



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick


**Serving the People of New Brunswick
as the Seat and Symbol of Democracy**



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What is the New Brunswick Legislature?



The New Brunswick Legislature, or Legislative Assembly, was established in 1785 to debate issues and make laws for New Brunswick.

It is made up of 49 elected representatives, who are known as Members of the Legislative Assembly, or MLAs. Each of the 49 Members is individually elected to represent the voters in one electoral district/constituency/riding.





Main functions of the Legislative Assembly

Law-making

A bill is a proposed law put before the Legislature for approval. Any Member can initiate a bill. A bill must be passed at all stages – first reading, second reading, committee stage, and third reading – before it can receive Royal Assent and become law.



Surveillance

The job of examining the actions of government is primarily a task for the opposition in order to hold the government accountable. Oral Question Period and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are some of the most visible means of surveillance. Members work to ensure that legislation is carefully considered, that public monies are effectively spent, and that differing views on important initiatives are publicly expressed and defended.



Representation

Serving and representing constituents is viewed by Members as one of their primary roles and most spend a great deal of effort directed toward this end. Members regularly meet with constituents and attend community meetings and events. Constituency offices assist people who have questions or concerns about provincial government programs, policies, and benefits.



Budget

The Budget is the government's statement of its fiscal, economic and social policies. Traditionally, the Minister of Finance makes a formal budget presentation to the Assembly during each session of the Legislature, by which the government submits its projected annual expenditures for parliamentary approval. The Legislative Assembly has sole authority to grant the monies needed to satisfy the government's demands. Once authority is granted, the government can meet its financial obligations.



How are MLAs elected?



In New Brunswick, provincial elections have a fixed date and are held every four years on the third Monday of October to elect Members. People vote by marking their choice on a ballot listing the candidates for the electoral district where the voter lives. After all of the ballots are counted, the candidate with the most votes is declared the elected MLA. By-elections are held whenever there is a need to fill a vacancy in a provincial electoral district.

All residents of New Brunswick are represented by an MLA, as each Member represents a different constituency. Generally, MLAs belong to a political party. Following an election, a party is chosen by the Lieutenant-Governor (who represents the Crown) to form government based on its ability to hold the confidence of the Assembly. Except on rare occasions, the party having the most seats in the Legislature forms government. By convention, the opposition party with the largest number of seats in the House is designated as the Official Opposition. The role of the opposition parties is to keep the government accountable by questioning government policies and actions and to offer alternatives. This role is key to our system of parliamentary democracy.



How do your MLAs work for you?

MLAs work in the local areas they represent. They also attend debates and committee meetings in the Legislative Assembly, located in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

In representing you, MLAs can:

**Introduce
and/or
debate a
motion**

**Speak in any
debate and
exercise a vote**

**Introduce a bill
or amendments
to change laws**

**Ask a question
of New
Brunswick's
Cabinet
Members**

**Raise
constituent
perspectives
and concerns
during debates**

**Present
petitions
on behalf of
New
Brunswickers**

**Ask
government
to take action
on particular
issues**

**Scrutinize
and approve
government
spending and
tax changes**

**Raise
constituent
perspectives
and concerns
during
committees**

To find out who your MLA is:

- Search your provincial election information on the Elections NB website: **electionsnb.ca** or the Legislative Assembly's website: **legnb.ca**
- Call Elections NB toll free at **1-888-858-VOTE(8683)**
- Call the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly at **506-453-2506**



What can the Legislative Assembly decide?

The *Constitution Act, 1867*, provides for the division of powers between the federal Parliament and provincial legislatures. In general, the federal Parliament has authority over policies and activities that affect all of Canada, such as banking, criminal law, national defense and citizenship. Provincial and territorial legislatures look after such activities as education, health care, social welfare, and roads and highways, and they pass laws that affect only the people of their province or territory.

Legislation

Bills can be introduced by any Member, whether they are a Minister or a Private Member (a Private Member is a Member of an opposition party or a Member of government who is not a minister.) There are two types of bills, public and private. A public bill relates to matters of public policy while a private bill relates to matters of a particular interest or benefit to a specific entity or organization.

Resolutions

In addition to debating legislation, Members may debate motions. A motion is a proposal made by a Member that the Assembly do something, or order something to be done, or express an opinion. Motions may be debated, amended, adopted, defeated, or withdrawn, as the Assembly may decide. Every motion, once adopted, assumes the form of either an “order” or a “resolution” of the Assembly.

Stages of a Public Bill



First Reading

Bill presented to the House. No further debate takes place.



Second Reading

Principle and the objective of the Bill are debated.



Committee Stage

The Member responsible for the Bill answers questions posed by MLAs regarding details of the Bill. Members can speak on any clause of the Bill being studied, ask any number of questions, and can propose amendments to any clause of the Bill.



Third Reading

The final version of the Bill approved at the committee stage is debated.



Royal Assent

The Lieutenant-Governor attends a sitting of the Legislative Assembly and gives Royal Assent to the Bill. At this stage, the Bill becomes law unless there is a proclamation clause that would indicate a specific date of enactment.



What happens in the Chamber?

All MLAs take part in meetings in the Chamber. Each sitting day is divided into two parts: Routine Proceedings and Orders of the Day.

Routine Proceedings is devoted to both new business and to providing Members with an opportunity to bring a variety of matters to the attention of the House. The same items of business reappear daily, such as Oral Question Period and First Reading of Bills. Orders of the Day refers to the business that is to come before the House each day. An item of business may include consideration of bills at second or third reading, or motions for which notice has already been given.

Legislative Committees

A significant amount of work is carried out by legislative committees. These committees are an extension of the House and undertake responsibilities that the Assembly as a whole would find difficult, if not impossible, to carry out. Committees exist to expedite the work of the House and to allow for more thorough study of complex or technical issues. Committees are also able to consult with the public on important matters, and travel when necessary, allowing Members to hear from people in all areas of the province.



How Can I be Made Aware of What is Happening?

There are several ways the public can be made aware of what is happening. The Legislative Assembly has a public viewing gallery where the daily proceedings can be watched in person. They can also be watched live on television or online:



Rogers Digital Cable channel 70
Bell Aliant channels 230 and 811



<https://legnb.ca/en/webcasts>

If you are not able to watch the proceedings live, they are archived on the Legislative Assembly's website (above) and can be viewed at a time that is convenient for you.



The public can also communicate directly with their MLA. Your MLA's contact information can be found at **legnb.ca** under the Current Members Directory.