

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
Annual Report 2020-21

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I hereby present the 2020-21 Annual Report of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (the "Office"). This report was prepared in accordance with the provisions of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. My signature below is indicative of my accountability for the results reported.

As a Category 3 Government Entity, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is required to report on activities carried out in the past fiscal year. The information presented in this report outlines the activities of the Office from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "N. Denic", is centered within a white rectangular box.

Nebojsa Denic, M.D., F.R.C.P.C.
Chief Medical Examiner
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Overview

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is responsible for reporting, investigating and recording deaths pursuant to the **Fatalities Investigation Act**. The Chief Medical Examiner is also responsible for appointing physicians to act as medical examiners and the appointment of medical investigators. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Drive, St. John's.

Administrative support is provided by a Manager of Corporate Services and an Administrative Officer, with additional clerical support provided by a medical Stenographer. Investigative support is provided by Medical Examiner Investigators and the Office has retained an Information Management Analyst to support record and data management. Files related to the investigations conducted by the Office for the previous five years are presently stored at the central office in St. John's. Older files are stored off site. According to the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund Year Ended 31 March 2021, actual expenditures of the Office were \$1,567,075.

Mandate

Pursuant to Section 3 of the Act, the responsibilities of the Chief Medical Examiner include:

- the administration of the Act in relation to the reporting, investigating and recording of deaths;
- the appointment of physicians as medical examiners and the supervision of the performance of medical examiners and pathologists performing medicolegal investigative duties;
- the appointment of medical investigators;
- the appointment of an Acting Chief Medical Examiner who may act in the place of the Chief Medical Examiner;
- the development and maintenance of facilities that may be required for the purpose of the Act; and,
- the education of persons required to perform functions under the Act.

The Office does not present separate Lines of Business as they are reflected in the Mandate.

Vision

An environment where the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner responds to those deaths that are appropriately reported in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**.

Highlights and Partnerships

In addition to the post-mortem examination and autopsies, the Chief Medical Examiner reviews non-fatal trauma cases for the police and Crown attorneys to interpret and

determine mechanism of trauma. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews all requests for cremations, as well as shipping-in and shipping-out of remains for the province. The Office also receives many requests during the year to analyze bones found by citizens or police throughout the province. These bones are analyzed to determine whether they are human remains.

The Office provides statistics to various organizations such as the Public Health Agency of Canada, Statistics Canada, the Red Cross, and the Lifesaving Society, regarding specific cause or manner of death, in addition to responding to numerous media requests throughout the year. The Chief Medical Examiner also sits on the Child Death Review Committee and the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network. The Office is affiliated with Memorial University as it provides training to medical students and residents, as well as education to RNC officers.

Report on Activities

Issue 1: Compliance with Fatalities Investigations Act

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner responds to reportable deaths as defined by the Act. The response depends upon the circumstances of death, examination of the scene, the deceased's health and the level of health care at the time of death, and witness statements. Some cases may require assistance of a Forensic Anthropologist. The focus of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will be consistent for 2021-22

Objective: By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**.

Indicators	Results
Conducted file reviews of medical examiner's reports*	588
Ordered and/or conducted external post-mortem examinations, as appropriate	199
Ordered and/or conducted medicolegal autopsies, as appropriate	215
Recorded and reported on causes and manners of death	555

*This indicator represents a full scope of conducted medical examiner file reviews by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The Indicator will change from "Conducted file reviews of medical examiner's reports" to "Conducted medical examiner file reviews" for March 31, 2022.

Opportunities and Challenges

In 2016, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner underwent an operational review. The report was released in early 2017. The purpose of the review was to identify operational deficiencies, and make appropriate recommendations to correct them. As of March 31, 2021, 50 of the 65 recommendations are complete or are in progress. The Office's staffing complement has been increased, and other recommendations such as the expansion of physical space are being explored with appropriate partners to address the needs of the Office in a fiscally responsible manner.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the operations of the Office were able to continue as normal. To comply with public health guidelines, a limited number of staff occupied the office space when necessary, and staff worked from home when they were able.

Financial Statements

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are unaudited and based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 (unaudited). The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is not required to provide a separate audited financial statement.

2.3.04. OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

	Actuals	Estimates
	\$	Original \$
01. Salaries.....	704,617	1,085,900
Operating Accounts:		
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	4,211	3,400
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	4,385	6,000
<i>Supplies</i>	7,493	2,400
<i>Professional Services</i>	349,145	309,700
<i>Purchased Services</i>	495,957	314,000
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	1,267	300
02. Operating Accounts.....	862,458	635,800
01. Revenue – Federal	-	(56,000)
Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner...	1,567,075	1,665,700

Contact us

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