

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Annual Activity Report 2007-08

## Transmittal Letter

I hereby present the 2007-08 Activity Report of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. 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 at an activity level. The information presented in this report outlines the activities of the Office from April 1, 2007 until March 31, 2008.



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## **Overview**

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Parkway, St. John's. Independence of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is heightened and enhanced through the employment of the Chief Medical Examiner as a Full Professor in Memorial University of Newfoundland's Faculty of Medicine.

Administrative support is provided by an Administrative Officer with additional clerical support provided for a portion of the year. Files related to the investigations conducted by the office are presently stored at the Janeway site, a facility of Eastern Health.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner receives reports of approximately 700 sudden and unexpected deaths per year. For fiscal year 2007-08 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador budgeted \$483,300 for expenditures associated with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

## **Mandate**

The mandate of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is contained in the *Fatalities Investigations Act, Chapter F-6.1, SNL 1995*. The Chief Medical Examiner is responsible for operation of the *Act* in relation to the reporting, investigating and recording of deaths, the appointment of physicians as medical examiners and supervision of the performance of their duties required by the *Act*, the appointment of medical examiner's investigators and the education of persons required to perform functions in accordance with the *Act*.

## **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*.

## Activities

### *Issue 1: Response to reported deaths*

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, on average, responds to between 500-700 reportable deaths annually, as defined by the *Fatalities Investigations Act*. The response to a particular death is dependent upon the circumstances of the decedent's health, level of health care at the time of death and the suspected cause of death. Some cases may involve a review of information submitted by a medical examiner, a post-mortem examination or even the assistance of a Forensic Anthropologist. This past year, the number of reportable deaths was on the low end of average.

Goal 1: By the end of fiscal year 2007-08 the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.

Measure: Response to reported deaths

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Results</b>
Conduct file reviews of medical examiner's reports	Over 430 file reviews of medical examiner's reports were conducted.
Order and/or conduct post mortem examinations as appropriate	Approximately 145 post-mortem examinations were ordered and conducted.
Order and/or conduct autopsies as appropriate	Approximately 200 autopsies were ordered and conducted
Record and report on cause of death	Over 430 causes of death were recorded and reported on.

## Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Over the next few years, it is anticipated that it will prove more difficult to recruit medical examiners in an already overworked medical system.

It is anticipated that receiving reports from medical examiners in a timely manner will continue to be a challenge given the current workloads of physicians.

The past year saw an increase in the number of deceased persons who tested positive for drugs. While this was not the primary cause of death for all those who tested positive, it is an indication that drug use is on the rise. Studies show that increases in drug use lead to increases in the number of deaths. If this pattern continues, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner may see an increase in the number of reportable deaths in the future.

## Financial Statements

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are un-audited 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 2008. Audited financial statements are a requirement at the government level and are made public through the Public Accounts process, however, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is not required to provide a separate audited financial statement.

### 2.3.03. OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

	Actual \$	Estimates	
		Amended \$	Original \$
01. Salaries.....	249,178	249,200	195,200
02. Employee Benefits.....	4,550	5,100	4,700
03. Transportation and Communications.....	3,934	7,800	14,200
04. Supplies.....	3,434	4,800	3,800
05. Professional Services.....	102,233	122,500	130,000
06. Purchased Services.....	101,636	116,100	132,600
07. Property, Furnishings and Equipment.....	1,977	2,800	2,800
Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.....	466,942	508,300	483,300