



# 2020 Election: Issues Brief

## About the New Brunswick Women's Council

The New Brunswick Women's Council is an independent advisory body for study and consultation on matters of importance, interest, and concern to women and their substantive equality. Its objectives are:

- a) to be an independent body that provides advice to the Minister on matters of importance to women and their substantive equality;
- b) to bring to the attention of government and the public issues of interest and concern to women and their substantive equality;
- c) to include and engage women of diverse identities, experiences and communities, women's groups and society in general;
- d) to be strategic and provide advice on emerging and future issues; and
- e) to represent New Brunswick women.

In delivering on these objectives, the council may conduct or commission research and publish reports, studies and recommendations.

## Women's equality and the election

The New Brunswick Women's Council is publishing this brief in advance of the election on September 14<sup>th</sup> as per our mandate to represent women and to bring to the attention of the public issues of interest and concern to women and their substantive equality. This brief focuses on three areas:

- how many women have run and been elected in provincial elections since 1982;
- a roundup of past recommendations from the Women's Council to government that still need attention and action; and
- responding to and rebuilding from COVID-19.

## Provincial elections in New Brunswick

### Breakdown of candidates and elected members since 1982 by sex

Election	Candidates (% of total)			Elected (% of total)		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
1982	186	19 (10.2%)	167 (89.8%)	58	4 (6.9%)	54 (93.1%)
1991	224	52 (23.2%)	172 (76.8%)	58	10 (17.2%)	48 (82.8%)
1995	226	47 (20.8%)	179 (79.2%)	55	9 (16.4%)	46 (83.6%)
1999	196	46 (23.5%)	150 (76.5%)	55	10 (18.2%)	45 (81.8%)
2003	177	34 (19.2%)	143 (80.8%)	55	7 (12.7%)	48 (87.3%)
2006	162	33 (20.4%)	129 (79.6%)	55	7 (12.7%)	48 (87.3%)
2010	235	71 (30.2%)	164 (69.8%)	55	8 (14.5%)	47 (85.5%)
2014	220	71 (32.3%)	149 (67.7%)	49	8 (16.3%)	41 (83.7%)
2018	241	93 (38.6%)	148 (61.4%)	49	11 (22.4%)	38 (77.6%)
2020	227	74 (32.6%)	153 (67.4%)			

### Breakdown of candidates and elected members in 2014, 2018, and 2020 by sex and party

Party and year		Candidates (% of total)			Elected (% of total)		
		Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
Liberal	2014	49	13 (26.5%)	36 (73.5%)	27	4 (14.8%)	23 (85.2%)
	2018	49	19 (38.8%)	30 (61.2%)	21	5 (23.8%)	16 (76.2%)
	2020	49	10 (20.4%)	39 (79.6%)			
Progressive Conservative	2014	49	14 (28.6%)	35 (71.4%)	21	4 (19%)	17 (81%)
	2018	49	14 (28.6%)	35 (71.4%)	22	4 (18.2%)	18 (81.8%)
	2020	49	17 (34.7%)	32 (65.3%)			
New Democratic Party	2014	49	15 (30.6%)	34 (69.4%)	0	0	0
	2018	49	25 (51%)	24 (49%)	0	0	0
	2020	33	12 (36.4%)	21 (63.6%)			
Green	2014	46	22 (47.8%)	24 (52.2%)	1	0	1 (100%)
	2018	47	23 (48.9%)	24 (51.1%)	3	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.6%)
	2020	47	25 (53.2%)	22 (46.8%)			
People's Alliance	2014	18	5 (27.8%)	13 (72.2%)	0	0	0
	2018	30	9 (30%)	21 (70%)	3	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.6%)
	2020	36	9 (25%)	27 (75%)			
Other/Independent	2014	9	2 (22.2%)	7 (77.8%)	0	0	0
	2018	17	3 (17.6%)	14 (82.4%)	0	0	0
	2020	13	1 (7.7%)	12 (92.3%)			

This information is from Elections New Brunswick and was current as of August 31, 2020.

The current version of the nomination form provides a blank space for sex. Based on what is submitted, Elections New Brunswick will record sex as male, female, or other. To date, Elections New Brunswick has not recorded any candidates as other, so it is not included in the chart. There may be non-binary candidates who did not know this option was available or who are uncomfortable with "other" as their marker.

## Advice previously provided to government

### Economic security

#### *Bring social assistance rates in line with the Market Basket Measure*

Social assistance rates in New Brunswick are below the Market Basket Measure, Canada's official poverty line. These low rates not only fail to meet the needs of recipients, they also do not make fiscal sense given the long-term costs to government that result from individuals living in poverty. Living in poverty is correlated with decreased health and mental health outcomes and increased vulnerability to violence.

#### *A minimum wage that is a living wage*

At \$11.70 an hour, New Brunswick's current minimum wage is not a living wage. Moving the minimum wage toward a living wage would not only improve women's economic security (as, according to 2019 numbers, women account for 56% of minimum wage workers in the province<sup>1</sup>), it would also contribute to addressing the systemic undervaluing of women's labour (as the majority of minimum wage jobs are for labour that is traditionally considered to be "women's work" such as retail, customer service, office or sales support, hospitality and food service).

