

Elections New Brunswick

Strategic Plan
2018–2027

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Introduction

Ms. Kimberly Poffenroth was appointed Chief Electoral Officer for the Province of New Brunswick effective March 2017 to carry out the mandate outlined in the provincial *Elections Act*, *Political Process Financing Act*, *Municipal Elections Act*, and related acts and regulations.

In the summer of 2017, she initiated a strategic planning process to identify the direction and goals for Elections New Brunswick over the next ten years. This resulting strategic plan represents a common vision for Elections New Brunswick that emerged from discussions and workshops with all staff, along with input from political parties.

The *Strategic Plan 2018-2027* will focus organizational efforts and align operational decisions with the goals and actions as set out in the plan. The plan will also communicate to the Legislative Assembly and the public how Elections New Brunswick intends to fulfil its mandate.

Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

As the Chief Electoral Officer of New Brunswick, I am proud to lead a team of professionals whose priority is the integrity of the electoral processes that we administer.

While many of the duties we perform in administering elections are prescribed through legislation, Elections New Brunswick must be prepared to respond to opportunities as well as challenges that impact the way we operate.

This was the motivation behind creating the first ever *Strategic Plan for Elections New Brunswick (2018-2027)*. This plan provides us with a road map for the future, by establishing strategic goals that will guide our efforts to be a forward-thinking, innovative and efficient organization.

These goals will help Elections New Brunswick maintain focus on our vision: to be a trusted organization that supports the democratic process by providing innovative electoral services to all New Brunswickers.

Over the last decade, we have modernized and streamlined voting procedures in New Brunswick, reforms that are now being replicated by other electoral agencies in Canada. The commitment and vision that our team has dedicated to these advances is an indication of how we will approach the challenges of administering elections over the next decade.

I am proud to present our *Strategic Plan 2018-2027* to the members of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. The plan is a collaborative effort of the employees of Elections New Brunswick who provided valued and thoughtful input on their vision of the organization. We also appreciate the input of all of the political party stakeholders who provided their feedback.

I wish to thank everyone who participated in making this process a success, especially the Elections New Brunswick team. Your dedication to and passion for your work is reflected in the values and goals of this strategic plan.



Kimberly Poffenroth
Chief Electoral Officer

Chief Electoral Officer of New Brunswick

The Chief Electoral Officer administers elections to ensure they are fair and free of political influence as set out in the *Elections Act*. In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer holds the position of Supervisor of Political Financing and oversees compliance with the *Political Process Financing Act*.

In New Brunswick, the Chief Electoral Officer is also the Municipal Electoral Officer, and as such is responsible for all municipal, district education council, regional health authority elections and plebiscites conducted under the *Municipal Elections Act*.

The Chief Electoral Officer is an officer of the Legislative Assembly. To ensure the position remains non-partisan, the *Elections Act* disqualifies the Chief Electoral Officer from being able to vote.

Strategic Plan 2018-2027

Our *Strategic Plan 2018-2027* comprises four components: mandate, vision, core values and strategic goals. We have identified six strategic goals as our current priorities, and each is supported by actions we will undertake to achieve these goals.

Our ability to deliver on these goals is subject to external influences such as new or amended legislation. These types of changes may require that we adjust the priorities and action items on which we intend to focus.

We will monitor our progress in implementing the planned actions and present these results in our annual reports. We will update our planned actions as necessary and will review the Strategic Plan in its entirety in 2023.

Our Mandate

Elections New Brunswick's mandate is to conduct free and fair elections for New Brunswickers, to facilitate compliance with electoral laws, and to advance public awareness of and confidence in the electoral process.

Our Vision

Elections New Brunswick is a trusted organization that supports the democratic process by providing innovative electoral services to all New Brunswickers.

Our Core Values

Our three core values are the deeply ingrained principles that guide all of our actions and influence everything we do. They guide our internal conduct as well as our relationship with our stakeholders. They guide us in fulfilling our mandate and realizing our vision. These values are essential to creating a work environment that supports the execution of our strategy.

Integrity

We work in an honest and trustworthy manner administering transparent and non-partisan electoral processes that adhere to legal and ethical principles.

Innovation

We strive to develop new and better ways to improve our electoral processes and services provided to our stakeholders.

Professionalism

Our strength comes from the knowledge, experience and dedication of our staff. Working together, we consistently deliver high-quality electoral products and services.

Our Strategic Goals

The following six strategic goals support the realization of our vision.

