

Pan-Canadian Public Health Network

Annual Report 2006-08

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Introduction

The Pan-Canadian Public Health Network (known more commonly as the Public Health Network) presents an annual report of the Network's activities to F/P/T Ministers of Health, *via* the Conference of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health. This is the Network's 2nd Annual Report to Health Ministers.

This Report provides an overview of years two and three of the Public Health Network's operations, including the status of both 2006-07 and 2007-08 deliverables and decisions and directions taken over the past two years. In addition, the Report provides an overview of the priorities for the Network in 2008-09.

Key Priorities

The key priorities for the Public Health Network remained the same in 2006-07 and 2007-08, namely:

- (1). preparing for and responding to public health emergencies, as well as communicable disease control and prevention;
- (2). building the public health infrastructure and organization; and
- (3). health promotion and chronic disease prevention, including the development and management of the healthy living strategy.

Below are some highlights of the work in 2006-2007, for further information please see the section on "Reporting on Years Two and Three: Priorities & Deliverables".

2006-07

- ✓ The Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector and related guidelines were updated;
- ✓ A revised Communications Annex to the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan was developed;
- ✓ Core competencies for the public health workforce were developed and disseminated; and
- ✓ Work began to develop indicators of the impact of health disparities on the economy, and to apply a disparities/inequality lens to health promotion policy and programming.

2007-08

The Network moved forward with several inter-jurisdictional Memoranda of Understanding agreements:

- ✓ MOU on Mutual Aid during an Emergency
- ✓ MOU on the Sharing of Information during a Public Health Emergency
- ✓ MOU on Roles and Responsibilities in Pandemic Preparedness and Response (operational and technical).

In addition:

- ✓ Agreement was reached on a National Antivirals Stockpile and recommendations concerning the use of Antivirals for Prophylaxis;
- ✓ A Business and Contingency Plan for Laboratory Response to Pandemic was drafted;
- ✓ The initial phase of the Real Time Pandemic Planning Exercise was undertaken by the Public Health Network Council at the February 2008 meeting;
- ✓ Recommendations were developed on the Human Papillomavirus Vaccine;
- ✓ National Forum on Emergency Management was held;
- ✓ An Action Plan for Strengthening Chronic Disease and Injury Surveillance was accepted by Council and was recently approved by the Conference of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health; and
- ✓ Indicators for healthy living that address the goal of reducing health disparities were identified.

The Public Health Network At A Glance

Mandate

The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Health announced the creation of the Public Health Network in April 2005 as a key intergovernmental mechanism for public health collaboration. The Network's establishment responded to the First Ministers' commitment in the *10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care* to work together in a collaborative and cooperative fashion to improve public health capacity in a pan-Canadian manner.

Reporting to the Conference of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health, the mandate of the Network is three-fold:

- Providing policy and technical advice to F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health on public health matters as requested and on emerging public health issues;
- Supporting the public health challenges jurisdictions may face during emergencies and/or crises; and

- Facilitating the sharing of information and best practices among all jurisdictions in Canada.

Public Health Network Composition

The Network is led by a 16 member Council – representing the public health leadership of each jurisdiction. Members are appointed by the Deputy Minister of Health of each jurisdiction. Dr. Perry Kendall (Chief Provincial Health Officer of British Columbia) was re-appointed in 2007 as the provincial/territorial co-chair and Dr. David Butler Jones (Chief Public Health Officer for Canada) serves as federal co-chair.

The Public Health Network is comprised of Council and six Expert Groups and includes representation from academics, scientists, public servants and members of non-governmental organizations. These six Expert groups focus on: communicable disease control, emergency preparedness and response, Canadian public health laboratories, surveillance and information, chronic disease and injury prevention and control, and health promotion. Expert Groups are supported, as needed, by Issue Groups. In addition, the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health provides a community medicine perspective and advice to the Public Health Network Council.

