

Executive Council Office

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 -2024

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Province of New Brunswick
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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, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Susan Holt

Premier of New Brunswick and the President of the Executive Council

From the Clerk to the Premier

Honourable Susan Holt

Premier of New Brunswick and the President of the Executive Council

Madam:

I am pleased to be able to present the annual report describing operations of the Executive Council Office for the fiscal year April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Judy Wagner

Clerk of the Executive Council, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Public Service

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PREMIER'S MESSAGE

Our province is changing. Across multiple sectors, our economy advances alongside our growing population, fostering our diverse cultures and shared heritage.

While there is great work worth highlighting across all departments, these successes also benefit from the support, coordination and partnership work done behind the scenes at the Executive Council Office. The employees at the Executive Council Office recognize the importance of their role, which they carry out with care and integrity. They serve as facilitators, ensuring efficient and dependable services for all departments and civil servants alike.

Although much of the work pertains directly to government affairs, I'd like to acknowledge their role in strategic communications efforts as well. Through creativity, innovation, and teamwork, members of the Executive Council Office collaborate to consistently achieve positive results.

I feel privileged to have joined this unique and diverse team.

Working in public service can be challenging and we are fortunate to have dedicated employees who serve New Brunswickers diligently. Their invaluable work contributes to the prosperity of our province, a contribution that makes an impact for years to come.

Each year, we take time to reflect on our achievements and learnings in order to guide our future goals. None of these successes would have been possible without the steadfast support of the exceptional people 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 is seen and appreciated. I am proud of what they have accomplished.



Honourable Susan Holt
Premier of New Brunswick and the President of Executive Council

CLERK'S MESSAGE

The contributions of the Executive Council Office play an integral role in so many areas of our work as a public service. Throughout the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the commitment and the dedication of ECO's team members led to the expansion of development opportunities for employees across government; improvements to our operations; and impactful changes to the programs and services we offer New Brunswickers.

Our mission of helping others succeed guides all that we do. It is a mission evident in all aspects of our roles and in how we work together with departments to continuously learn, adapt and achieve our outcomes as a team.

One such example is our program designed to prepare the Government of New Brunswick's future leaders at all career levels, the Building Future Ready Leaders program. With a total of 181 participants in the Evolving Leaders stream over the past year, and preparations in place for the launch of the first Aspiring Leaders cohort in September, the program continues to expand its reach while developing competencies among our employees.

Providing GNB employees with learning opportunities extended to our training offerings, with the department delivering courses to approximately 1,500 employees on governance and decision-making, launching an online course, How Government Works, and introducing an in-person orientation tailored for employees in assistant deputy minister roles.

In our role of supporting government's executive branch, we successfully coordinated the business of the Legislative Assembly with the passage of 41 bills; oversaw the appointment of 277 members to agencies, boards, and commissions; and facilitated the presentation of more than 432 memorandums to the Executive Council and the completion of 253 orders-in-council. Improvements were made to our cabinet room, with the addition of infrastructure to allow for simultaneous interpretation to be offered.

The department was also responsible for GNB's portfolio of priorities. We introduced a new toponymy process for government, with the pilot of this project leading to the renaming of a mountain, protected natural area and community in the north of the province.

Throughout the year, we remained committed to keeping the public informed at all times, with a continued focus on growing GNB's social media audience, now totalling 453,046 followers across five platforms, and the largest Facebook following of any provincial government.

I am extremely proud of the work of our department, our commitment to our mission and the many areas in which our team members are making a difference. Together, we support one another, our operations, and all those we serve, and I am honoured to share how we are helping others succeed.



Judy Wagner

Clerk of the Executive Council, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Public Service

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Strategy and Operations Management

The Government of New Brunswick uses leading business practices to develop, communicate, and review strategy. This provides the public service with a proven methodology to execute strategy, increase accountability, and continuously drive improvement.

Government Priorities

Our vision for 2023-2024 is a vibrant and sustainable New Brunswick. To make progress towards this vision, we must focus on our government's priorities.

