

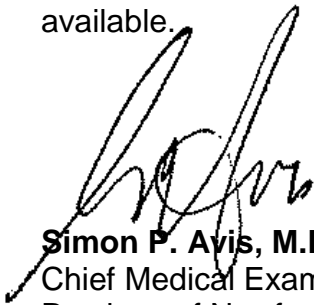
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Annual Activity Report 2017-18

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I hereby present the 2017-18 Annual 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, 2017 to March 31, 2018. Specific data reported are for the calendar year of 2016, the most recent year for which complete records are available.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon P. Avis', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Simon P. Avis, 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. 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 by a medical dictatypist. 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 2016, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated 537 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 2018, actual expenditures of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner were \$1,368,298.

Highlights

During the calendar year 2016, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated 537 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	294	(includes 227 from metro St. John's)
2. Central Newfoundland	110	
3. Western Newfoundland	94	
4. Labrador	39	
Total	537	

And included:

1. Natural deaths	339
2. Accidental deaths	99
3. Suicides	73
4. Homicides	4
5. Undetermined	22
Total	537

Of the 99 accidental deaths, 72 included:

Motor vehicle deaths	48
Drowning	7
Drug overdose	17
Total	72

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also performs a number of other duties. The information provided is from the 2016 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 or not they are human remains. During 2016, the Chief Medical Examiner received 16 requests from police jurisdictions for examination. In 4 of these cases the bones were determined to be human in origin.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews all requests for cremations in the province. During the calendar year 2017, the Office reviewed 2,598 requests for cremations and issued the appropriate permits.

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 2016, the Chief Medical Examiner reviewed 13 non-fatal trauma cases.

The Office also provides statistics to various organizations regarding specific causes or manner of death. In 2016, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner provided detailed information on the following:

Type of Death	#
Drowning	7
Motor Vehicle Accident	48
Suicide	73
Accidental Drug Overdose	17
Total	155

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 is consistent over the next two years.

Objective: By March 31, 2018, 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	537
Ordered and/or conducted post-mortem examinations, as appropriate	155
Ordered and/or conducted autopsies, as appropriate	190
Recorded and reported on cause of death	537

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

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. Recommendations are now being analyzed and an implementation strategy devised. To that end, initial budget increases have been approved for manpower issues. 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 2016, included 81 full toxicological analysis and 43 urine screens. This compared to 76 full toxicological screens and 48 urine screens in 2015. Toxicological analysis performed as part of a death investigation is expected to increase as society continues to face the opioid epidemic, fentanyl analogues, designer drugs and their negative impact on society.

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 2018 (unaudited). 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.....	768,844	780,000	464,900
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	3,323	4,000	4,000
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	4,199	6,700	6,700
<i>Supplies</i>	2,571	1,800	1,800
<i>Professional Services</i>	134,132	148,800	86,000
<i>Purchased Services</i>	455,229	443,600	336,300
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	-	300	300
02. Operating Accounts.....	599,454	605,200	435,100
Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner...	1,368,298	1,385,200	900,000