



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.

Who delivers public health

Strong public health systems depend on a highly-skilled workforce capable of translating core functions and population health goals into practice. However, Canada's public health workforce draws in professionals from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, many of which do not include specialized education in public health. For this reason, two elements are needed to support a workforce with the skills to protect and promote the health of Canadian populations. One is a detailed description of workforce competencies, and the other is an accessible pan-Canadian training program to provide competency and skill development for public health workers from all professional backgrounds.

Workforce Competencies

Building cohesive and comprehensive public health systems requires developing an updated set of competency descriptions aligned with core public health functions and goals. These descriptions must cover both foundational approaches of public health as well as the specialized skills needed to address complex and evolving public health challenges. Once developed, these competency descriptions will form the basis for training and professional development curricula; inform job descriptions and performance appraisal criteria; improve planning and resourcing within public health organizations; and enable cross-jurisdictional workforce planning and deployment.

Workforce Training

Currently Canada has no comprehensive, accessible and bilingual workforce training in foundational public health competencies and specialized skills. In order to advance systemic coherence and quality as well as improve pan-Canadian workforce mobility, public health training must be developed at the national level, rather than through the existing patchwork of training programs. For these reasons, the federal government must support the creation of a new high-quality and comprehensive professional training system, with content informed by nationally-defined public health functions and goals, and based on a renewed set of public health competencies.

CALLS TO ACTION

CPHA calls on the federal government to:

1. Collaborate with provincial and territorial governments, and with relevant stakeholders, to produce an updated list of public health competencies. As an initial step, it should mandate a new 'Public Health Systems Working Group' (including practitioners, professional groups and academic programs) to define an updated list of public health competencies
2. Lead consultations on a pan-Canadian training program for public health professionals based on a renewed set of public health competencies, and to commit to funding an online training platform for the public health workforce. As an initial step, it should mandate the 'Public Health Systems Working Group' to lead consultations on developing a pan-Canadian training program for public health workers.

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