- energize private sector;
- vibrant and sustainable communities;
- affordable, responsive and high-performing government;
- dependable public health care;
- world-class education; and
- environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Executive Council Office (ECO) focused on these government priorities:

- **Leadership Development** – The Organizational Performance team is responsible for the design and implementation of the Building Future Ready Leaders initiative, with over 300 participants to date, which includes 43 Emerging Executives, and 274 Evolving Leaders developed or in development. A cohort of approximately 200 Aspiring Leaders will launch in September 2024.
- **Policy, Governance and Legislative Affairs** – ECO analyzed and provided strategic guidance on approximately 432 proposals to government including lead on four legislative proposals. Coordinated the business of the house, which included the passage of 41 bills in the spring and fall of 2023. This involved providing advice, resources, guidance and training to departments in the achievement of their priorities. Launched the online training course to provide GNB employees entry level information on how government works. Coordinated the process on 277 appointments, including 167 that required cabinet approval. Continued to deliver training on policy, governance and the legislative process, government decision making, and briefing senior leaders.
- **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 253 orders-in-council and provided royal assent to 58 bills. She oversaw numerous awards ceremonies, including the Order of New Brunswick and Order of St. John investiture ceremonies, recognizing exceptional New Brunswickers for their contributions. In early May 2023, the lieutenant-governor celebrated the coronation of King Charles III with a large breakfast reception and flag raising ceremony at the Government House. Later in May, she hosted and participated in events associated with the visit of The Princess Royal, Princess Anne. The lieutenant-governor hosted or attended approximately 230 engagements throughout the province, including diplomatic visits, cultural and multicultural events, recognition events and visits to not-for-profit service organizations. As the patron of more than 40 non-for-profit organizations, Her Honour supports initiatives targeting diversity and inclusion, poverty reduction, gender equality, the elimination of violence against women by men, and Indigenous truth and reconciliation.
- **Communications and Marketing** – The Communications and Marketing division conducted a comprehensive marketing campaign for the launch of the MyHealthNB app. After its official launch at the State of the Province in January 2024, a comprehensive marketing campaign ran during February and March 2024 and included newspaper ads, organic and paid social media, digital ads, Google search ads, YouTube shorts, Connected TV ads, digital screen ads, a homepage takeover on both Brunswick News and Acadie Nouvelle, and public transit ads. As of May 2024, more than 31,000 people had downloaded the app, and between the app and the website, nearly 110,000 people are using MyHealthNB.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

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

Outcome # 1 – BUILD A CUSTOMIZED AND SUSTAINABLE ACCELERATED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The objective is 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 Organizational Performance team has developed customized leadership streams in partnership with departments to address the readiness needs of future GNB leaders.

Why is it important?

Strong, future ready leaders build strong teams who, in turn, deliver on 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 2024, two of three "Emerging Executives" cohorts have completed their 18-month journey, while the third "Emerging Executives" cohort is set to complete in June 2025. Cohort one to five of Evolving Leaders, representing 180 participants, completed their journeys in 2023-2024, while cohorts six and seven, representing 74 participants, are currently in progress. Over 75 more participants are scheduled for the remainder of 2024. A strong foundation has been built, delivery is on time and on budget, and feedback is positive from applicants, participants, their leaders and executive teams. Key Performance indicators are demonstrating progress to desired outcomes as it relates to business and customer impact, retention and progressive role changes.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

- Launched seven Evolving Leaders stream cohorts, engaging with departments to support identification of future leaders, applying proven assessment tools and development approaches.
- Cohorts one to five of Evolving Leaders completed their 12-month formal learning journey.
- Emerging Executives third cohort is in progress with a focus on customized learning, with significant GNB experiential learnings coupled with leadership competencies development.

Outcome # 2 – 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 is it 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

The Executive Council Office was successful in completing 97 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 the outcome

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

Baseline: 98.5%

Target: 100%

Actual: 97%

Outcome # 3 – INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS AND ENGAGEMENT

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

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

Why is it 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) expands the overall audience and therefore government's ability to share its message with members of the public.