#### *Legislate pay equity for the private sector*

In 2017, the Institute for Women's Policy Research estimated that equal pay for women would reduce the poverty rate for working women by half.<sup>2</sup> Legislating pay equity in the private sector would not only improve wages in the present, but would increase workers' earnings over their lifetime, helping to ensure that they do not age into poverty.

Some workers in community-based caregiving services receive pay equity adjustments from government, but the Women's Council and the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity have concerns that the methodology used to determine the adjustments is flawed, resulting in wages that are too low (government also has not reviewed these adjustments since they were first made). Legislating pay equity in the private sector would provide an opportunity to address these challenges.

#### *Support newcomer and immigrant women seeking to enter the workforce*

As government works to grow the population and workforce through immigration, newcomer and immigrant women require tailored supports to increase their access to employment opportunities in all fields and at all levels of work.

#### *A note on wages for early childhood educators and home care workers*

Wages for early childhood educators and home care workers must be raised so that workers are properly compensated for their labour – which will, in turn, ensure that day care and home care services are available in New Brunswick. The availability and accessibility of these services directly affect women's ability to participate in the labour force, the early learning achievements of children, and the health and well being of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. (2020). New Brunswick Minimum Wage Report. Retrieved from the NB Jobs website: <https://www.nbjobs.ca/sites/default/files/2020-06-03-lmi-mw-report-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Hartman, Hayes, Huang and Milli. (2017). The Impact of Equal Pay on Poverty and the Economy. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/C455.pdf>

## Care work

### *Recognizing unpaid labour*

New Brunswick is working to address complex issues such as poverty, an aging population, and increasing demands on health care systems. Many proposed solutions have focused on community-based approaches rather than institutional intervention. While this is positive, it runs the risk of increasing the burden of unpaid labour on communities, families, and individuals – labour that we know is likely to be performed by women. Government must consider how reductions in services or increased reliance on community, family, and individuals will likely result in increasing demands for unpaid labour from women.

In relation to dementia, the Women's Council has suggested that concrete supports for unpaid caregivers could involve investing in respite services and other support programs as well as support for travel costs, home modifications or other financial costs; this could apply to other areas of unpaid care as well.

### *Supporting homecare workers*

In addition to pay increases, home care workers need improved working conditions, including enhanced support for their safety and security, reimbursement for costs incurred on the job (e.g. mileage), and predictable scheduling. This is a matter of economic security and personal safety for the workers in this sector, the majority of whom are women.

### *Early childhood education and care infrastructure*

Government needs to treat early childhood education and care as a critical infrastructure investment and as an essential component of women's equality and improved future outcomes for marginalized and vulnerable children. Government must also work with New Brunswick's early childhood and care sector to shift toward a not-for-profit model.

## Violence

### *Increase funding for [Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in New Brunswick: A Framework for Action](#)*

Funding the framework will help close service gaps for survivors of sexual violence and provide better support for community organizations addressing this issue. These organizations are facing increasing demands on their services, often without accompanying increases in resources.

### *Improve police response to reports of sexual violence*

In 2017 government [convened a multi-sector and agency stakeholder](#) group led by the Department of Public Safety to provide recommendations on improving police response to reports of sexual violence. The Women's Council is part of this group and hopes to see it provide recommendations to government in the coming months. The recommendations will require commitment and support.

## Racism

### *Establish a commission of inquiry into systemic bias and racism against Indigenous people in police and justice systems, as per the call to action from the [Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqey Chiefs in New Brunswick](#)*

The Chiefs have expressed that a review of existing reports and recommendations, as proposed by government in response to their call for an inquiry, will not suffice. While an inquiry must take existing reports and recommendations into account, new work that is New Brunswick-specific must also be undertaken. The inquiry must be independent and Indigenous-led.

### *Responding to Black Lives Matter calls to action*

Black Lives Matter Fredericton/New Brunswick has issued [these calls](#):

- “incorporate content on the history of slavery, segregation, and systemic oppression in New Brunswick and Canada into the public school curriculum of New Brunswick”

- “commission independent research on the personal, social, and economic impacts of racism in New Brunswick and develop an action plan to remedy these issues through an anti-racist strategy” and
- “implement mandatory cultural competency/ anti-racism training for police and government officials.”

## **Health care**

### *Increase support for midwifery services in New Brunswick*

Midwifery care saves money and reduces stress on hospitals and specialists by moving low-risk pregnancies into a community health care setting. The existing demonstration site in Fredericton must be better resourced not only to serve the local community, but also to generate data required for evaluating the site and planning the expansion of midwifery services to more regions of the province.

### *Enable pharmacists to prescribe hormonal birth control*

In other Canadian jurisdictions, pharmacists’ regulated scope of practice allows them to prescribe hormonal birth control. This should be explored in New Brunswick to help improve access to health care while reducing stress on family practices, community health centres, walk-in clinics, and hospitals. Should this be integrated into the services pharmacists can offer, it should be eligible for billing to Medicare.

