



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 2013-2014

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 2013-2014

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

Goal: Improve Provincial Court's media relations

Key Accomplishments:

- A secure room has been made available to members of the media in St. John's. This has proven to be very popular and convenient to those who regularly provide coverage of court proceedings.
- The Chief Judge continues to answer media queries and give telephone and "in person" interviews within two hours of receipt of requests.
- In November the Chief Judge was a guest speaker at an "All Courts" seminar on "Media and Open Courts" organized by the National Judicial Institute.

Goal: Expand public outreach

Key Accomplishments:

- Video component for the online school education program has been completed and uploaded to the Court's website.

Goal: Increase functionality of the Provincial Court's website

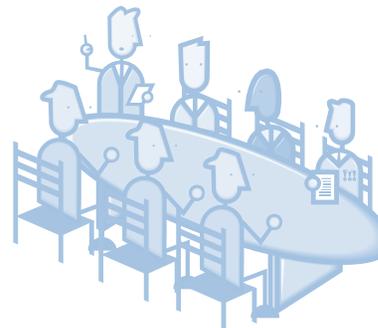
Key Accomplishments:

- 2012-13 Annual Report was posted online on August 2, 2013.
- 2012-14 Strategic Plan progress report for fiscal year 2013-14 was posted online on March 31.
- Traffic Court matters are now included with the Adult Court Docket on the Court's website.

Goal: Proactively communicate key messages

Key Accomplishments:

- The Chief Judge addressed a luncheon meeting of the Canadian Bar Association on the subject of "Recent Developments in the Provincial Court".
- The Chief Judge was a speaker at a Continuing Legal Education Seminar organized by the Law Society on the subject of Advocacy before the Provincial Court.
- The Director met regularly with the Assistant Deputy Minister—Courts and Legal Services to provide updates on the Court's services and initiatives.
- The Director met regularly with provincial stakeholders to provide updates on the Courts services and initiatives.



2. Improved Timeliness and Access

Goal: Reduce number of appearances and time to disposition

Key Accomplishments:

- Monthly statistics are shared with provincial stakeholders, including clearance rates and court sitting times.
- A caseflow management manual has been developed to assist Court Administrators in performing quarterly caseflow reviews to identify cases that fall behind benchmarks.
- Smart Scheduling Guidelines have been drafted and will be finalized and distributed to staff in April 2014.
- Court Administrators continue to meet regularly with local stakeholders to discuss caseflow management strategies in each Court Centre.

Goal: Increase accessibility of Provincial Court services

Key Accomplishments:

- Consistency of message and materials available to the public from Court Centres was improved through a review and standardization process.
- Steps have been taken to identify and organize information on available interpreting services and compiled into one interpreter policy.
- Approvals have been secured for various rates to expedite the scheduling of interpreters in order to coordinate case scheduling and improve the access for those who need language assistance.

Key Accomplishments in 2013-2014

3. Wise Use of Emerging Technology to Improve Court Processes

Goal: Continuously improve court processes through application of technology

Key Accomplishments:

- A Practice Note was implemented in January for the use of videoconferencing technology with all Provincial Correctional Centres for in-custody individuals requiring short non-evidentiary appearances before the Court.
- Traffic Court processes for receipting non-contested ticket payments, scheduling and processing contested tickets, and financial reporting for fines collected for summary offence tickets have been automated.
- Standardized automated forms have been developed providing enhanced communication with Fines Administration Division of the Department of Justice on status and outcomes of contested summary offence tickets.
- The original staff intranet has been replaced with Microsoft SharePoint, allowing better access to tools such as operational manuals as well as increasing employee engagement.
- The Green Initiatives Committee focused on education and awareness, including attaching an environmentally friendly tag line to all emails asking the recipient to consider the environment before printing.
- Desktop computers have been installed on all judges' benches in St. John's to pilot automation processes between the courtroom and registries.

4. High Quality Service and Professionalism

Goal: Provide consistent high quality service and professionalism

Key Accomplishments:

- Client Satisfaction Survey has been developed and approved with the pilot scheduled for May 2014 at the Corner Brook Court Centre.
- A number of Managers have completed courses offered by the National Center for State Courts in the Court Management Program.
- All Court Administrators participated in "From Performance Coaching to Succession Planning", a how-to session on succession planning at the annual Court Administrators' training in September 2013.
- All employees have been setup with PS Access e-learning, through the Centre for Learning Development.
- All employees have completed "Service Excellence" training through PS Access e-learning.
- Annual Performance Coaching sessions are ongoing.
- Employees have taken part in a variety of training activities offered through The Centre for Learning Development, The Gardiner Centre and the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission totaling 837.75 in training hours.
- Court staff on the West Coast, Central and Eastern regions received training on Ethics and Professionalism for Court Employees.

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

Key Accomplishments:

- A number of judges have attended programs of continuing judicial education offered by the National Judicial Institute, the National Justice Symposium, the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges, the University of New Brunswick (French Language Training) and the International Association of Women Judges.
- The judges continue to produce an increasing number of written decisions which are distributed nationally.
- The management information system of the judicial administration now records statistics regarding judges' individual performance which is distributed internally. This information is used by judges, staff and judicial administration.
- The disciplinary process for judges has been fortified. The Complaints Review Committee has received and investigated 14 complaints from the public regarding the conduct of judges.



Key Accomplishments in 2013-2014

5. Strengthened Court Security

Goal: Minimize operational risks by improving court security measures

Key Accomplishments:

- In consultation with the Court Security Division of the Office of the High Sheriff, security enhancements have been implemented in various Court Centres where infrastructure allowed.
- Where practical, improvements have been completed to ensure separate and secure storage areas for exhibits.
- Recommendations for standardization of exhibits control, handling and storage have been finalized. Staff manual to be completed in the next fiscal year.



6. Comprehensive Information Management Strategy

Goal: Develop a comprehensive information management strategy

Key Accomplishments:

- Data Quality Project has moved into the auditing and monitoring phase and a work plan to schedule Court Centre audits and training based on results has been developed with implementation anticipated in the new fiscal year.
- Adoptions Records Project has been completed in eight Court Centres.
- TRIM has been implemented for audio recordings in six Court Centres.
- Retention schedules for Adult Court and Courtroom Proceedings records have been approved and implemented.
- Manual processes have been replaced with automated processes in Traffic Court making for a more reliable record of traffic matters.
- The percentage of Provincial Court records housed in commercial storage has been reduced to zero.

