

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER
AND
THE COMMISSIONER FOR LEGISLATIVE STANDARDS**

Business Plan 2008-2011



Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

It is with great pleasure that I present the 2008-2011 Business Plan for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. This plan describes the Election Office's overall work program, establishes our priorities, and indicates the performance measures we expect to achieve over the next three years. For the 2008-2011 planning period, we will be working toward three specific focuses: change, convenience, and communication. This plan will also outline plans for the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

The Office, also known as Elections Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), is responsible for exercising general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of elections and for enforcing fairness, impartiality, and compliance with the *Elections Act, 1991*.

Change is going to be our first and most ambitious focus as it will be imperative to achieving our goals and objectives. We have to focus our office to meet the on-going technical challenges and voter demands for convenient and accessible voting. Staff efforts will continue to be focused on identifying the most effective and efficient means to fully meet our legislative mandate. To do this, we must keep the elector at the forefront of our minds – What can we do to improve their voting experience? What is it that they need in order to increase interest and awareness surrounding Provincial Elections?

Every citizen of Newfoundland and Labrador is entitled to their right to vote and it is this Office's responsibility to ensure that they are able to exercise that right in a manner that is fair, convenient and accessible. It is critical that we continue to provide adequate training and professional development for our present staff. It has been a priority for this Office to seek approval for several new positions to support existing management and the development and implementation of new programs which are crucial to the future of the Office. I am pleased to announce that we have been approved for seven full-time, permanent positions: four Voter Registry Coordinators, one Communication and Training Officer, one Business Analyst, and one Administrative Assistant. This reorganization will bring us in line with other jurisdictions and will provide the capability to participate more fully with our partners across Canada as a member of the Electoral Technology Accord, which was created specifically to address the development and delivery of electoral processes. Our Office must continue to be accountable and transparent in all of our undertakings. Beginning this year, we will implement a long term and permanent strategy of public awareness aimed at increasing voter knowledge for both youth and seniors. We must continue to promote and support continued involvement in the political process. The youth are our future and if we fail to engage them now the political history of this Province could be lost.

Convenience is our next focus. Voting should be convenient for electors or the desire to vote could decline. We have several ideas in mind which will require significant research and consideration, but which will be able to make voting more accessible to anyone who is interested.

Our third focus is Communication. In an effort to improve voter knowledge, we must improve and increase our communication with electors – through both awareness and increased technology. Voter participation has been on the decline in Newfoundland and

Labrador and we must work toward making more information available to the electorate, in hopes of increasing their awareness and basic knowledge of, for example, how to exercise their right to vote, where to vote, what methods are available, and so on. In the 1997 General Election there was an 83 per cent voter turnout. Our most recent General Election on October 9, 2007, realized only 62 per cent. Voter decline is not exclusive to Newfoundland and Labrador; it is a dilemma that is being addressed by all jurisdictions across Canada. New technology and information, communications and community outreach are integral to revising this trend. Democracy is an on-going process and we must ensure that we provide the electorate with the most convenient tools to be active in the electoral process.

Implementation of our office restructuring, adequate staff and financial support will ensure we achieve our goals. We must pursue a new vision and aggressively move in the direction that will make us a leader in the electoral process.

The Office is considered a Category 2 entity under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. It must therefore prepare a Business Plan that sets a clear direction for the outputs of the Office. As the Chief Electoral Officer, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of its goals and objectives.



