
Executive Council Office

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

Executive Council Office

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Province of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1 CANADA
gnb.ca

ISBN 978-1-4605-3135-8 (Bilingual print edition)

ISBN 978-1-4605-3136-5 (PDF: English edition)

ISSN 2816-6914 (Bilingual print edition)

ISSN 2816-6922 (PDF: English edition)

22-00088 | 2022.11 | Printed in New Brunswick

Transmittal letters

FROM THE PREMIER TO THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

**The Honourable Brenda Murphy
Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick**

May it please Your Honour:

It is my privilege to submit the annual report of the Executive Council Office, Province of New Brunswick, for the fiscal year April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Honourable Blaine Higgs
Premier of New Brunswick and the President of the Executive Council

FROM THE CLERK TO THE PREMIER

**Honourable Blaine Higgs
Premier of New Brunswick and President
of the Executive Council**

Sir:

I am pleased to be able to present the annual report describing operations of the Executive Council Office for the fiscal year April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Hansen
Chief Operating Officer, Clerk of the Executive Council
and Head of the Public Service

Contents

Premier's message	3
Clerk's message	4
Government priorities	5
Performance outcomes	7
Overview of departmental operations	10
Division overview and highlights	12
Financial information	18
Summary of staffing activity	19
Summary of legislation and legislative activity	20
Summary of official languages activities	21
Summary of recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General	23
Report on the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act</i>	27

Premier's message

Over the past two years, the staff of the Executive Council Office have truly been put to the test. It should come as no surprise that this dedicated group of professionals has risen to every challenge it has faced and continued to work hard behind the scenes to advance the priorities of New Brunswickers.

Working in the public service is not for everyone, but we are fortunate in New Brunswick to have employees who are passionate about what they do in service to the people of this province. Their hard work has provided us with the solid foundation required to not just overcome the pandemic, but to come out the other side stronger than ever.

We are ready to face the future with a renewed sense of optimism, knowing we have the strength and resilience required to overcome any obstacles we face.

The staff of the Executive Council Office have led by example, showing what is possible when we work together for the greater good, and continue to provide steadfast support for civil servants across government. I consider myself fortunate to work with this dedicated group.

Much of the work done by the staff of the Executive Council Office is directly related to the business of government, whether it is developing or amending policies, co-ordinating the development of new policies, reviewing regulatory or legislative proposals, or monitoring ongoing progress on government objectives. Other work focuses on strategic communications planning and liaising with departmental communications to ensure a co-ordinated approach. It's work that requires creativity, innovation and attention to detail, and is most successful when it is undertaken with a team approach.

Together, we have taken steps to ensure that we continue to manage our finances responsibly and strengthen our economy, even while navigating a pandemic.

Though it wasn't always easy, I believe we are clearer than ever on our priorities and have an even better understanding of what we need to do to reach our goals. We have proven that when required, we will take quick and decisive action – even when that means doing things differently.

Working together, we have implemented a forward-thinking agenda and changed the narrative on New Brunswick to one of success.

None of that would have been possible without the support of the strong team of individuals at the Executive Council Office.

I want to thank Executive Council Office employees for all that they do on behalf of New Brunswickers. Their hard work and dedication are recognized and appreciated, as even during challenging times they have shown what it means to have a responsive and high-performing government. I hope they are proud of all they have accomplished.

I look forward to working together for a better future for all New Brunswickers and to continuing to build on our success.

Honourable Blaine Higgs

Premier of New Brunswick and the President of Executive Council

Clerk's message

The work completed by the Executive Council Office during the 2021-2022 fiscal year has been nothing but extraordinary. Across the department, staff have played a central role in successfully supporting operations across government, assisting departments in achieving their priorities, and ensuring the collective and ongoing improvement of services offered to New Brunswickers.

It is a role that has been integral to the department and its purpose, so much so that it has become the inspiration behind the department's newly introduced mission, "Helping others succeed."

This is a mission that is closely intertwined with the department's long-standing commitment to advancing government's priorities. Together, it is a perfect match – one that is enabling both government and our province to benefit from the transformational work and the advancements of the Executive Council Office.

For example, through extensive efforts led by the Office of the Chief Operating Officer, we have streamlined and evolved the ways our department does business, becoming more process-oriented and agile, and providing better supports to departments. We have led by example as *One Team One GNB*, exemplifying the positive impact and value of working together towards a shared goal.

Across all areas of our work, we have made great strides. We supported government's executive branch in its central decision-making through facilitating 623 memorandums to the Executive Council, 112 committee meetings, 74 cabinet meetings, 36 COVID-19 cabinet meetings and the passage of 43 bills. At the same time, we led the mandate review for our province's agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs), and have overseen the appointment of 269 members since last April.

The department expanded efforts to equip our organization's leaders at all levels to be ready for the opportunities and challenges ahead through the growth of our Building Future Ready Leaders initiative. To date, 67 participants have taken part including the program's two cohorts of Emerging Executives and one of Evolving Leaders who initiated their learning journeys this year.

We continued to advance an integrated approach for our external communications and provided 24-7 communications support to help keep the public informed and safe during the pandemic. We further built our organization's social media audience to help reach New Brunswickers, with the GNB Facebook page now the most followed of any provincial government in Canada. Since March 2020, when communications about COVID-19 began, there have been over 10,000 related posts and over 180 livestreams. Comments on social media increased by 586 per cent compared to before the pandemic.

In our fight to minimize the impact of the pandemic, we embarked on a listening tour to reach out to, and sit with, leaders and community members within areas of the province hit extremely hard by the pandemic to better understand the underlying reasons behind the increased level of vaccination hesitancy within these regions.

We also introduced additional structure and increased accountability for government's priority reporting process, with regularly scheduled discussions taking place with departments on the status of their priority files.

In collaboration with Finance and Treasury Board, we released New Brunswick's first gender impact statement as part of the annual budget process. This will allow the public to better understand how specific government decisions impact women, gender minorities and other diverse groups.