Figure 1, Public Health Network Composition



The Public Health Network

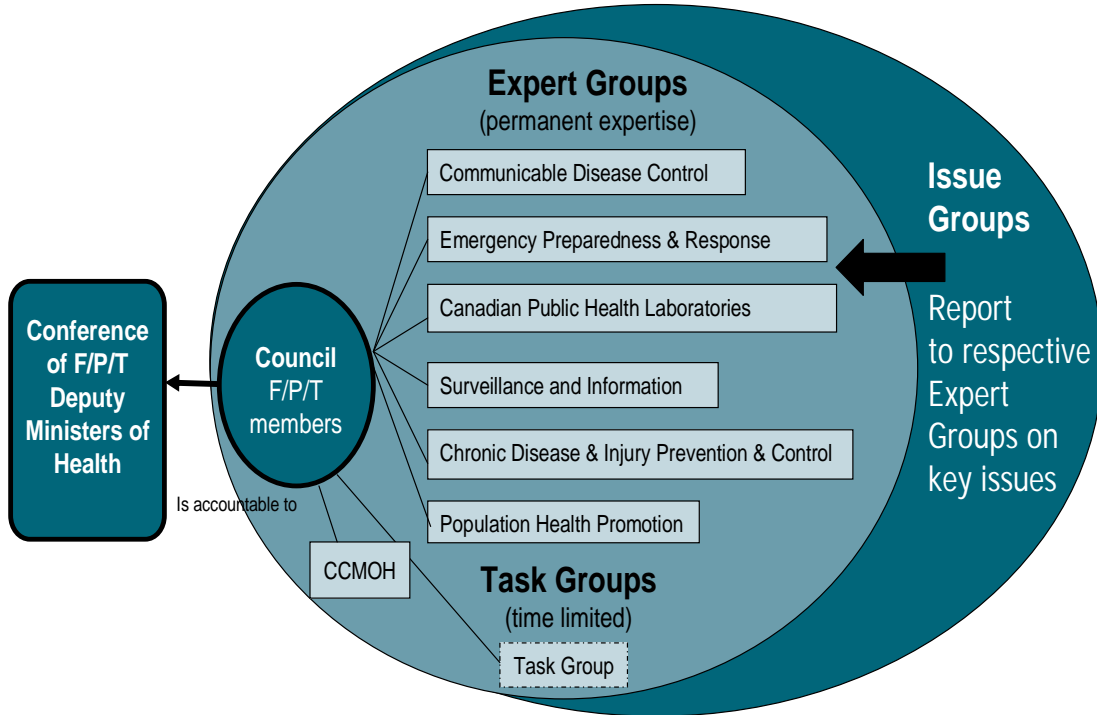


Table 1, Public Health Network Council Meetings, by Year

	<i>Year 2 (06-07)</i>	<i>Year 3 (07-08)</i>
<i>Number of Council Meetings</i>	<i>11 (4 in person)</i>	<i>10</i>

Changes in Public Health Network Council Membership

Between April 1, 2006 – March 31, 2008, there were several changes in Council membership. The Public Health Network wishes to thank the following people for their service as members of Council:

- Dr. Nicholas Bayliss, Alberta
- Ms. Marcia Thomson, Manitoba
- Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario
- Dr. Lamont Sweet, Prince Edward Island
- Dr. Jeff Scott, Nova Scotia
- Ms. Lynn Vivian-Book, Newfoundland

The Public Health Network is also pleased to welcome the following new members to Council:

- Ms. Margaret King, Alberta
- Dr. David Williams, Ontario
- Dr. Heather Morrison, Prince Edward Island
- Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia
- Ms. Jennifer Jeans, Newfoundland
- Dr. Joel Kettner, Manitoba

Public Health Network Governance and Accountability

The Public Health Network is a mechanism for intergovernmental collaboration and coordination on public health issues -- *while respecting jurisdictional responsibilities in public health.*

Public Health Network Council reports, on behalf of the Network, to F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health, and then on to the Conference of F/P/T Ministers of Health.

Four Liaison Committees: the Committee on Health and the Environment, the F/P/T Committee on Problematic Substance Use, the Tobacco Control Liaison Committee and the F/P/T Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS report through the Public Health Network to F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health.

Responding to direction from F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health to address recommendations in the 2002 Advisory Committee on Population Health and Health Security report *Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure in Canada*, the Public Health Network Council established the Task Group on Public Health Human Resources in 2005-2006. The mandate of this Task Group is to collaborate with the Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources to advance the implementation of the Pan-Canadian Framework

for Public Health Human Resources Planning (Framework); and to make recommendations to F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health, through the Public Health Network, with regards to public health human resources in the context of the Canadian health system.

