



Elections New Brunswick



Annual Report
2017–2018

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Transmittal Letter

From the Chief Electoral Officer to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Donald Forestell

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

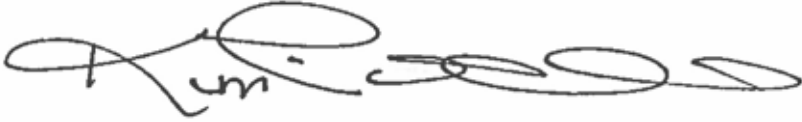
Dear Mr. Forestell,

I have the honour of presenting the first Annual Report of Elections New Brunswick, for the period April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018.

I respectfully request that you forward this report to the members of the Legislative Assembly.

I also request that my office be invited to present its annual report to members of the Procedure, Privileges, and Legislative Officers Committee at its earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Poffenroth', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly A. Poffenroth
Chief Electoral Officer

Table of Contents

- Message from the Chief Electoral Officer 1
- Overview. 2
- Who We Are 2
- Financial Summary 3
- Electoral Events 4
- Political Financing 4
- Geography and Mapping 5
- New Brunswick Voter Information Services 5
- Operations. 6
- Communications and Community Outreach 6
- Activities Related to Strategic Goals. 6
 - 1. Encourage voter engagement. 6
 - 2. Improve services to political parties 7
 - 3. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes 8
 - 4. Increase employee satisfaction 9
 - 5. Improve workplace efficiency and effectiveness 9
 - 6. Increase organizational resilience 10

Message from the Chief Electoral Officer



This is Election New Brunswick's first annual report. While not required by legislation, we intend to use our annual reports to measure and communicate to stakeholders our performance in meeting our strategic goals.

Those strategic goals were identified as Elections New Brunswick undertook the development of its first-ever strategic plan during the 2017–2018 fiscal year. We view this as a critical step in ensuring that the decisions we make and priorities we set for ourselves reflect Elections New Brunswick's vision to be a trusted organization that supports the democratic process by providing innovative electoral services to all New Brunswickers.

Our core values as defined in our *Strategic Plan 2018–2027* — integrity, innovation and professionalism — are the guiding principles we adhere to as we administer elections and plan for the future.

This report details the activities undertaken at Elections New Brunswick over the past year and ties those activities to our strategic goals.

With the next provincial general election scheduled for September 24, 2018, Elections New Brunswick has been busy preparing the supplies, equipment, training materials and staffing required to administer a province-wide election, while continuing to run multiple sets of municipal by-elections twice a year in the spring and fall.

As I table this first annual report, the 49 provincial returning officers appointed by the Executive Council are in the early stages of receiving the training they will require to manage the elections in their respective electoral districts.

During each election, we grow from a permanent staff of 15 to over 4500 part-time and casual election workers who are employed across the entire province.

I was sworn in as the Chief Electoral Officer in March 2017. It did not take long for me to learn that I work with a team of professionals who are dedicated to our vision, and strive every day to fulfill our mandate to conduct free and fair elections for New Brunswickers. I want to publicly recognize and acknowledge their efforts in making the transition to this new and exciting role a smooth one for me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly A. Poffenroth'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'K'.

Kimberly A. Poffenroth
Chief Electoral Officer.

Overview

Elections New Brunswick's strategic plan was developed during the 2017–2018 fiscal year. The activities being reported on in this annual report are tied to the goals identified in our *Strategic Plan 2018–2027*, making accountability to our goals transparent.

The annual report will reference actions we intend to pursue going forward. Some will be actions we are able to act upon independently; others will require legislative change and require us to work with government to achieve our goals.

Each annual report will make reference to electoral events and political financing activities that occurred during the fiscal year; however, we will continue to produce separate reports covering these activities and events in greater detail.

Who We Are

Elections New Brunswick is the election management body responsible for the administration and oversight of provincial elections, municipal elections, district education council elections and regional health authority board elections, as well as any government-ordered plebiscites or referendums.

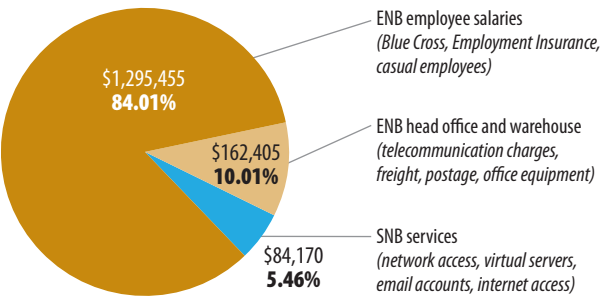
The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) administers provincial elections in accordance with the *Elections Act* and ensures they are fair and free of political influence. In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer holds the position of Supervisor of Political Financing and oversees compliance with the *Political Process Financing Act*. Under the *Municipal Elections Act*, the CEO is also the Municipal Electoral Officer. As an officer of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, the CEO must be non-partisan and may not vote in any election.