Paul Reynolds
Chief Electoral Officer

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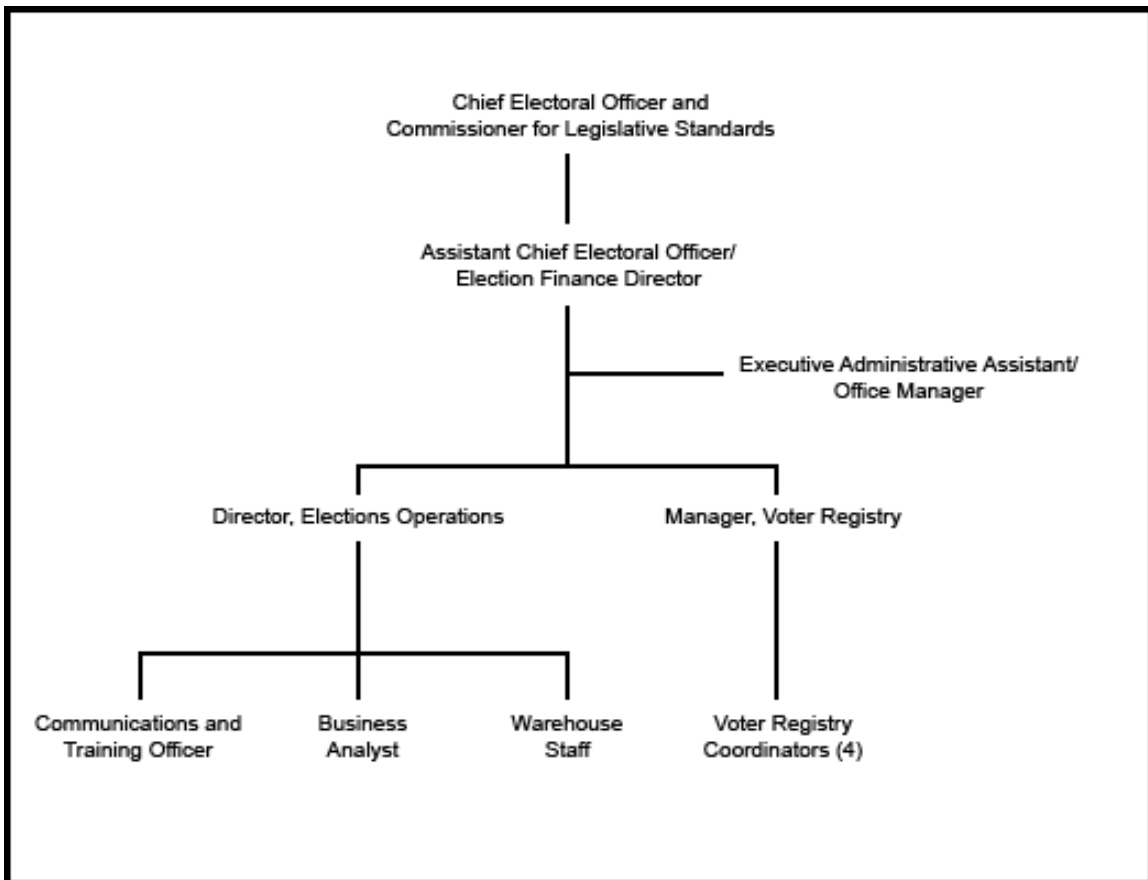
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Introduction

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, also known as Elections Newfoundland and Labrador, is a non-partisan office responsible for the conduct of provincial elections and plebiscites. The Office is accountable to the House of Assembly and to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Office is also responsible for ensuring fairness, impartiality and compliance with all aspects of the *Elections Act, 1991*. In addition to responsibilities associated with provincial elections our Office works co-operatively with federal, provincial, and municipal governments in the sharing of information to maintain an accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date permanent list of electors. These initiatives are supplemented by promotional activities aimed at encouraging voter registration and education programs in our schools to encourage youth participation in the voting process. With a relatively small number of permanent staff, the Office makes a tremendous amount of progress. In addition, the Office is appreciative of the work that is put in by large numbers of field staff and temporary employees.



The Chief Electoral Office is located at 39 Hallett Crescent, St. John's, in the O'Leary Industrial Park. The telephone number is 729-0712 and the fax number is 729-0679. The Elections Newfoundland and Labrador website is www.gov.nl.ca/elections and provides

information about the Chief Electoral Office itself, as well as information for electors and the voting process.

For the past year or so, the Office has been extremely busy. A Province-wide Enumeration was conducted in May 2007 to effectively update the voter's list and an evaluation of the Electoral Boundaries was done, followed by a Boundary Redistribution. The 2007 General Election took place on October 9, 2007.

