

---

# *Retirees – An Untapped Public Health Resource*

---

Ron de Burger

CHNAC Meeting, Calgary AB

June 2009

---

# Context

*“No attempt to improve public health will succeed that does not recognize the fundamental importance of providing and maintaining in every local health agency across Canada an adequate staff of highly skilled and motivated public health professionals.*

*Our national aim should be to produce a cadre of outstanding public health professionals who are adequately qualified and compensated, and who have clear roles, responsibilities and career paths”*

**Learning from SARS:Renewal of Public Health in Canada (Naylor)**

---

# Context - 2

Major reviews over past 25 years :

- Provincial health reviews (80s and 90s)
- Krever (1997)
- Capacity report – 2001
- Naylor (2003)

*FPT response to Romanow, Naylor, Kirby et al.  
to address gaps*

- *Commitment and direction from Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Health*

---

# PHHR Planning in Canada

**PHHR Planning is underdeveloped in Canada:**

- *lack of overarching public health strategy* to guide planning
- *lack of data* on the existing PH workforce
- *lack of capacity to assess* needs or to anticipate trends
- *a discipline, not a systems, approach*
- *lack of easily accessible education programs*

---

# Public Health Importance

Recommendations are common and consistent:

- *it is just as critical to have a well functioning public health system as it is to have a strengthened health care system (Last)*
- *a well functioning public health system can contribute to sustaining the health care system (Last)*
- *public health efforts are critical to achieving better health outcomes (F M Communique - 2004)*
- *our most valuable public health resources are human resources (Campbell)*
- *a strong public health system depends on an adequate supply of public health professionals with the right knowledge, skills and supports to do their job (Naylor)*

---

# Common Findings

## In all Public Health jurisdictions:

- many **vacant** public health positions
- inequitable distribution of PH resources
- a distinct shortage of PH providers in First Nations
- an aging workforce
- competition for limited public health resources
- lack of capacity to respond to public health needs
- lack of surge capacity to respond to new and emerging needs

---

# Common Findings - 2

- small number of training seats in community medicine
- *limited opportunities for practice placements*
- limited opportunities for interdisciplinary education
- limited opportunities for continuing education, lack of career development
- jurisdictions launch new or enhanced public health programs with no assessment of human resource requirements or the impact on existing staff

---

# PHAC PHHR Leadership

**PHAC Strategic Plan for 2007-2012 (p. 23), the Agency**

*“will . . . place a priority on collaborating with other levels of government to fill gaps in public health human resources, both within the Agency and in other jurisdictions,*

*and on working with partners to provide leadership in the areas of training and skills development, core competencies, accreditation and recruitment and retention policies.”*

---



---

# SEPH Program Initiative

**In support of this mandate the Skills Enhancement for Public Health (SEPH) Program**

*identified retired personnel as a valuable untapped resource and sought out partners to explore ways to utilize retired public health practitioners.*

---

# CIPHI – Retirees Advisory Committee (RAC)

In September, 2005, with PHAC/SEPH support,

*CIPHI established a Retirees' Advisory Committee (RAC) to determine what role retired public health inspectors can play to assist public health agencies when human resources are not adequate to manage work surges, emergencies and/or day to day staffing situations.*

# RAC - 2

- The past **experience and corporate knowledge** of retired public health inspectors is considered a **valuable asset to the future planning of public health initiatives.**
- A joint project of the two organizations/agencies to address the need for qualified public health inspectors to deal with potential public health emergencies.
- The developed framework would serve as **tool to enhance the public health system capacity and serve as a pilot for other health disciplines.**

---

# Time to Act

**It is imperative that we take action now to deal with:**

- *staff shortages,*
- *an aging workforce contemplating retiring within the next five years that will exacerbate staff shortages and,*
- *geographic mal-distribution of resources in northern areas.*

---

# 2009 CIPHI Survey

**A survey was conducted by the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors Retirees Advisory Committee in February 2009.**

- **a summary report presented at the CIPHI Conference in Kananaskis, Alberta.**
- **30 of 34 Health Units in Ontario responded**
- **an overall response rate of 70% was achieved throughout Canada.**

---

# 2009 CIPHI Survey - 2

- **As part of the Retirees Advisory Committee's strategic plan, a sustainable process is to be developed to provide access for employers to have access to accredited retired Public Health Inspectors to assist in addressing surge capacity needs in the time of a public health emergency and/or provide contract services to address extended staff shortages.**
- **The recommendations will provide steps to engage both retirees and employers of Public Health Inspectors help to address these issues.**

