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Annual Report 2025-2026

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August 17, 2026

Hon. Francine Landry
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Building, Centre Block
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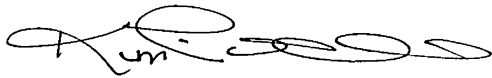
Madam Speaker,

I have the honour of presenting the Annual Report of Elections New Brunswick for the period April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026.

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

With my appointment ending in March 2027, this will be the last annual report I will submit as New Brunswick's Chief Electoral Officer. Should members of the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers wish to ask questions about this report or the path that lies ahead for this organization, I would be pleased to accommodate them at their convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Poffenroth', with a stylized, flowing script.

Kimberly A. Poffenroth
Chief Electoral Officer

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.

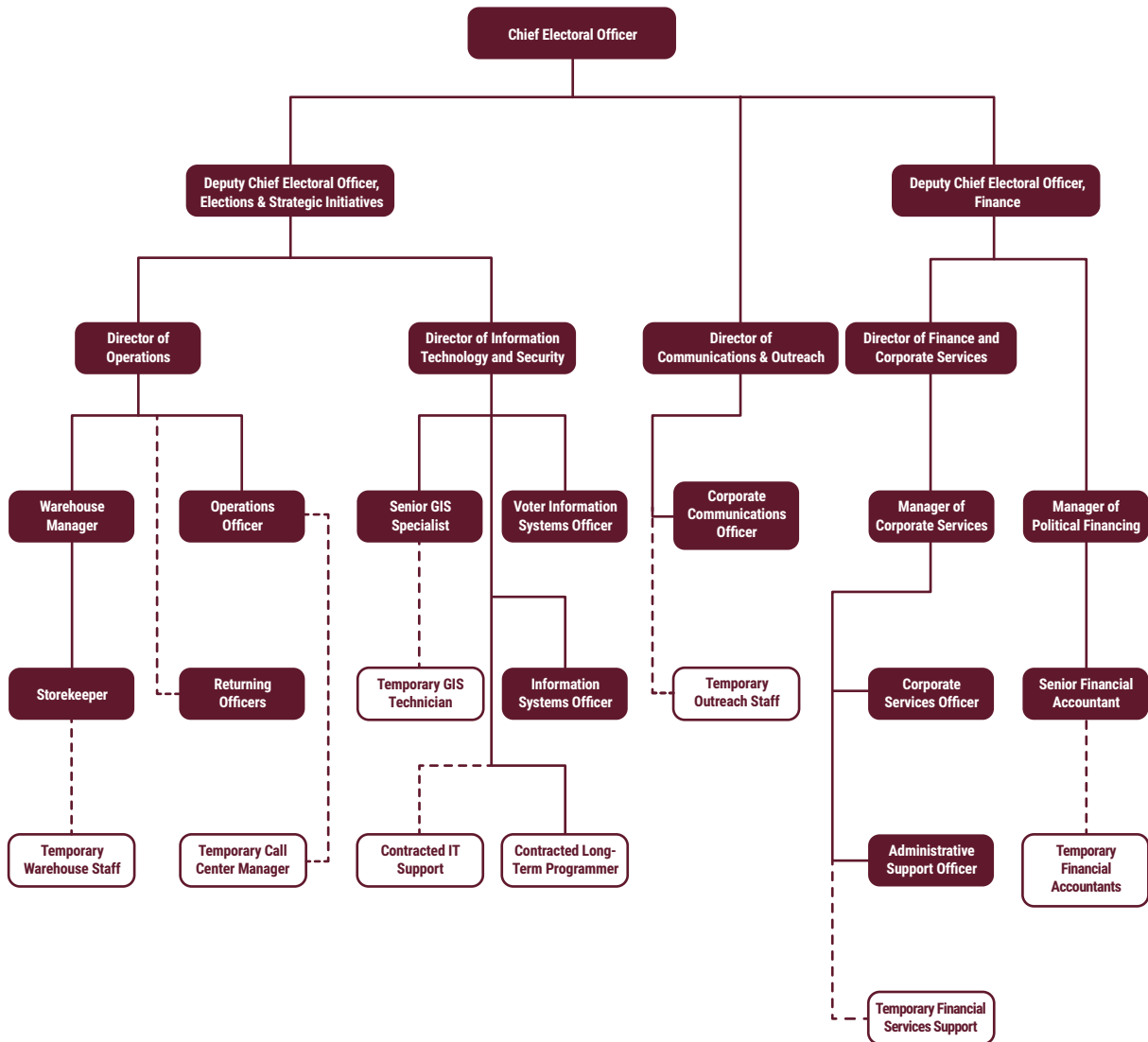
Innovation

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.

Organizational Chart



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Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

It is my privilege to present the annual report of Elections New Brunswick which highlights our activities, accomplishments, and challenges over the past year in support of our mandate to administer fair, accessible, and transparent elections.

