



STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS in Canada

The Canadian Public Health Association calls on the federal government to lead provincial and territorial governments and other stakeholders in creating cohesive, comprehensive and accountable public health systems in Canada.

What public health does

Public health is the organized societal effort to keep people healthy and prevent injury, illness and premature death. Strengthening the nationwide systems that organize and deliver public health services, must begin with an updated shared vision of what services these systems are mandated to deliver and the outcomes they should aim to achieve for Canadian populations.

Core Functions

In Canada, practitioners commonly identify six core functions of public health: 1) population health assessment; 2) health protection; 3) health surveillance; 4) disease and injury prevention; 5) health promotion; and 6) emergency preparedness and response. Currently Canadian jurisdictions define, translate into practice and administer these functions in disparate ways, often through outdated and fragmentary legislation and regulations.



Population Health Assessment



Health Protection



Health Surveillance



Disease & Injury Prevention



Health Promotion



Emergency preparedness and response

Cross-jurisdictional agreement on detailed descriptions of the core functions will be the structural foundation of strengthening public health systems across Canada. It will underpin a coherent framework of goals and outcome measures, standards for data gathering and analysis, public health workforce competencies and training, as well as governance.

Population Health Goals

Defining the 'what' that public health systems must deliver also requires cross-Canada agreement on a set of high-level goals setting health outcome targets for various populations and for reducing inequities across populations. These goals must be associated with measurable indicators to enable regular reporting and analysis, and built into the design of nation-wide health data systems.

CALLS TO ACTION

CPHA calls on the federal government to:

1. Lead in convening provincial and territorial governments to define a pan-Canadian statement of core public health functions, establishing a shared commitment to the mandate of public health services. As an initial step, the federal government should establish a cross-jurisdictional 'Public Health Systems Working Group', with the first task of defining the core functions of public health services in Canada.
2. Work with provincial and territorial governments to translate agreed-upon core public health functions into a set of high-level population health goals. These goals should be associated with agreed on outcome indicators and with health data systems designed to collect data supporting measurement of progress toward achieving these population health goals.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the Government of Canada to:



CORE FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS

- 1 Convene provincial and territorial governments to create a pan-Canadian statement of core public health functions, establishing a shared commitment to the mandate of public health services.

POPULATION HEALTH GOALS

- 2 Work as a partner with provincial and territorial governments to translate agreed-upon core public health functions into a set of high-level population health goals specifying outcomes that public health services will be accountable to deliver for Canadian populations.
- 3 Seek agreement on pan-Canadian outcome indicators to measure progress toward achieving these population health goals.

WORKFORCE COMPETENCIES

- 4 Collaborate with provincial and territorial governments, and with relevant stakeholders, to produce an updated list of public health competencies.

WORKFORCE TRAINING

- 5 Lead consultations on a pan-Canadian training program for public health professionals based on a renewed set of public health competencies. Determine optimal formats for training delivery.
- 6 Commit to funding an online training platform for the public health workforce, to be developed and delivered by the Public Health Agency of Canada or delegated to a qualified stakeholder organization.

GOVERNANCE

- 7 **LEAD THE CREATION OF A NEW CANADA PUBLIC HEALTH ACT THAT WOULD:**
 - Define core functions and goals of public health services in Canada;
 - Detail the federal mandate for supporting public health at the national level and in collaboration with provinces and territories;
 - Allocate targeted new funding transfers to provinces and territories that would fill gaps in their capacity to provide public health services;
 - Assign accountabilities for reporting, monitoring and evaluating public health outcomes within provincial and territorial health systems, and require annual reporting on nation-wide progress toward meeting public health goals; and

- Support public health emergency planning and define in legislation federal public health emergency powers related to areas in which pan-Canadian coordination is essential (e.g., immunization, manufacturing capacity, and data reporting).

- 8 **ADOPT GOVERNANCE PRACTICES ENABLING PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTISE TO INFORM HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY BY:**

- Identifying performance measurement indicators best suited to assess the impacts of public health in improving health and promoting health equity;
- Establishing targeted governmental mechanisms to foster cross-departmental collaboration to promote population health; and
- Structuring governance bodies and processes to increase the voice and authority of affected communities both in routine governance of public health and during public health emergencies.



**CANADIAN
PUBLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION**

Canadian Public Health Association is the independent national voice and trusted advocate for public health, speaking up for people and populations to all levels of government.

OUR VISION Healthy people and communities thriving in inclusive, equitable, sustainable environments

OUR MISSION To enhance the health of all people and communities in Canada, particularly those who are structurally disadvantaged, and to contribute to a healthier and more equitable world