



PRESIDENT'S REPORT
42nd BIENNIAL MEETING
NB PEI BRANCH OF THE CPHA

Welcome to the 2012 NB PEI branch of CPHA biennial meeting and conference “Place and Health: Shaping the Built Environment of New Brunswick and PEI”! This year we have had the opportunity to partner with the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors NB Branch to provide a joint conference. I hope you are all enjoying the sessions so far.

I have had the honour to serve the Branch as President for two terms, since 2007. During the 2010-12 term, I have worked with a very supportive and dedicated Board of Directors, and they are:

President Elect	Kathleen Brennan (PEI)
Secretary-Treasurer	Ann Harling
Members	Nancy Arseneau (NB)
	Debbie Godlewski (NB) – resigned July 2012
	Anne Lebens (NB)
	Pat Seaman (NB)
	Mary Beth MacDonald (PEI)
	Dr. Heather Morrison (PEI)

I thank them all for their hard work, enthusiasm, and ideas over the past two years, and extend a special appreciation to Nancy Arseneau, Debbie Godlewski, and Ann Harling as they end their time on the Board and move on to other adventures. Particular thanks go to Ann Harling, who has been involved in some capacity with the NB PEI branch, particularly as the secretary treasurer, since the early 1970s. Her dedication, skill and corporate memory have been invaluable to the Branch and the operation of its Board.

For those unfamiliar with our Branch, we were founded in 1952 and are one of 11 Provincial and Territorial Public Health Associations in Canada. Our current mission is to “improve and maintain personal and community health according to the public health principles of health promotion and protection, disease prevention and healthy public policy”. We collaborate closely with the other associations as well as our national partner, the Canadian Public Health Association (which was founded in 1910) to advance public health in our respective geographic areas. We are entirely volunteer driven although we do receive some in kind technical support from the CPHA.

Events over the past two years:

Our last biennial conference, held in October 2010, “Managing Multiple Priorities in Public Health Practice”, was well received, with the presence of several popular and dynamic speakers, including Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer. There were over 170 delegates at the conference and thanks to the hard work of the organizing committee the conference financials showed a modest profit.

This term the Board has focused on a couple of occasions on how we can strengthen our organization through strategic planning. Shortly after the last biennial meeting, in early 2011, the Board proposed a two year strategic plan which focused on three goals: 1) Improve communication with and engagement of NB PEI general membership; 2) Enhance the capacity of the NB and PEI public health workforce by providing quality educational opportunities at the local level; and 3) Engage in positive advocacy activities that raise the profile of the branch in NB and PEI. Our subsequent activities were guided by these goals.

On the communications front, one of our dedicated Board members, Mary Beth MacDonald, took on the task of exploring website options for the Branch. The Branch has continued to have a companion webpage to the national CPHA rather than an autonomous site. While initial discussions included the possibility of constructing an independent web page, conversations with the current CPHA webmaster have been fruitful, and he has offered his expertise to help us redesign our current layout to make it more user friendly and informative. I invite you to see the latest at <http://www.cpha.ca/en/about/provincial-associations/nb-pei.aspx>

Following discussions with other provincial public health associations, most notably discussions with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and in order to increase communication with our general membership, we initiated our first open Board of Directors meeting to encourage membership involvement in the priorities and actions of the Branch. This meeting was attached to a webinar overview of population health indicators for NB and PEI. Other webinars followed, on the social determinants of injury and normalization of HIV testing, to encourage members to join discussions on current topics and allow non-members to gain interest in Branch activities. Members were also sent e-bulletins on current public health issues and events.

In keeping with our third strategic plan goal of engaging in advocacy activities, we participated in a couple of initiatives, including a letter of support to the Medical Society of PEI regarding their population health focused resolutions around immunization, literacy, and injury prevention; a letter to the NB Minister of Health regarding the proposed delisting of the influenza vaccine to NB adults 19-64 years; and the distribution of the CPHA position statements on alcohol and tobacco use to relevant provincial ministers.

