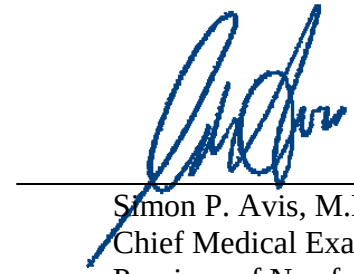
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Annual Activity Report 2010-11

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I hereby present the 2010-11 Activity 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. This information presented in this report outlines the activities of the Office from April 1, 2010 until March 31, 2011.



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Chief Medical Examiner
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Table of Contents

Overview 1

Mandate 1

Vision 1

Facts of Interest 2

Activities 3

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead 3

Financial Statements 4

Overview

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Parkway, 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 for a portion of the year. Files related to the investigations conducted by the office are presently stored at the L.A. Miller Centre, a facility of Eastern Health.

Based on the past 15 years, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner receives reports of approximately 650 sudden and unexpected deaths per year, of which approximately 511 deaths fall under the *Fatalities Investigations Act,* Chapter F-6.1, SNL 1995. For fiscal year 2010-11 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador budgeted $733,000 for expenditures associated with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Mandate

The mandate of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is contained in the *Fatalities Investigations Act, Chapter F-6.1, SNL 1995*. The Chief Medical Examiner is responsible for operation of the *Act* in relation to the reporting, investigating and recording of deaths, the appointment of physicians as medical examiners and supervision of the performance of their duties required by the *Act,* the appointment of medical examiner's investigators and the education of persons required to perform functions in accordance with the *Act*.

Vision

An environment where the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner responds to those deaths that are appropriately reported in accordance with the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.

Facts of Interest

In addition to the investigation of deaths as reportable under the *Fatalities Investigations Act*, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also performs a number of other duties. The information provided here is from the 2009 calendar year, which is 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 2009, the Chief Medical Examiner received 10 requests from police jurisdictions for examination. In all 10 cases the bones were of animal origin.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also reviews all requests for cremations in the province. During the year 2009, the Office reviewed 1,303 requests for cremations and issued the appropriate permit.

The Chief Medical Examiner also reviews certain nonfatal trauma cases. This occurs at the request of the police or crown attorneys for an analysis of trauma. During the year 2009, the Chief Medical Examiner reviewed 4 non-fatal trauma cases.

The Office also provides statistics to various organizations regarding specific causes or manner of death. In 2009, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner provided detailed information on the following:

Manner of Death	#
Drowning	34
Motor Vehicle Accident	45
Suicide	50

Report on Activities

Issue 1: *Compliance with Fatalities Investigations Act*

The Office of the Chief Medical examiner receives reports of approximately 650 sudden and unexpected deaths per year. The Chief Medical Examiner does an initial assessment of these reported deaths to determine if they are reportable as per the definition contained in the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.

On average, based on information from the past 15 years, the Chief Medical Examiner investigates approximately 511 deaths annually. 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.

Objective 1: During the time frame 2008-11, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.

Measure: Response to reported deaths

Indicators	**Results**
Conduct file reviews of medical examiner's reports	Approximately 650
Order and/or conduct post mortem examinations as appropriate	152
Order and/or conduct autopsies as appropriate	218
Record and report on cause of death	Approximately 650

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner recently outsourced toxicology services to a certified Forensic Lab in the United States. This has improved turnaround times considerably. Drug monitoring continues to be a priority for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Financial Statements

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are un-audited 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 2011 (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……...……	458,867	458,900	372,900
02. Employee Benefits…….……	4,170	4,900	4,700
03. Transportation and Communications…….	5,647	14,100	14,200
04. Supplies……...……...	2,457	3,800	3,800
05. Professional Services……..	118,130	130,000	130,000
06. Purchased Services…….……	160,310	165,900	204,600
07. Property, Furnishings and Equipment……	-	2,700	2,800
Total: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner……	749,581	780,300	733,000