In 2006-07, Council established two time-limited Task Groups (Antivirals for Prophylaxis and Roles and Responsibilities in Pandemic Preparedness and Response) to respond to directions coming from F/P/T Ministers of Health on pandemic preparedness and response.

*Public Health Network "UNDER THE MICROSCOPE":
Milestones in the Development of the Pan-Canadian Policy on
Antivirals for Prophylaxis*

On May 13, 2006, Federal, Provincial and Territorial (F/P/T) Ministers of Health agreed to "*step up their efforts to strengthen public health capacity in preparing for an influenza pandemic and other public health threats*". Ministers specifically agreed to "*direct officials to immediately begin a process aimed at the creation of a national policy recommendation on the provision of prophylactic antivirals (prevention) for use during an influenza pandemic.*"

In response to this direction, the Public Health Network Council established the Task Group on Antivirals for Prophylaxis (TGAP). Co-chaired by a Federal representative and Quebec, this group was asked to develop a pan-Canadian policy recommendation on whether the National Antiviral Stockpile should include antivirals to be used for prophylaxis during an influenza pandemic.

Considering the complexity of the issue, the development of a Pan-Canadian Policy Recommendation on Antivirals for Prophylaxis required careful coordination of a wide range of partners, including intergovernmental partners, as well as citizen and professional-based groups in related areas.

The processes developed by the Public Health Network in this area were innovative: the Task Group was composed of FPT experts in emergency management, communications, public health, ethics, law, aboriginal health, health system. The Task Group undertook a thorough review of the available scientific evidence, as well as an in-depth analysis of the legal, logistical, ethical, international, F/P/T, aboriginal health and economic considerations associated with the use of antivirals for prophylaxis.

These reviews were complemented by public and stakeholder consultations in order to examine the values and key considerations Canadians think should guide governments in their decision making. The results of these consultations were released in August 2007. Overall, the sessions showed citizens' support for pragmatic approaches on use of antivirals, for instance focusing limited resources on health and emergency workers.

Based on the reviews and the public consultation, TGAP developed a series of recommendations, which were approved by the F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health in November 2007 and are now pending F/P/T Ministers of Health approval.

Reporting on Years Two and Three: Priorities & Deliverables

Key Priorities

The key priorities for the Public Health Network remained the same in 2006-07 and 2007-08, namely:

- (1). preparing for and responding to public health emergencies, as well as communicable disease control and prevention;
- (2). building the public health infrastructure and organization; and
- (3). health promotion and chronic disease prevention, including the development and management of the healthy living strategy.

The Public Health Network delivered on those priorities through the actions listed below.

(1). Preparing for and responding to public health emergencies, as well as communicable disease control and prevention

2006-07

- ✓ The Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector and related guidelines were updated;
- ✓ A revised Communications Annex to the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan was developed;
- ✓ Work began on a recommended approach for a National Antivirals Stockpile and recommendations concerning the use of Antivirals for Prophylaxis;
- ✓ A Pandemic Preparedness Health Operations Coordination Working Group was established;
- ✓ A mapping document that describes the current health emergency management structure and resources in Canada was developed to build health emergency management capacity in the health sector;
- ✓ National goals and recommendations regarding immunization were produced, and immunization program planning was carried out;
- ✓ Work was carried out with respect to the development of effective and integrated plans and guidelines to respond to communicable disease, e.g., Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections; Hepatitis C Physicians' Desk Reference; Drug Discontinuation and Access to Treatment;
- ✓ A proposal for the development of a Real Time Pandemic Planning Exercise was developed; and
- ✓ A National Forum on Emergency Preparedness and Response was held in December 2006.

2007-08

The Network finalized several inter-jurisdictional Memoranda of Understanding agreements:

- ✓ MOU on Mutual Aid during an Emergency
- ✓ MOU on the Sharing of Information during a Public Health Emergency
- ✓ MOU on Roles and Responsibilities in Pandemic Preparedness and Response (operational and technical).

