



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 2014-2015

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 (CAARS) 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
- 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 2014-2015

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

Goal: Expand public outreach

Key Accomplishments:

- The Provincial Court and the Public Legal Information Association of NL (PLIAN) have partnered to develop an orientation program for new Canadians titled “Understanding and Accessing the Provincial Court System”. The first session will be held in May 2015.
- The Chief Judge met regularly with the Provincial and National Executive of the Canadian Bar Association. The Chief Judge is also an honorary member of the Canadian Bar Association’s Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family matters.

Goal: Increase functionality of the Provincial Court’s website

Key Accomplishments:

- Draft pamphlets to assist self-represented litigants have been prepared and are being reviewed.
- The 2013-14 Annual Report was posted to the Court’s website on July 29, 2014.
- The 2014-15 Strategic Plan Progress Report was posted to the Court’s website on March 31, 2015.
- Traffic Court dockets were added to the Court’s website in January 2015.

Goal: Proactively communicate key messages

Key Accomplishments:

- The Director continued to meet regularly with the Assistant Deputy Minister—Courts and Legal services to provide updates on the Court’s services and Initiatives.
- The Director continued to meet regularly with provincial stakeholders to provide updates on the Court’s services and initiatives.
- New practice notes and other initiatives were communicated to the Law Society and placed on the Court’s website prior to the commencement of these initiatives.



2. Improved Timeliness and Access

Goal: Reduce number of appearances and time to disposition

Key Accomplishments:

- The Court Automated Scheduling System (CASS) was fully implemented across the Province by December 2014. Highlights of the new system include overall efficiency by centrally collecting, displaying and providing real-time coordination of scheduling activities and an improved docket found on the Court’s website. In addition, electronic docket monitors have been installed throughout the St. John’s Court centre.

Goal: Increase accessibility of Provincial Court services

Key Accomplishments:

- An Agreement was reached in October 2014 between the Provincial Court and the Mushua Innu First Nation (MIFN) for MIFN to provide interpretation services for the Provincial Court circuit to Natuashish.
- Managers have been assigned to collect and analyze new statistics for Mental Health Court which are shared with the Mental Health Court team as required throughout the fiscal year.

Key Accomplishments in 2014-2015

3. Wise Use of Emerging Technology to Improve Court Processes

Goal: Continuously improve court processes through application of technology

Key Accomplishments:

- E-filing initiatives have been examined with the hope to bring them and other electronic initiatives to fruition in the next plan.
- The Business Requirement Document and Project Charter have been developed for the on-line record requests project in conjunction with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). The project is expected to be completed by December 2015.
- Point of Sale (debit/credit) terminals are now installed in 9 of 10 centers.
- The Green Initiatives Committee supports the Managed Print Services project that is being rolled out Province-wide and will continue to encourage and educate all staff to take part in environmentally friendly actions/practices.
- Records stored in TRIM have received judicial approval to be treated as true copies and can be printed and certified reducing the need to courier records to and from offsite storage, as well as our carbon footprint.
- Court Orders required to be signed by Judges are now electronic and being piloted on the Bench in St. John's.

4. High Quality Service and Professionalism

Goal: Provide consistent high quality service and professionalism

Key Accomplishments:

- Annual Performance Coaching sessions continue with staff.
- In total 1382 training hours have been completed by employees, up from 837.75 last year.
- The Client Satisfaction Survey was administered at the Provincial Court in Corner Brook during the week of March 2 to 6, 2015. This survey gauged ratings of court users on the Court's accessibility and fairness. Results have been forwarded to Newfoundland and Labrador Statistical Agency for tabulation.

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

Key Accomplishments:

- All newly-appointed judges continue to be assigned a mentor and participate in an orientation process under the guidance of the Chief Judge.
- The Court is awaiting the appointment of the Associate Chief Judge.
- The Chief Judge has attended all formal programming for administrative Judges offered by the National Judicial Institute.
- The newly implemented CASS provides instant information to the judicial administration regarding scheduling decisions made by puisne judges.

- Through its strategic partnership with the National Judicial Institute, which offers world class continuing judicial education, the vast majority of the Court's Judges have availed of hundreds of hours of education regarding the content, craft and context of judging. A total of 21 of the 23 Judges participated in continuing education in 2014-15.
- The Complaints Review Committee has retained legal counsel and meets regularly. A total of 15 individual complaints against judges of the court were filed in 2014-15.



Key Accomplishments in 2014-2015

5. Strengthened Court Security

Goal: Minimize operational risks by improving court security measures

Key Accomplishments:

- The Court's Business Continuity Plan annual review was conducted in June, 2014. The Plan was effectively used on several occasions including the relocation of operations for the Harbour Grace Provincial Court for a two-week period in order to allow required repairs to the facility. Two additional areas in the "all hazards plan" have been identified for development over the next fiscal year.
- An exhibit manual covering exhibit control, handling and storage has been drafted.



6. Comprehensive Information Management Strategy

Goal: Develop a comprehensive information management strategy

Key Accomplishments:

- Data quality audits continued up to the implementation of the Court Automated Scheduling System (CASS) in December. Since CASS contributes data input efficiencies, these audits will change considerably. Testing of files that were both initiated and concluded in CASS will commence in the new fiscal year before new audits begin.
- TRIM for audio has been implemented in all court locations.
- The adoption records project has been completed.
- February 2015 saw the completion of an upgrade to the Court's VIQ recording software. This upgrade included a centralized service for audio repository. New computers and software were deployed in all Provincial Court courtrooms. This project was completed in conjunction with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

Acknowledgement

This progress report marks the end of the 2012—2014 Strategic Planning process. This was an ambitious plan which included 6 strategic directions, 11 goals, and a total of 60 objectives. More than 90% of these objectives have been fully achieved over the past three years. The Chief Judge and the Director wish to thank the Court's management team for their leadership and relentless efforts in this achievement. Appreciation is also extended to the Judges and staff across the province for their continued contribution to the Court's success.