The last Strategic Plan (2004-2007) produced by the Office was entitled "A Plan for the Future". This plan included our mandate, vision, and our goals. The goals were all met, but they were very general and did not outline specific objectives. We will work to improve our planning process by specifying precisely what we plan to do in order to achieve our goals and meet our objectives for the 2008-2011 planning period.

Today, the Chief Electoral Office is striving to become one of the leaders in Canadian election operations. Our Province has seen a drastic decline in voter turnout and it is our intention to improve the information that is made available to voters, in hopes of rectifying this problem. We plan to implement organizational changes, ensure convenience for the electorate, and increase our external communications. Several issues lie in the way of our progress, but each one is directly addressed in this Business Plan.

Environment

A Business Plan must take into account the external and internal environments which affect the organization's ability to achieve its goals and objectives. As was outlined in the 2004-2007 Strategic Plan, we will describe factors which affect our progress, but which ultimately drive us to break through these barriers and make real progress for the electorate in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Demographics

According to recent research conducted by the Economics and Statistics Branch (October 2006), our Province's population is declining due to several factors. First and foremost, Newfoundland families are having an average of 1.3 children per child-bearing woman, which is nearly half of the national average. In 1961, the Province peaked at approximately 16,000 births. The projected number of births for 2011 sits at approximately 4,000 births.

If you compare the number of annual births in Newfoundland and Labrador to the number of annual deaths, you will see that there are more people dying in our Province than are being born. This means that our population is naturally declining. By factoring in out-migration, this decrease is even larger.

When considering how to effectively serve the electorate in the Province, it is imperative to consider the decline in population. We need to engage the youth of the Province and encourage people to exercise their right to vote.

Legislation

We must continue to examine electoral legislation to ensure that it is meeting the changing needs of the people of the Province. If changes in legislation are required, we must challenge them.

Technology

Technology has an intricate role in today's society. It has enhanced the electoral process in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.

Voter Turnout

The 2007 General Election had an exceptionally low voter turnout of just 62 per cent. In 1993, the voter turnout peaked at 84 per cent. We aim to reach these levels again, and hope that our strategic initiatives will help.

Staff

The staff at the Electoral Office must maintain a constant state of readiness. A by-election could be called at any time in any district. We must ensure that we have a full contingent of field staff and resources. We must also ensure that our staff is well trained and that their knowledge is up-to-date. Many people employed by the Office are long-term, dedicated staff members who have considerable knowledge about their respective electoral districts.

Role and Mandate

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer operates in accordance with the *Elections Act, 1991*.

According to the Act, it is the duty of the Chief Electoral Officer to:

- (a.) exercise general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of elections and to enforce on the part of election officers fairness, impartiality, and compliance with [the Act];
- (b.) issue to election officers those instructions that he or she considers necessary to ensure effective execution of this Act; and
- (c.) perform all other duties that are imposed on him or her by or under [the Act].

The mandate of the Chief Electoral Office includes, but is not limited to:

- (a.) Exercising general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of elections;
- (b.) Ensuring that all election officials enforce fairness, impartiality, and compliance with the Act;
- (c.) Preparing various reports to be tabled in the House of Assembly and to be made available to the general public;
- (d.) Administering the election finance provisions of the legislation as they pertain to registered parties and candidates;
- (e.) Encouraging voter participation through various forms of communication and promotion.

Lines of Business

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer provides the following lines of business in carrying out its mandate.

Facilitate Elector's Right to Vote

Everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador who is over the age of 18 and is a resident of the province has a right to vote. The Chief Electoral Office facilitates this right by communicating to elector's everything that they would need to know in order to vote in a convenient and effective manner. The Office works to ensure that field staff, such as Returning Officers, Election Clerks, and Special Ballot Officers, are well-trained. By ensuring that all the staff has a strong working knowledge of processes and procedures, the Office can ensure that the electorate will have the best possible election experience.

