

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL
EXAMINER
ACTIVITY PLAN
2020-2023**

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I am pleased to present the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Activity Plan 2020-23. This plan was prepared under my direction and in accordance with the provisions of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is classified as a Category 3 Government Entity and, as such, must prepare an Activity Plan taking into consideration the strategic directions of Government applicable to the Department of Justice and Public Safety. I have taken those directions into account.

As Chief Medical Examiner, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of its objective.



Nebojsa Denic, M.D., F.R.C.P.C.

Chief Medical Examiner

Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

Table of Contents

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner	i
Overview	1
Mandate	2
Vision	2
Values	2
Who We Serve	2
Strategic Issue	3
Issue 1: Compliance with Fatalities Investigations Act	3

Overview

The Fatalities Investigations Act (the “Act”) states that the Chief Medical Examiner is responsible to the Minister for the operation of the Act in relation to the reporting, investigating and recording of deaths.

Approximately 700 deaths per year come to the attention of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (not all of these deaths are considered ‘reportable’ under the legislation). Deaths which are considered reportable are those which are due to violence, accident or suicide, improper or negligent treatment, are sudden and unexpected or occur when an individual is not under active medical care at the time of death or when the cause of death cannot be determined. Deaths of this nature account for approximately 30 percent of the deaths within Newfoundland and Labrador. The OCME receives reports of approximately 600 reportable deaths per year. According to the Estimates of the Program Expenditure and Revenue of the Consolidated Revenue Fund 2019-20, the OCME operates with a budget of approximately \$1,800,000.

OCME is also responsible for appointing physicians to act as medical examiners. In addition to the Chief Medical Examiner, there are four medical examiners: a forensic pathologist, a rural pathologist, and two general practitioners. There are also seven rural pathologists handling non-complicated cases within the respective Regional Health Authorities. The work of these medical examiners and pathologists is directed by and subject to review of the Chief Medical Examiner, and their work is limited to cases which are non-criminal or suspicious in nature. Assistance in investigation is provided by police officers employed by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are, by virtue of their office, medical examiner investigators.

The OCME is located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Parkway, St. John’s. The OCME is an independent entity, however, cooperation with multiple external agencies, including law enforcement and health organizations, is essential to the success of its operation.

Administrative support is provided by an Administrative Officer I, and a Stenographer II, both of whom are supervised by the Manager of Corporate Services. Files and slides related to the investigations conducted by the office are presently stored at the OCME office, at the Health Sciences Centre, a facility of Eastern Health, and at the Provincial Records Centre, located at 190 East White Hills Rd, Pleasantville, St. John’s.

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.

OCME 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**.

Values

The core values of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner provide a guiding framework for those who are required to perform duties in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**. These values and related action statements are:

- **Independence:** The Chief Medical Examiner ensures the independence of the office is maintained by acting in a neutral fashion when engaged in investigating and reporting sudden and unexpected deaths.
- **Impartiality & Fairness:** The Chief Medical Examiner and Medical Examiners perform their work without bias.
- **Empathy:** The Chief Medical Examiner and employees of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner deal fairly and respectfully with individuals who are affected by a sudden and unexpected death.

Who We Serve

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner serves the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador by investigating those reportable deaths to determine the cause and manner of death. OCME also provides statistical information regarding the number and causes of death to various federal and provincial government and non-government agencies.

Strategic Issue

Issue 1: Compliance with Fatalities Investigations Act

The OCME responds to reportable deaths as defined by the Act. The response to a particular death is dependent upon the circumstances of the deceased's health, level of health care at the time of death, and the suspected cause of death. Each case involves a review of information submitted by a medical examiner or other medical professional. Some cases also include post-mortem examinations including external exams or autopsies, or even the assistance of a Forensic Anthropologist. The focus of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will be consistent over each of the three fiscal years covered by this plan.

Objective 1: By March 31 of each year, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**.

Indicators:

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

Contact us

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Level 1, Room 1562

Health Sciences Centre

St. John's, NL A1B 3V6

Tel: (709) 777-6402

Email: ocme@gov.nl.ca