New Brunswick strengthens **drinking water protection**

The Government of New Brunswick (GNB) has recently introduced important updates to strengthen the safety and reliability of regulated drinking water across the province. This initiative has aligned the province's drinking water program requirements with Health Canada's Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality, reinforcing the multi-barrier approach to protecting public health and supporting the long-term sustainability of New Brunswick's drinking water systems.

Updated drinking water quality guidelines

The New Brunswick Drinking Water Quality Guidelines (*www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWaterGuidelines.pdf*) have been revised to reflect recent updates made by Health Canada. The revised guidelines introduce new drinking water parameters and update the Maximum Acceptable Concentrations (MACs) and Aesthetic Objectives (AOs) for several existing parameters.

To support these updates and expand our understanding of drinking water quality, a province-wide baseline sampling project was undertaken in 2025–26. Working in collaboration with the Research and Productivity Council (RPC) and local governments, GNB collected data on a broad range of previously unmonitored parameters. The results are being used to establish baseline water quality conditions throughout the province and to support evidence-based decision-making.

New treatment and disinfection policy

The new Drinking Water Treatment and Disinfection Policy (*www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/env/pdf/Water-Eau/drinking-water-treatment-and-disinfection-policy-january-2026.pdf*) establishes clear treatment and disinfection expectations for drinking water systems based on Health Canada's guidance. The policy emphasizes the importance of effective treatment, disinfection practices, and ongoing monitoring to reduce the risk of waterborne diseases and ensure safe drinking water is delivered to consumers.

Further, to ensure treatment requirements are appropriate for the level of risk associated with each water supply, regulated groundwater system owners must assess whether their wells are under the influence of surface water through New Brunswick's updated Groundwater Under the Direct Influence of Surface Water (GUDI) Protocol (*www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/env/pdf/Water-Eau/gudi-protocol-january-2026.pdf*). Since 2020, owners of local government groundwater systems completed Step 1 (Screening) through funding support from the Environmental Trust Fund.

Supporting water system owners

Recognizing that implementing new requirements takes time, New Brunswick has adopted a phased approach to the implementation of these new requirements. This allows water system owners to plan for future monitoring, treatment, and operational changes while continuing to provide safe drinking water to their communities.

The Department of Environment and Local Government (DELG) is updating sampling plans and Approvals to Operate to reflect the new requirements. These updates identify revised monitoring requirements, sampling frequencies, and locations, as well as establishes compliance timelines for meeting new requirements.

Regulated water system owners and operators are encouraged to review their updated Approvals to Operate and sampling plans as they are issued and use the identified timelines to support planning, budgeting, and operational improvements.

Greater transparency

As part of the goals established in GNB's A Water Strategy for New Brunswick, the new Drinking Water Quality Data Portal (*www.gnb.ca/en/topic/environment-resources/water/drinking-water-portal.html*) was launched to provide the public with online access to drinking water quality results from 68 local government operated systems. By making monitoring data more accessible, the portal enhances transparency, strengthens public confidence, and gives residents New Brunswickers greater insight into the quality of their drinking water.

Looking ahead

The modernization of New Brunswick's drinking water program will continue in the coming years. As part of this ongoing work, the province is advancing updates to the Clean Water Act to strengthen protections for water quality, update regulatory frameworks, and improve transparency and access to information.

Following engagement in Fall 2025, GNB collected responses from more than 500 New Brunswickers regarding their concerns for local air and water quality. All feedback has been summarized in the What We Heard Report (*www.gnb.ca/content/dam/GNB3/gov/consult/docs/elg-clean-water-act-report-july2026-en.pdf*) and will be used to guide program development moving forward. Engagement with First Nations, the public, and stakeholders will continue throughout 2026–2027 to inform the development of proposed legislation and regulatory changes.

Through collaboration with local governments, system owners, operators, laboratories, consultants, and industry partners, New Brunswick continues to build a drinking water program that is responsive to emerging challenges, informed by science, and focused on protecting public health.

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This article was contributed by the ACWWA Government Affairs Committee. For questions about the content or suggestions for future articles, please contact the Committee Chair via the ACWWA website.

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