Election Preparation

Election preparation is a continuous process and consists of a myriad of areas from ordering supplies for headquarters and field personnel to manual preparation, province wide ballot box distribution and special ballot voting both at headquarters and at the district returning offices. Election preparation requires staff to have acquired professional skills in order to provide a reliable and consistent service to those we serve. Election preparation also involves providing electors with the information and mechanisms they require to participate in the electoral process.

Voter Registry including Boundary Issues

The Voter Registry Division was created and mandated partly because of legislative changes to the Elections Act, 1991 but also partly because of the need for voter data and geographic services to be in constant readiness for elections, by-elections, plebiscites and/or boundary redistribution. The sharing of information with federal, provincial and municipal governments and the continuous updating of both voter and geographic data are very important functions of the Registry.

The Voter Registry Division provides a range of services including continuous voter registration services to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians (both during and in-between electoral events). The Registry maintains voter and address data; implements voting area boundary adjustments; manages address resolution and collection; oversees information requests and responses; ensures safeguarding of data while providing the electorate with an accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date permanent list of electors.

Election Finance

Election Finance provides education, guidance and assistance to candidates and political parties about election finance with respect to meeting guidelines and disclosure according to the *Elections Act, 1991*.

Communications

It is important for the Office of the Chief Electoral Office to communicate clear, strong messages to its primary clients and the general public. Various types of communications are used frequently to address issues, particularly important dates and reminders. Public

notices, advertising, press releases, media kits, and public service announcements are just a few of the methods that are used to inform the public of 'need to know' information.

For example, the Special Ballot process was advertised in local papers, radio and television. Additionally, a news release was sent out to alert electors about Special Ballot deadlines and general information.

The OCEO also has a website that contains a wealth of information on the electoral process. The Office strives to keep the website up-to-date and current with issues that pertain to elections.

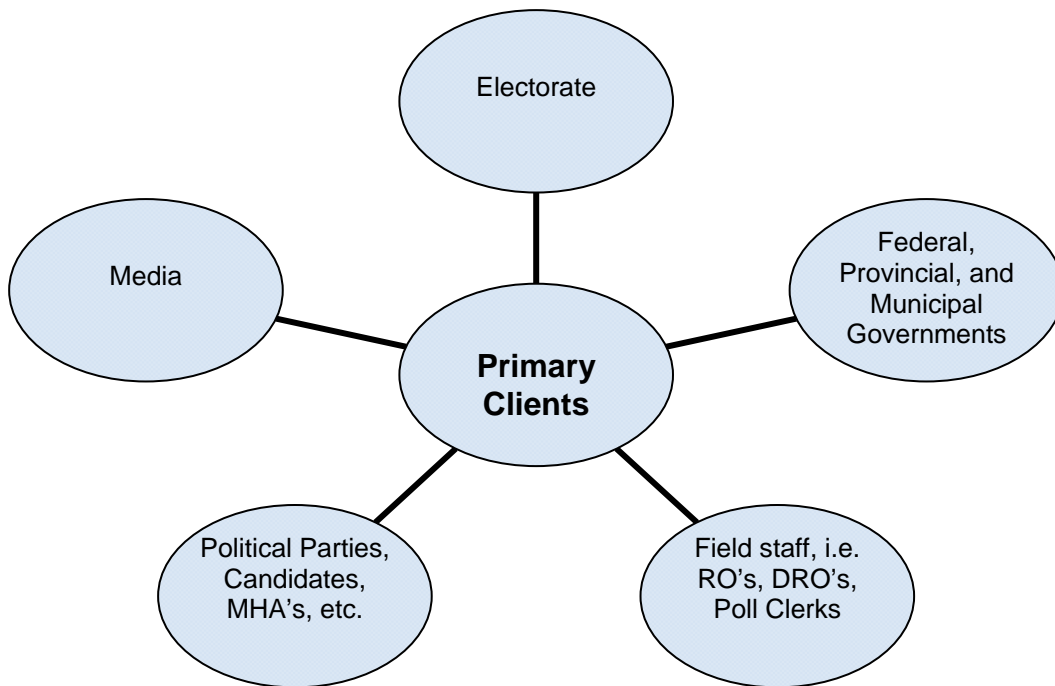
Values

The importance of having values in an organization is often overlooked. In order to function efficiently as a government entity and as the Province's authority on provincial elections, it has become important for our Office to keep our values in the forefront of our minds in every task that we undertake. Our employees know the values and understand the importance of them in the work that we do. The values of this Office include:

Values	Action Statements
Confidence	Each individual makes an effort toward learning and professional development, creating confidence among staff members.
Integrity	Each individual exhibits the courage to face problems in the workplace and work toward solutions.
Fairness	Each individual ensures that his or her own tasks and projects keep the election process fair for all involved.
Impartiality	Each individual shows complete impartiality toward election matters, committing to the Non-Partisan environment in which we work.
Accountability	Each individual performs his/her duties with the most up to date information attainable, and in keeping with the role of being a public employee.

Primary Clients

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer considers its primary clients to be those individuals, groups, and organizations which require most of its attention, resources, and services. It is not this Office's intent to over-look any other relevant groups; this is mainly serving the purpose of this plan and represents the clients we most frequently deal with.



Vision

To be an organization that inspires confidence in all those involved in the electoral process through impartiality, excellence, and professionalism.

Mission

The mission identifies the primary focus of the Office for the term ending in 2011. The mission also includes measures and indicators which will assist in the Office evaluating progress, as well as allowing the public to evaluate the level of compliance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer now has the ability to accomplish more plans and goals due to the Office's restructuring. With more staff comes more opportunity to achieve what other provincial elections offices have been able to do. Many of these Offices have been able to implement in-depth initiatives, but this Office has been unable to do the same due to a lack of resources. The following mission represents what the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer feels will bring us closer to the same level as our election counter-parts nation wide, in addition to working in line with our role and mandate of facilitating the elector's right to vote in a way that is fair, convenient, and accessible.

Mission: By 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have implemented programs and services required to support the 2011 Provincial General Election.

Measure: Implemented programs and services.

Indicators:

- Implementation of Voter Information Cards
- Initiated development of a Youth Awareness campaign
- Increased effort put toward encouraging people to register to vote
- Improvement to Election Official training

Issues

The following outlines the Office's plans for the next three years. These are its top priorities; however, please note that at times any potential progress may have to be deferred due to the very unpredictable environment in which we work. The Office could be faced with any number of challenges (for example, by-elections) in a short period of time but will do its best to achieve what it has planned.

Issue 1:

Change

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer has undergone an Office Restructuring in order to better serve the electorate. One area that has undergone significant change is the Voter Registry Division. This is an integral part of the election process. It is important that the Voters List be kept up to date and maintained between electoral periods in order to ensure an accurate elector database. Recently, four full-time, permanent positions were approved for this division and this will ensure that the division is as efficient as possible.

Goal 1: By March 31, 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer has improved the voter registry.

Measure: Improved Voter Registry

Indicators:

- Improved updating procedures for the Voters List
- Improved ability to meet legislative deadlines
- Explored options for future developments and improvements

Objectives:

1. By March 31, 2009, the Office of the Chief Electoral Office will have incorporated new voter data into the voter registry.

Measure: Incorporated new data

Indicator: New data now incorporated

2. By March 31, 2010, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have continued to incorporate multi-source data and explored additional sources.
3. By March 31, 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have improved availability of voter information in support of the 2011 Provincial General Election.

Issue 2:**Convenience and Communication**

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for the conduct of provincial elections, by-elections, and plebiscites. Therefore, it is the responsibility of this Office to provide up-to-date, accurate information to the electorate regarding the voting process. In order to fulfill our mandate, we must continue to improve the information that we make available to the electorate and change this information as times and technologies change.

Goal 2: By March 31, 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer has improved information availability to the electorate.

Measure: Improved information availability.