As the independent body responsible for overseeing the electoral process in New Brunswick, we remain steadfast in our commitment to strengthening public confidence in our democratic institutions. In a rapidly evolving environment in which expectations around accessibility, security, and service delivery are constantly changing, we continue to adapt our practices to ensure every eligible elector can participate fully and confidently in the democratic process.

Over the past year, Elections New Brunswick focused on modernizing our systems, enhancing voter services, and improving outreach and education. These efforts were guided by our dedication to integrity, accountability, and the continuous improvement of the electoral experience for all New Brunswickers.

I want to acknowledge and thank the dedicated staff at Elections New Brunswick, along with returning officers and our other election workers, for their professionalism, resilience, and commitment to excellence. Their work is essential in delivering trusted elections and protecting the democratic rights of all citizens.



At our annual general meeting, we were pleased to recognize four individuals. Our Director of Operations, Craig Astle, and our Director of Communications and Outreach, Paul Harpelle, were recognized for their many years of service with the Province of New Brunswick, 20 and 21 years, respectively. Senior management created a new award this year, the Peer Recognition Award. This award honours an individual who consistently goes above and beyond to support their peers and makes a meaningful impact on those around them through their actions, dedication, kindness and willingness to step up. Nominations may be submitted to the selection committee by any employee of Elections New Brunswick. Operations Officer, Amanda Buchanan, was selected as the first recipient of the Peer Recognition Award. In addition, returning officer Tanya Cooper received a certificate of appreciation for 22 years of dedicated service with Elections New Brunswick, having worked in a variety of positions as an election officer during both provincial and municipal elections.



From left to right: Paul Harpelle, Kimberly A. Poffenroth and Craig Astle



Amanda Buchanan



Tanya Cooper

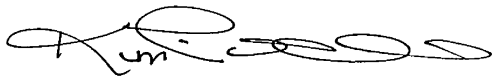
As we look ahead, Elections New Brunswick will continue to explore new ways to serve voters more effectively, while upholding the core principles of neutrality, transparency, and fairness that define our work.

With my term as Chief Electoral Officer ending in March 2027, I want to take a moment to reflect on the privilege it has been to work side-by-side with such an exceptional team of professionals who have become an integral part of my “work family” over the past decade.

We have shared some remarkable achievements in those ten years. We saw a modern warehouse and office built to meet our needs; we became the first election management body in Canada to conduct a province-wide election during the global COVID-19 pandemic; and we welcomed a significant legislative change granting the Chief Electoral Officer the authority to recruit and hire returning officers, rather than having them appointed by government.

In 2017, I was pleased to work hand-in-hand with staff to create Election New Brunswick’s first strategic plan. It mapped out a ten-year vision, setting goals and targets to strengthen public trust, enhance resiliency and protect the integrity of the organization. Although not required under legislation, we also tabled our first annual report in 2018 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Since that inaugural report, it has become a key tool for measuring our progress toward the targets set out in the strategic plan and for holding ourselves accountable to our mandate, vision and core values.

As I look toward the final year of my mandate, I do so with a deep appreciation for the people who have helped shape this organization and strengthened its role in New Brunswick’s democracy. The progress we have made together—grounded in integrity, innovation, and service—gives me great confidence in the road ahead. Elections New Brunswick will continue to evolve and excel because of the remarkable individuals who carry out this work every day. I am proud to have been part of this chapter in its history.



Kimberly A. Poffenroth
Chief Electoral Officer

Overview

In fiscal year 2025-2026, Elections New Brunswick focused its time and resources on the administration of a provincial by-election in October 2025, and preparations for the next province-wide local government council, rural district advisory committee and district education council elections scheduled for May 2026.

A major development affecting preparations for the May 2026 elections occurred in early 2026. The longtime New Brunswick vendor certified to print ballots compatible with our tabulation machines ceased operations. With ballot printing scheduled to begin in mid-April 2026, the Director of Operations undertook the urgent task of securing a replacement vendor that could produce our ballots and be certified by Dominion Voting Systems. Advocate Printing of Pictou, Nova Scotia, was engaged and achieved certification in March 2026.



Fiscal year 2025-2026 saw the organization make significant advancements in the development of an online voter registration portal, an initiative identified in our original *Strategic Plan 2017-2028* to encourage voter engagement. Built in-house, the portal will allow eligible electors to securely send their personal information and supporting identification documents to Elections New Brunswick. Staff then update the registry of electors by adding electors, updating electors' information and removing electors from the registry. A soft launch of the portal was scheduled for April 2, prior to the May 2026 local government elections.

Several activities were completed during 2025-2026 which addressed our strategic goal of improving workplace efficiency and effectiveness. An employee handbook consolidating administrative policies and procedures was completed to support employee onboarding.