Overall performance

As of March 31, 2024, GNB's overall social media audience was 453,046 followers, which represents an 8.75 per cent overall increase over fiscal 2022-2023. The GNB Facebook page alone has more than 254,959 followers between the English and French corporate accounts, making it the most followed of any provincial government in Canada.

Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the social media team assisted with the creation of 8,138 posts on the GNB corporate accounts. GNB's social media content was displayed to the public 228,598,447 times, and had 3,893,314 engagements, (10.9 per cent increase over last fiscal) with an average engagement rate of 1.7 per cent.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome

The social media team has been incorporated into the Marketing and Creative Services team, enabling a more streamlined and integrated approach to marketing and communications and to uphold GNB visual identity standards in all materials. By working collaboratively, the integrated team ensures that all marketing activities including social media have a strategic approach to delivering optimal results for client departments. These changes contribute to more engaging social media content for all New Brunswick residents and for specific target audiences.

OVERVIEW OF DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

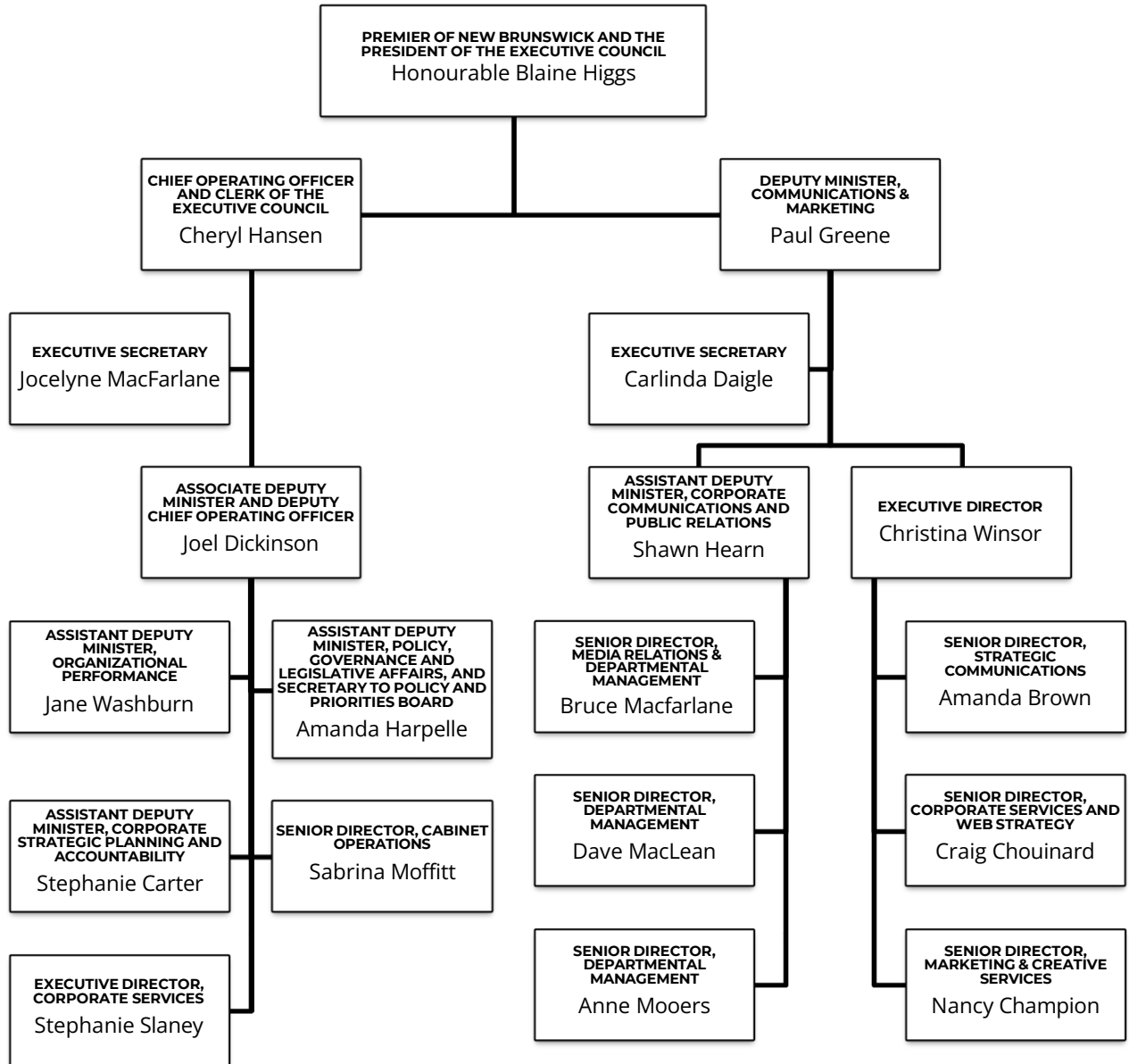
The **Office of the Clerk and the Chief Operating Officer** provides professional non-partisan advice and support on the structure and operations of government. The Clerk also acts as the head of the public service, ensuring effective and efficient management and that the public service is delivering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