In addition:

- ✓ Agreement was reached on a National Antivirals Stockpile and recommendations concerning the use of Antivirals for Prophylaxis, these recommendations were developed and tabled with F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health;
- ✓ An operational Business and Contingency Plan for Laboratory Response to Pandemic was drafted;
- ✓ The 2nd Annual National Forum on Emergency Preparedness and Response was held (October 2007);
- ✓ Recommendations on a pan-Canadian social marketing framework for pandemic influenza were developed;
- ✓ A discussion paper describing the key operational components and procedures of a National Health Incident Management System was drafted and is under consultation within jurisdictions; and
- ✓ The initial phase of the Real Time Pandemic Planning Exercise was undertaken by the Public Health Network Council at the February 2008 meeting.

(2). Building the public health infrastructure and organization

During its first year of operations, the Network undertook a review of committees dealing with public health issues within the Public Health Network structure, and those which have operated outside of it, to look at opportunities for improved F/P/T collaboration, and a more streamlined F/P/T committee structure to address public health effectively.

Network Council subsequently formulated recommendations on the review of the Public Health Network Committee Structure and developed a report on this work for CDMH consideration in June 2006. As a result of the review, the Network reduced the number of Issue Groups from 34 to 23, with five other time-limited issue groups in place to complete specific work. These changes are intended to improve the effectiveness of individual committees and the Network itself, while at the same time improving resource management.

As first indicated on page 3, the Public Health Network Council currently has three time-limited task groups reporting to it to assist with priority public health issues:

- The Task Group on Public Health Human Resources is moving forward on the recommendations of the report entitled, *Building a Public Health Workforce for the 21st Century—A Pan-Canadian Framework for Public Health Human Resources Planning* (on hold pending review of the Public Health Network);
- The Task Group on Antivirals for Prophylaxis has focused on developing national policy recommendations on the provision of prophylactic antivirals during an influenza pandemic (now sunset); and
- The Task Group on Roles and Responsibilities in Pandemic Preparedness has mapped out the federal, provincial and territorial governments' roles and responsibilities (related to pandemic preparedness and response) regarding operational and technical activities (now sunset and succeeded by a small group of Deputy Ministers).

Other deliverables identified in the 2006-07 and 2007-08 work plans were also fulfilled:

2006-07

- ✓ Bilingual Master of Public Health (MPH) program guidelines were developed and disseminated;
- ✓ Discussion paper to guide the development of schools of public health in Canada was prepared and disseminated;
- ✓ Core competencies for the public health workforce were developed and disseminated;
- ✓ A report on *Strengthening Surveillance of Chronic Disease and Injury* was drafted;
- ✓ A review and assessment of public health laboratory capacity in Canada was begun and further work will continue in 2008-09; and
- ✓ An assessment of considerations for Aboriginal engagement was undertaken, and a discussion paper was developed.

2007-08

- ✓ An Action Plan and associated Workplan for Strengthening Chronic Disease and Injury Surveillance was accepted by Council and was approved by F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health in April 2008;
- ✓ The Surveillance and Information Expert Group began collaborative work with the Panorama Pan-Canadian Public Health Surveillance System;
- ✓ Key gaps and opportunities related to public health infrastructure from recent public health reports were analyzed.

(3). Health promotion, including the development and management of healthy living

2006-07

- ✓ Work began to develop indicators of the impact of health disparities on the economy, and to apply a disparities/inequality lens to health promotion policy and programming.

2007-08

- ✓ Indicators for healthy living that address goal of reducing health disparities were identified.

Advice to F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health

A key function of the Public Health Network Council is to provide advice to the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health on public health matters in Canada.

During the years 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Public Health Network Council provided advice to the Conference of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health on the following issues:

- Recommendations for a streamlined Public Health Network committee structure;
- Recommendations on Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Immunization Program for use in planning immunization programs within jurisdictions and related public communications approach (developed by the Canadian Immunization Committee);
- Recommendations from the Task Group on Antivirals for Prophylaxis and a related Communications Strategy;
- Recommendations for Aboriginal Engagement in the Public Health Network;
- *2006 Progress Report on Tobacco Control*; and
- MOUs on Information Sharing and Mutual Aid.

External Communications

In addition to these achievements, the Public Health Network increased its own external communications efforts over the last two years. For example, at the 2006 Annual Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) Conference, the two Network Council Co-Chairs hosted a plenary session on Public Health in Canada, during which the Public Health Network was featured and its new website (www.phn-rsp.ca) went "live."