Elections New Brunswick staff continued to participate in various professional development opportunities in 2025-2026. The Director of Communications and Outreach, with his counterpart from Elections Saskatchewan, co-chaired the subcommittee on Issue Management established by the Secretariat for Electoral Coordination.

The organization was also pleased to have its Corporate Communications Officer accepted into the Evolving Leaders Program, a year-long Government of New Brunswick initiative focused on accelerating leadership readiness, executive-level talent identification, continuous learning, and creating clear leadership pathways.

Elections New Brunswick's Director of Information Technology and Security became a Certified Information Systems Security Professional, a globally recognized cybersecurity certification that validates expertise in designing, implementing, and managing an organization's security posture.

Elections New Brunswick also benefitted from participating in other election-related conferences in 2025-2026, including the Conference of Canadian Election Officials hosted by Elections Yukon and the Canadian Vote Summit, held in Montreal in June 2025. Staff also completed courses offered by Canadian Election Official Training, including "Introduction to Election Administration" and "Trusted Elections: Strategies for Building and Maintaining Public Confidence".

Who We Are

Elections New Brunswick is the election management body responsible for the administration of provincial and local government general elections and by-elections, referendums and plebiscites. We also administer district education council elections on the same date that local government and rural district advisory committee elections are held.

The Chief Electoral Officer administers these elections to ensure they are fair and free of political influence in accordance with the *Elections Act*. In New Brunswick, the Chief Electoral Officer also holds the positions of Supervisor of Political Financing and Municipal Electoral Officer, overseeing compliance with the *Political Process Financing Act* and the *Municipal Elections Act*. As an officer of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, the Chief Electoral Officer must be non-partisan and may not vote in any election for which she is responsible.

Elections New Brunswick has a full-time staffing complement of 19 permanent positions, including the Chief Electoral Officer, and an additional three term positions. The corporate office is located in Fredericton. The Chief Electoral Officer is supported in fulfilling her legislated duties by two Deputy Chief Electoral Officers. One is responsible for overseeing the electoral processes and strategic initiatives, while the other is responsible for overseeing all matters related to corporate services and political financing.



Financial Summary

Elections New Brunswick's annual budget is approved by the Legislative Administration Committee (LAC) of the Legislative Assembly. As provided in the Main Estimates for fiscal year 2025–2026, we received funding of \$7,991,000.

An overview of our budget, expenditures, and surplus or deficit by financial program is presented in the following table and explanatory notes:

Program	Budget	Expenditures	Surplus (Deficit)	Notes
Administration and coordination				
Administration	2,323,000	2,221,151	101,849	(1)
Infrastructure				
Elections infrastructure	2,525,000	1,604,712	920,288	(2)
Local government elections				
By-elections, April 14, 2025	400,000	314,181	85,819	(3)
General elections, May 11, 2026	1,850,000	2,052,046	(202,046)	(4)
	2,250,000	2,366,228	(116,228)	
Provincial elections				
General election, October 21, 2024				
Direct costs	225,000	222,813	2,187	(5)
Candidates' reimbursements	-	(22,407)	22,407	(6)
Miramichi West by-election, October 6, 2025				
Direct costs	-	162,190	(162,190)	(7)
Candidates' reimbursements	-	35,646	(35,646)	(8)
	225,000	398,242	(173,242)	
General operations	7,323,000	6,590,333	732,667	
Legislative payments to registered political parties				
Annual payments to political parties	668,000	668,000	-	(9)
Total	7,991,000	7,258,333	732,667	

- (1) The Administration program reflects the cost to operate the head office and warehouse of Elections New Brunswick.
- (2) Elections infrastructure is used for both local government and provincial elections. It includes equipment that must be maintained between elections, such as tabulation machines, personal computers and tablets. It also includes maintenance of software applications such as our proprietary New Brunswick Voter Information System. This year, funding of \$864,388 was received for hosting services, technical support and training services related to a potential new election management system. While the funding was provided, it was ultimately not expended because the project did not proceed.
- (3) The Chief Electoral Officer moved the Spring 2025 local government by-elections from May to April in order to avoid conflicting with the anticipated federal general election. As a result, expenditures were lower than planned in this fiscal year since many of the costs were incurred last fiscal year.
- (4) Preparations for the Spring 2026 local government general elections were initiated earlier than had been budgeted, resulting in a modest deficit in this program.
- (5) The last provincial general election was held on October 21, 2024. Direct costs incurred in the current fiscal year were for the salaries of staff to continue to examine the electoral financial returns of the candidates in the election.
- (6) An estimate of the reimbursements for the election expenses of eligible candidates was accrued last fiscal year. The accrual exceeded the final reimbursement total, resulting in a reversal of the excess this fiscal year and the resulting modest credit in expenditures of the program.
- (7) A by-election was held in the provincial electoral district of Miramichi West following the resignation of the district's member of the Legislative Assembly.
- (8) Two candidates in the Miramichi West by-election were eligible for a reimbursement of a portion of their election expenses.
- (9) An appropriation is authorized annually by the Legislature for annual payments to political parties (*Political Process Financing Act*, s.32). This funding supports the operations of provincially registered political parties and reimburses their annual audit fees up to a maximum amount calculated under the Act.

