



Strategic Plan ^{2.0} 2018-2027

 **ELECTIONS NB**

Elections New Brunswick

Strategic Plan 2.0
2018–2027

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Introduction

Elections New Brunswick's first strategic plan was introduced in 2018. The plan defined our agency's mandate, vision and core values. It also identified our strategic goals for the following ten years.

The strategic plan included a commitment to review our strategic plan in 2023, as we reached the halfway point of the period covered by the plan. With the assistance of an outside facilitator, that review was initiated in February 2023. Staff were brought together to review the goals set out in the original strategic plan and to identify new goals and actions to be included in the plan for its remaining four years.

This updated *Strategic Plan 2018-2027* reflects the outcome of those discussions. Completed actions have been removed from the strategic plan, as have actions identified as no longer being a priority for the organization. New actions have been included in the strategic plan that align with our organizational and operational plans moving forward. With most actions associated with the original strategic goal number four ("Increase employee satisfaction") having been addressed, the remaining actions associated with this goal were better connected with the goal of improving our workplace efficiency and effectiveness.

Our updated strategic plan will continue to inform the Legislative Assembly and the public on how Elections New Brunswick intends to fulfil our mandate.

Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

As we complete the first five years of our strategic plan, I am proud of the progress made in implementing changes that have improved the electoral processes we manage.

Making headway on the action items connected to the original six strategic goals set out in our plan was not without its challenges. We had to deal with the call of an unscheduled provincial general election in the fall of 2020, followed by local government general elections scheduled in May 2021, after having been delayed by one year. Both province-wide general elections were held during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring the undivided attention of our staff and forcing us to put the advancement of some of our strategic goals on the backburner.

Despite these challenges, we managed to move forward on numerous goals identified in our strategic plan. We received legislative support to move to a merit-based process, led by us, for the future hiring of all returning officers. We obtained approval to increase the pay rates for all election workers, which are now permanently tied to future increases in the minimum wage. We are publishing annual reports, enhancing our accountability to the elected members of the Legislative Assembly. Finally, in 2022, we were able to co-locate our head office and warehouses, resulting in immediate workplace and financial efficiencies.

This updated strategic plan includes new goals identified as being important to our organization as we evolve and adapt to changes taking place globally in election management. Each goal supports our continued commitment to excellence as we prepare for and deliver elections.

Our goals are focused on improving electoral services for all New Brunswickers, from electors to political parties and candidates, and on building relationships with our partners. Some goals are internally focused and aimed at growing our own people.

I wish to thank everyone who, over the last five years, contributed to Elections New Brunswick's progress on our strategic goals, especially the dedicated team of professionals at Elections New Brunswick. Their dedication to and passion for their work is reflected in the values and goals identified in our strategic plan.



Kimberly A. Poffenroth
Chief Electoral Officer



Chief Electoral Officer of New Brunswick

The Chief Electoral Officer is an officer of the Legislative Assembly and is supported in the execution her duties and responsibilities by the staff of Elections New Brunswick.

As set out in the *Elections Act*, the Chief Electoral Officer administers elections to ensure they are fair and free of political influence or interference. In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer holds the position of Supervisor of Political Financing, overseeing compliance with the *Political Process Financing Act*. In New Brunswick, the Chief Electoral Officer is also the Municipal Electoral Officer, and is responsible for all municipal, district education council and regional health authority board elections and plebiscites conducted under the *Municipal Elections Act*. To ensure the position remains non-partisan, the *Elections Act* disqualifies the Chief Electoral Officer from being able to vote.

Strategic Plan 2.0 2018-2027

Our Strategic Plan 2.0 2018-2027 comprises four components: mandate, vision, core values and strategic goals. We have identified five 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 or a global pandemic. 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 will update our planned actions as necessary. Our progress and results will be presented to the Legislative Assembly and the public in our annual reports.



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 relationships 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 all New Brunswickers.

Professionalism

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

Strategic Goals

- ① Encourage voter engagement
- ② Improve services to participants in the political process
- ③ Increase efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes
- ④ Improve workplace efficiency and effectiveness
- ⑤ Increase organizational resilience

1. Encourage Voter Engagement

- a. Provide alternative ways for individuals to be added to the register of electors and to update their information on the register
 - i. Pre-register high school students who will become electors
 - ii. Implement online voter registration
 - iii. Effectively integrate Elections Canada data into the register of electors
- b. Develop and regularly distribute educational information on electoral processes between and during events
- c. Engage with NB's First Nations to identify ways to improve the services provided by Elections NB
- d. Support partners in delivering civics education in schools
- e. Develop and implement new methods for voter communication with Elections NB
- f. Expand "vote anywhere" options

2. Improve Services to Participants in the Political Process

- a. Develop and share training resources for participants in the political process
- b. Modernize tools for financial reporting and examination
- c. Improve the usability of the online registry of political entities
- d. Promote online access to electoral information and maps
- e. Share the MLA and political parties list of electors using a secure online portal
- f. Conduct surveys of political entities and candidates

3. Increase Efficiency and Effectiveness of Electoral Processes

- a. Develop and implement a competitive hiring process for returning officers and other field staff
- b. Develop and deliver ongoing and innovative training opportunities for field staff
- c. Consider the objectives of diversity, equity and inclusion when designing and implementing hiring and training programs
- d. Design and implement an election worker management and payment system
- e. Develop a ballot on-demand solution for polling stations
- f. Identify changes needed to the register of electors to accommodate any policy changes to voter eligibility
- g. Improve the usability of the Elections NB website based on customer feedback and analytics
- h. Seek legislative amendments as recommended in the 2019 report, *Modernizing New Brunswick's Electoral Legislation*

4. Improve Workplace Efficiency and Effectiveness

- a. Review and document policies and procedures, and implement new policies and procedures if gaps exist
- b. Develop and implement management systems to improve administrative processes, e.g., records management, elections management, and correspondence management
- c. Introduce sustainable practices wherever possible
- d. Improve the annual performance management process
- e. Improve internal communication of operational decisions affecting staff across work units

5. Increase Organizational Resilience

- a. Create and maintain a risk management program for:
 - i. All applicable legislation
 - ii. All IT systems
 - iii. Electoral activities, e.g., logistical, environmental, human resources
- b. Cross-train staff to increase operational capacity and flexibility
- c. Develop a succession plan for positions within the organization
- d. Develop, document and test business continuity and disaster recovery plans
- e. Increase cybersecurity awareness and training for Elections NB staff, including election workers

History of Elections NB

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 2016, the Government of New Brunswick established a Commission on Electoral Reform 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 implemented a number of recommendations aimed at encouraging voter participation and 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 received the required resources to accomplish these goals.

In June 2019, the Chief Electoral Officer tabled the discussion paper, *Modernizing New Brunswick's Electoral Legislation*. Containing 108 recommendations, the document was the result of a holistic review of the three pieces of legislation which set out the mandate of Elections New Brunswick. The recommendations proposed wide-ranging changes that would enhance voting and political financing procedures for New Brunswickers. As indicated in the Chief Electoral Officer's message, some of those recommendations have been acted on. However, the majority of recommendations await the legislative action required to move them forward.

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