

Municipalities Matter

Voter's Guide to Municipal
Issues – Election 2024

Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick



The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB)

is a non-partisan, bilingual association of fifty-six local governments of all sizes, representing almost eighty percent of New Brunswick's population. Since 1994, the UMNB has advocated for strong, sustainable communities throughout the province. Our members decide UMNB's policies and priorities through member resolutions, at regional Zone meetings, and at our Annual General Meeting. Together, our members tackle local challenges and share solutions to make life better for their citizens.



Municipalities Matter



New Brunswick is one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise a family. More than 840,000 people now call New Brunswick home and understand that the communities in which we live are what makes New Brunswick such a great place. Our cities, towns, villages and rural communities are responsible for most aspects of our quality of life, yet the importance of municipalities has continued to be overlooked by successive provincial governments.

Think about it. Today, municipalities in our province are responsible for the things that matter most in our daily lives:

- Water
- Roads
- Waste collection
- Police and fire
- Regional economic development
- Tourism
- and more.

Despite managing these vital services for its residents, municipalities continue to be underfunded and undervalued. Research shows that underfunding municipalities has led to New Brunswickers paying more in property tax than necessary.

The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) is calling on all candidates and political parties in the upcoming provincial election to commit to a series of vital recommendations that will improve the affordability and quality of life for all New Brunswickers.

As a New Brunswick taxpayer, this matters to you more than you may know. If we had a more balanced funding model that recognized the role and responsibilities of municipalities, your property taxes wouldn't have gone up as much in the past five years.

The Issues





Action 01

Create a stronger and more unified provincial-municipal partnership that meets collective growth objectives, empowers municipalities, and achieves the goal of municipal reform to build strong and vibrant communities.

What

Municipal governments best understand the issues that matter to you.

Why

Local solutions are key to solving big challenges. The UMNb values the role of member municipalities in citizens' lives.

The Ask

We're calling on all candidates in the upcoming provincial election to commit to a stronger partnership with municipalities and better recognition of the importance municipalities play in the daily lives of New Brunswickers. Municipalities Matter in New Brunswick and we're urging every political party to recognize that importance.



Action 02

Complete the work of municipal reform in New Brunswick by fulfilling the commitment to a new fiscal framework.

What

Since 2022, the Province's local governance reform has profoundly changed the municipal landscape. While the UMNb supports the principles of municipal reform, there is still much work to be done. The Provincial government has reduced the number of municipal entities but hasn't provided the necessary fiscal reform to deliver all the new services we are now responsible for locally as well as the required ongoing investment for infrastructure renewal. This leaves municipalities struggling financially and increases pressure on residential property taxpayers and renters.

Why

The underfunding of municipalities by the provincial government has left municipalities in New Brunswick with few options other than to fill the gap using the only tool available to them today - property tax. Research shows that the residential base is growing faster than the non-residential tax base. This trend, combined with the existing tax system means the increased financial burden will fall to property owners and renters unless something changes.

If municipalities had additional revenues from the provincial portion of the property tax or a share of the HST, they could use it in different ways, just like the federal and provincial governments do.

We highlight the possibility of an HST revenue sharing model as currently exists in other provinces because it allows for a different tool that isn't property tax. Saskatchewan and Quebec currently have HST/PST sharing agreements with their municipalities which have been very successful.



The Ask

The UMNb is asking all candidates in the upcoming election to commit to adequate, stable and transparent municipal funding that takes into account new responsibilities in areas such as climate change adaptation, housing and homelessness, infrastructure renewal, regional economic development and tourism, and more.

A new fiscal sharing agreement would provide taxpayers with a number of benefits including:

- Providing services at the level people expect and deserve
- Building and renewing critical infrastructure

- Foster strong and vibrant communities
- Ease financial pressure on residential homeowners and renters

Strong communities are places where people want to live, and attract needed professionals like doctors, nurses, and teachers. With better funding, municipalities can provide enhanced services and better address the growing social challenges like mental health and homelessness.



Action 03

Collaborate with municipalities to address housing affordability, build the right kind of housing supply to support population growth, and take action on shared goals to end chronic homelessness.

What

Municipalities across New Brunswick are working hard to address the housing challenges that are impacting communities nationwide. While provincial governments are working on the issue, municipalities must be at the decision-making table to ensure that the right kind of housing is developed locally.

Why

Whether addressing housing affordability, adequateness or supported transitional housing, each municipality in New Brunswick knows best as to what's needed within their communities.

The Ask

The UMNB is calling on all candidates in the upcoming provincial election to commit to collaborating with municipalities around all housing-related issues.



Action 04

Establish a distinct Urban Housing Strategy for New Brunswick’s largest urban centres that partners with city governments to support growth and affordable housing targets and adequately addresses challenges related to homelessness.

What

While every municipality in New Brunswick is facing housing affordability and adequateness challenges, most of the issues in this province are centered within our larger urban centres.

Why

Our cities and large towns are primary destinations for newcomers and are beacons for vulnerable populations. This equates to unaffordable housing, skyrocketing housing prices and a growing homeless population.

The Ask

The UMNb is calling on all candidates in the upcoming provincial election to work with the UMNb’s Urban Municipal Caucus to develop an Urban Housing and Investment Strategy that considers the unique challenges within our larger centres. These issues can only be effectively tackled if the province and urban municipalities work together toward clear, shared goals.



Action 05

Conduct a comprehensive provincial policing review in consultation with municipalities, with a fair funding model to ensure appropriate community presence and visibility.

What

Public safety is a big concern for everyone, and crime rates are going up. Policing costs take up a lot of the budget for cities and towns. In fact, just a 5% increase in policing costs can have up to a 6% increase in overall expenses for a municipality.

Why

Municipalities have little control over rising policing costs and are challenged to implement the level of policing service their community desires. They often do not clearly understand the level of service they are receiving for the cost.

The Ask

The UMNB is calling on all candidates to commit to working with municipalities on reviewing the current policing models in New Brunswick. This is to make sure we are able to deliver adequate policing services in a fiscally responsible way.



What Can You Do As A Voter?

If the issues outlined above matter to you as a taxpayer and citizen in New Brunswick, let your local candidates know. When they come to your door or solicit your input, ask them about their commitments to:

- a new fiscal framework for municipalities,
- better partnerships with municipalities
- including municipalities at the decision-making table on key issues like housing and policing

Share this guide with your friends and neighbours so they can understand what municipalities are asking for on behalf of their residents.

Why It Matters?

By recognizing how important our municipalities are, we can stop putting all the cost burdens on New Brunswick property owners and renters. We can begin looking at more equitable ways of delivering the services you deserve. By focusing on priorities, we can begin to address the most pressing issues within your community in a smart and affordable way.

New Brunswickers deserve nothing less.

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To learn more visit: umnb.ca