Electoral Events

Local Government By-Elections

Local government by-elections were scheduled for Monday, April 14, 2025, to fill 15 vacancies on 11 local government councils.

At the close of nominations on Friday, March 21, 2025, there were enough candidates to require elections to be held for nine positions in seven communities. Four candidates were elected by acclamation in three communities,¹ and, in two communities, a single council position remained vacant on each of the councils. After revisions, 33,432 electors were eligible to vote. A total of 9,694 ballots were cast, representing a 29% voter turnout across the seven communities in which elections were held.

The direct cost of holding these by-elections was \$498,504.

Under the *Local Governance Act*, by-elections cannot be held during the 12 months immediately preceding a local government general election. The April 14, 2025, by-elections were the last by-elections permitted to be held before the province-wide local government elections scheduled for May 11, 2026.

Provincial By-Election

A by-election was held on October 6, 2025, to fill a vacancy in the electoral district of Miramichi West.

At the close of nominations, candidates were confirmed from the Liberal Party of New Brunswick, the Progressive Conservative Party of New Brunswick, the Libertarian Party of New Brunswick, and the Parti Vert N.B. Green Party. There was also one nominated independent candidate.

Of the 10,053 eligible electors, 5,248 cast ballots, resulting in a 52% voter turnout. The Progressive Conservative candidate, Kevin E. Russell, was elected with 3,008 votes, winning by a margin of 961 votes over Liberal candidate Hannah Fulton Johnston.

The direct cost of administering the by election was \$162,190. An additional \$35,646 was spent to reimburse to two qualifying candidates for their eligible election expenses.²

Local Government Council, Rural District Advisory Committee and District Education Council Elections

Under the *Local Governance Act*, local government general elections are held on the second Monday in May every four years to elect the following:

- mayors and councillors in 77 local governments;
- rural district advisory committee members in 12 rural districts; and
- district education councillors for the four Anglophone and three Francophone school districts established under the *Education Act*.

The elections scheduled for May 11, 2026, required significant preparatory work during fiscal year 2025–2026.

¹ In a single community, an election was held for one vacant council position, and a second vacant position was filled by acclamation.

² *Political Process Financing Act*, S.N.B. 1978, c.P-9.3, s.78.



Recruitment of 17 municipal returning officers began in June 2025. Once appointed, the returning officers and their election clerks attended two training sessions at Elections New Brunswick headquarters in Fredericton.

- **November 2025:** Training in November 2025 focused on electoral geography. The deadline for local governments to alter their wards or council structures was November 10, 2025. Once this deadline passed, returning officers and their election clerks worked with Elections New Brunswick's Senior GIS Specialist to review and, where necessary, redesign polling divisions and clusters. The November training prepared staff to identify and secure polling stations that met accessibility standards, logistical requirements and took into consideration the convenience of voters. During training, returning officers and election clerks also received information which would enable them to recruit and appoint employees to work in their returning offices.
- **February 2026:** Returning officer and election clerk training in February 2026 covered operational responsibilities for administering the May 2026 general elections and any subsequent by-elections. Training officers and technical support officers also attended sessions in February to prepare them for their duties during the elections.

The notice of election was published on March 21, 2026, officially launching the election period. Returning offices opened to the public on March 23, 2026. A detailed report on the local government general elections, including results of the elections, will be published later in 2026.

Finance and Corporate Services

Reporting to the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Finance, the Finance and Corporate Services Section consists of four permanent employees.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services oversees the day-to-day operations of corporate services, supported by the Manager of Corporate Services and a Corporate Services Officer. An Administrative Support Officer is also part of the team.

The section is responsible for the organization's financial activities throughout the year, including budgeting, procurement, accounts payable and payroll. Fiscal year 2025–2026 included processing of expenses related to the local government by-elections held in April 2025 and the October 2025 provincial by-election. In addition, numerous expenses related to the May 2026 local government general election were incurred during this fiscal year, such as employee training and the purchase of equipment and other supplies.

Political Financing

The Political Financing Section consists of two permanent employees and three term employees, including the Manager of Political Financing. The Manager reports to the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Finance.

During fiscal year 2025–2026, the section focused on examining the electoral financial returns of the 207 candidates from the 2024 provincial general election, in addition to the annual financial returns of the seven registered political parties and their registered district associations.

