Environmental Trust Fund – Department of Environment and Local Government

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Why Is This Important?

- The environment is a significant source of concern for New Brunswickers and one of government's priority areas
- The Environmental Trust Fund had expenditures of over $77 million during the past 10 years, and an accumulated Fund surplus of almost $41 million as of March 31, 2022
- A lack of oversight in the Environmental Trust Fund would leave the legislature and the public without enough information to determine if the Fund mandate is being achieved

Overall Conclusions

- The Department is not effectively overseeing the Environmental Trust Fund to ensure it is being used to deliver on its mandate
- The Department has not evaluated all of the project results to see how they have contributed to the achievement of the Fund mandate or what has been accomplished with 30 years of expenditures
- The Fund's accumulated surplus grew to almost $41 million by 2022, without a plan to use it

What We Found

Roles and Responsibilities Are Not Clear

- Mandate letters not provided regularly
- Advisory Board roles, responsibilities and expectations not defined
- No single role specifically tasked to oversee Fund administration

Lack of Planning

- The Department has no documented strategic or annual plans for the Environmental Trust Fund
- Over $77 million has been spent over the past 10 years without strategic or annual plans

Evaluation and Decision-making are Not Evidence-based

- The rationale for why some projects and expenses are ineligible is unclear
- There is no standardized method for evaluating project funding
- Eligibility criteria are not clearly defined

Inadequate Performance Evaluation and Reporting

- Information on past project results has not been evaluated
- Only selected project results are reported annually
- There is no explanation provided for variances between budget and actual expenditures