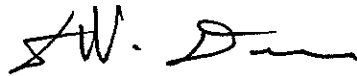


Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
Annual Report 2019-20

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I hereby present the 2019-20 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, 2019 to March 31, 2020. As it was the most recent complete set of data available at the time, the 2018-2019 annual report contained data from the calendar year of 2017. As more current data is now available, this year's report will present data from the calendar year 2019, with 2018 calendar year data appended in Annex A at the end of this report.



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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 of Corporate Services and an Administrative Officer, with additional clerical support provided by a medical Stenographer. 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.

During the calendar year 2019, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated 551 deaths that were reportable under the **Fatalities Investigations Act** (the Act). According to the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund Year Ended 31 March 2020, actual expenditures of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner were \$1,423,214.

Highlights and Partnerships

During the calendar year 2019, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated 551 as reportable deaths under the Act. The geographic locations of reportable deaths were as follows:

Region	Number
1. Avalon Peninsula	333*
2. Central Newfoundland	94
3. Western Newfoundland	94
4. Labrador	30
Total	551

*Includes 222 from metro St. John's

And included:

Manner of Death	Number
1. Natural deaths	361
2. Accidental deaths	106
3. Suicides	63
4. Homicides	5
5. Undetermined	16
Total	551

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also performs a number of other duties. The information provided is from the 2019 calendar year, 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 2019, the Chief Medical Examiner received 28 such requests from police jurisdictions in which one of the 28 cases was 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 2019, the Chief Medical Examiner reviewed 19 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 2019, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner provided detailed information on the following:

Type of Death	Number
Drowning	11
Motor Vehicle Accident	33
Suicide	62
Accidental Drug Overdose	24
Total	130

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews all requests for cremations in the province. During the calendar year 2019, the Office reviewed 2,926 requests for cremations and issued the appropriate permits. Additionally, approval was given for 63 bodies to be shipped into the province and for 13 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 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 2020-2021.

Objective: By March 31, 2020, 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	551
Ordered and/or conducted post-mortem examinations, as appropriate	151
Ordered and/or conducted autopsies, as appropriate	225
Recorded and reported on cause of death	551

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, 2020, 50 of the 65 recommendations are complete or are in progress. The OCME'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 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 2019 included 112 full toxicological analysis and 102 drug urine screens. This compared to 92 full toxicological screens and 63 drug urine screens in 2018. Toxicological analysis performed as part of a death investigation is expected to continue to increase as trends nationwide suggest an increase in the use of opioids, 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 2020 (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.....	627,704	1,093,400
Operating Accounts:		
<i>Employee</i>	2,357	3,300
<i>Benefits.....</i>		
<i>Transportation and Communications.....</i>	8,189	6300
<i>Supplies.....</i>	4,658	10,800
<i>Professional Services.....</i>	266,397	309,200
<i>Purchased Services.....</i>	516,923	313,900
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment.....</i>	1,255	63,400
02. Operating Accounts.....	799,779	706,900
Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner...	1,427,483	1,647,900

Annex A

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER – 2018 calendar year data

The 2018-19 Annual Report for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner reported data from the 2017 calendar year. As the most current data available for the 2019-20 Annual Report is for the 2019 calendar year, 2018 data has been included in this annex to ensure no gaps in data reported occur.

Reportable deaths by geographic location (2018):

Region	Number
1. Avalon Peninsula	377*
2. Central Newfoundland	69
3. Western Newfoundland	84
4. Labrador	40
Total	570

*Includes 261 from metro St. John's

Reportable deaths by manner of death (2018):

Manner of Death	Number
1. Natural deaths	367
2. Accidental deaths	104
3. Suicides	71
4. Homicides	4
5. Undetermined	24
Total	570

Reported death statistics (2018):

Type of Death	Number
Drowning	12
Motor Vehicle Accident	39
Suicide	71
Accidental Drug Overdose	24
Total	146

In addition, the Office receives many requests during the year to analyze bones found by citizens or police to determine whether they are of human origin. As well, the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews certain non-fatal trauma cases at the request of the police or Crown attorneys for an analysis of trauma. This information for 2018 is as follows:

Other case statistics (2018)

Type of Consultation	Number
Bones*	31
Non-fatal Trauma	28
<i>*none determined to be of human origin</i>	Total 59

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews all requests for cremations in the province. In 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.

It is the yearly objective of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**. For 2018, these numbers are as follows.

Case files by indicator (2018):

Indicators	Results
Conducted file reviews of medical examiner's reports	570
Ordered and/or conducted post-mortem examinations, as appropriate	165
Ordered and/or conducted autopsies, as appropriate	233
Recorded and reported on cause of death	570

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