In addition, two annual reports of the Supervisor of Political Financing, covering the calendar years 2022 and 2023, were tabled with the Legislative Assembly.

Information Technology and Security

The Information Technology and Security Section plays a critical role in safeguarding the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the organization's information systems. It is responsible for the secure development, implementation and maintenance of technology infrastructure and systems at our head office and in returning offices.

The Director of Information Technology and Security oversees all matters related to IT security, including deployment, installation, testing and support of communications equipment, computer hardware, software and other technologies. This includes ensuring systems are hardened, monitored, and compliant with applicable cybersecurity standards and policies.

Our ongoing cyber awareness training continues to strengthen employee vigilance, as demonstrated by a consistently low phishing simulation click rate. This reflects a growing security-first culture and reduced organizational risk from cyber threats.

In fiscal year 2025-2026, the section introduced a new Cradlepoint router solution that significantly accelerates the deployment of phone and internet services at returning offices across the Province. By leveraging cellular-enabled connectivity, we can now provision VoIP¹ phones within hours rather than waiting days or weeks for traditional landline installations from external providers. This approach not only reduces service delivery timelines but also increases flexibility in how and where we establish operations, a particular issue we encountered during the 2020 unscheduled provincial general elections. With this solution deployed in 18 returning offices in mid-March 2026, some troubleshooting was required where call drops or local network drops were noted. Detailed logs were collected for analysis by the vendors involved to determine if there were any common root causes of these issues, and investigation is ongoing.

Reporting to the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Elections and Strategic Initiatives, the Information Technology and Security Section is comprised of four permanent employees: the Director of Information Technology and Security, the Voter Information Systems Officer, the Information Systems Officer and the Senior GIS Specialist.

¹ "Voice over Internet Protocol"

Operations

Reporting to the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Elections and Strategic Initiatives, the Director of Operations oversees procurement and warehousing activities for Elections New Brunswick. The Director of Operations also coordinates the scheduling of training programs for returning office staff and the day-to-day conduct of electoral events.

The provincial by-election and local government by-elections held in fiscal year 2025-2026 kept the section busy coordinating with returning officers on staffing, the set-up of their offices, and the rental of polling stations. Warehouse staff handled the shipping out of required supplies and the cleanup of materials returned after both events.

As mentioned earlier in this report, in January 2026, the Operations Section learned that the vendor contracted to print ballots compatible with our tabulation machines had ceased operations. With ballot printing for the May 2026 general elections due to begin in mid-April 2026, work immediately began to source a replacement printer who had the capacity and technical capability to print ballots on a press certified by Dominion Voting Systems (Dominion). Advocate Printing of Pictou, Nova Scotia, was certified by Dominion to print ballots in March 2026, and was engaged by Elections New Brunswick to print the ballots for the May 2026 elections. In March 2026, the Director of Operations initiated discussions with additional New Brunswick printers to gauge their interest in pursuing with Dominion the certification necessary to be eligible to print ballots for Elections New Brunswick.

The Operations Section is comprised of four permanent employees. In addition to the Director of Operations, the section includes the Warehouse Manager, a Storekeeper, and an Operations Officer.