I am extremely proud of our many accomplishments and all our team members across Executive Council Office, who, together, have made this possible through their hard work, dedication and commitment to our province. In all that we have completed, we have done so in the interest of improving the lives of New Brunswickers.

This publication marks the first annual report for Executive Council Office, and I am honoured to have this opportunity to share the tremendous efforts of the department throughout the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Thank you,

Cheryl Hansen

Chief Operating Officer, Clerk of the Executive Council and Head of the Public Service

Government priorities

Delivering for New Brunswickers

ONE TEAM ONE GNB

One Team One GNB is our vision as an organization and a collaborative approach to how we operate. It is our path forward, and it represents a civil service that is working collectively across departments, professions, and sectors. Together, we are learning, growing, adapting, and discovering new and innovative ways of doing business. It is enabling us to achieve the outcomes needed for New Brunswickers, and we are working more efficiently and effectively than ever before.

As *One Team One GNB*, we are improving the way government departments:

- communicate with one another,
- work side-by-side on important projects, and
- drive focus and accountability.

STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

The Government of New Brunswick (GNB) uses a formal management system built on leading business practices to develop, communicate and review strategy. This process provides the public service with a proven methodology to execute strategy, increase accountability and continuously drive improvement.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Our vision for 2021-2022 is a vibrant and sustainable New Brunswick. To make progress towards this vision, we must focus on our government's priorities:

- Energizing the private sector
- Vibrant and sustainable communities
- Affordable, responsive and high-performing government
- Dependable public health care
- World-class education
- Environment

COVID-19 RESPONSE

As part of GNB's priorities this past year, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic was at the forefront.

Our department supported GNB in responding to the pandemic by ensuring that the public remained up to date on the ever-changing and evolving circumstances across the province.

Many residents became familiar with some of the department's more public-facing response and recovery work, including GNB's regularly livestreamed COVID-19 news conferences; the province's coronavirus website; daily COVID-19 news releases; and the management of all interview requests and questions. ECO was also responsible for GNB's active social media presence; print, radio, and digital ads; and extensive marketing materials designed to help keep New Brunswickers safe.

Internally, ECO played a critical role in supporting the ongoing operations of the 36 all-party committee meetings on COVID-19; the introduction of multiple legislative changes in response to the pandemic; and the strategic guidance, oversight, and support to departments as it related to their pandemic response and recovery efforts, including a government-wide *One Team One GNB* approach for ensuring business continuity.

HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, Executive Council Office focused on these government priorities through:

- Legislative Assembly – Co-ordinated the business of the house which included the passage of 43 bills in the spring 2021 and fall 2021. This involved providing advice, resources, guidance and training to departments in the achievement of their priorities; co-ordinating the process which led to the hiring of three legislative officers; and implementing a translation pilot project in partnership with Service New Brunswick.
- Leading the ABC Mandate Review – This is a large project implicating all departments and involved developing: enhanced accountability, reporting requirements and guidelines; and proposals to streamline the appointment process and create efficiencies.
- Leadership Development – The organizational performance team was responsible for the design and implementation of Building Future Ready Leaders, with 67 participants to date which includes 27 emerging executives in development and 40 evolving leaders. There will be 120 more participants in 2022-2023.
- Corporate Communications – Continued to advance an integrated approach throughout government for external communications. This has allowed for a more strategic approach to focus on using communications to help departments meet their operational objectives. As traditional media readership and viewership continues to drop and fragment, Corporate Communications has continued to build the GNB social media audience across various platforms to help reach New Brunswickers. The GNB Facebook page is the most followed of any provincial government in Canada.
- Cabinet Operations – Since April 2021, the Executive Council Office also facilitated 623 MECs, 112 committee meetings, 74 cabinet meetings, and the passage of 43 bills. Cabinet Operations supported 36 cabinet committee meetings on COVID-19 by maintaining flexibility in response to the immediate need for meetings on short notice, and managing the flow of materials. They also conducted committees and cabinet virtually during lockdown periods. Meetings were conducted efficiently with ease of delivery; ministers, staff, and officials provided positive feedback.
- Women’s Equality Branch – This fiscal year, the branch has invested \$1.6 million for violence prevention initiatives in more than 30 agencies, as well as assembling a ministerial roundtable on campus sexual violence, resulting in the identification of many issues and opportunities to address campus sexual violence. The Women’s Equality Branch has established 21 gender-based analysis champions in government and released the province’s first gender impact statement. The branch also hosted several events including engagement sessions with Indigenous communities and organizations, trade and technology career exploration events, virtual forums, training sessions, and the presentation of the inaugural Minister’s Award for Excellence in Championing Gender Equality.
- Office of the Lieutenant-Governor – As the representative of the Crown and head of state of the Province of New Brunswick, Lt.-Gov. Brenda L. Murphy delivered the speech from the throne, signed 335 orders-in-council, and provided royal assent to 40 bills. She oversaw the Order of New Brunswick and Order of St. John investiture ceremonies, recognizing exceptional New Brunswickers for their contributions.
- The lieutenant-governor hosted or attended nearly 100 events throughout the province, down from typical years due to COVID-19 restrictions. As the patron of more than 25 non-profit organizations, Her Honour supports initiatives targeting poverty reduction, gender equality, the elimination of violence against women by men, reconciliation, and social cohesion.
- On February 6, 2022, a flag-raising ceremony and open house event were held at Government House to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee.

Performance outcomes

The information below outlines some of the department's priorities and how we measured our performance.

Outcome #1

PERFORMANCE AGREEMENTS

The preparation of an employee performance agreement, Section 1 of the performance agreement, at the beginning of the performance review period will provide an opportunity for managers and employees to identify, agree and set work objectives and measures based on priorities and overall business results.