### *Abortion access and support for Clinic 554*

Regulation 84-20 Schedule 2 (a) must be updated to allow surgical abortions outside of hospitals to be billed to Medicare (this would also require enabling community-based surgical abortion providers to bill ultrasounds to Medicare).

Government must also work with Clinic 554 to co-create a solution to prevent their impending closure. While Clinic 554 operates as a family practice, it is also the lone out-of-hospital surgical abortion provider in the

province and offers specialized LGBTQ2S+ health care for New Brunswickers as well as individuals from Prince Edward Island. If action is taken quickly, the impending closure of Clinic 554 may be avoided. This would not only ensure that the current level of surgical abortion access sites in the province is maintained, it would also mean that access to surgical abortions at Clinic 554 is no longer restricted to those who can pay out of pocket, thereby increasing access overall. It would also ensure that all other patients of Clinic 554 continue to have access to primary health care.

## **Better decision-making**

### *Address social deficits and debts*

Social deficits are the gap between what people need in terms of services and what is available to them. Like fiscal deficits, social deficits do not simply disappear at the start of a new year; they become debt with interest. The interest looks like problems becoming more entrenched and complex, both in individuals’ lives and as public policy issues, the longer that adequate services are missing.

These deficits and debt are not publicly accounted for with the same attention that fiscal or infrastructure deficits are; they are not typically assessed rigorously and regularly by governments to have dollar values assigned or long-term costs projected clearly—that has to change.

### *Engage in co-creation*

One of the best ways to increase the odds of success when addressing an issue is by involving the people and communities who are impacted by it in the process of identifying the problem, designing the solution, and establishing how the outcomes will be evaluated. This is co-creation.

Too often, however, this is not what happens. Government often relies on superficial engagement and consultation, which erodes public trust. Co-creation will not only result in better decisions but will also

increase public trust in government. This, in turn, can help ensure that evidence-based decisions and investments in effective initiatives, programs, and services are resistant to being altered or cut without good reason.

*Public disclosure on the use of gender-based analysis*

Gender-based analysis (GBA) is a tool used to assess how specific populations may experience policies, programs, and initiatives differently than others (GBA that is tailored to the budget process is sometimes called gender budgeting). GBA goes beyond sex and gender to consider intersecting factors that shape individuals' experiences, including age, location, race, culture, ability, and language. As a matter of transparency and accountability, government should publicly share more information about when GBA is used in decision-making and when a decision may be exempted from requiring GBA as well as information generated by GBA processes.

*A note on community-based not-for-profit organizations*

These organizations have a critical role to play in understanding and addressing social deficits and debts, co-creation, gender-based analysis, and gender budgeting. Government must move to longer-term, sustainable operational funding models for these organizations to support service delivery, internal capacity-building, and improve wages for workers.

## COVID-19

The pandemic is not affecting everyone in the same way and our province's plans to mitigate future waves of COVID-19, recover economically, and create a "new normal" need to respond to this fact.

Here is what government needs to ask – and act on:

- **Who is least able to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19 due to social and economic factors?** This includes people who are living in crowded housing, who cannot do their jobs from home, and who are not receiving public health updates in their first language.
- **Who is affected more severely or in unique ways by social distancing measures in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 (particularly more stringent measures, such as stay at home orders)?** This includes people who are experiencing violence in the home, who need to access in-person services that may be limited or shuttered, who take on additional caregiving responsibilities for children and seniors, who do not have paid leave to stay home if needed, and who are working in the most heavily impacted sectors.
- **Whose unpaid labour and reduced labour force participation will the "new normal" rely on?** This is a question of who will stay home with kids when they need to quarantine, whose work from home arrangement is more likely to also include caregiving throughout the day, and who is least likely to return to the workforce post-COVID-19. The answer? Women.
- **Are the people described above represented at decision-making tables in New Brunswick?**

Responses to COVID-19 that do not address these questions are leaving people behind and are not only unequal and inequitable, they are simply not as effective as they could be.

To respond to the pandemic comprehensively and effectively, government needs to understand its gendered impacts and put the people and communities who are the most vulnerable in our province at the centre of COVID-19 planning. After all, the pandemic has shown us how deeply we rely on each other to keep healthy and safe—and this means that we are only as secure as our most vulnerable.

To do this, government needs to use tools and approaches like gender-based analysis and co-creation—and it needs to be transparent about how it is doing this. This will require government to engage people, organizations, and communities.

Through this, government will not only learn about how the pandemic is playing out on the ground but will get concrete ideas about how to respond more effectively. Vulnerable and marginalized communities have been fighting for survival long before COVID-19 and many of the strategies they have developed (like mutual aid network and bubbles or pods) are going mainstream in the context of the pandemic. This is clear example of how inclusive and equitable decision-making not only benefits those who would otherwise be excluded or disproportionately affected, but all of us.

### COVID-19 digital library

The New Brunswick Women's Council has created a library of online content on the COVID-19 pandemic that considers marginalized populations, the not-for-profit sector, or uses a social justice lens.

Visit the library at [nbwc-cfnb.herokuapp.com](https://nbwc-cfnb.herokuapp.com).