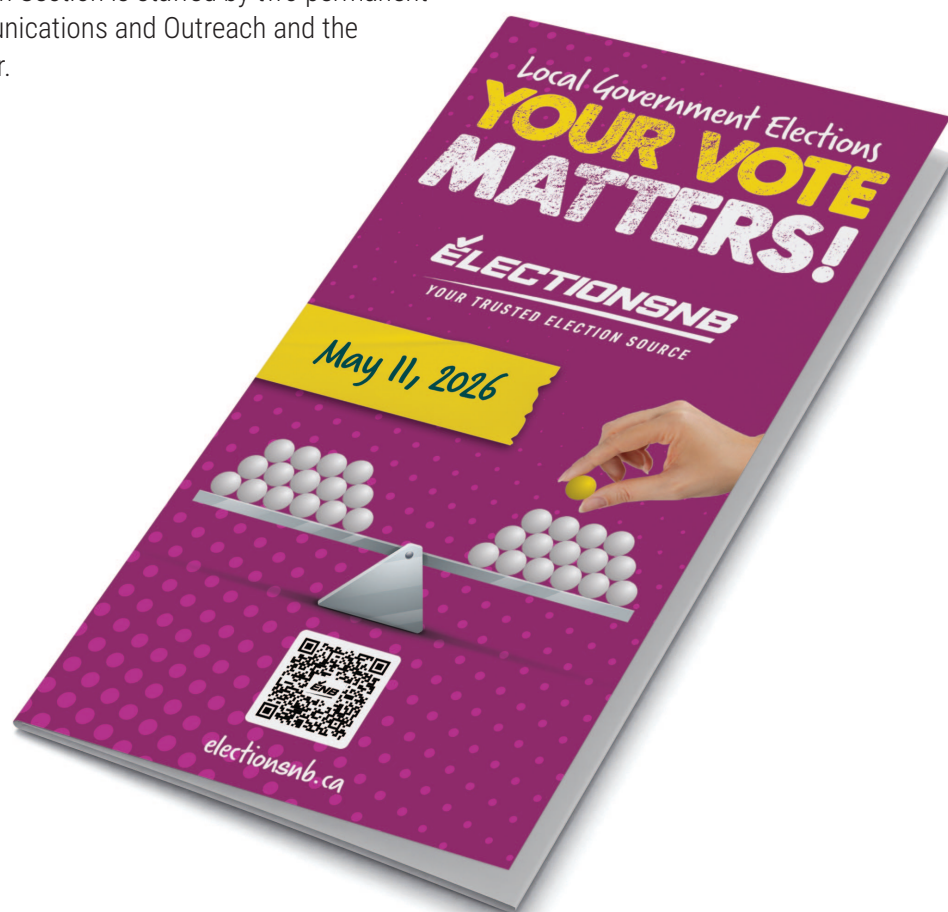
Communications and Outreach

The Communications and Outreach Section oversees the development, design, and deployment of all materials used by Elections New Brunswick to communicate and promote the organization's election related activities.

With local government council, rural district advisory committee, and district education council elections scheduled for May 2026, the section dedicated much of fiscal year 2025–2026 preparing for these events. This work began with engaging a design firm to create a visual concept for the election campaign. The section then collaborated with multiple vendors to design and produce the communication materials required for our get out the vote initiative.

During 2025–2026, the section developed a second series of educational videos aimed at informing the public about electoral processes. The proactive education of the public is an important strategy for undermining attempts to erode confidence in electoral processes and election outcomes.

The Communications and Outreach Section is staffed by two permanent employees: the Director of Communications and Outreach and the Corporate Communications Officer.



Activities Related to Strategic Goals

A significant portion of activities undertaken during fiscal year 2025-2026 supported preparations for the local government council, rural district advisory committee and district education council elections scheduled for May 2026.

As identified in greater detail below, the Communications and Outreach Section led many of the activities supporting the strategic goal of encouraging voter engagement.

1. Encourage voter engagement

- In fiscal year 2025-2026, Elections New Brunswick began development of an online voter registration portal which was identified as a goal in our *Strategic Plan 2.0, 2018-2027*. The portal enables secure uploading of the documentation required to process requests for additions to, updates to and removals from the register of electors. Election New Brunswick's contracted programmer worked on its design over the winter, with vulnerability testing being performed in February 2026. The portal was scheduled to be launched on April 2, 2026.
- In June 2025, the Communications and Outreach Section of Elections New Brunswick began working with a New Brunswick marketing firm selected to design the public awareness campaign for the May 2026 local government elections. This campaign included the following products featuring our slogan, "Your Vote Matters!":
 - i. the first pre-election communication tool to feature the "Your Vote Matters!" slogan was a pamphlet delivered to every household in the Province in February 2025;
 - ii. bookmarks distributed to public libraries and independent bookstores;
 - iii. videos promoting all of the available voting opportunities; these videos were shown at all SNB Service Centres beginning in March 2026;
 - iv. bilingual videos to be played at movie theatres during the election; and
 - v. information on how to be added to the list of electors was included in envelopes with the cheques sent to 27,000 social assistance recipients in March 2026.



- Work began in June 2025 on a second series of educational videos explaining New Brunswick's electoral processes. Five new videos were produced in advance of the 2026 local government elections. These included two videos which highlighted accessible voting options, including one dedicated to the audio-vote system available at returning offices. In December 2025, Elections New Brunswick produced versions of these videos in American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ) to make them fully accessible to Deaf and hard of hearing audiences.
- In February 2026, Elections New Brunswick partnered with the New Brunswick Branch of the CNIB on a project to deliver text and voice messages to its clients. Pre-recorded messages promoted key voting periods and the audio-vote system.
- Supporting partners in delivering civics education in schools is identified in Elections New Brunswick's strategic plan as an action in support of our strategic goal of encouraging voter engagement. CIVIX is a national organization that delivers election-related civics programs to schools across the country. During fiscal year 2025-2026, we engaged with CIVIX to support its delivery of the Student Vote program during the May 2026 local government elections.

2. Improve services to participants in the political process

- Elections New Brunswick consults periodically with two legislative advisory committees established under the *Elections Act* and the *Political Process Financing Act*. In April 2025, a joint meeting of the advisory committees on the electoral process and the financing of the political process was convened by the Chief Electoral Officer. The topics discussed during the meeting included the following:
 - i. review and discussion of Elections New Brunswick's *Electoral Data Privacy: A Discussion Document*, issued in February 2025;
 - ii. status update on work to replace our election management system;
 - iii. potential improvements to the candidate portal; and
 - iv. proposed modifications to the process for recruiting special voting officers during provincial elections.
- The Progressive Conservative Party of New Brunswick announced in May 2025 that it would hold a leadership convention on October 17, 2026, to elect the party's new leader. In October 2025, Elections New Brunswick staff provided virtual training to members of the party's executive team to review the rules established for the leadership candidates to ensure they complied with the rules under the *Political Process Financing Act*.