Why this is important

By preparing performance agreements both strategic and organizational objectives will be cascaded through the organization to increase both organizational and individual performance.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Executive Council Office was successful in completing 82.9 per cent of our employee performance agreements. This metric is calculated according to the number of performance agreements established each quarter divided by the total cumulative number of performance agreements eligible that quarter.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve this outcome

Executive Council Office took a proactive approach to ensure that performance agreements were completed on time.

Base: N/A

Target: N/A

Actual: 82.9%

Outcome #2

INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS AND ENGAGEMENT

Social media is a key component of GNB's strategic communications plan to ensure that communications across GNB are well co-ordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public and is a key priority under government's digital-first approach to public communications.

The objective is to build and broaden the audience for GNB corporate social media accounts during subsequent fiscal years to better inform and engage New Brunswickers who frequently read, watch, and interact with the most popular social media platforms.

Why this is important

Social media allows government to provide New Brunswickers with timely information, important resources, and responses to questions. Increasing social media followers (the number of people who follow one or more of GNB's corporate social media accounts) and engagement (the number of people who see a post, or who interact with it by liking, commenting on, or sharing a post) broadens our audience, and therefore government's ability to share its message with members of the public.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve this outcome

The social media team has restructured to assign two staff as strategic content advisors. As point persons, they help departments create post texts and visuals to make their social media content more attractive. They also use the content calendar to schedule posts strategically to get the optimal reach per post. These changes contribute to more engaging social media content for New Brunswickers.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

- As of March 31, 2022, our overall social media audience was 368,449 followers, which represents a 17.6 per cent increase over fiscal 2020-2021. A reasonable growth rate in terms of followers would be 10 per cent year over year.
- Between April 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, the social media team, through the Digital Communications unit, assisted with the creation of 8,550 posts. These saw an average reach of 40,327 people per post, and an average engagement rate of 11.2 per cent. The social media team aims to increase the average reach by two to five per cent each year.

Outcome #3

BUILD A CUSTOMIZED AND SUSTAINABLE ACCELERATED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The objective was to build a sustainable system to prepare future GNB leaders to lead teams in delivery of dependable, responsive, and efficient programs and services to drive organizational improvement for New Brunswick taxpayers and customers.

The initial timeline is fiscal years (2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023) to establish the foundation of this initiative and engage initial groups of participants in their learning journeys. The Organizational Performance (OP) team, of ECO is working with departments and outside partners to deliver on this priority.

Why this is important

Strong, future ready leaders build strong teams who, in turn, deliver on our commitments to New Brunswickers. Attracting, developing, and retaining top leadership and executive talent is key to making GNB's vision a reality. A business and customer-driven, sustainable leadership development pathway is foundational to *Creating a Vibrant and Sustainable New Brunswick*.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

As of March 2022, two "Emerging Executive" cohorts were established (Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) track and Deputy Minister (DM) track) as well as the initial "Evolving Leaders" cohort (Director/Executive Director (ED) track), representing 67 participants to date with 120 more scheduled for 2022. A strong foundation has been built, project is on time and on budget, feedback is positive from applicants, participants, their leaders, and executive teams.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve this outcome

- Launch of Evolving Leaders stream (Director/ED track) - engaged with departments to support identification of future leaders, applying proven tools and approaches.
- Launch of second Emerging Executives cohort (DM track) – same as above but engaged with DM's.
- Progress/success of first Emerging Executives cohort (ADM track) – based on individual development plans that were on track, retention rate of candidates, and promotion rate.

Overview of departmental operations

The **Office of the Clerk and the Chief Operating Officer** provides professional non-partisan advice and support on the structure and operations of government. The clerk also acts as the head of the public service, ensuring effective and efficient management and that the public service is delivering high-quality programs, support on priority files and services, based on evidence-based evaluations.

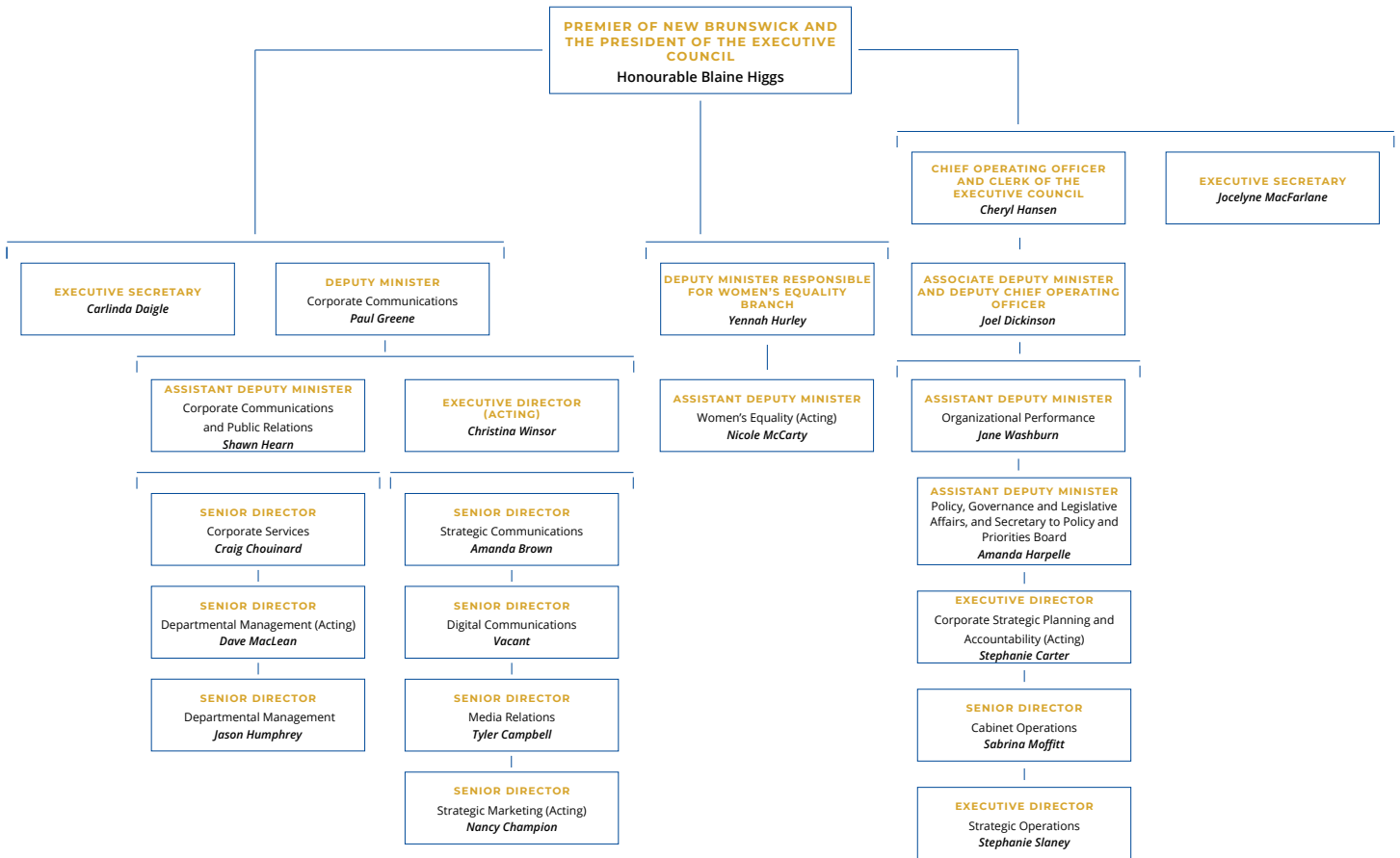
It also provides secretariat and administrative services for Executive Council and the Policy and Priorities Board, and occasionally, the special committees of cabinet. It reviews proposals for the development or amendment of government policy and reviews all regulatory and legislative proposals. It provides central support on appointment and governance of agencies, boards, and commissions. The office also provides support to the government house leader in planning, establishing, and managing the government's agenda for the legislative assembly; and in overseeing policy issues related to democracy and the legislature. It also liaises with the Office of the Lieutenant-Governor.

