

**OPPORTUNITY FOR MASTERS STUDY AT THE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY**

Research Area: **Impact Assessment / Regional Assessments**

Supervisors: **Dr. Steve Bonnell**
 Other(s) TBD

The Department of Geography is offering one (1) funded studentship for an MA or MSc student to work in this area, commencing in Spring or Fall 2025.

An initial overview of the proposed research topic is provided below, for illustrative and discussion purposes. This will be subject to further definition by the student, in consultation with the supervisors, in the initial stages of the research.

Early inquiries and expressions of interest from prospective students are welcomed, addressed to:

Dr. Steve Bonnell
Department of Geography
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada
Email steveb@mun.ca
<https://www.mun.ca/geography/people/faculty/steve-bonnell/>

This opportunity will be partially funded through an external grant (and is subject to final funding availability).

Regional Assessments: Their Role in Improving Impact Assessment Effectiveness and Efficiency

The Canadian *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) includes provisions for the planning and conduct of regional assessments (RAs), and their required consideration at various stages of subsequent project impact assessments (IAs). Several RAs have been completed or are in progress, focused on existing and future development activities and associated environmental, health, social and economic issues in various parts of the country. Experience to date suggests that there are numerous potential objectives, approaches, outcomes and uses for such assessments, and often diverse views amongst participants around what an RA can be and should deliver.

On the one hand, RAs are seen as an important tool for improving the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of IA processes, helping address complex regional issues that are difficult to assess and manage through project-specific IAs alone. At the same time, they are often viewed as a means of streamlining and expediting subsequent IAs and associated decision-making, including as part of “federal efforts needed to accelerate regulatory efficiency for clean growth projects” as per a recent federal *Cabinet Directive* (July 2024).

This research will explore the role of RAs in achieving the dual (but inter-related) objectives of improving both IA “effectiveness” and “efficiency”. This will include investigating key procedural and methodological factors that have implications for RA utility and outcomes in that regard, and ways to maximize the effect of earlier RAs on the scope and conduct of subsequent project-specific IAs.