- While Elections New Brunswick did not conduct a dedicated campaign to encourage individuals to run as candidates in the May 2026 elections, efforts were undertaken to support prospective candidates. Elections New Brunswick provided informational fact sheets on becoming a candidate and campaign advertising rules to more than 60 local governments across the province. These fact sheets were also available for download from our website.
- In the period leading up to the local government elections, Elections New Brunswick officials participated in several in-person and virtual candidate information sessions organized by local governments across New Brunswick.
- In March 2026, Elections New Brunswick took part in two province-wide virtual webinars hosted by New Brunswick's three municipal associations, providing guidance and answering questions about the candidate nomination process for the local government elections.

3. Increase Efficiency and Effectiveness of Electoral Processes

- A comprehensive review of online training courses for returning office staff and election officials was conducted in 2025. Updates arising from the review were published through Fall 2025 and into early 2026. In-person poll worker training materials were redesigned to be more user friendly for regional training officers. These improvements support the delivery of standardized, high-quality training to prepare election officials to complete their duties.
- To address concerns raised in previous elections about travel distances to polling stations, the Senior GIS Technician developed a tool that calculates travel distances and expected drive times to potential voting locations. Returning officers used this tool, and assessments of the locations' accessibility, to select polling stations for the May 2026 local government elections.
- In January 2025, Elections New Brunswick met with the Consultation Committee on Election Accessibility to gather advice on improving the preparation of election information for, and its distribution to, clients of organizations represented on the committee. Following a committee suggestion, we contacted Accessible Media Incorporated (AMI) to request coverage of accessibility options available in New Brunswick elections. The Chief Electoral Officer was featured in an episode of the AMI podcast *Reflections*, "The Strength of the Ballot: Why Accessible Voting Matters", where she spoke on accessible voting in New Brunswick. The episode was to be available for streaming in April 2026.
- Elections New Brunswick staff participated in a March 2026 podcast with the Neil Squire Society to promote accessible voting options.

4. Improve Workplace Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Elections New Brunswick has not previously used electronic tracking for its correspondence. After reviewing off the shelf solutions, we engaged WorkDynamics to build us a customized correspondence and complaints system. A limited rollout began in February 2026 for staff who interact directly with the public, with additional workflows to be added as staff become proficient in its use.
- The paper-based system for processing invoices, expenses, and leases submitted by returning offices was replaced with an electronic process in fiscal year 2025–2026. Documents are now scanned at returning offices and uploaded to a shared drive for processing. Paper documents are returned following the election in the event they are required to be accessed.
- In fiscal year 2025-2026, employees participated in a number of conferences, courses, and committees related to activities impacting the management and integrity of elections. Such activities are important as they ensure the organization remains current on global trends and activities relevant to election administration.
- An updated digital employee handbook consolidating Elections New Brunswick’s policies and procedures was completed in July 2025 and posted on the corporate intranet.
- As part of our ongoing commitment to foster team cohesiveness and relationship building, our third annual general meeting was held in Moncton in September 2025. Included as part of the team-building activities were facilitated sessions on thriving in a multi-generational workplace and leading difficult conversations.

5. Increase Organizational Resilience

- As we continued our efforts to identify replacements for our ad-hoc election management system (EMS), Elections New Brunswick investigated systems used in other jurisdictions, which included in-depth meetings with select election management colleagues from across the country. In February 2026, a Request for Information was issued and received two vendor responses, reaffirming the niche nature of the market and the added complexity of accommodating bilingual provincial and local elections.
- The Information Technology and Security Section continued its cybersecurity awareness efforts. In collaboration with the Communications and Outreach Section, it produced a “Cyber Safe Tips” brochure for use by returning office employees.

Looking forward

A number of key issues raised in past annual and post election reports remain unresolved and continue to pose risks to the long-term resilience and integrity of Elections New Brunswick.

The legislative weakness surrounding the protection of elector data - identified in a report commissioned by Elections New Brunswick and tabled with the Legislative Assembly in March of 2025 - has not been addressed. The recent and highly publicized voter data leak in Alberta may provide the impetus to strengthen the rules governing how members of the Legislative Assembly, registered political parties and candidates safeguard the personal elector data that Elections New Brunswick is required by law to provide to them.

