



The Law Courts of Newfoundland and Labrador

Provincial Court of Newfoundland and Labrador Strategic Plan 2012-2014

Building On Our Successes

Progress Report



Strategic Directions, Goals, and Objectives

and

Key Accomplishments in 2012-2013

Strategic Directions, Goals, and Objectives

1. Improved Public Trust and Confidence through Greater Transparency and Accountability

Goal: Improve Provincial Court's media relations

Objectives:

- Invite press to meet with the Chief Judge
- Develop a set of guidelines for the judiciary
- Develop a set of guidelines for the media

Goal: Expand public outreach

Objectives:

- Expand the Lunch with a Judge Program
- Develop an online school education program
- Partner with the Public Legal Information Association and the Canadian Bar Association

Goal: Increase functionality of Provincial Court's website

Objectives:

- Revise the Court's website
- Publish the Annual Report online by July 31st
- Publish the Strategic Plan online and report progress by March 31st
- Add Traffic dockets to the Court's website

Goal: Proactively communicate key messages

Objectives:

- Inform service groups of the Chief Judge's availability for speaking engagements
- Initiate a Court Stakeholders Committee
- Consult with justice partners in advance of new initiatives
- Prepare press releases for all new initiatives

and positive developments

2. Improved Timeliness and Access

Goal: Reduce number of appearances and time to disposition

Objectives:

- Introduce an electronic calendaring system
- Roll-out Case Assignment and Retrieval System (CARRS) to all Court Centres
- Continue to improve case processing
- Develop a set of standards for court scheduling practices
- Train and task employees to follow-up on cases that fall beyond established benchmarks

Goal: Increase accessibility of Provincial Court services

Objectives:

- Improve assistance provided to self-represented litigants
- Improve online access
- Eliminate barriers to access for vulnerable witnesses and persons who need interpreters
- Continue to support and annually evaluate Mental Health Court
- Continue to support and annually evaluate Family Violence Intervention Court
- Explore options for piloting a Drug Treatment Court

3. Wise Use of Emerging Technology to Improve Court Processes

Goal: Continuously improve court processes through application of technology

Objectives:

- Adopt as a best practice the use of videoconferencing
- Expand E-filing initiatives
- Provide more options for payment
- Evaluate options for enhancing the presentation of evidence
- Demonstrate a green philosophy
- Test the feasibility of automating the generation of court orders in the courtroom
- Support the establishment of a Court Stakeholders Committee



Strategic Directions, Goals, and Objectives

4. High Quality Service and Professionalism

Goal: Provide consistent high quality service and professionalism

Objectives:

- Measure client satisfaction
- Conduct formal annual performance reviews and training needs assessments
- Provide training focused on excellence in court management and administration
- Require staff to complete customer service training and refresher courses
- Require staff to complete ethics and professionalism training
- Finalize and implement a Code of Conduct
- Update the New Employee Orientation Guide and implement a formal training program
- Expand recruitment efforts
- Finalize a succession plan
- Develop an Employee Recognition Program
- Establish a Change Management Team

Goal: Commit the Provincial Court to a high standard of judicial excellence

Objectives:

- Formally adopt a rigorous judicial mentoring program for all new judges
- Develop a succession plan for administrative judicial positions
- Provide specialized training for administrative judges
- Increase accountability for case flow decisions
- Provide opportunities for external professional development
- Process judicial complaints impartially and efficiently

5. Strengthened Court Security

Goal: Minimize operational risks by improving court security measures

Objectives:

- Identify security needs for circuit courts and advocate for improvements
- Support measures to control the entry of people and prevent the entry of weapons and potential weapons
- Evaluate the Business Continuity Plan on an ongoing basis
- Review procedures related to the handling of exhibits



6. Comprehensive Information Management Strategy

Goal: Develop a comprehensive information management strategy

Objectives:

- Adopt a data quality standards and monitoring program
- Implement TRIM for all records
- Complete the Adoption Records Project
- Pursue a technological solution for long-term storage of the Court's electronic files
- Develop and seek approval of retention schedules
- Reduce commercial storage of records
- Explore and implement options for replacing Traffic Court's manual processes



Key Accomplishments in 2012-2013

1. Improved Public Trust and Confidence through Greater Transparency and Accountability

Goal: Improve Provincial Court's media relations

Key Accomplishments:

- The Chief Judge has held several informal meetings with local media personnel. As well, all media requests are addressed promptly and numerous interviews have been conducted.
- Guidelines for the judiciary are currently being developed in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Chief Judges and Justices.
- Guidelines for the media as adopted by the Canadian Judicial Council have been circulated.

