKelvey
- Jessica Babb, Barrister & Solicitor, Babb Law Office
- Victoria Belbin, CEO, Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association
- Cathy Bennett, Co-Founding Partner, Sandpiper Ventures
- Randy Billiard, President & CEO, Virtual Marine
- Carolann Harding, CEO, SmartICE
- Patrick Hickey, Independent Consultant
- Ted Lomond, CEO, North Atlantic
- Colin Ryan, COO & CFO, Solace Power
- Karen Skinner, Executive Leader & Board Director



- Florian Villaumé, CEO, techNL
- Kevin Woodbury, Vice President, Innovation and Technology, Fortis Inc

COIC is unique in that it is not a membership-driven entity, but a catalyst for cross-sector innovation, focused on driving growth, modernization, and global competitiveness across Newfoundland and Labrador's critical sectors. To help build a Newfoundland and Labrador high-performing innovation ecosystem, COIC will be a hub that offers multiple ways for the ecosystem to engage with the Centre to accelerate growth across sectors. Whether that's research and development, light industrial space, office space, demo opportunities, virtual programming, or something else, the purpose of COIC is to identify those needs and fill them.

"Innovation and resiliency are baked into the DNA of this province. But we need to capitalize on emerging growth and funding opportunities in priority sectors - and we need to do it at the pace of the current global moment," added Kay-Fowlow. "We have a clear, strong vision that is now complemented with a laser-focused board that brings the experience, credibility, and cross-sector perspective to steward COIC through its next phase—while ensuring the Centre remains non-partisan, mission-driven and focused on long-term impact for the province. It's an exciting time to be part of the innovation ecosystem in Newfoundland and Labrador."

COIC will continue to work closely with ecosystem partners and will maintain strong collaborative relationships with organizations across industry, research, and government committed to advancing innovation and commercialization in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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About COIC

Co. Innovation Centre (COIC) is an innovation hub that fosters industry, business, and ecosystem collisions across multiple sectors. It is focused on fostering collaboration and technology growth to accelerate the development of the innovation-driven economy across the province. This trailblazing initiative was born out of the needs of the innovation community and broader ecosystem. COIC's inception was led by techNL, in partnership with Energy NL, Canada's Ocean Supercluster (OSC), and Energy Research & Innovation Newfoundland & Labrador (ERINL), and econext, with support from many other companies, organizations, and volunteers. Funding has been provided by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and through the Government of Canada's Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). More about COIC at www.coic.co.

Biographies - Board of Directors

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr. (Chair), Senior Business Advisor, Stewart McKelvey

Seamus O'Regan is a Senior Business Advisor at Stewart McKelvey, Atlantic Canada's largest law firm, where he advises on hydroelectricity, hydrogen, wind power, tech, mining, oil and gas, Indigenous economic development, defence, labour and Canada-US relations. In his previous role as federal Minister, he played a foundational role in the establishment of COIC, championing the vision of a world-class innovation hub that supports remote operations and fosters collaboration across the province's critical sectors. His leadership was instrumental in securing the initial \$9.6 million in funding that helped launch the Centre. Being born in St. John's, raised in Labrador, and meeting with thousands of organizations and individuals in his years in journalism and politics, Mr. O'Regan brings a deep understanding of the experiences and opportunities in sectors across Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond.

Jessica Babb, Barrister & Solicitor, Babb Law Office

Jessica M. Babb is a lifelong resident of Carbonear, Conception Bay, where her family roots run deep. Since 2013, Jessica has maintained a busy private law practice in her hometown, focusing on civil litigation and property law, and is actively involved with and passionate about her community and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Jessica brings extensive experience providing sound practical advice and guidance as a leader both professionally and through volunteerism in a wide range of areas including law, governance, healthcare, and fine arts.

Victoria Belbin, CEO, Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association

Victoria Belbin is CEO of the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association (ACADA), where she drives innovation and collaboration across the region's aerospace and defence sectors. Since joining ACADA in 2021, she has strengthened its role as a catalyst for industry growth, building partnerships and preparing members to compete locally and globally.