Communications and Marketing 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 coordinate communications across government. Key functions include coordinating strategic horizontal projects and digital strategies; establishing and enforcing marketing standards and policies; developing communication plans; and developing, implementing and evaluating strategies.

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 delivers high-quality programs and services through 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, and members of cabinet and cabinet committees by ensuring that the business of cabinet and its committees are conducted in a timely and efficient manner and that proper collective information is provided. There are three main areas of responsibility in the cabinet operations unit: 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 issuance of a formal record for matters requiring approval of the lieutenant-governor; and support in preparation and planning related to government transitions.

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 designing, implementing and monitoring the accountability process to achieve priority outcomes and the management of government platform commitments. The unit leads and co-ordinates the annual report process for Part 1 departments.

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, 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 **Corporate Services** 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 unit is responsible for the oversight of *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* requests for Executive Council Office as well as the Office of the Premier, and to help support initiatives across GNB departments. The unit 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 Policy and Treasury Board and, occasionally, special committees of cabinet. The unit 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 to, 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*. The unit provides training on machinery of government. It also supports the government house leader in planning, establishing and managing the government's agenda for the legislative assembly, overseeing policy issues related to democracy and the legislature. Policy, Governance and Legislative Affairs works directly with departments to ensure Executive Council Office receives well-thought-out, strategic proposals for consideration as it relates to governance and public policy, including legislation.

Highlights

Cabinet Operations

- Cabinet Operations coordinated 40 cabinet meetings, ratified 432 memorandums to the executive council and issued 451 cabinet records of decision and 253 orders-in-council.
- The team has coordinated the installation of a new simultaneous interpretation system in the cabinet room that will integrate with existing technology to allow meetings to be conducted with simultaneous interpretation services when required.
- The team has also commenced with transition planning preparations in advance of the scheduled general election in October of 2024.

Organizational Performance

- Cohort one to five of Evolving Leaders completed their 12-month journey.
- Launched Evolving Leaders Cohorts six and seven.
- Included College Communautaire du NB participants to the French cohort seven.
- Emerging Executives Cohort 2022 completed their 18-month journey.
- Launched Emerging Executives 2024.

Policy, Governance and Legislative Affairs

- *An Act Respecting the Proposed Electoral District of Tantramar* passed, which addressed the situation raised in the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission filed on March 12, 2023.
- *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act* passed, which ensured the wording pertaining to fixed elections dates in the *Legislative Assembly Act* are consistent with other jurisdictions.
- *An Act Respecting the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act* passed, which implements the recommendations of the Legislative Administration Committee in terms of members' salaries and added parental leave as a distinct type of leave.
- *An Act to Amend the Executive Council Act* passed, making a department and two ministerial title changes.
- Provided in person training to departments on how government works through policy development, governance training and legislative processes.
- Analyzed and provided strategic guidance on approximately 432 proposals to government (memoranda to executive council).
- Launched the "How Government Works" online course intended for new GNB employees.
- Implemented mandatory training for new legislative coordinators.
- Coordinated all the business of the house including responses to petitions, motions, minister statements, opposition briefings and 41 bills.