Goal: Expand public outreach

Key Accomplishments:

- Lunch with a Judge Program is being offered on a continuous basis throughout the school year in nine Court Centres.
- Video footage for an online school education program has been compiled and editing is in progress.

Goal: Increase functionality of the Provincial Court's website

Key Accomplishments:

- Continuous improvements have been made to the Court's website since a new layout and colour scheme were launched in January 2012.
- 2011-12 Annual Report was posted online on August 2, 2012.
- 2012-14 Strategic Plan progress report was

posted online on April 1, 2013.

Goal: Proactively communicate key messages to stakeholders

Key Accomplishments:

- Court Stakeholders Committees have been initiated on both regional and provincial levels.
- Justice partners are consulted in advance of new initiatives.

2. Improved Timeliness and Access

Goal: Reduce number of appearances and time to disposition

Key Accomplishments:

- Principles of Case Assignment and Retrieval System (CAARS) have been introduced to all Court Centres and circuit courts.
- Work is progressing on standards for court scheduling practices. Once these standards have been finalized and approved, they will be circulated to Court Administrators/Managers in each Court Centre.
- Case management presentation was given to Court Administrators/Managers in Sept. 2012.

Goal: Increase accessibility of Provincial Court services

Key Accomplishments:

- Self-represented Litigant Committee has been established, a project charter has been adopted, and quarterly meetings are held. The Committee's first priority is to review all current resources (printed and electronic) for usability and plain language.
- Online access was improved through the

addition of PDF fillable forms.

3. Wise Use of Emerging Technology to Improve Court Processes

Goal: Continuously improve court processes through application of technology

Key Accomplishments:

- New and replacement videoconferencing equipment was installed in four Court Centres.
- All correctional institutions now have videoconferencing equipment and the Court is in the process of expanding remand video appearances provincially.
- Green Initiatives Committee has been established, terms of reference have been adopted, a majority of Court Centres have been surveyed for current green practices, and a work plan has been compiled.

Key Accomplishments in 2012-2013

4. High Quality Service and Professionalism

Goal: Provide consistent high quality service and professionalism

Key Accomplishments:

- Client Satisfaction Survey has been drafted and is awaiting final approval.
- Formal annual performance reviews and training assessments have continued. Refresher performance review training for Court Administrators/Managers is ongoing.
- Code of Conduct has been drafted and is awaiting final review.
- New Employee Orientation Guide has been updated and distributed. A formal training program has been developed and is available for use upon hiring of new employees.
- Recruitment efforts have been assisted by the addition of key position descriptions to the Court's website.
- Employee Recognition Program was launched with Court Administrators/Managers in September 2012.
- Change Management Steering Committee has been established, terms of reference have been adopted, and an information sheet and checklist have been circulated to staff.

Goal: Commit the Provincial Court to a high standard of judicial excellence

Key Accomplishments:

- Judicial mentoring program has been adopted and all seven judges appointed since 2009 have been assigned mentors. Effectiveness of the judicial mentoring program will be reviewed every six months. The first series of reviews was completed in March 2013.
- Succession plan has been implemented for administrative judicial positions to ensure that the positions of Senior Coordinating Judge, Associate Chief Judge, and Chief Judge are not based on seniority alone but on demonstrated leadership as well as administrative ability and vision.
- Working with the National Judicial Institute and the Ontario Court of Justice, the administrative judges have attended educational programs designed to enhance their ability to meet the challenges of judicial administration. This training will continue.
- General case processing statistics and measures are collected daily and distributed to all judges in the province at the end of each month.
- Intensive experiential-based seminars and lectures through the National Judicial Institute have been provided to individual judges of the Court on sixteen different occasions.
- Appointment of the Complaints Review Committee, with a secretary and legal counsel, has been completed. The Committee, chaired by the Chief Judge, includes a representative of the public, and has processed a number of complaints in the last fiscal year.

5. Strengthened Court Security

Goal: Minimize operational risks by improving court security measures

Key Accomplishments:

- All Court Centres have completed audits regarding current procedures for handling exhibits. The next step is to develop recommendations for standardization and improvements, which will be completed early in the next fiscal year.

6. Comprehensive Information Management Strategy

Goal: Develop a comprehensive information management strategy

Key Accomplishments:

- Data Quality Project Report has been drafted and reviewed by senior management. Work is progressing on a manual regarding case file integrity.
- TRIM has been implemented for criminal case files (adult and youth) in St. John's, providing desktop access and reducing search times.
- Adoptions Records Project has been completed in seven Court Centres.
- TRIM has been implemented for audio recordings in St. John's and Corner Brook.
- Amendment to Adult Record Retention Schedule has been submitted to the Government Records Committee.
- Traffic Court processes are being reviewed to ensure standardization.