An experienced association leader, Victoria has transformed organizations into influential policy advocates and fostered collaborative environments through strategic initiatives and stakeholder engagement. She brings extensive governance and management expertise from serving on boards including the Workplace Health and Safety Commission (WNL), NL Liquor Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, Cancer Care Foundation, TaskForceNL, Wonderbolt Circus, and the Rideau Hall Foundation.

Victoria holds a Master of Marine Studies from Memorial University and an ICD.D designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors.

Cathy Bennett, Co-Founding Partner, Sandpiper Ventures

Cathy Bennett is a seasoned board chair, director, investor, and business leader with more than three decades of experience across energy, mining, capital markets, technology, and public policy.



Her governance work spans publicly traded companies, crown corporations, and privately held businesses, alongside active involvement in early-stage innovation and venture investment.

Over her career, she has held more than two dozen corporate, public sector, and non-profit directorships, including multiple chair roles. Her experience includes leadership in major resource projects, energy and utilities, telecommunications, industrial manufacturing, advanced technology, and entrepreneurship—reflecting a long-standing commitment to economic development, innovation, and sustainable growth across diverse sectors.

She brings deep experience in economic development across Atlantic Canada's highest-potential sectors, including mining, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and innovation-driven technologies. Her work spans major resource developments, energy transition initiatives, dual-use and frontier technologies, and scale-up strategies that strengthen regional competitiveness. Recognized for navigating complex stakeholder environments and aligning industry, government, and community interests, she has consistently advanced productivity, investment attraction, and long-term growth.

Randy Billiard, President & CEO, Virtual Marine

Dr. Randy Billard is President and CEO of Virtual Marine. He is the original founder of the company and has been with the company since it started in 2004. He is a P. Eng, holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Master's Degree in Ocean and Naval Architectural Engineering from Memorial University of Newfoundland, He has a Ph.D. in Engineering at Memorial University with a research concentration in measuring human performance in simulation-based training programs. His research work has included human factors studies to assess the effectiveness of simulation-based training programs, and studying AI methods to increase trainee competence and operational readiness. Randy is currently responsible for introducing Virtual Marine's dual-purpose small vessel and ice simulation technologies to users in global defence, oil and gas, energy and ferry markets. Randy is also on the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association and techNL, and he has focused Virtual Marine as a strong ecosystem partner in Atlantic Canada.

Carolann Harding, CEO, SmartICE

Carolann Harding ICD.D, CEO of SmartICE, is a dynamic leader and team player that thrives on creativity, strategy, collaboration and engagement. Carolann is leading a diverse coast to coast to coast award-winning team focusing on meeting SmartICE's social enterprise mandate and strategic directions. SmartICE community-based services provide invaluable, data-driven insights into ice thickness and local ice travel conditions, in near real-time. Canadian Geographic has named SmartICE #1 of 20 Canadian Innovations to watch. Carolann is currently a Director on the Memorial Faculty of Business Advisory Board, Chair of the ICD NL Chapter Executive, Director on the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association, Director on the St. John's International Women's Film Festival and a member of the Oceans Advance Industry Advisory Council. Carolann is a graduate from both Memorial and Dalhousie Universities. Atlantic Business Magazine, named



Carolann as one of Atlantic Canada's 25 most Powerful Women in Business in 2021 and a Top 50 CEOs 2024 and 2025.

Patrick Hickey, Independent Consultant

Patrick is a dynamic leader with a calm demeanour, proudly from Newfoundland and Labrador. Interested in how culture and community interact with business and the economy, Patrick is interested in leveraging both enterprise and policy as tools for place-based innovation and development. His interests include purpose-driven finance, current affairs, the fishing industry, and football.