Executive Council Office (ECO) **Corporate Communications and Public Relations** is a full-service communications and marketing division serving all other provincial government departments, agencies and boards. Its mandate is to provide strategic communications planning to the Executive Council Office and co-ordinate communications across government. Key functions include co-ordinating strategic horizontal projects and digital strategies; establishing and enforcing marketing standards and policies; developing communication plans; and developing and implementing strategies.

The **Women's Equality Branch** was created, within the Executive Council Office, to promote gender equality and reduce systemic discrimination, to provide advice and support on advancing equality to the minister responsible for women's equality as well as to departments of government, and to co-ordinate the implementation of the government's actions and initiatives in the areas of women's personal, economic, and social security.

The **lieutenant-governor** of New Brunswick represents the King within the Province of New Brunswick and is the province's legal head of state. As His Majesty's direct representative in the province, the lieutenant-governor is first in the provincial order of precedence. The lieutenant-governor upholds the province's constitutional framework and serves as both the apex and the unifying link in the constitutional and political structure of the province – executive, legislative, and judicial. To uphold the constitutional framework, the lieutenant-governor ensures the continued existence of government in the province of New Brunswick; selects a first minister as premier of the province; appoints and administers the oaths of office, allegiance and confidentiality to the premier and members of the executive council; summons, prorogues and dissolves the legislature; delivers the speech from the throne; provides royal assent to provincial legislation; and signs orders-in-council, proclamations and other official documents before they have the force of law. In celebratory and promotional roles, the lieutenant-governor celebrates, inspires and connects New Brunswickers, while promoting the history, culture and achievements of the province. They instill pride in the rich natural resources of New Brunswick, as well as the accomplishments of the people of the province. The lieutenant-governor is the patron of many community-based organizations and presides over award ceremonies for the Order of New Brunswick and other prominent provincial awards of excellence.

HIGH-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Division overview and highlights

OFFICE OF THE CLERK AND THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Overview

The Office of the Clerk and the Chief Operating Officer provides professional non-partisan advice and support on the structure and operations of government. The clerk also acts as the chief operating officer and head of the public service, ensuring effective and efficient management and that the public service is delivering high-quality programs and services, based on evidence-based evaluations. The Office of the Chief Operating Officer has several units supporting the division.

The **Cabinet Operations** unit serves the clerk of the Executive Council and secretary to cabinet, members of cabinet and cabinet committees by ensuring that the business of cabinet and its committees is conducted in a timely and efficient manner, and that proper collective information is provided. There are three main lines of responsibility; development and implementation of the processes associated with cabinet decision-making; support for the Office of the Lieutenant-Governor in fulfilling ceremonial functions related to the installation of the lieutenant-governor and the swearing-in of cabinet ministers, as well as the statutory requirement for decisions of cabinet requiring subsequent approval of the lieutenant-governor, formally recorded through the issuance of orders in council; and support in preparation and planning related to government transition.

The **Corporate Strategic Planning and Accountability** unit works directly with deputy ministers and their senior teams to align departmental strategic plans with government priorities and commitments. The unit is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring the accountability reporting process to achieve priority outcomes and management of government platform commitments. The unit drives corporate accountability and results while overseeing the reporting process, provides coaching, guidance, and co-ordination of corporate requests, and enables collaboration and connections across departments. The unit leads and co-ordinates the annual report process for Part 1 departments. This team also supports the implementation of the *One Team One GNB* brand, practices, and mindsets across GNB.

The **Organizational Performance** unit is responsible to build and execute a customized and sustainable executive and leadership development system. This functions to prepare future GNB leaders to lead teams in the delivery of dependable, responsive, and efficient programs and services while driving organizational improvement for New Brunswick taxpayers and customers. This is in partnership with deputy ministers, their executive teams and human resources teams, and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO). Building Future Ready Leaders (BFRL) is aligned to the strategic priority of an affordable, responsible and high-performing government.