1. Encourage voter engagement
2. Improve services to political parties
3. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes
4. Increase employee satisfaction
5. Improve workplace efficiency and effectiveness
6. Increase organizational resilience

Our Strategic Goals and Planned Actions

1. Encourage voter engagement

Actions:

- a. Increase the accuracy and completeness of the register of electors
 - Pre-register high school students who will become electors
 - Implement online voter registration
- b. Develop and distribute information on electoral processes
- c. Support partners in delivering civics education
- d. Develop and implement new methods of voter communication with Elections New Brunswick
- e. Introduce “vote anywhere” at polling stations
- f. Explore mail-in ballots for municipal by-elections
- g. Conduct post-election surveys of voters

2. Improve services to political parties

Actions:

- a. Promote access to electoral information and maps
- b. Implement communication, in real-time, of who has voted at polling stations
- c. Simplify and modernize financial reporting processes
 - Revise the annual financial return for political parties to more closely resemble standard financial statements
 - Develop new electronic tools to facilitate financial reporting
- d. Implement a web-based registry of political entities
- e. Conduct surveys of political entities

3. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes

Actions:

- a. Seek legislative change to adopt a merit-based, competitive hiring process for Returning Officers, Municipal Returning Officers and other field staff
- b. Provide ongoing and innovative training opportunities for field staff
- c. Design and implement an election worker management and payment system
- d. Acquire additional technical and human resources to develop improved electoral and administrative processes
- e. Seek legislative change to modernize electoral legislation (*Elections Act, Political Process Financing Act and Municipal Elections Act*)
 - Improve investigation and enforcement provisions
 - Recognize impact of fixed-date elections on political financing

4. Increase employee satisfaction

Actions:

- a. Align the organizational structure with the Elections New Brunswick mandate, vision and strategic goals
- b. Revise the employee performance management system
- c. Provide for employee professional development
- d. Recognize and reward performance
- e. Support work-life balance
- f. Improve internal communications
- g. Conduct employee satisfaction surveys

5. Improve workplace efficiency and effectiveness

Actions:

- a. Review and document existing Elections New Brunswick policies and procedures
- b. Improve administrative processes and supporting file management system
- c. Develop, document and implement new administrative policies where gaps exist
- d. Co-locate the Elections New Brunswick warehouse and head office
- e. Prepare and publish an annual report

6. Increase organizational resilience

Actions:

- a. Create and maintain a risk management program
- b. Cross-train staff to increase operational capacity and flexibility
- c. Develop a succession plan for key persons/positions
- d. Develop, document and test business continuity and disaster recovery plans
- e. Anticipate and prepare for realistic future scenarios
- f. Create opportunities to share systems, equipment and training with other Canadian electoral offices

History of Elections New Brunswick

With a history that pre-dates Canada's Confederation, New Brunswick has had more than 200 years' experience with elections. Some of that history is quite colourful and features controversial scandals, civic unrest, blatant voter "persuasion" and outright corruption. However, the evolution of legislative democracy, particularly in the last half-century, has resulted in the adoption of accountable, principled and carefully managed administrative electoral processes that are in step with other Canadian jurisdictions.

Significant advances can be traced to electoral reform in 1967. Among other changes, that reform resulted in universal adult suffrage for Canadian citizens aged 21 years or older – until then only landholders were eligible to vote – and control over all aspects of balloting being taken away from political parties. The position of the Chief Electoral Officer was established, independent of the political party system and directly accountable to the Legislative Assembly. The first Chief Electoral Officer was Donald Whalen (1967-1970).

The 1967 reforms began a prolonged period of incremental change starting with the lowering of the voting age to 18 in 1971. In 1974, single-member districts were created to replace the traditional multi-member district system, and, in 1978, the province began to regulate election finances through the Office of the Supervisor of Political Financing. Disparity in constituency sizes, which was a factor in the 1987 election, led to the establishment in 1991 of the New Brunswick Boundaries Commission; its report in 1993 resulted in the Legislative Assembly adopting new constituency boundaries.

In 2003, the Government appointed a Commission on Legislative Democracy to review the electoral processes as well as report on legislative reform, referenda, party politics, civics education and the democratic deficit. Its recommendations were broad and often controversial, but the *Electoral Boundaries and Representation Act* was passed in 2005, and an Electoral Boundaries and Representation Commission was appointed to implement the law. In its extensive review, aided by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commission considered communities of interest, representation of the province's two official linguistic communities, population shifts, specific challenges in rural areas, municipal and administrative boundaries, and geography, as well as other factors. The boundary redistribution was in place for the 2006 election.

Other reforms followed. In 2007, fixed election dates were adopted. Another recommendation from the Commission on Legislative Democracy led to the establishment in 2007 of a new, independent electoral office, called Elections New Brunswick. It combined the duties and responsibilities of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Office of the Supervisor of Political Financing, with an expanded mandate: to conduct elections and referenda; supervise political financing and make it more transparent and accountable; promote New Brunswick's electoral process; and report directly to the Legislative Assembly.

In the most recent initiative, the Government of New Brunswick established a Commission on Electoral Reform in 2016 to consider ways to improve participation in democracy. Its report, "A Pathway to an Inclusive Democracy", was released in March 2017. In its response to the Commission, the Government has implemented a number of recommendations aimed at encouraging voter participation and has also committed to giving New Brunswickers the chance to voice their opinion on issues, such as lowering the voting age and new voting options in the future, while committing to ensuring Elections New Brunswick receives the required resources to accomplish these goals.

Elections New Brunswick

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