Patrick has studied innovation from seminal academics at Oxford University, where he pursued a Masters of Public Policy and a Masters of Science in Sustainable Enterprise as a Rhodes Scholar. He has also observed and analyzed innovation strategies of public and private enterprise, pursuing a business degree at the Richard Ivey School of Business, and working in Mergers and Acquisitions Global Investment Banking with RBC Capital Markets. Most recently, Patrick has practiced innovation as a Senior Director of Strategy with a global seafood company, and through service work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association.

Ted Lomond, CEO, North Atlantic

Prior to his role at North Atlantic, Mr. Lomond served as a Deputy Minister in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for the Departments of Municipal and Provincial Affairs; Natural Resources; and Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

His experience in economic and business development also includes senior management roles with the econext (formerly the Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association), the Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Economic Development Association (NLREDA), and the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development at Memorial University. He currently serves on the Board of the Canadian Fuels Association (CFA), the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association (ACADA), and is Chairperson of North Sun Energy LP.

Mr. Lomond's has a Master of Business Administration, a Master of Philosophy in Humanities, a Master Certificate in Project Management, and diplomas in Applied Ethics (Environmental) and Credit Management. He is a Fellow of the School of Graduate Studies at Memorial University and previously was a lecturer in the Faculty of Business Administration at Memorial University. He is a Certified International Trade Professional (CITP/FIBP) and in 2024 he received the Newfoundland and Labrador Confederation 75th Anniversary Medal.

Colin Ryan, COO & CFO, Solace Power

Colin Ryan, CPA, ICD.D, serves as COO and CFO of Solace Power, a Mount Pearl, NL-based wireless power technology company focused on industrial and defence applications. With over 15 years in executive leadership, he also specializes in board governance, chairing not-for-profit boards and serving as a director for tech startups alongside traditional industry boards. A seasoned CPA, he currently spearheads strategic fundraising, venture capital, and financial scaling for



deeptech and SaaS firms, complemented with foundation skills in independent assurance, financial advisory, and extensive commercial real estate development experience.

Karen Skinner, Executive Leader & Board Director

Karen Skinner is an executive leader and board director with over 32 years of relevant experience. Ms. Skinner previously held the role of vice-president of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (NL). Ms. Skinner has a Master of Business Administration from Dalhousie and a Bachelor of Commerce from Memorial University. Ms. Skinner's senior leadership experience encompasses work related to economic development and public policy. As an individual devoted to giving back to her community, she serves on several boards such as the Janeway Children's Hospital Foundation, Dr. Jack Hand Legacy Foundation, Business and Arts NL, Bonavista Biennale, and Lady Cove Women's Choir. Ms. Skinner is also a member of the Board of Management for the Canada Revenue Agency and the Independent Appointments Commission (NL).

Florian Villaum , CEO, techNL

Florian Villaum  is an entrepreneurial leader dedicated to creating and growing impact-oriented initiatives. Since becoming the CEO of techNL in May 2022 in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, Florian has driven the organization through a transformative 10x growth in its project portfolio, spearheading its two largest initiatives: Find your Future In Tech (a \$32.5 M project) and the Co. Innovation Centre. Before joining techNL, Florian also founded and developed the Memorial Centre for Entrepreneurship, elevating it to an internationally recognized, award-winning university center. Florian's leadership has been recognized in the Atlantic Business Magazine's list of Top 50 CEOs in Atlantic Canada, in both 2020, 2024 and 2025.

Kevin Woodbury, Vice President, Innovation and Technology, Fortis Inc

Kevin Woodbury is Vice President, Innovation and Technology at Fortis Inc., leading enterprise-wide efforts to harness technology and innovation in support of the company's long-term strategy and performance. With over two decades of leadership across innovation, business development, operations, and human resources within the Fortis group, he brings strong governance expertise, including NACD Directorship Certification and a professional cybersecurity certification. Kevin focuses on building the strategy, structures and culture needed to scale innovation. He also serves as Chair of Shorefast Social Enterprises Inc. and a board member of Junior Achievement NL, supporting social enterprise, youth education, and place-based economic development in the province.