

# Future of N.B. to be decided in 'unpredictable' runoff

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Both the Liberal and Progressive Conservative campaign buses are pictured in Campbellton on Saturday morning with the J.C. Van Horne Bridge over the Restigouche River pictured in the background. The two buses overnighted in the northern city at the same hotel.

Photo: Adam Huras/Legislature Bureau

FREDERICTON • The future direction of New Brunswick is on the line and the decision is now in the hands of voters.

It's Election Day.

Liberal Leader Brian Gallant is attempting to secure a second term in power, something that no sitting premier has managed since 2003. Standing in his way is Progressive Conservative Leader Blaine Higgs, who himself wants to take back the reins of the province he held as Tory finance minister, but lost, four years ago.

Meanwhile, the province's third parties are eyeing gains.

People's Alliance Leader Kris Austin is pushing for a breakthrough after coming within 26 votes of winning a seat four years ago and Green Leader David Coon is attempting to build on the history of 2014 where he won the party's first-ever seat.

The NDP's Jennifer McKenzie is also in search of a spot in the legislature in the Saint John Harbour riding the party last held 15 years ago.

### **Polling stations**

Polls open across New Brunswick's 49 ridings on Monday at 10 a.m. and will close at 8 p.m.

There are 455 polling stations set up across the province with 493 tabulation machines.

There are roughly 570,000 voters eligible to cast ballots, and about 4,500 people will be staffing the returning stations to greet them. That said, more than 87,000 New Brunswickers have already cast their ballot through two days of advanced poll, compared to 67,317 four years ago.

"New Brunswickers should get out and vote because those who vote have a voice in the future direction of our province," New Brunswick Chief Electoral officer Kim Poffenroth said. "If you're eligible to vote and you don't vote that means you're letting other people decide."

Poffenroth said New Brunswickers should bring their voter information card they received in the mail with them to the polls. If they didn't receive one, voters should bring identification that has their name and current address listed.

### **'It's really unpredictable'**

The Liberals won the popular vote in 2014 by 8.1 percentage points.

That translated into 27 seats, with the Tories winning 21 and the Greens one.

That said, five ridings were decided by less than 100 votes, and 13 ridings had margins of less than 500 votes.

"It's really unpredictable because of that large percentage of third party support," J.P. Lewis, associate professor of politics at the University of New Brunswick said, citing a Brunswick News-Nanos Research poll where roughly 30 per cent support fell to parties outside the big two.

"There are upwards of 12 ridings that you just don't know what will happen."

Meanwhile, the current makeup of the legislature entering dissolution has the Liberals with 24 seats, the Progressive Conservatives with 21, the Greens with one and former Liberal speaker Chris Collins sitting as an independent.

There are also two vacancies left after Liberal MLA Donald Arseneault resigned to take a job in Ottawa and Madeleine Dubé left politics to accept an appointment as vice-rector of the Université de Moncton.

### 'Economically underachieving'

Whoever wins on Monday night will have their work cut out for them.

“Over the past decade, New Brunswick has been an economically underachieving province and it still is,” Jack Mintz, a fellow at the University of Calgary’s School of Public Policy, said in a recent editorial. “The province isn’t yet an economic basket case but it could end up that way without a major change in direction soon.”

Herb Emery, the Vaughan Chair in regional economics at the University of New Brunswick, has said that private-sector investors have not been choosing New Brunswick as a place to invest for over a decade, leaving a public sector driven economy.

“Premiers and governments cannot influence global commodity prices, exchange rates or policies and regulations of trading partners that affect our exports,” he said. “But premiers and governments can set policies, regulations and tax regimes that improve the competitiveness of producers in New Brunswick”

### Election results

So with all that’s on the line, how soon will New Brunswickers get results?

Elections NB says there won't be a repeat of the fiasco of the last provincial election night when initial results started coming in but then suddenly stopped for hours, triggering recounts after the Tories cast doubt on the true winner in a number of closely contested ridings.

There’s a new process in place and Elections NB has completed over a dozen tests of the system since last time around in byelections and municipal runoffs.

But Poffenroth is not predicting a time when final results will roll in.

“At Elections NB we’re more concerned with accuracy than speed,” she said, adding anyone still in line at 8 p.m. will get to cast a ballot.

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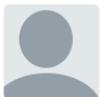
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**KAREN FRASER** • 4 days ago



For so many decades NB has had Liberal then Conservative governments, then back to Liberals and then again to the

Conservatives. They keep trading power, then blaming the previous government for the problems they inherit and can't correct. The other parties deserve some input through representation in the Provincial legislature. If NB'ers will put a few of the "other party " members into the legislature, that would send a message to the main-line parties to start addressing the issues that plague our Province. Bill H

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Hubert B** → KAREN FRASER • 4 days ago

Agreed, but a step further... These 2 flip flopping parties have done absolutely nothing meaningful long term for NB'ers but push us further into debt that generations to come will struggle to climb out of. I say boot every last one of these 2 party failures out of office and replace them all with a mixture of the balance. Time for NB'ers to shake things up a bit. These 2 parties going back and forth failing each time, clearly failing each time is enough..... NB'ers... QUIT THE INSANITY, WAKE UP AND SMELL WASTE COMING OUT OF THE LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES... ITS A FOUL SMELL, DON'T GIVE ANY OF THEM ANOTHER 4 YEARS.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**ALEX TOTH** → Hubert B • 4 days ago