Corporate Strategic Planning and Accountability

- During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Corporate Strategic Planning and Accountability team saw success in the GNB portfolio of priorities with the completion of 93 outcomes.
- All Annual Reports for Part 1 departments were submitted to the Legislative Assembly.
- Communities of Practice were held each month for departmental representatives overseeing their departments priority portfolio to support the alignment and execution across GNB.

Corporate Services

- Facilitated the inaugural assistant deputy minister orientation session.
- Completed 14 requests under the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* within 30 business days.

Key Performance Indicators

Organizational Performance

- Emerging Executive Cohort 2021 promoted/progressive role change to date: 71%
- Emerging Executives Cohort 2022 promoted/progressive role change to date: 30%
- Emerging Executives Cohorts 2021 and 2022 GNB retention rate to date: 91%
- Evolving Leaders Cohorts one to five participant promoted/progressive role change to date: 49%
- Evolving Leaders Cohorts one to five participant GNB retention rate: 98%

Evolving Leaders Program Assessment Results Cohorts 1-5		
Statement	% of Managers agreed	% of Participants who agreed
The participants demonstrated new and/or improved leadership behaviours.	98%	97%
The participants' development had a positive Impact on their team/department.	97%	96%
The participants' development had a positive Impact on the customer (internal/external).	92%	87%
The Evolving Leaders Journey was valuable for leadership development.	100%	96%

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Overview

Communications and Marketing is a full-service communications and marketing division serving all provincial government departments, agencies and boards. Its mission is to help New Brunswickers understand – in both official languages – what government is doing and why. Its mandate is to provide strategic communications planning to the Executive Council Office and coordinate communications across government. Key functions include coordinating strategic projects and digital strategies; establishing and enforcing marketing standards and policies; developing communication and marketing plans; and developing, implementing and evaluating strategies.

Communications and Marketing is comprised of six units: Corporate Services; Web Strategy and Development; Strategic Communications; Departmental Management; Media Relations; and Marketing and Creative Services.

Corporate Services 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 administering and publishing the Royal Gazette, the official publication of the Province of New Brunswick.

In partnership with departments, the **Web Strategy and Development** unit assists in all stages of website development, including research and analytics, content analysis, writing and editing and information architecture development. This assistance is followed by site development, launch and maintenance. The unit also updates and maintains all corporate and departmental pages on gnb.ca and snb.ca as well as for some other government organizations. It approves any external website development and partners with departments to ensure these sites meet standards and appropriately represent government.

The **Strategic Communications** unit works with departments to help them identify goals for communicating their policies and initiatives. It helps generate ideas and gain insights through research and bring together the means necessary to implement their plans. The unit is responsible for the management of the GNB Communications and Marketing 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. It also coordinates and develops integrated marketing and communications plans, reviews communications plans that are attached to memorandums to executive council and works on enhancing analytics within Communications and Marketing. It is also responsible for the provincial newswire.

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

The **Media Relations** unit strategically assesses and addresses media requests, working with departmental communications staff on strategies to communicate with the media. It also provides

media training for ministers and departmental staff and spokespeople, assists with event management, and manages all media scrums when the Legislative Assembly is in session.

The **Marketing and Creative Services** unit is responsible for developing, planning and approving all major marketing initiatives and facilitating approvals for marketing campaigns, as well as evaluating their success. It provides cost-effective creative services and visual communications expertise, which includes graphic design, content editing, creation and management, and advertising design services. Marketing and Creative Services includes the Social Media, Digital Photography and Videography Services team responsible for the oversight of government social media channels. It also records hundreds of videos and still images supporting government Communications and Marketing activities each year.