Indicators:

- Initiated development of an awareness campaign for youth
- Initiated development of training manuals aimed at educating youth
- Implemented Voter Information Cards
- Implemented information packages for schools
- Improved advertising availability

Objectives:

1. By March 31, 2009, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have identified opportunities to promote awareness among youth about the electoral process.

Measure: Identified opportunities

Indicator: Review of practices by other provincial elections offices
Input from regional staff
Exploratory work toward creating training manuals

2. By March 31, 2010, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have designed and implemented Voter Information Cards.
3. By March 31, 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have assessed advertising availability province-wide for the upcoming Provincial General Election.

Issue 3:**Internal Training**

After the completion of the October 9, 2007 Provincial General Election, staff from the Office met with Returning Officers, Election Clerks, and Special Ballot Officers province-wide to hold Election Debriefing Meetings. These meetings served to inform staff at the Office in St. John's of issues surrounding the election and what they thought went well or what needs improvement.

One issue that was identified in these meetings focuses on the training of election officials for elections.

Goal 3: By March 31, 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have improved the Election Official Training.

Measure: Improved Election Official Training

Indicators:

- Training Sessions implemented
- Feedback from Election Officials

Objectives:

1. By March 31, 2009, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have made contact with Elections Canada and other provincial election offices country-wide in order to begin planning new training methods.

Measure: Contacted Elections Canada and other provincial election offices

Indicator: Initiated research pertaining to Election Official training

2. By March 31, 2010, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have initiated work on improving training materials.
3. By March 31, 2011, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer will have implemented new training methods for the 2011 Provincial General Election.

Introduction

Mr. Paul Reynolds is the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards is assigned responsibility for investigating and conducting inquiries, if necessary, to determine whether a Member has failed to fulfill any obligation under the code of conduct and to report to the House with recommendations as to appropriate sanctions similar to the ones that are available for breached of conflict of interest duties in Part II of the *House of Assembly Act*.

The Commissioner is located at 39 Hallett Crescent, St. John's, NL, A1B 4C4. The telephone number is 729-0712 and the fax number is 729-0679.

Role and Mandate

The Commissioner is an officer of the House of Assembly and reports annually upon the affairs of the office to the Speaker of the Assembly, who then presents the report to the House of Assembly.

Mr. Reynolds is responsible for the enforcement of the conflict of interest provisions of the *House of Assembly (Amendment) Act*.

As well as the responsibilities under the House of Assembly Act, the Commissioner is also responsible for hearing appeals of public office holders under the *Conflict of Interest Act, 1995*.

It is the mandate of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to ensure that the conflict of interest legislation is followed by all members.

Lines of Business

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards provides the following lines of business in carrying out his mandate.

Inquiries

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards will conduct inquiries into Member's conduct and would make recommendations based on his findings.

Disclosure Statements

After each Provincial General Election and on April 1 of each year thereafter, the Commissioner is required to acquire Disclosure Statements from the Members of the House of Assembly. Once they are approved, they are made available to the public for review.

