

GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK UPDATE

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New Brunswick municipal elections postponed due to COVID-19

FREDERICTON (GNB) – The provincial government passed legislation today to postpone municipal elections that were planned for May 11.

An Act Respecting Elections in 2020 received royal assent after first, second and third readings all occurred in one day.

“With the large number of electors, polling stations and poll workers, there was no safe way to undertake the municipal election at this time,” said Kim Poffenroth, New Brunswick’s Chief Electoral Officer. “Elections are contact-heavy events and with the guidance of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health’s directive on public gatherings and social distancing, it was felt to be the only option at this time.”

The legislation also includes district education council, regional health authority and local service district elections as well as a plebiscite in Saint-Quentin.

The legislation also postpones the two provincial byelections, currently scheduled for June 15, 2020. The byelections would have to be held no later than 30 days prior to the day that the legislature begins a new session in the fall as long as it is safe to do so.

“Everyone has a role to play in mitigating the impact of COVID-19,” said Dr. Jennifer Russell, the province’s chief medical officer of health. “Mass gatherings can have the potential for serious public health consequences if they are not planned and managed carefully. They can increase the spread of infectious diseases and cause additional strain on the health-care system when held during outbreaks.”

With the municipal budget cycle being organized on the calendar year, an election in the fall would impact the ability of local governments to prepare and pass their budgets. Subsequently, elections are expected to be held in May 2021 or sooner depending upon how quickly the outbreak subsides.