The **Strategic Operations** unit provides corporate services (human resources and financial) to all employees of the Office of the Chief Operating Officer and works with Finance and Treasury Board's director of finance to produce the annual budget for the Office of the Chief Operating Officer. The branch is responsible for the oversight of *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* for Executive Council Office as well as the Office of the Premier, to help support initiatives across GNB departments, and to help to implement the *One Team One GNB* brand across GNB. The branch also provides process documentation co-ordination, internal communications support, and champions employee experience in addition to supporting the deputy chief operating officer.

The **Policy, Governance and Legislative Affairs** unit provides secretariat and administrative services for Executive Council, the Policy and Priorities Board, the Joint Board, and occasionally, the special committees of cabinet. It analyzes proposals for the development or amendment of government policy and oversees all aspects of regulatory and legislative proposals, from policy development through the stages of the legislative assembly. This unit provides central leadership on appointment and governance of provincial agencies, boards and commissions, as well as oversight of accountability requirements for Crown bodies under the *Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act*. It also supports the government house leader in planning, establishing, and managing the government's agenda for the legislative assembly; and in overseeing policy

issues related to democracy and the legislature. Policy, Governance and Legislative Affairs serves to ensure Executive Council Office receives well-thought-out, strategic proposals for consideration as it relates to governance and public policy, including legislation.

Highlights

- 73 per cent of departmental annual reports filed on time, compared to only 40 per cent the previous year.
- Initiated monthly meetings with policy directors across all government departments.
- Analyzed and provided strategic guidance on approximately 623 proposals to government (memoranda to Executive Council).
- Co-ordinated the appointment process for three legislative officers: auditor general; ombud; and child, youth and seniors advocate.
- Initiated a translation pilot project with SNB for the timely translation of documents for the legislative assembly.
- Co-ordinated the process on 269 appointments, including 161 that required cabinet approval.
- Completed a mandate review of 86 provincial agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs).
- Facilitated and co-ordinated, in collaboration with departments, the mandate letters for Crown bodies, in accordance with the *Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act*.
- Initiated a comprehensive review of the Executive Council Procedures Manual for Memoranda to Executive Council.
- Led the cross-departmental 90-day rental review.
- Clerk embarked on a departmental listening tour to examine the impacts of the pandemic.

Key Performance Indicator

Emerging executives (ADM track) performance indicator results for fiscal year 2021-2022

KPI MEASURE	PERCENTAGE / OUTCOMES
Part I department engagement/participation	100%
Applicant rate	5.3 applicants per available seat
Participant retention rate	100%
Progressive role promotion rate	41% (to date)
Individual development plans on track or complete	75% (to date, continues into fiscal year 2022-2023)

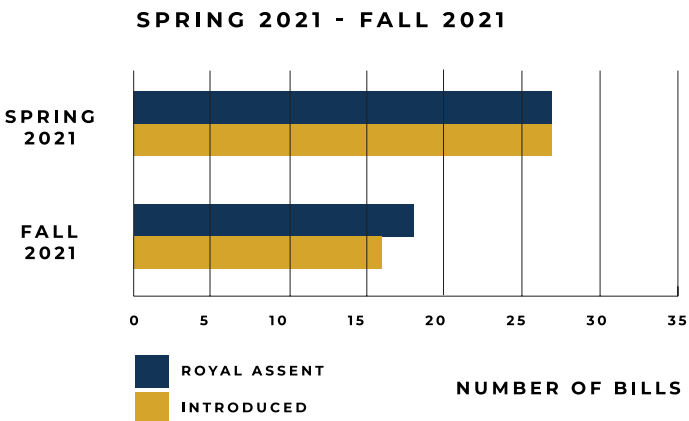
Gender distribution of appointments to agencies, boards and commissions in 2021-2022

BOARD TYPE	GENDER	TOTAL (#)	TOTAL (%)
Order in Council	Female	79	49%
	Male	82	51%
Ministerial	Female	56	52%
	Male	52	48%
Total	Female	135	50%
	Male	134	50%
	Overall	269	100%

Overall gender distribution on agencies, boards and commissions as of March 31, 2022

BOARD TYPE	GENDER	TOTAL (#)	TOTAL (%)
Order in Council	Female	244	45%
	Male	299	55%
Ministerial	Female	121	50%
	Male	120	50%
Total	Female	365	47%
	Male	419	53%
	Overall	784	100%

Governmental bills that were introduced or received royal assent in fiscal year 2021-2022



CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Overview

ECO Corporate Communications is comprised of six units: Corporate Services; Strategic Communications; Departmental Management; Digital Communications; Media Relations; and Strategic Marketing.

The **Corporate Services** unit is responsible for managing the organization's operational budget, human resource development, staff recruitment and training, and communication and marketing contracts. The unit is also responsible for government media monitoring, the provincial newswire, and administering and publishing the *Royal Gazette*, the official publication of the Province of New Brunswick.

The **Strategic Communications** unit has a specific role in setting direction, guiding implementation, and ensuring measurable outcomes are achieved for government communications activities. The unit works with departments to help them identify goals for communicating their policies and initiatives. They help generate ideas and gain insights through research and bring together the means necessary to help departments implement their plans. In addition, the unit is responsible for managing the GNB corporate communications calendar, providing writing and editing support for the Office of the Premier and the Executive Council Office as well as acting as a liaison between departments and the Office of the Premier.

The **Departmental Management** unit is responsible for departmental communications and houses all communications directors and officers. All communications staff are assigned centrally by ECO Corporate Communications but respond to the communications needs of their respective departments.

The **Digital Communications** unit is responsible for website strategy and maintenance, audio-visual services and managing government's social media presence. The web staff manages and develops webpages within the main Government of New Brunswick website and related websites, while the social media team engages with New Brunswickers through the government's corporate social media channels. The unit records hundreds of videos and still images in support of government communications and marketing activities each year.