Annual Reporting

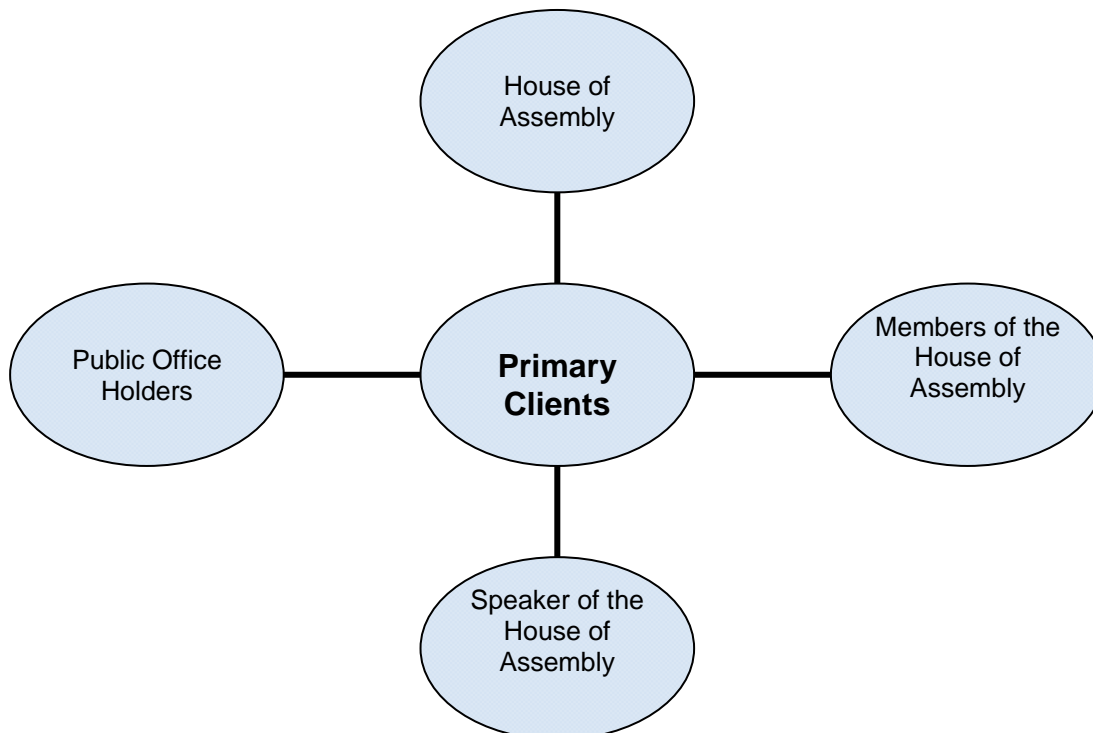
The Commissioner is responsible for preparing an Annual Report on the progress that is made.

Values

The primary value for the Commissioner of Legislative Standards is **Integrity**. The Commissioner for Legislative Standards aims to protect the integrity of the Member's by ensuring that there is no conflict between them and Government's practices.

Primary Clients

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards has three primary clients and they are as follows.



Vision

The Vision of the office of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards is an environment where the highest ethical standards are in place for the House of Assembly.

Mission

The mission identifies the primary focus of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards for the term ending in 2011. The mission also includes measures and indicators which will assist the Commissioner in evaluating progress, as well as allowing the public to evaluate the level of compliance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards is responsible for ensuring compliance with Legislative guidelines, and the Commissioner would like to try and improve the timeliness in which disclosure statements are filed. This could be achieved through increased communication with Members, which could include

Mission: By 2011, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards will have made an effort to increase communications with Members regarding timeliness of disclosure statement filing.

Measure: Increased communications with Members

Indicators:

- Increased number of information materials provided
- Increased number of Members filing within required timelines

Issues

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards is assigned responsibility for investigating and conducting inquiries, if necessary, to determine whether a Member has failed to fulfill any obligation under the code of conduct and to report to the House with recommendations as to appropriate sanctions similar to the ones that are available for breached of conflict of interest duties in Part II of the *House of Assembly Act*.

Therefore, the primary and sole issue pertaining to the role of Commissioner for Legislative Standards is **Compliance**.

Issue 1:**Timely Filing of Disclosure Statements**

Goal 1: By March 31, 2011, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards has processes in place to improve Members' compliance with Legislative deadlines pertaining to disclosure statements.

Measure: Improved processes in place

Indicator:

- Increased communications with Members
- Provision of assistance to Members

Objectives:

1. By March 31, 2009, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards will have initiated the development of an informational pamphlet regarding Members responsibilities and Legislative guidelines.

Measure: Initiated the development of informational material for Members

Indicator: Information and resources have been gathered
Draft version of informational material has been developed

2. By March 31, 2010, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards will have begun communicating with Members to advise them of deadlines.
3. By March 31, 2011, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards will have explored additional options to facilitate the timely filing of Member Disclosure Statements.