Elections New Brunswick has a full-time staffing complement of 15, including the Chief Electoral Officer, and its head office is located in Fredericton. The Chief Electoral Officer is supported in her fulfilling her legislated duties by two Assistant Chief Electoral Officers — one responsible for political financing matters and one responsible for election matters.

Financial Summary

Elections New Brunswick submits its budget annually to the Legislative Administration Committee (LAC) for approval. Over and above our annual operating expenses, the budget submission includes separate funding for the costs of administering electoral events.

Our annual operating budget for fiscal 2017–2018 was \$1,542,030. Just over 84% of the budget was allocated to employees’ salaries and benefits (see chart below). A number of the strategic goals identified in our *Strategic Plan 2018–2027* will require expenditures that cannot be covered within the existing operating budget envelope. As a result, this will necessitate a request additional funding in future budget submissions.



In fiscal 2017–2018, Elections New Brunswick was authorized to spend \$674,000 to begin preparations for the 2018 provincial general election. As of March 31, 2018, Elections New Brunswick had spent \$1,400,399.

The following is a summary of the amount spent on preparations for the 2018 provincial general election:

Printing of polling official material	\$370,000
Netbook computers for polling locations	\$321,000
Dominion Voting Systems	\$328,608
Costs incurred due to early election speculation (ballot paper, returning office supplies, etc.)	\$191,531
Online training for Returning Office staff and polling officials	\$135,000
Translation & IT contract services	\$46,000
Materials required for online training	\$8,260
Total	\$1,400,399

In addition, conduct of the May 15, 2017, municipal by-elections and plebiscite required \$180,500 in additional funding, and conduct of the October 23, 2017, municipal by-elections and plebiscite required a further \$198,250 in additional funding.

Electoral Events

During fiscal year 2017–2018, two sets of municipal by-elections were held, as well as a first-election and two plebiscites.

On May 15, 2017, by-elections were held in the municipalities of Kedgwick, Le Goulet, Maisonnette, Salisbury, Saint-André (Ward 1, Ward 2) and Shippagan. A first election was held in Haut-Madawaska. In addition, at the request of the Department of Environment and Local Government, residents in ten local service districts in the Lamèque-Miscou region on the Acadian Peninsula voted in a plebiscite on whether to merge with two neighbouring communities to form a new rural community. In this event, 5,216 of 8,894 eligible electors cast a vote.

On October 23, 2017, by-elections were held for the municipalities of Grande-Anse, McAdam, Nigadoo, Petit-Rocher, Rexton and Saint-André. In addition, at the request of the Department of Environment and Local Government, residents in the local service districts of Keswick Ridge, Douglas, Bright, a portion of the local service district of Kingsclear, and a portion of the local service district of Queensbury voted in a plebiscite on forming a rural community. In this event, 5,356 of 11,412 eligible electors cast a vote.

Political Financing

The Chief Electoral Officer is also the Supervisor of Political Financing and is responsible for the enforcement of the *Political Process Financing Act*. Along with overseeing compliance with the political financing regime established in the Act, the political financing staff works with the registered political parties and independent candidates to ensure stakeholders operate on a level playing field.

In May 2017, two bills amending the *Political Process Financing Act* received Royal Assent, resulting in significant changes to the political financing rules in New Brunswick. Included in the amendments were the elimination of contributions by corporations and trade unions to registered political parties and a reduction in the annual contribution and financing limit of individuals from \$6,000 to \$3,000.

The changes were discussed during a joint meeting of the Electoral Process Advisory Committee and the Political Financing Advisory Committee chaired by the Chief Electoral Officer in October 2017.

In addition to the Assistant Chief Electoral Officer responsible for political financing matters, the Political Financing department consists of one permanent employee and one seconded employee.

Geography and Mapping

In 2017, the Geography & Mapping section of Elections New Brunswick began the redesign of provincial polling divisions to coincide with individual properties' parcel boundaries. With over 27,000 streets in the Province, this project increased the accuracy of addresses in each polling division and electoral district for the 2018 provincial election. The redesign will enable political parties to more easily use the maps in preparing their respective campaigns and created internal efficiencies at Elections New Brunswick. We can now electronically verify the list of street addresses against the maps, rather than using the manual method of the past.



