

Review of the Officers of the Legislative Assembly

Executive Summary

As part of the Government of New Brunswick's Strategic Program Review, the Speaker of the New Brunswick Legislature, the Honourable Chris Collins, announced in November 2015 that the legislative arm of government would engage in a similar process through a review of its legislative officers. Drawing from and updating the 2011 report titled *Fine-tuning Parliamentary Machinery: A Review of the Mandates and Operations of New Brunswick's Legislative Officers* written by Bernard Richard, the 2015 Terms of Reference focuses on reporting on the relevance and clarity of the legislated functions of legislative officers and how they are held accountable in meeting their objectives. Improving efficiency and effectiveness with respect to the functions and operations of legislative officers without compromising their independence is also within the scope of this review as part of elaborating strategic proposals to contribute to the government's efforts in eliminating its budgetary deficit.

In the course of the 2015 review research phase, a number of consultations were held with stakeholders (including legislative officers and members of their staff) to revisit the pending recommendations from the 2011 report and address outstanding and new issues that are relevant to this exercise. In addition, stakeholders were consulted on how, as part of a strengthened collaboration between the Legislative Assembly and its officers, initiatives could be developed and implemented to increase the legislative officers' accountability while serving the overall interest of efficiency, effectiveness and expenditure control.

The report concludes with 44 recommendations that draw from the recommended initiatives outlined in the 2011 report as well as additional proposals to achieve the goals set out in the Terms of Reference. The recommendations include steps to strengthen the relationship between legislative officers and the Legislative Assembly through the designated reporting authority, measures to increase and render more efficient the collaboration between legislative officers and the executive branch of government, as well as initiatives and processes to review and assess the appropriateness of funding and resources allocation to legislative officers while implementing an effective accountability framework. Other recommendations identify general and specific actions that should be considered by legislative officers and government to generate savings while increasing efficiencies. In addition, the redistribution and realignment of select mandates and legislative responsibilities is recommended, as is the development of a new structure of specialized oversight offices or branches.

With regard to the proposed revised structure of legislative offices, a review of the current situation as well as a potential increase in the number of officers leads to a proposed model based on a strategic redistribution and realignment of functions as an option for government's review.

Of the 44 recommendations, the first 28 call for immediate or short-term attention by government and relate to measures that could be adopted relatively quickly to set in motion initiatives that have bearing on legislative officers' independence, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. The remaining 16 recommendations are to be considered in the context of a proposed collaborative process that would involve a period of several months during which

legislative officers would work with the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers to develop additional proposals to increase expenditure reductions and cost avoidances as well as strategic reinvestment submissions to strengthen capacity and increase productivity.

While potential savings and cost avoidances are speculative at this juncture of the process, various possible scenarios that may result from the implementation of the proposed recommendations could lead to considerable savings over the course of the next three fiscal years. In turn, government may give consideration to proposals that offer financially-sound and sustainable expenditure initiatives to ensure that legislative officers are able to exercise their mandates optimally.