



President's Report

Prepared for: 47th Biennial Meeting of the Public Health Association of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island

June 05, 2023

Submitted by Charlotte Riordon, President

This president's report is prepared for the 47th Biennial meeting of the Public Health Association of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island (PHA NBPEI). It covers a reporting period of 2 years and 5 months, January 2021 - June 2023. The report shares the main highlights from this term including a review of our membership and recruitment challenges, our work with our parent organization the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, and our advocacy initiatives.

I would like to sincerely thank all of our board members for their valuable time and commitment. It has been a pleasure to work with each of you and I thank you all for your mentorship, advice and passion for this work.

The current members of the Board of Directors of the PHA NBPEI are:

Secretary Marjorie Allison-Ross

Past Treasurer Christine de Jong

Membership and Interim Treasurer Faye Skaarup

PEI Representative Susan Hartley

Members At Large Paula Baker
Angela Hache
Cristin Muecke
Folasade Ofurune
Alie Ross

Membership and Recruitment

The Public Health Association of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island (PHA NBPEI) is a volunteer-run organization of professionals working and interested in various fields related to public health and population health. During the last term, the Board explored several opportunities to remedy the historical issues of stagnant membership and low recruitment. Through recruitment posters, emails and

surveys the Board tried to gain new members. In 2022 the Board successfully recruited four new members, Angela Hache, Susan Hartley, Folasade Ofurune and Alie Ross. Each of these women bring a unique perspective and valuable expertise to the Board and we are indebted to their service.

In the Fall of 2022, the Board hired an undergraduate student, Oliver Batchilder, to update our website and to create content for our social media accounts. With a part-time contract, Oliver curated and posted 32 unique social media pieces related to COVID-19, influenza, RSV transmission, and broader public health fundamentals. Oliver also put extensive effort into overhauling and modernizing our website. Oliver's efforts have helped to create a more consistent and modern presence online which we hope will contribute to a growing membership in the future.

CPHA and Canadian Network of Public Health Associations

The Canadian Network of Public Health Associations (CNPHA) has continued to hold quarterly meetings with representatives from the CPHA and the Provincial/Territorial Public Health Associations (PTPHA). These meetings present an opportunity for each PTPHA to share updates on association initiatives, challenges and successes. The meetings continue to be useful for connecting the PTPHAs with each other for collaboration. For instance, several PTPHA representatives met early in 2023 to support the second annual Canadian Public Health Week which was spearheaded by the CPHA and ran from April 3-7, 2023. In collaboration with the Ontario Public Health Association and the Manitoba Public Health Association, the CPHA hosted several webinars on topics including climate change, safe consumption sites, and tobacco and vaping.

The CPHA has expressed interest in collaborating with the smaller PTPHAs (such as ourselves) to support hosting webinars/events in the future. Due to the small size and limited capacity of our volunteer-run Board of Directors, we sincerely appreciate the support from the CPHA and hope to utilize their resources more in the future.

The CPHA has facilitated some conversations between the Atlantic PHAs (PHANS, PHA NBPEI, and NLPHA). It was noted that over the course of the COVID-19 Pandemic the already small Atlantic PHAs were continuing to struggle with membership and capacity. Many members of the Boards were pulled into front-line duties responding to the pandemic and as such PHA activities slowed, and at times, completely stopped. Discussions were had about pooling resources between the three Atlantic PHAs to consider amalgamation, however it was decided to remain separate and to offer collaboration and support as each PHA is able. We hope to continue building connections between these small PHAs and to work together in the future on conferences/events that can bring the Atlantic PHAs together.

COVID-19

Throughout my term as president, the COVID-19 pandemic evolved and continued longer than any of us hoped. From various-coloured phases, lockdowns, vaccine mandates and daily reporting of cases to loosened government recommendations and only monthly reports, residents of our provinces have had to be patient, resilient and to translate extensive amounts of unfamiliar public health information. The PHA NBPEI is incredibly proud of and grateful for the work and dedication of all of the public health professionals in NB and PEI. Our modern public health systems have not encountered a pandemic quite like this and it has taken courage, persistence and strength from our public health professionals to continue this important work.

Like other small PHAs, we struggled to continue association business. However, we managed to maintain regular monthly meetings and produced updated COVID-19 resources for social media when our provinces dropped formal COVID-19 prevention measures. This resource can be found on our website.

Advocacy

Our mission is to advocate for the improvement and maintenance of personal and community health according to the public health principles of disease prevention, health promotion and protection, and healthy public policy. Over the last term, our advocacy work included follow up workshops from our ACEs event (*Our Greatest Opportunity: Understanding ACEs and Building Self-Healing Communities*) in January 2021 and the endorsement of several letters of support. The board endorsed the following initiatives in the last term:

- SAFE Summerside's Active Transportation Network presentation
- Canadian Health Association for Sustainability and Equity (CHASE) letter for Green Buildings Strategy
- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and addictions (CCSA) updated Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines, sent to federal Ministers
- CPHA Opioid Poisoning Crisis Briefing note - yet to be published
- CPHA Strengthening Public Health Systems in Canada

The board also provided feedback on the Government of New Brunswick document *Striving for Dependable Public Health Care: A discussion paper on the future of health care in New Brunswick*, where we identified a need for a public health lens. The published version of this discussion paper did not appear to consider our comments. Finally, the board wrote an open letter in the Spring of 2022 regarding Bill 104 in NB. Bill 104 amends the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Minister of Health. In our letter we challenged the view that sweeping public health measures are most appropriately put in place by elected officials and believe instead that this is clearly within the scope of practice of public health and preventive medicine specialty trained physicians. A copy of our letter can be found on our website.

Conclusion

As an early career professional I came into the role of president with a unique lens. I am truly grateful for the mentorship and guidance provided by my fellow board members during my term. Special thanks must be given to my husband Regan and daughter Quinn. I became a first-time mom during my time as President and the Board showed great patience while I chaired Zoom meetings with my tummy-time-loving, crawling, cruising, now walking and soon to be running daughter playing in the background.

I echo the president's reports of past years as I say that we continue to struggle with membership. My hope for the future is that our association becomes more active with e-newsletters and social media and that these efforts will result in a larger, more engaged membership. In the future, I would love to see more early career professionals and students and also hope for continued partnerships with the CPHA and the other Atlantic PHAs. Together we can accomplish great things and continue to pursue our mission of advocacy, education and leadership.

Respectfully Submitted

Charlotte Riordon

Outgoing president PHA NBPEI