Highlights

Media relations

Effective media relations are essential for maintaining transparency, informing the public and promoting government initiatives. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Communications and Marketing issued 486 news releases and organized more than 150 media events, photo opportunities and visits or tours. Additionally, our staff provided 2,562 media responses. These efforts ensure accurate and timely communication with the public, building trust and fostering positive relationships with the community and media outlets.

Media training

Ten media training sessions were held to educate senior management, officials and staff in four departments on responding to media requests.

Web Modernization Project

The Web Modernization Project is a multi-phase project to renew GNB's web content and design to make it user-centric instead of department based, accessible on all major platforms and adhering to global standards and best practices.

The project passed several milestones over the past fiscal year:

- The platform technology for gnb.ca and associated web pages was overhauled, updated and moved onto a secure, cloud-based platform in conjunction with Finance and Treasury Board and Service New Brunswick (SNB).
- The building team implemented a new intake process for webpage requests to make them more user focused. During 2023-2024, 35 new-build websites were created and 21 new-build topic and destination pages were published.
- The net content team reviewed and reorganized a significant number of the more than 300,000 pages within gnb.ca to create an updated navigation structure for the website, centred around 11 key themes and their subsequent topics.
- The project team is working on updating, reorganizing and rewriting content and building the improved site on the new platform.

Addiction and Mental Health (AMH) Helpline

The AMH Helpline was launched on July 11, 2023, providing support for those dealing with addictions and mental health issues. A marketing campaign was developed to increase awareness and call volume. The paid campaign ran during the fiscal year in July, August, October, February and

March. It included organic and paid social media, Google search, YouTube pre-roll, programmatic digital ads, SNB lobby screens and university student agendas – resulting in more than 10 million impressions. During campaign months, call volume increased by 14.5 per cent, with a total of nearly 18,000 calls from July 2023 to March 31, 2024.

Physician recruitment

Communications and Marketing provided ongoing support to the newly established Health Human Resources (HHR) team at the Department of Health, whose aim is to attract and retain health-care professionals in New Brunswick. With help from Communications and Marketing, HHR conducted numerous hiring events in other provinces, ran international recruitment missions in a variety of high-priority markets overseas and developed a flagship health-care recruitment marketing campaign that ran between May and September 2023. The campaign's messages raise awareness of New Brunswick and what the province has to offer. The campaign generated more than 105 million impressions over a variety of digital channels and more than 1.6 million clicks from people interested in finding out more about health-care positions in New Brunswick, resulting in 17,855 conversions, including 85 physician applications, 5,895 nursing engagements and 4,003 allied health professional engagements. Alongside attraction and recruitment efforts, a series of student appreciation events focused on retention, specifically engaging students in healthcare specialties to remain and practice in the province following their graduation.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Fiscal year ending March 31, 2024

EXPENDITURES	TOTAL BUDGET	2023-2024 ACTUALS	VARIANCE	% OF BUDGET
Office of the Clerk, Chief Operating Officer and Head of the Public Service and Executive Council Secretariat	\$3,797,000	\$3,963,662	(\$166,662)	104%
Communications and Marketing	\$7,427,000	\$7,288,581	\$138,419	98%
Office of the Lieutenant-Governor	\$567,000	\$530,651	\$36,349	94%
Executive Council Office	\$11,791,000	\$11,782,894	\$8,106	100%

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 2022-2023 for the Executive Council Office.

NUMBER OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES AS OF DEC. 31 OF EACH YEAR		
EMPLOYEE TYPE	2023	2022
Permanent	113	127
Temporary	28	19
TOTAL	141	146

The department advertised 9 competitions, including 9 open (public) competitions and 0 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 Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and members of a visible minority group with equal access to employment, training and advancement opportunities.	16(1)(a)	0
Department Talent Management Program	Permanent employees identified in corporate and departmental talent pools, who meet the four-point criteria for assessing talent – performance, readiness, willingness and criticalness.	16(1)(b)	10
Lateral transfer	The Government of New Brunswick transfer process facilitates the transfer of employees from within Part 1, 2	16(1) or 16(1)(c)	2