The **Media Relations** unit strategically assesses and addresses media requests and works with departmental communications staff on their plans and strategies to communicate with the media. They also review requests received under the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* for Executive Council Office, assist with events management, and manage all media scrums when the legislative assembly is in session.

The **Strategic Marketing** unit is responsible for developing, planning, and approving all major marketing initiatives and facilitating approvals for marketing campaigns. They provide cost-effective creative services and visual communications expertise including graphic design, content editing, creation and management, and advertising design services.

The ongoing goal of the division has been to appropriately staff and fund an organization that addresses the communications needs of departments and agencies throughout government.

Highlights

- Created and placed 112 separate ad campaigns related to COVID-19, including print, radio, and digital ads since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Completed 330 media campaigns or buys in 2021-2022 for a total value of \$4,350,000.
- More than 10,000 COVID-19 related posts on GNB social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn).
- Worked closely with the legislative and executive branches to support the sitting of the legislative assembly including bill development and production and opposition briefings.
- Transformed processes to support cabinet and all-party COVID-19 committee decision-making in the pandemic environment.
- Began work on three priority projects to do our part in transforming GNB and how we serve New Brunswickers.
- Conducted several public opinion surveys to gauge awareness, interest and understanding of various topics and initiatives. The findings have been used to develop marketing and communications messaging and strategies to effectively target New Brunswickers.

- Updated the layout process for, and financial management of, the *Royal Gazette*.
- Successfully moved the majority of GNB media events online due to continued COVID-19 restrictions on event attendance and distancing. Nearly 170 livestreams were completed in 2021, with around 1.7 million views, up 12 per cent over 2020.
- Hosted a livestream with participants in different locations for the first time while maintaining second language and sign language interpretation.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY BRANCH

Overview

The Women's Equality Branch is mandated to promote gender equality and reduce systemic discrimination; provide advice and support on advancing equality to the minister responsible for women's equality as well as to departments of government; and co-ordinate the implementation of the government's actions and initiatives in the areas of women's personal, economic, and social security.

The branch is organized in two units: Violence Prevention and Community Partnerships, and Policy and Strategic Initiatives.

The **Violence Prevention and Community Partnerships** unit co-ordinates government's action on violence against women and sexual violence. It funds and oversees programs and supports agencies in delivering services. It consults, develops, and implements initiatives, policies, and procedures. It is a vital connection point between government departments and community partners working on violence against all women. This includes supports and services to women victims of domestic, intimate partner and sexual violence, and violence against Indigenous women and girls. By providing advice to community organizations and government departments and by training government and community, the unit facilitates a co-ordinated response to the complex needs of those caught in the cycle of violence and of survivors.

The **Policy and Strategic Initiatives** unit is responsible for ensuring movement towards achieving women's economic security and supporting government policy making that is gender responsive and enhances equality of outcomes for the public. Commitment to enhancing women's economic equality in New Brunswick is undertaken through the promotion of family-friendly workplace initiatives and pay equity practices; supporting gender wage gap reduction initiatives; providing mentorship for students entering male dominated career training programs; and, developing and distributing information, tools, resources, and strategies to advance women in leadership and decision-making positions.

Highlights

- Convened a ministerial roundtable on campus sexual violence that resulted in the creation of a working group on campus sexual violence which has identified many issues and opportunities to address campus sexual violence.
- Invested \$1.6 million for violence prevention initiatives in more than 30 agencies for:
 - Domestic Violence Outreach Program
 - Second Stage Housing
 - Sexual Violence Framework
 - Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls
 - Provincial Partnership in Action Forum
 - Community Action Fund
- Expanded Gender-Based Analysis + (GBA+) by creating a GBA+ Community of Practice within government and establishing 21 GBA+ champions representing 17 departments.
- Collaborated with Finance and Treasury Board to release New Brunswick's first gender impact statement as part of the annual budget process.
- Hosted seven engagement sessions with Indigenous communities and organizations to develop government's response to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- Hosted four virtual Trades & Technology Career Exploration events, with more than 3,600 participants, to introduce students in middle and high school to women from their community who are working or studying in skilled trades and technology sectors.
- Held a full-day virtual forum to bring together stakeholders to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on women and vulnerable groups.
- Hosted 18 training sessions with more than 900 participants on danger assessment, coercive control and justice system, domestic/intimate partner violence in the workplace, emergency intervention orders, and on sexual violence.
- Presented five women in New Brunswick with the inaugural Minister's Award for Excellence in Championing Gender Equality (VIVE Awards).
- Established the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network, an initiative of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, which was the result of work initiated by the Atlantic Ministers responsible for Status of Women Forum.

Financial information

**TABLE 1: ORDINARY EXPENDITURE
STATUS REPORT BY PROGRAM COMPONENT**

Fiscal year ending March 31, 2022 (\$ 000's)

ORDINARY PROGRAM	TOTAL BUDGET	2021-2022 ACTUALS	VARIANCE	% OF BUDGET
Office of the Clerk, Chief Operating Officer and Head of the Public Service	\$3,602,223	\$3,284,770	\$317,453	91%
Corporate Communications	\$6,651,452	\$6,127,104	\$524,348	92%
Office of the Lieutenant-Governor	\$474,042	\$492,616	(\$18,574)	104%
Women's Equality Branch	\$3,332,934	\$3,257,190	\$75,744	98%
Executive Council Office	\$14,060,651	\$13,161,680	\$898,971	94%

Summary of staffing activity

Pursuant to section 4 of the *Civil Service Act*, the secretary to treasury board delegates staffing to each deputy head for his or her respective department(s). Please find below a summary of the staffing activity for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years for the Executive Council Office.

NUMBER OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES FOR FISCAL YEARS		
EMPLOYEE TYPE	2020-2021 FISCAL	2019-2020 FISCAL
Permanent	112	120
Temporary	14	11
Total	126	131

*Note the department is unable to report the staffing activity for calendar years due to software programs used for human resources.