The Public Health Network also presented an exhibit booth at the conference, providing information materials and running a short presentation. At the CPHA 2007 Annual Conference, the Public Health Network once again hosted an exhibit booth where it promoted its expanded website, launched a formal information presentation and provided media/information kits. In 2008, in addition to hosting an exhibit booth, the Public Health Network will host a pre-conference workshop at the CPHA Annual Conference.

Funding

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides secretariat support for the Public Health Network, financial support for meetings and related work, and participation in the Network. Provinces and territories provide in-kind support through participation in the Network, and provide financial support for Public Health Network programs and operations.

Looking Ahead

In its fourth year of operations, the Public Health Network will build on its achievements to date. Inter-jurisdictional agreements which will assist in managing public health emergencies and/or crises are ready for signature by F/P/T Ministers of Health this coming year, shifting the Network's focus to the implementation of these agreements.

Aboriginal engagement in the Public Health Network will also be a priority in 2008-09, with a consultation of National Aboriginal Organizations being developed for consideration of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health, to be followed by the drafting of a Network Aboriginal Engagement Strategy.

In addition, the Network will continue to focus its efforts on updating the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan, assessing and improving laboratory response capacity, strengthening of chronic disease surveillance, and developing guidelines to assist in public health human resource planning. The Network will also complete the implementation of its multi-phase real time pandemic exercise.

Also of note for the coming year is the extensive review of Network operations to date. An independent third party has been retained to assess:

- how well the Public Health Network has met its mandates, as defined by Ministers in 2005;
- how well it has functioned in several key areas of communications, engagement and other workings internal to the Public Health Network; and
- how effective has it been in supporting F/P/T collaboration in public health.

An interim report of findings will be submitted to the Conference of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health, for their consideration in June 2008. The final report is expected in Fall 2008.

The Public Health Network will also continue to expand its external communications efforts, through participation in conferences and other appropriate fora, and by further developing its website.

Conclusion

The Public Health Network has established itself as a Pan-Canadian forum for public health matters, and where public health threats can be anticipated, prepared for, and responded to in a coordinated manner.

The Public Health Network strives to conduct this work in a manner that is respectful of the authority and jurisdiction of each government to manage public health operations within their own domain; that embraces the differences in how each jurisdiction exercises its public health responsibilities, establishes priorities and manages its public health infrastructure; and that recognizes that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to public health.

In addition, in order to keep the Public Health Network functioning as an efficient and effective mechanism, the Public Health Network Council has established a set of principles regarding the functions of the Public Health Network in order to:

- avoid duplication of effort;
- ensure a streamlined and efficient operating structure;
- manage Network human and financial resources in a cost efficient manner; and
- ensure the effective provision of expertise and advice on priority issues.

The Public Health Network has accomplished a great deal since its creation in April 2005, and is assisting governments and other public health partners in providing a high quality, efficient and responsive public health system for Canadians.

As evidenced in this report, the Public Health Network has become – in its first three years of operation - *the* focal point for collective F/P/T action in public health in Canada. The Network has focused its efforts on delivering on the commitments and priorities identified by the Conference of F/P/T Deputy Ministers of Health (CDMH) and the F/P/T Ministers of Health, including those articulated in the F/P/T Special Task Force report, *Partners in Public Health*.

The Public Health Network looks forward to reporting on further progress made in 2008-09

Pan-Canadian Public Health Network

Partners in Public Health

Public Health Network Council Members (as of March 31, 2008)

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<p>Perry Kendall Provincial Health Officer BC Ministry of Health 1515 Blanshard Street, 4th Floor Victoria BC V8W 3C8</p> <p>Tel: (250) 952-1742 www.gov.bc.ca</p>	<p>David Butler-Jones Chief Public Health Officer Public Health Agency of Canada 130 Colonnade Road Ottawa ON K1A 0K9</p> <p>Tel: (613) 946-3538 www.phac-aspc.gc.ca</p>
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<p>(Council member to be determined)</p> <p>Manitoba Health Unit #7, 1680 Ellice Avenue Winnipeg MB R3H 0Z2</p> <p>Tel: (204) 945-3744 www.gov.mb.ca/health</p>	<p>David Williams Acting Chief Medical Officer Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care 5700 Yonge Street, 8th Floor Toronto ON M2M 4K5</p> <p>Tel: (416) 314-5487 www.gov.on.ca</p>
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