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
	(school districts) and 3 (hospital authorities) of the Public Service.		
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)	10
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
36	<p><i>An Act Respecting the Proposed Electoral District of Tantramar</i></p> <p>Bill-36.pdf (legnb.ca)</p>	March 30, 2023	<p>The Bill provided an exception to the requirements of the <i>Electoral Boundaries and Representation Act</i> to address the situation raised in the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission filed on March 12, 2023, which impacted the electoral district #16 Tantramar and Cap-Acadia. The Bill allowed a variance of greater than 25% from electoral quotient for Electoral District #16 Tantramar.</p>
43	<p><i>An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act</i></p> <p>Bill-43.pdf (legnb.ca)</p>	June 16, 2023	<p>The Bill amended the wording pertaining to fixed elections dates in the <i>Legislative Assembly Act</i> to be consistent with other jurisdictions.</p>
49	<p><i>An Act Respecting the Executive Council Act and the Legislative Assembly Act</i></p> <p>Bill-49.pdf (legnb.ca)</p>	June 16, 2023	<p>The Bill followed the recommendations of the Legislative Administration Committee in terms of members' salaries and added parental leave as a distinct type of leave.</p>
13	<p><i>An Act to Amend the Executive Council Act</i></p> <p>Bill-13.pdf (legnb.ca)</p>	December 13, 2023	<p>The Bill amended two ministerial titles set out in the <i>Executive Council Act</i>, as well as a department name and any required consequential amendments. The changes included:</p> <p>The Department of Aboriginal Affairs becomes the Department of Indigenous Affairs.</p>

BILL #	NAME OF LEGISLATION	DATE OF ROYAL ASSENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
			<p>The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs becomes the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.</p> <p>The Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform becomes the Minister of Local Government.</p>

The acts for which the department was responsible in 2023-2024 may be found at:
<https://laws.gnb.ca/en/bycategory/cs?categoryId=departmentId&itemId=executive>

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACTIVITIES

Introduction

The Executive Council Office ensures that the Government of New Brunswick implements strategies and plans on official languages and is committed to offering and providing quality services in both official languages. GNB's plan on official languages, *Official Bilingualism: A Fundamental Value*, was launched in July 2015.

Focus 1

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

- Communications and Marketing is responsible for creating both internal and external communications materials that enable the government to share its message with all New Brunswickers. These materials include news releases, social media posts, communications plans, speeches and ministerial statements, among others.
- New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. New Brunswickers have the right to receive communications from GNB in either official language. All materials prepared and distributed by Communications and Marketing are provided in English and French, following the *Official Languages Act* and related GNB policies.

Focus 2

An environment and climate that encourages, for all employees, the use of the Official Language of their choice in their workplace:

- Communications and Marketing has an internal working group to better reflect the needs of francophone members of staff and ensures all official information is provided to staff in both official languages. This group is mandated to monitor and bring forward the challenges staff members face when it comes to working or expressing themselves in their preferred language, along with putting forward ways to help others feel more comfortable in doing so.
- Communications and Marketing provides bilingual information to all staff, through emails, important documents and PowerPoint presentations.
- Several Communications and Marketing staff members took French second-language training during the fiscal year as part of the division's efforts to increase and improve its capacity to work in and conduct all communications and marketing in both official languages.

Focus 3

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

- Communications and Marketing coordinates market research for various government departments and agencies and occasionally contracts external market research firms to conduct such research. All such work is conducted in both official languages; any in-person or online research activities are done bilingually or with English and French focus groups.

Focus 4

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 provided to all new employees, which includes information about the *Official Languages Act* and the policies and regulations governing their interactions with respect to official languages. It 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 with these documents.
- Always continue to remind all employees of their responsibility to provide an active offer of service in both official languages.