The department advertised 12 competitions, including nine open (public) competitions and three closed (internal) competitions.

Pursuant to sections 15 and 16 of the *Civil Service Act*, the department made the following appointments using processes to establish merit other than the competitive process:

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
Specialized Professional, Scientific or Technical	An appointment may be made without competition when a position requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a high degree of expertise and training a high degree of technical skill recognized experts in their field 	15(1)	0
Equal Employment Opportunity Program	Provides Aboriginals, persons with disabilities and members of a visible minority group with equal access to employment, training and advancement opportunities.	16(1)(a)	3
Department Talent Management Program	Permanent employees identified in corporate and departmental talent pools, who meet the four-point criteria for assessing talent, namely performance, readiness, willingness and criticalness.	16(1)(b)	3
Lateral Transfer	The GNB transfer process facilitates the transfer of employees from within Part 1, 2 (school districts) and 3 (hospital authorities) of the public service.	16(1) or 16(1)(c)	10
Regular Appointment of Casual/Temporary	An individual hired on a casual or temporary basis under section 17 may be appointed without competition to a regular properly classified position within the civil service.	16(1)(d)(i)	5
Regular Appointment of Students/ Apprentices	Summer students, university or community college co-op students or apprentices may be appointed without competition to an entry level position within the civil service.	16(1)(d)(ii)	0

Pursuant to section 33 of the *Civil Service Act*, no complaints alleging favouritism were made to the deputy head of the Executive Council Office and no complaints were submitted to the ombud.

Summary of legislation and legislative activity

BILL #	NAME OF LEGISLATION	DATE OF ROYAL ASSENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
43	An Act Respecting the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act	June 11, 2021	This bill will extend the salary freeze for members of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council until April 1, 2022.

Summary of official languages activities

INTRODUCTION

Executive Council Office ensures that the Government of New Brunswick implements strategies and plans on official languages. GNB's plan on official languages, *Official Bilingualism: A Fundamental Value*, was launched in July 2015.

Focus 1

LANGUAGE OF SERVICE

Ensure access to service of equal quality in English and French throughout the province:

- New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. New Brunswickers have the right to receive communications from GNB in either official language. ECO Corporate Communications is responsible for creating both internal and external communications materials that enable government to share its messages with all New Brunswickers. These materials include news releases, social media posts, communications plans, speeches, and ministerial statements, among others. All communications materials prepared and distributed by ECO Corporate Communications are provided in English and French, following the *Official Languages Act* and related GNB policies.
- Executive Council Office continues to ensure that all written and oral communication is in the official language of choice of the intended recipient.
- Executive Council Office continues to ensure that there is a balance of linguistic capabilities to provide quality services in both official languages to internal and external stakeholders. As an example, Executive Council Office initiated a translation pilot project with Service New Brunswick's Translation Bureau so that materials would be translated and available in a timely manner as part of the proceedings of the legislative assembly.
- For Executive Council Office's emerging leaders program, all materials, presentations, and communication are provided in both official languages.

Focus 2

LANGUAGE OF WORK

For all employees, provide an environment and climate that encourages the use of the official language of their choice in their workplace:

- The active offer is always presented to participants in the leadership development program.
- Presentation materials are prepared in both official languages internal to the department and in the provision of training across GNB.

Focus 3

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO OFFICIAL LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES

Provide strategic means to ensure that new and revised government programs and policies consider the realities of the province's official language communities:

- Government continues to ensure that official bilingualism is included as a fundamental value of the public service and is clearly included in the code of conduct of the employees of the public service.
- The official language requirements were built into the leadership development program, including ensuring external partner alignment.

Focus 4

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ACT AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS

Ensure public service employees have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the *Official Languages Act*, relevant policies, regulations, and the province's obligations with respect to official languages:

- Executive Council Office has developed an onboarding program that follows the principles of GNB's onboarding program where official languages is included in the orientation checklist for new employees. The department ensures that all new employees are provided these documents.

Conclusion

Official languages continues to be a priority of Executive Council Office. We understand the importance and value of providing services in both official languages.

Summary of recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General

SECTION 1

Includes the current reporting year and the previous year.

NAME AND YEAR OF AUDIT AREA WITH LINK TO ONLINE DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
	TOTAL
2021 V2 Chapter 3: Crown Agency Salary and Benefits Practices	1
2021 V1 Chapter 3: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour – Covid-19 Funding – New Brunswick Workers’ Emergency Income Benefit	1
2021 V1 Chapter 4: Executive Council Office – Risks Exist in Government’s Oversight of Crown Agencies	5
2021 V1 Chapter 2: Regional Development Corporation and Opportunities New Brunswick – Funding for Rural Internet	3
2020 V1 Chapter 3: Ambulance Services	1

IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN
<p>2021 V1 Chapter 2: Regional Development Corporation and Opportunities New Brunswick – Funding for Rural Internet</p> <p>2.52 We recommend Executive Council Office ensure responsibility for government policy commitments, including funding for rural internet, be clearly assigned to specific government entities to ensure accountability and transparency for government programs and services.</p>	<p>The Executive Council Office (ECO) has dedicated human resources responsible to provide oversight and guidance regarding commitments. This specific project being audited was approved by government and assigned to the former Department of Economic Development/Opportunities NB.</p> <p>ECO has a mandate to work with departments to ensure commitments are appropriately monitored, measured, and reported on as part of the accountability process.</p> <p>Departments must report monthly to central government regarding the progress of their priorities. Going forward, the file related to rural internet is the responsibility of Finance and Treasury Board’s Office of the Chief Information Officer division.</p>