In 2019, Elections New Brunswick issued the document *Modernizing New Brunswick's Electoral Legislation*. The document contained 108 recommendations to better respond to how elections have evolved since the statutes were first written 50 to 60 years ago. Three of those recommendations have been implemented.

Following the September 14, 2020, provincial election, which was conducted during the global pandemic, our post-election report contained a number of recommendations to improve the conduct of elections. It was recommended that the chief electoral officer be granted authority to adapt the provisions of the *Elections Act* in order to protect public safety in the event of a declared state of emergency, and to respond to logistical challenges that such an emergency might present for conducting an election. Global events continue to demonstrate that the risks underlying the original recommendation persist and, in some cases, have intensified, making it critical that the Chief Electoral Officer have the flexibility to adapt election legislation when necessary.

These same global events underscore another concern raised by the chief electoral officer on a number of occasions. The Chief Electoral Officer has publicly raised concerns that the *Elections Act* does not provide a mechanism to suspend or delay an election that is underway if an emergency occurs that makes it impracticable to hold the election or if holding the election would put the health or safety of persons at risk. The Chief Electoral Officer has recommended two alternatives for the withdrawal of a writ of election when a state of emergency is declared, including a public health emergency, or when a flood, fire or similar event makes it impracticable to hold an election:

- i. authorize the CEO to apply to a judge of the Court of King's Bench for an order for the withdrawal of a writ of election, or
- ii. authorize the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to order the withdrawal of a writ of election on the recommendation of the CEO.



These unresolved issues also underscore a broader challenge raised by the Chief Electoral Officer and fellow legislative officers in July 2021. The Legislative Officers recommended that legislative amendments recommended by, or relating to, legislative officers should be considered by the Legislative Assembly rather than Executive Council. Although the officers were invited to appear before the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers to present their position, no formal response was received.

An election management system (EMS) supports the data driven processes required by election officials and other key stakeholders to administer an election. Elections New Brunswick's EMS is outdated and built on multiple disconnected legacy systems. Three years ago, Elections New Brunswick assessed the weaknesses of, and threats to, its current election management processes. The assessment concluded that building or acquiring a purpose-built EMS is the only viable solution that will permit Elections New Brunswick to achieve many of its strategic goals, while remaining up to date with technology and security requirements. Elections New Brunswick continues to assess the options available to address this vulnerability with a goal of presenting a proposal for required funding when an acceptable solution has been identified.

With a new Chief Electoral Officer expected to assume the leadership of Elections New Brunswick in April 2027, it will be up to them to determine if these issues remain a priority for the organization.

Although raised in our 2024-2025 annual report and the report following the 2024 provincial general election, the intersection of disinformation campaigns and generative AI continues to present a serious threat to democratic institutions and democratic engagement. The seriousness of this threat bears repeating until adequate action is taken. Generative AI allows for the inexpensive and easy production of disinformation and influence campaigns. The interconnectedness of our world via social media and other platforms permits these campaigns to be spread widely, with minimal effort, by domestic and foreign actors. In rare cases are the goals of these campaigns beneficial to a healthy democracy – influencing and misleading voters, spreading disinformation about elections and candidates, and discrediting the electoral process and results.¹

Both the federal Commission on Foreign Interference and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance consider disinformation – whether domestic or foreign – to be one of the greatest threats to democracy, if not the single greatest threat. As recommended previously, legislative action must be taken to safeguard our elections and democratic institutions, which action must be supported by robust civics education and digital literacy for everyone. Other jurisdictions in Canada have made recommendations or implemented changes to deal with the threats posed by both foreign interference and the proliferation of disinformation, and the impact generative AI has on these threats.² Our legislators must take deliberate steps to ensure our election legislation is equipped to protect the democratic institutions we value so deeply in New Brunswick. Although this will require sustained effort, laws governing elections must be regularly reviewed and updated. Without such ongoing attention, the unthinkable could occur—our democracy could weaken, whether through attack or neglect.

¹ Canadian Centre for Cyber Security (March 28, 2025). *Cyber threats to elections*.

<https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/cyber-threats-elections#report-tdp>

² For example, see: (a) Elections Canada (November 2024). *Protecting Against Threats to the Electoral Process*.

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/oth/prthr/rpt&document=index&lang=e>.

(b) Elections Ontario (October 2024). *Maintaining a Level Playing Field; Addressing Misinformation and Disinformation Threats to Electoral Administration in Ontario*.

<https://www.elections.on.ca/content/dam/NGW/sitecontent/2024/reports/Maintaining%20a%20Level%20Playing%20Field%20-%20Addressing%20Misinformation%20and%20Disinformation%20Threats%20to%20Electoral%20Administration%20in%20Ontario.pdf>

(c) Elections British Columbia (April 2025). *Restrictions on False Statements and Misrepresentation*.

<https://elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/election-integrity/restrictions-on-false-statements-and-misrepresentation/>