Conclusion

Official languages continue 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
2022 V2 Chapter 2: Contaminated Sites - Department of Environment and Local Government	2
2023 V1 Chapter 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight – Executive Council Office	5

IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN
<p>2022 V2 Chapter 2: Contaminated Sites - Department of Environment and Local Government</p> <p>2.83 We recommend the Executive Council Office align its instructions to government departments for annual planning with the requirements of the <i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act</i>.</p>	<p>Government departments provide annual planning details to the legislature through the Main Estimates process. Annual reports are required for departments under the <i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement Act</i>. No further action from Executive Council Office (ECO) is required.</p>
<p>2022 V2 Chapter 2: Contaminated Sites - Department of Environment and Local Government</p> <p>2.94 We recommend the Executive Council Office assign responsibility to an oversight body for the coordination of all government-owned contaminated sites to ensure they are remediated in a timely manner to the applicable environmental standard.</p>	<p>Environment and Local Government has been assigned responsibility as the oversight body for the co-ordination of all government-owned contaminated sites to ensure sites are remediated in a timely manner to the applicable environmental standard.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS NOT IMPLEMENTED	CONSIDERATIONS
<p>2023 V1 Chapter 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight – Executive Council Office</p> <p>2.50 We recommend the Executive Council Office ensure that the province improve its emergency preparedness process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing and keeping emergency response plans up to date for all hazards (including pandemics); and • testing and updating plans on a regular basis according to a predefined schedule. 	<p>Agree. Beginning in 2013, the Province made successive improvements to its plans related to emergency management, following events in 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2018. This work is ongoing, and we will revisit processes following the COVID-19 after action review.</p>
<p>2023 V1 Chapter 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight – Executive Council Office</p> <p>2.59 We recommend the Executive Council Office ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all executive committees involved in provincial emergency responses are clearly defined and documented; and • records are maintained for all committee meetings during an emergency response. 	<p>Agree. There was only one governance and oversight committee that did not have formal documentation around roles and responsibilities (COVID Core). COVID-19 Cabinet and Cabinet maintained records for each meeting. COVID Core was not a formal decision-making body. Therefore, records were not created/required. Provincial Emergency Operations Centre produced daily situation reports that were shared with COVID Core for information.</p>
<p>2023 V1 Chapter 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight – Executive Council Office</p> <p>2.78 We recommend the Executive Council Office ensure recommendations and decision support be documented for any similar future emergencies, as emergency situations become more stable with the passage of time.</p>	<p>Agree. As situation stabilizes, decision support will be documented. First and foremost, the province is committed to the health and safety of New Brunswickers.</p>
<p>2023 V1 Chapter 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight – Executive Council Office</p> <p>2.94 We recommend the Executive Council Office, in collaboration with New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization, undertake</p>	<p>Underway: A COVID-19 after-action review will be performed, analyzed and incorporated into the plan.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS NOT IMPLEMENTED	CONSIDERATIONS
a post-operation review and incorporate communication lessons learned into an updated New Brunswick Emergency Public Information Plan.	
<p>2023 V1 Chapter 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight – Executive Council Office</p> <p>2.100 We recommend the Executive Council Office ensure the Department of Justice and Public Safety, in collaboration the Department of Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake an After-Action Review to evaluate the provincial response to the COVID-19 pandemic; • incorporate lessons learned into an updated provincial pandemic emergency plan; and • create and implement a schedule to regularly test and update the provincial pandemic emergency plan. 	Underway: A COVID-19 after-action review will be performed, analyzed and incorporated into the plan.

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
2021 V1 Chapter 2: Regional Development Corporation and Opportunities New Brunswick – Funding for Rural Internet	3	3
2021 V2 Chapter 3: Crown Agency Salary and Benefits Practices	1	1
2021 V1 Chapter 3: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour – Covid-19 Funding – New Brunswick Workers’ Emergency Income Benefit	1	1
2021 V1 Chapter 4: Executive Council Office – Risks Exist in Government’s Oversight of Crown Agencies	5	5
2020 V1 Chapter 3: Ambulance Services	1	0
2019 V1 Chapter 5: City of Saint John Funding Agreement – Special Review Executive Council Office	5	5

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 on any disclosures of wrongdoing 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 2023-2024 fiscal year.