

**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**  
**Annual Report 2021-22**

## Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I hereby present the 2021-22 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, 2021 to March 31, 2022.



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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 responsible for reporting, investigating and recording deaths pursuant to the **Fatalities Investigation Act** (the Act). The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Drive, St. John's. The Chief Medical Examiner holds an appointment with the Memorial University of Newfoundland and is actively involved in teaching of undergraduate medical students, and teaching and training of the postgraduate students in pathology.

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. In addition, through an agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the OCME now has a dedicated Public Health Officer to support federal public health research with respect to opioid and stimulant related deaths in the province.

According to the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund Year Ended 31 March 2022, actual expenditures of the Office were \$ 1,654,316.

## Mandate of the Chief Medical Examiner

Pursuant to Section 3 of the **Fatalities Investigation Act**, some main 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; and,
- the education of persons required to perform functions under the Act, etc.

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

## **Mission of the OCME**

Efficient and comprehensive execution of duties under the **Fatalities Investigation Act** as they pertain to the reporting, investigation and recording of deaths in Newfoundland and Labrador in the interest of public safety.

## **Vision of the OCME**

To provide evidence based death investigation services for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act** and collaborate with external entities in ethical research activities conducted in the interest of public safety.

## **Highlights and Partnerships**

In addition to the post-mortem examinations 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 OCME also reviews all requests for cremations, as well as shipping-in and shipping-out of remains from the province. The OCME also receives many requests during the year to analyze bones and other remains found by citizens or police throughout the province. These bones/remains are analyzed to determine whether they are human in origin.

The OCME 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 OCME is affiliated with Memorial University as it provides training to medical students and residents, as well as education to Royal Newfoundland Constabulary officers. The Chief Medical Examiner also sits on the Child Death Review Committee and the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network. The Child Death Review Committee is mandated to review child deaths and maternal deaths as outlined in the **Fatalities Investigation Act**. The Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network reviews the context in which domestic homicides occur in Atlantic Canada, as part of an Atlantic Premiers initiative. This review guides policy development with a goal to prevent domestic homicide.

## **Report on Activities**

### **Issue 1: Compliance with Fatalities Investigations Act**

The OCME 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 OCME will be consistent for 2022-23.

**Objective:** By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**.

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Results</b>
Conducted review of Medical Examiners files	580
Ordered and/or conducted external post-mortem examinations, as appropriate	216
Ordered and/or conducted medicolegal autopsies, as appropriate	210
Recorded and reported on causes and manners of death	559

## **Opportunities and Challenges**

In 2016, the OCME 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, 2022, 50 of the 65 recommendations are complete or are in progress. Outstanding recommendations continue to be addressed with the relevant parties and partners to bring to completion.

Through a data sharing agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner now has an opportunity to provide historic and real-time data on reportable deaths in the province to the federal government. This collaboration provides an opportunity to help shape policy and programming at the federal level with respect to drug and alcohol related deaths.

As part of a collaborative effort with the Provincial Clinical Genetics Program, the OCME is now exploring opportunities with private industry for direct cardiac genetic testing to help prevent sudden cardiac deaths within the population of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Working with the Department of Digital Government and Service NL, Vital Statistics Division, the Office is working towards the development of an online Electronic Death Notification (EDN) system, which will digitize and streamline the production of death certificates as well as the processing of cremation requests within the province.

## 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 2022 (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.....	813,150	1,151,900
Operating Accounts:		
<i>Employee Benefits</i> .....	3,288	2,400
<i>Transportation and Communications</i> .....	7,653	6,500
<i>Supplies</i> .....	10,967	2,900
<i>Professional Services</i> .....	309,391	305,000
<i>Purchased Services</i> .....	686,423	436,000
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i> .....	2,158	300
02. Operating Accounts.....	1,019,879	753,100
01. Revenue – Federal .....	(178,713)	(154,900)
<b>Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner...</b>	<b>1,654,316</b>	<b>1,750,100</b>

## Contact us

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