In August 2012, we took the strategic planning process a step further when the Board and interested members got together in Moncton for a facilitated planning day. This resulted in the proposal of an updated mission statement – our previous statement was “To advocate for the improvement and maintenance of personal and community health according to the public health principle of disease prevention, health promotion and protection and healthy public policy” and the proposed statement is now “To support our provinces through leadership, advocacy and education in the continual improvement of population and public health, according to current public health principles.”. It also resulted in a proposed change of business practices – the introduction of two new operational documents (a strategic plan and a policies and procedures manual) in

addition to the bylaws, to facilitate operations and support the work of the Board of Directors. And this, of course, resulted in proposed changes to the bylaws.

Finally, we participated actively in the Canadian Network of Public Health Associations with the NB PEI Branch co-chairing the quarterly meetings for 2012. Collaboration with the other provincial and territorial public health associations has allowed us to gain new ideas and perspectives and collaborate on larger initiatives of national scope.

There are several challenges and opportunities for our association at the current time:

We have proposed a name change from “the New Brunswick PEI branch of the Canadian Public Health Association” which is alternatively a mouthful or a series of acronyms, to “the Public Health Association of New Brunswick and PEI”. We can seize this opportunity to revitalize our association and engage in new ways that meet the changing needs of our local public health professionals (be they traditional public health workers or those in other professions that engage in work that advances public health). We should continue to promote the unique benefits of being involved in a regional, multi profession association that is committed to advancing public health practice in our two provinces. Such involvement can contribute to the breaking down of silos and inter professional barriers, and advocate for region specific public health action.

Attracting not only a higher absolute number of members but also engaging members in meaningful ways with the association has been an issue of ongoing discussion. We continue to seek the input of our members on where to focus our initiatives, as well as their expertise in influencing policy, creating position statements, and liaising with other organizations on common projects. Regular communication is one of the keys to success, and we will need to bring ourselves into the 21st century regarding communication tools – Facebook, Twitter, listservs, and other platforms which allow for quick and vibrant conversations. Early discussions around the creation of a virtual office space for our association have already begun, and these pieces could be considered as well.

Creating new partnerships, and positioning ourselves as a key player in regional public health issues, is another key. We hope that opening the door to the option of direct membership as well as creating a category for organizational membership will enhance our role as a multi professional association advancing public health issues in our provinces, and potentially provide opportunities for collaboration on various regional projects.

In the past we have relied heavily on our (small but regular) membership dues and any (unpredictable) profits from the biennial conferences. As a result we have limited funds for any ongoing initiatives. However, we also know from the experience of national CPHA that project-based funding has become a less viable option now as well. What to do?

I think we need to have some serious discussions on how to generate revenue in an innovative and sustainable way. This is certainly not an issue that is unique to our organization, and sharing issues and solutions with other provincial associations and the CPHA will be helpful. Certainly it would be ideal if we could manage to fund a part time position to help with the running of the organization, but here too, an innovative solution may be required. For example, could we get a student as part of a practicum course requirement?

Finally, translation and bilingual capacity continues to be ongoing issues for our organization. In the past we have relied heavily on members to translate documents and letters on their own time, since translation costs

are often prohibitive. As such we have recently developed a statement regarding our capacity that reads as follows:

“The NB PEI Branch of the CPHA values the bilingual status of New Brunswick and our francophone colleagues. We will endeavor to provide as much francophone content and/or translation in our correspondence, documents and educational events as possible. We are, however, a small voluntary organization and do not have the resources to provide full bilingual services. We appreciate any assistance provided by members to improve our bilingual capacity.”

Here again, an innovative solution may need to be developed. Is it possible that government partners may do some in kind translation for our association? I was recently made aware of a Translation Assistance Program (www.tnbt.ca) that we can explore.

I look forward to assisting the new Board of Directors in my role as Past President. Thank you for your time, and enjoy the biennial conference and activities!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Mecke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.