In January 2017, work began on the development and design of an on-line tool to be used for requesting feedback from the general public and political parties on the proposed location of polling stations selected by the returning officers for use in the 2018 provincial election. The web-based polling station survey was launched on May 15, 2018, allowing for 30 days of feedback.

The Geography & Mapping section consists of two permanent employees.

New Brunswick Voter Information Services

New Brunswick, like other Canadian jurisdictions, maintains a permanent registry of electors. The names and addresses of registered electors is securely stored in the New Brunswick Voter Information System (NBVIS), a data system which is updated through data-sharing agreements with other government agencies, including motor vehicle registration and vital statistics.

The Register is managed by one permanent employee.

Operations

The daily operations of Elections New Brunswick are managed by the Director of Operations who, with direction from the members of the senior management team, coordinates all procurement and financial management activities, human resource matters, information management and technology matters and warehousing activities.

The Operations department consists of six permanent employees.

Communications and Community Outreach

The Communications and Community Outreach section of Elections New Brunswick is responsible for developing and coordinating communications and community outreach programs and activities for the organization.

The Communications and Community Outreach section consists of one permanent employee.

Activities Related to Strategic Goals

1. Encourage voter engagement

Delivering on our mandate to advance public awareness and confidence in the electoral process, Elections New Brunswick engages throughout the year with numerous stakeholder groups that represent electors. Our outreach efforts are focused on ensuring that New Brunswickers are aware of the details of how, when and where to vote during elections and the many options provided to make voting accessible.

a. During the past year, the Chief Electoral Officer participated in numerous public events that offered the opportunity to encourage voter engagement. In addition, Elections New Brunswick proactively requested opportunities to speak directly to stakeholder groups representing segments of the voting population with unique voting requirements. Activities included:

- Participating in citizenship swearing-in ceremonies organized across the province by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.



- Speaking directly to stakeholder organizations such as the Premier’s Council on Disabilities, New Brunswick Association of Nursing Homes, New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA), and representatives from the NBCC student unions.
- b. While the majority of our efforts are focused on providing information to those who have reached voting age, we also welcome the opportunity to engage and communicate with young future voters:
- In July 2017, we entered into discussions with CIVIX, a non-partisan, nationally-recognized not-for-profit organization dedicated to building the skills and habits of active and engaged citizenship among young Canadians. As a result, the “Student Vote” program will be run in New Brunswick schools for the first time during a provincial election in September 2018.
 - Elections New Brunswick participated in a program run by the City of Saint John which introduces students from several local elementary schools to governance at the municipal level. Staff from Elections New Brunswick used the event to explain its role in running elections and provide the students with the chance to cast a demonstration ballot in a mock election.
 - Elections New Brunswick set up an information booth at a *Canada 150 “My Canada”* symposium in Saint John that was attended by hundreds of middle and high school students from the Greater Saint John area.
- c. In New Brunswick, most first-time electors register to vote during an electoral event. Making the process of registering easier and more accessible is viewed as a way to increase the likelihood of voter participation in future elections. During 2017–2018, Elections New Brunswick embarked on a project to design, develop and implement an on-line registration portal to achieve the objective of simplifying and making more accessible the process of registering to vote. It is anticipated that the tool will be ready for beta-testing before the end of 2018–2019.
- d. A significant number of young electors are enrolled in post-secondary institutions spread across the Province. Planning began in early January 2018 for the delivery of our campus voting program. Temporary voting stations will be located on university and college campuses for the September provincial general election.
- Building on the model used in the two previous elections, Elections New Brunswick set a goal to expand the number of campuses we would visit and to increase voter turnout at these locations.

2. Improve services to political parties



- Significant changes to the rules for political financing were introduced by government during 2017–2018. To help ensure that the registered political parties were aware of the impact of the rule changes leading up to the 2018 provincial election, Elections New Brunswick held a one-day “Elections 101” workshop in February 2018 for representatives of the registered political parties. In addition to reviewing changes to the political financing rules, attendees were briefed on various aspects of election planning, processes and procedures for the upcoming provincial election.

- In 2017, we began rewriting the political financing manual that includes guidelines issued by the Supervisor of Political Financing. Final English and French documents were made available in May 2018.
- In 2017–2018, Elections New Brunswick also began the process of simplifying the financial returns that the registered political parties are required to file annually. It is anticipated that these simplified returns will be easier for volunteers to complete and improve compliance with legislated deadlines and requirements.

3. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes

Our vision, to remain a trusted organization that supports the democratic process, requires us to operate in a dynamic environment that aims for continuous improvement. This is achieved by promoting a culture within the organization that encourages the evaluation and examination of our processes and procedures, with the goal of addressing any challenges uncovered and adopting innovative solutions to improve our processes.

- a. Every province-wide election administered by Elections New Brunswick requires that more than 4500 people are hired temporarily to work as poll workers. These individuals require training, scheduling and payment.
- In 2017, we continued discussions with an outside vendor aimed at replacing our paper-intensive payroll system with a modern web-based solution that would simplify scheduling and payment of these workers. However, following discussions with the Government of New Brunswick, we were advised that a province-wide government solution was in the early stages of development which would eventually meet our operational needs with respect to the payment of poll workers.



- In 2017, work began on the development of a series of new on-line training courses covering the duties and tasks of each election officer working in the polling stations and returning offices.
- In addition, instructional videos were produced in-house covering various tasks performed by poll workers while working at a polling station.
- In 2017, three former Training Officers were engaged by Elections New Brunswick to review and update every manual, form and presentation used as part of the training process.

- b. To validate the tabulated election results and review the various instructions and procedures used by poll workers, Elections New Brunswick conducted an internal audit of the municipal by-elections and the plebiscite held on October 23, 2017.
- Each of the 5,356 ballots was hand counted, and for each candidate in each municipality, the number of votes determined matched the number of votes declared by the municipal returning officer following each by-election and the plebiscite.
 - In general, manual record books maintained by election officers at the polling stations were complete. Minor errors such as incomplete entries were noted in some instances, which in some cases, were identified for emphasis in future elections by the Municipal Returning Officers.

4. Increase employee satisfaction

The strength of our organization is the small and dedicated team of professionals who strive to constantly uphold our core values of integrity, innovation and professionalism.

Improving upon the success of any organization is best achieved when all employees of the organization feel engaged and valued for their contributions.

Our success in modernizing the electoral processes that we deliver reflects the commitment of employees to the administration of fair, accessible and cost-effective elections.

- The creation of our first-ever strategic plan, released in March 2018, provided an ideal opportunity for all staff to work together closely in the development of this plan, providing a true sense of ownership.
- To ensure the organizational structure of our office is aligned with our mandate, vision and strategic goals, Elections New Brunswick engaged the services of the Office of Strategy Management, a branch of the Executive Council Office, to assist us with our review of the organization, our programs and our processes.
- In March 2018, the Chief Electoral Officer began skip-level interviews with non-management employees. These one-on-one meetings allow staff to offer the CEO an unfiltered view of where they see themselves within the organization and to share their insights and suggestions for the organization's future.

5. Improve workplace efficiency and effectiveness

Ensuring the continued growth and development of our organization requires assessing our goals and our effectiveness at meeting those goals against the backdrop of continuous improvement.

- The introduction of an annual report, to be tabled with the Legislative Assembly, provides transparency on our achievements and enables us and our stakeholders to measure our performance against the targets we set for ourselves in our strategic plan.
- Elections New Brunswick currently operates an 8000 ft² warehouse at a location separate from its head office. This results in frequent trips for staff back and forth between the warehouse and the head office, to both conduct work and to obtain required supplies. In February 2018, discussions were initiated with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to co-locate our head office and our warehouse to increase operational efficiency and to gain sufficient space to prepare for a province-wide election.
- As part of a review of current procedures for managing the register of electors and the sharing of elector data with political parties, Elections New Brunswick has initiated a privacy impact assessment of these aspects of our operations.



6. Increase organizational resilience

Elections New Brunswick must position itself to respond to changes, predictable or otherwise, that impact our ability to deliver on our mandate. Ensuring the resiliency of our organization requires the development of concrete plans that identify and address operational and resource needs on a long-term basis.

- In July 2017, the Chief Electoral Officers from across Canada were presented with the terms of reference for the creation of a Secretariat for Electoral Coordination. Funded by all of Canada's election management bodies (EMB), the role of the secretariat is to identify and take the lead in addressing common issues faced by the different EMBs. In February 2018, Elections New Brunswick formally signed on as a partner to the secretariat.
- While voting procedures, titles and positions may vary amongst election management bodies (EMB), Elections New Brunswick has supported staff's participation in EMB training opportunities where best practises can be discussed with their counterparts from other provinces.
- As many of our head office functions are performed by individual employees, there is a high risk to the organization should these people be unavailable to work. In addition, with a number of employees approaching retirement, Elections New Brunswick has begun evaluating our succession plans and the potential opportunities for realignment of human resources.