<p>2021 V1 Chapter 2: Regional Development Corporation and Opportunities New Brunswick – Funding for Rural Internet</p> <p>2.53 We recommend Executive Council Office direct the responsible department or agency to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any future funding for rural internet is delivered via a program which identifies appropriate outcomes and performance metrics; a needs assessment is conducted to determine the service gap before providing any future funding; and future applications for rural internet funding be validated to ensure they address service gaps identified through a needs assessment. 	<p>The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) in Finance and Treasury Board (FTB) has identified high-level targets and continues to work with the service providers to align their work with desired outcomes. Future funding decisions will be aligned to specific outcome metrics and service gaps that are to be addressed. OCIO continues to liaise and support internet service providers in an effort (for internet service providers) to procure federal funding for the provision of rural broadband to rural New Brunswick homes. OCIO has established a process to identify gaps in rural broadband service for households and businesses. This work is ongoing and will inform future decisions.</p>
<p>2021 V1 Chapter 2: Regional Development Corporation and Opportunities New Brunswick – Funding for Rural Internet</p> <p>2.63. We recommend that Executive Council Office direct the responsible department or agency to ensure any future funding for rural internet is delivered through a competitive and transparent process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> issuing public tender; or adhering to the terms and conditions of funding guidelines. 	<p>Government recently approved a financial assistance policy that will apply to for-profit organizations that will soon be fully implemented. Finance and Treasury Board will be responsible for providing the central financial oversight on this new policy. Organizations will be put through a rigorous process and must meet criteria to be approved.</p> <p>This recommendation is currently underway.</p>
<p>2021 V1 Chapter 3: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour – Covid-19 Funding – New Brunswick Workers’ Emergency Income Benefit</p> <p>3.82 We recommend the Executive Council Office create a formalized process to provide direction, guidance, and resources to departments that are tasked with new activities during an emergency not covered under defined Mission Critical Business Functions within their respective Emergency Preparedness Plans</p>	<p>The Department of Justice and Public Safety, through the New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization, monitors risks and co-ordinates planning, resulting in the provincial emergency plan. Established risks and plans include the need for emergency social supports, including financial supports, during events. Arrangements under this plan were leveraged to develop and then deliver the New Brunswick Workers’ Emergency Income Benefit.</p>
<p>2021 V1 Chapter 4: Executive Council Office – Risks Exist in Government’s Oversight of Crown Agencies</p> <p>4.36 We recommend the Executive Council Office prepare, recommend for Ministerial approval, and issue mandate letters to Crown agencies with sufficient time (such as six months in advance) to enable Crown agencies to plan their upcoming fiscal year and address government priorities and objectives.</p>	<p>ECO has undertaken work with Crown agencies and departments to improve the process.</p>
<p>2021 V1 Chapter 4: Executive Council Office – Risks Exist in Government’s Oversight of Crown Agencies</p> <p>4.37 We recommend the Executive Council Office ensure mandate letters contain all information required by the <i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act</i>, such as including performance expectations, prior to Ministerial approval.</p>	<p>ECO has worked to ensure performance expectations are included.</p>

<p>2021 V1 Chapter 4: Executive Council Office – Risks Exist in Government’s Oversight of Crown Agencies</p> <p>4.47 We recommend the Executive Council Office develop and implement a formal process to monitor if Crown agencies file annual reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in the time frame specified by the <i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act</i>.</p>	<p>ECO has formalized an agreement with the clerk of the legislative assembly to ensure ECO is able to monitor whether Crown agencies file their reports on time.</p>
--	---

RECOMMENDATIONS NOT IMPLEMENTED	CONSIDERATIONS
<p>2021 V2 Chapter 3: Crown Agency Salary and Benefits Practices</p> <p>3.27 We recommend the Executive Council Office, in consultation with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board, update the Memoranda of Understanding with each Part IV Crown agency to clearly define what government expects for salary and benefits practices for non-bargaining employees.</p>	<p>ECO will continue to collaborate with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. Memorandums of understanding will be updated to reflect this direction.</p>
<p>2020 V1 Chapter 3: Ambulance Services</p> <p>3.206 We recommend the Executive Council Office review the Conflict of Interest Regulation under the <i>Conflict of Interest Act</i> and amend the regulation to include all relevant Crown corporations in Schedule A, including EM/ANB Inc.</p>	<p>There is concurrent statutory authority in the enabling legislation of many Crown corporations to develop their own conflict of interest by-laws and/or policies. ECO will explore a more consistent approach through a review of the <i>Conflict of Interest Act</i> and regulation.</p>
<p>2021 V1 Chapter 4: Executive Council Office – Risks Exist in Government’s Oversight of Crown Agencies</p> <p>4.45 We recommend the Executive Council Office collaborate with the responsible Minister, department and Crown agency to review Crown agency annual plans/business plans to ensure they comply with the <i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act</i> (or other relevant legislation such as the <i>Regional Health Authorities Act</i>) before the documents are approved by the Minister responsible.</p>	<p>Guidelines have been developed to identify the roles and responsibilities for ECO, responsible departments, and Crown bodies related to the <i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act</i>.</p> <p>ECO will continue to support departments to ensure all accountability documents are compliant with the act prior to approval.</p>

SECTION 2

Includes the reporting periods for years three, four and five.

NAME AND YEAR OF AUDIT AREA WITH LINK TO ONLINE DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS	
	TOTAL	IMPLEMENTED
2019 V1 Chapter 5: City of Saint John Funding Agreement – Special Review Executive Council Office	5	5
2018 V1 Chapter 2: WorksafeNB – Phase 1 - Governance	1	1
2018 V2 Chapter 4: Follow up recommendations from Prior Years Performance Audit Chapters	2	2
2017 V3 Chapter 2: Service New Brunswick Residential Property Assessment - Special Examination	1	1
2017 V2 Chapter 2: Financial Assistance to Atcon: Unanswered Questions	1	1

Report on the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*

As provided under section 18(1) of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, the chief executive shall prepare a report of any disclosures of wrongdoing that have been made to a supervisor or designated officer of the portion of the public service for which the chief executive officer is responsible. The Executive Council Office received no disclosure(s) of wrongdoing in the 2021-2022 fiscal year.