I agree with both of you. Send an unexpected third party to the legislature. There may be more 'talent' in the big two parties, but when that talent is aimed at enriching themselves more than the province what is the point of electing them? Maybe it is time to take a chance on someone who's heart is in the right place and hope they can handle to job no matter how inexperienced they are.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**MIKE MCCORMICK** • 4 days ago

The results will be fun to watch tonight given the increase in support for third parties. Regardless of who wins, the negativity will continue unabated. Many candidates have worked extremely hard to garner support. It's too bad that gets lost in all the hype.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**VICKI WILLIS** → MIKE MCCORMICK • 4 days ago

The citizens have had from 1999 to the present day to work on their negativity. Taxes have gone up. The debt has gone up. Government bureaucracy has gone up. On top of all that

the quality of government services has gone brown. The economy is stagnant and there is little chance that will change. Those are just for starters.

If Gallant wins then the lifestyle for most of us is all but guaranteed to get worse. If Higgs wins and tries to fix our financial mess then the future is nearly as grim.

For those who try to follow our politics then the only way to be upbeat and positive is to be mentally ill or on drugs.

RonW.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**COLIN SEELEY** → VICKI WILLIS • 4 days ago — | v

Well Ron we are on our way to getting stoned to alleviate the pain of our dis functional politicians. Come oct 24th we can head for the pot shops.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**VICKI WILLIS** → COLIN SEELEY — | v  
• 4 days ago

Sounds tempting Colin but I don't smoke and only have the occasional drink. I might have to consider the drinking part if things get too bad here. RonW.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**MIKE ARSENAULT** → COLIN SEELEY — | v  
• 4 days ago

If you can afford it

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**mmccormi** → VICKI WILLIS • 4 days ago — | v

You are obviously hanging out with the wrong crowd.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**VICKI WILLIS** → mmccormi • 4 days ago — | v

Depends on your point of view. Maybe you're the one hanging out with the wrong crowd? I like to think of myself as a realist.

You should note that the negative points I listed are the same ones to be found in nearly every assessment of this government's performance and of our economic situation.

That makes me comfortable with my opinion.

RonW.

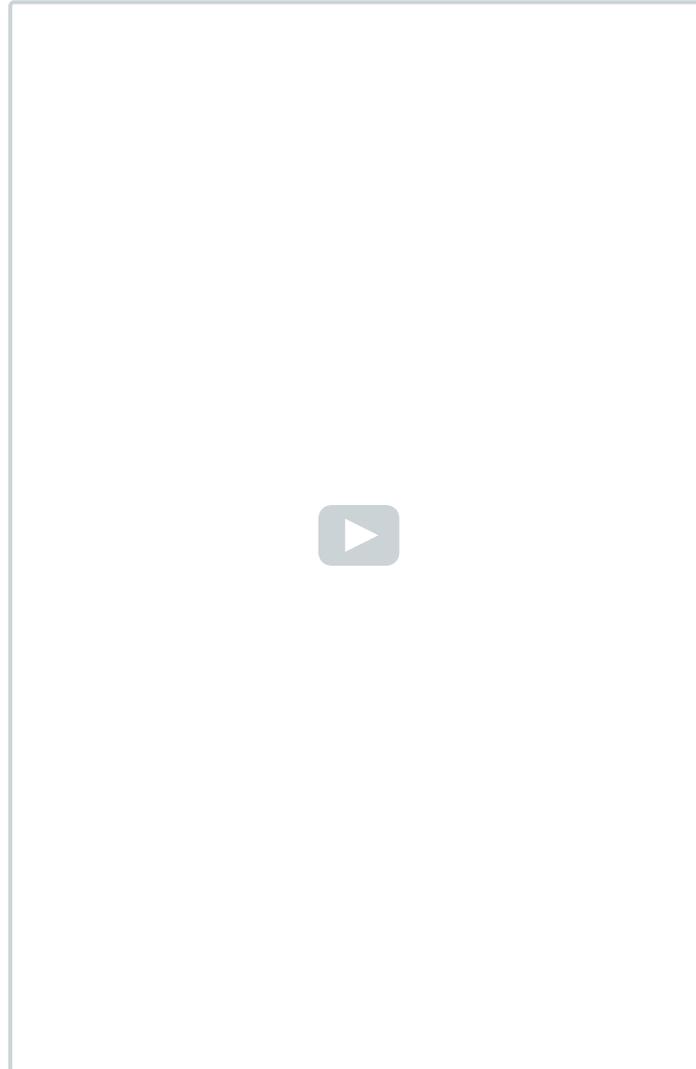
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**GUY BASTARACHE** → VICKI WILLIS • 4 days ago - | ▾

So....Ron; which of those two things explains the several insults you throw out????? Dianne Bastarache

^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**DAVID MACGOWAN** → VICKI WILLIS • 4 days ago - | ▾



^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**ANDREW HOWARTH** → DAVID MACGOWAN • 4 days ago - | ▾

Oldie but goodie, if only it was that simple. :-)

1 ^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**RANDY CLARK** → MIKE MCCORMICK • 4 days ago - | ▾

With yet another new computer system and the ever more likely problems with same, I won't be waiting up! Maybe the russians or some bored teen will hack it and the results will be REALLY unpredictable. What's wrong with counting a few paper ballots using humans every 4 years!!??

1 ^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**COI IN SFFI FY** → RANDY CLARK • 4 days ago — | ▾