

Chief Electoral Officer Directives for Polling Station Selection

(*Elections Act*, R.S.N.B. 1973, c.E-3, s. 2, ss.20(4), s.59)



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General

As defined in the *Elections Act*, a “polling station” means a building, or a portion of a building, secured by a returning officer for the taking of the votes of electors on the ordinary polling day or an advance polling day.

The predominant consideration for selection of a polling station is voter convenience. Consolidation of polling stations strictly for the convenience of administration by the Returning Office is to be avoided.

Returning officers will be given lists of polling stations used in the last municipal and provincial elections. It is not at all to be taken for granted that the former polling stations will be used again, simply because they were used before, nor that the same polling divisions shall report to the same polling stations.

Evaluation of the Physical Polling Station

Prior to an election, returning officers shall evaluate all the polling stations used in the last election, as well as other potential locations that may be suitable for use in the upcoming election. At the same time, returning officers shall evaluate the polling divisions that would report to the particular advance and ordinary polling stations with a view to the distance and travel patterns of the electors. It is this combination of location, proximity to the electors’ homes, and the normal travel patterns of the community that determines what a suitable polling station is. This is more of a concern in rural areas as compared to urban centres.

To do this evaluation, returning officers shall use the prescribed checklist, which includes items such as a general description of the building, civic address, and contact information, parking, wheelchair accessibility, washroom facilities, proximity to bus routes, and a rough sketch of the main room(s) to be used as the voting area, including entrances and dimensions. Elections NB will make a concerted effort to ensure that all polling stations have wheelchair access unless there is no other suitable site in the area.

During the evaluation process, returning officers shall contact the local MLA(s) to obtain any input on the suitability of the polling stations that are planned to be used.

Returning officers shall return completed checklists to Elections NB by the date directed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Selection of Polling Station

The decision as to the selection of the polling stations to be used in the upcoming election shall take into account the considerations expressed above, the availability of the polling stations, the feedback from the MLAs, guidance from Elections NB, and the evaluation criteria information previously collected.

The returning officer will make a final decision as to the polling station selections to be used in an electoral district. This shall be done prior to the date directed by the Chief Electoral Officer in order to prepare the information to be printed on the Voter Information Cards for the upcoming election.