---

# Survey Findings

- **Substantial support (90%)** to engage both retirees and employers in a program where access to human resources (retirees) will be available in a data base to address surge capacity in a public health emergency or staff shortages due to vacancies.
- It is **essential** that retired Public Health Inspectors **maintain their certification and level of skill** so they may contribute to a need and act in a capacity of the profession.
- *Maintaining certification and skills ensures employability so re-integration into the workforce is not a threat to the retiree and a liability to the employer.*

---

# Survey Findings - 2

- **There is no indication that existing staff exhibit any subtle discrimination towards retirees with regards to skill level or the threat of taking work from existing or potential new staff.**
- **Ageism does not appear to be a problem.**

**This support will allow the group to continue working with retirees and the employers to address staffing issues.**



---

# Recommendations

- **Develop a national data base of retired Public Health Inspectors who are:**
  - Interested and willing to provide assistance in a public health emergency.
  - Interested and willing to provide contract work to address staff shortages or participate in special projects or to volunteer in various capacities.
- **Develop a program to identify skills and knowledge required to maintain certification and to encourage retirees and pre-retirees to maintain their certification.**

---

# Recommendations - 2

- **Establish an annually updated national database of skills/competency gaps.**
- **Develop a communication strategy to inform retirees of the national data base for providing assistance in an emergency and contract positions.**
- **Develop a communication strategy for employing agencies to inform them of a data base of retirees that are willing to assist in emergencies, contract positions or volunteering in some capacity.**

---

# Recommendations - 3

- Develop a strategy to ensure a **smooth transition** of retirees back into the work force.
- A plan on the **value of service and age diversity** for existing staff is essential for any initiative to be effective and successful.
- Develop a **strategy to communicate** with Public Health Inspectors that they will not be displaced with retirees but the retiree involvement is a continuum and that the retirees are only a temporary solution to a staffing problem.

---

# Recommendations - 4

- **Develop a strategy to inform pre-retirees of options and future opportunities.**
- **Explore the role of mentorship to strengthen the profession.**
- **Investigate an alternate method to provide training for both retired and current staff**

---

# Recruitment/Retention Steering Committee

An *Ad Hoc Retiree Recruitment/Retention Steering Committee* met recently to consider ways to build on the work of the CIPHI-RAC and establish an *“Interdisciplinary Public Health Retiree Recruitment/Retention Advisory Committee”* that would be representative of public health inspection, nursing, nutrition, dental, epidemiology, physician and health promotion personnel

---

# Work to Date

So far:

- a nation wide roster of all known retired public health inspectors across Canada was developed. It identified those available to work if required.
- a survey of all Directors and Managers of Public Health Inspection Programs across Canada was conducted to determine if there was a need for support/assistance from retirees.
- a contractor analyzed the results of the survey and provided a report "Environmental Health Resource Capacity: Report on Surveys".

---

# Work to Date - 2

- **9 priority areas have been identified for inclusion in the planning process.**
- **Developed a proposal to document the history of public health in Canada, beginning with the recording of stories from selected retired public health workers and champions of public health.**

---

# PHRRR - AC Goal and Mandate

**Goal** – To launch *an interdisciplinary public health retirees advisory group for the Atlantic Region that will work to strengthen the capacity of the public health work force by utilizing retired personnel.*

**The mandate** is *to provide guidance and counsel to the Public Health Agency of Canada in ways to strengthen the capacity of the public health workforce.*



---

# Atlantic Interdisciplinary PH Retiree Recruitment and Retention Committee

- **this group met at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI), held in St. John's, NL in July, 2008.**
- **It will advise on matters related to recruiting and/or retaining retired personnel into the public health workforce in Atlantic Canada. There is potential for this group to prepare the way for a similar Pan Canadian initiative.**

---

# *Is Atlantic Canada Redefining Retirement?*

- **Sponsored by the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI), Retirees Advisory Committee and the Public Health Agency of Canada, an exploratory survey, was carried out in Atlantic Canada during March and April 2009 to answer this question**
- **The public health organizations described in this survey do not appear to be prepared for an even greater increase in the ageing population**

---

# Atlantic Canada Survey

- **The survey findings suggest there is a low level of awareness about the long range future implications of population ageing among respondents**
- **There is very little evidence that public health organizations are preparing for the coming human resource challenges related to accelerated population ageing.**

---

# Atlantic Canada Survey - 2

- **There is sensitivity to the issue – but it is not a well informed one that is guiding concerted action.**
- **Older workers are, for the most part, an under recognized resource.**
- **Need to enhance strategic planning that will better accommodate, retain and recruit older workers into the public health workforce.**

---

*Now, there are more questions to answer....*

- **Are other provinces and territories more or less informed?**
- **Have other provinces and territories begun to experience the same increases in the numbers of older workers and retirees?**
- **Is Atlantic Canada leading the way?**
- **What are the next best steps?**