

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
Annual Activity Report 2018-19

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I hereby present the 2018-19 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, 2018 to March 31, 2019. The specific data reported is for the calendar year of 2017, the most recent year for which complete records are available.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "N. Denic", is displayed on a light grey rectangular background.

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 located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Drive, St. John's. This office is associated with the Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Administrative support is provided by a Manager/Policy Analyst and an Administrative Officer, with additional clerical support provided by a medical Stenographer. Files related to the investigations conducted by the Office are presently stored at the central office in St. John's for the previous five years. Older files are stored off site.

During the calendar year 2017, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated 569 deaths that were reportable under the **Fatalities Investigations Act**. According to the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund Year Ended 31 March 2019, actual expenditures of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner were \$1,423,214.

Highlights and Partnerships

During the calendar year 2017, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated 569 deaths that met the criteria for reporting under sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the **Fatalities Investigations Act**. The geographic locations of reportable deaths were as follows:

1. Avalon Peninsula	324	(includes 235 from metro St. John's)
2. Central Newfoundland	133	
3. Western Newfoundland	79	
4. Labrador	33	
Total	569	

And included:

1. Natural deaths	356
2. Accidental deaths	110
3. Suicides	90
4. Homicides	3
5. Undetermined	10
Total	569

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also performs a number of other duties. The information provided is from the 2017 calendar year (excluding cremation permits), which was the most recent year for which the information was available at the time this report was prepared.

The Office 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. During 2017, the Chief Medical Examiner received 30 such requests from police jurisdictions. In none of these cases were the bones determined to be human in origin.

The Chief Medical Examiner also reviews certain non-fatal trauma cases. This occurs at the request of the police or Crown attorneys for an analysis of trauma. During the calendar year 2017, the Chief Medical Examiner reviewed 18 non-fatal trauma cases.

The Office also provides statistics to various organizations such as the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Red Cross, and the Lifesaving Society, regarding specific cause or manner of death, in addition to numerous media requests throughout the year. In 2017, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner provided detailed information on the following:

Type of Death	#
Drowning	11
Motor Vehicle Accident	40
Suicide	90
Accidental Drug Overdose	25
Total	166

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews all requests for cremations in the province. During the calendar year 2018, the Office reviewed 2,814 requests for cremations and issued the appropriate permits. Additionally, approval was given for 71 bodies to be shipped into the province and for 14 bodies to be shipped out of the province.

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 **Fatalities Investigations 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. 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. The focus of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will be consistent for 2019-2020.

Objective: By March 31, 2019, 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	569
Ordered and/or conducted post-mortem examinations, as appropriate	168
Ordered and/or conducted autopsies, as appropriate	226
Recorded and reported on cause of death	569

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, including staffing, and make appropriate recommendations to correct them. Budget increases have been approved to increase staffing levels and improve operational requirements. Other recommendations such as physical space are in discussion with appropriate partners to address the needs of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in a fiscally responsible manner.

Drug deaths continue to be both a national and local concern. Toxicological analysis on deaths investigated by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in 2017, included 105 full toxicological analysis and 65 drug urine screens. This compared to 81 full toxicological screens and 43 urine screens in 2016. Toxicological analysis performed as part of a death investigation is expected to increase as trends nationwide suggest an increase in the use of opioid, fentanyl and other designer drugs.

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 2019 (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

	Actual \$	Estimates	
		Amended \$	Original \$
01. Salaries.....	365,066	389,100	519,100
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Employee</i>	-	3,500	3,500
<i>Benefits.....</i>			
<i>Transportation and Communications.....</i>	7,344	8,700	8,700
<i>Supplies.....</i>	10,838	129,800	9,800
<i>Professional Services.....</i>	498,609	538,800	538,800
<i>Purchased Services.....</i>	540,339	363,900	363,900
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment.....</i>	957	62,300	33,800
02. Operating Accounts.....	1,058,087	1,107,000	958,500
Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner...	1,423,153	1,496,100	1,477,600