



PHANS

Public Health Association of Nova Scotia

P.O. Box 33074, Halifax, NS B3L 4T6

Public Health:

Healthy Community, Healthy Environment, Healthy Economy

A (Very) Brief History of PHANS

Although the Public Health Association of Nova Scotia was formed in the late fifties or early sixties, it was first registered as a society in 1973. This overview focuses on our activities from 1989 onward.

1989-1999

The decade from 1989 to 1999 was bracketed by milestones in health reform and PHANS was involved every step of the way. During the years following the Royal Commission on Health Care, PHANS became a credible independent voice for health system reform—a credibility born of hard work and persistence.

PHANS was represented on nearly every Task Force, Committee and Commission related to health reform that was struck during this decade. We had members on the Task Force on Primary Health Care, the Ministerial Task Force on Physician Policy Development, the Task Force on Nursing, the Blueprint Committee, the Provincial Health Council and the Working Group on Midwifery Regulation.

PHANS offered critiques of nearly every document the bodies produced and met with every Minister of Health to state our positions on all aspects of health system reform. PHANS also made presentations to the Law Amendments Committee regarding the Act to Establish Regional Health Boards (Bill 95) and participated on a review committee to revise this legislation.

PHANS also participated in joint efforts to influence health reform—for example the Think Tank on Health System Reform.

During this decade, PHANS also devoted considerable effort to defining and explaining the role of public health and its relationship to health promotion and disease prevention. PHANS worked to help government decision-makers in departments other than health—for example, environment, education and agriculture—to understand the concepts of population health and the determinants of health, and how these are affected by decisions and initiatives that occur far from the health department. One of the most intense and effective of these PHANS initiatives was our critique of the Provincial government's "Government by Design" document. PHANS' analysis—titled "Nova Scotia's Health Goals, Determinants of Health and Government by Design"—was

circulated extensively among government departments and Regional Health Boards.

PHANS furthered this initiative in May 1995, by organizing a major intersectoral conference—“Sickness, Health and the Economy”—that was attended by over 100 participants from federal, provincial, regional and local governments.

PHANS In addition to its work on public health and health reform, PHANS lobbied and advocated for an amazing variety of issues. A partial list includes:

- Heart Health
- Smoking
- AIDS
- Child Health
- School Health Education
- Sex Education
- Cervical Screening
- Gambling
- Environmental Illness
- Affordable Housing
- Environment and Health
- Nutrition
- Infant formula contracts at the Grace
- Availability of condoms in schools
- Loss of medical Officers of Health
- User fees
- Liberalized sale of alcohol
- Support for the Provincial Health Goals
- Accountability and Transparency of Regional Health Boards
- Home Care
- Primary Health Care Projects
- Poverty reduction
- Smoke free vehicles
- Early child development supports and services
- Building public health capacity

2000-2008

For a few years at the end of the last decade and the beginning of this one, PHANS had a period of decreased activity. However, the organization regrouped and has continued to be active in pursuing our mission to advocate for policy change. This partial and preliminary list of some of our activities gives a flavour of where PHANS has put its resources over the past few years:

- Opened a website and list serve to better communicate with its members, key public health stakeholders and the general public (2001)

- Accountability Framework, which began as our submission to the Romanow Commission (2002)
- Chronic Disease Prevention Strategy committees (2003)
- Election Primers for 2003 and 2006 elections
- VOICES Grant with MicMac Friendship Centre, to define what the idea of “health” meant to the community to develop a framework for measuring progress toward that goal (2004)
- Comment on gaming strategy, tobacco strategy (2004)
- Public Health Roundtable (2004)
- Working with Doctors NS and Health Charities to push for and participate in the Independent Review of Public Health (2004-5)
- Participation in the development of National Health Goals (2005)
- Health Literacy Consultation (2005)
- Public Health Capacity Framework – initial development, and joining with CPHA, NL, NB, PEI and Manitoba to get Health Canada funding to further develop and refine the framework (2005)
- Presenting a paper on the process of developing the Capacity Framework at CPHA’s Conference in Ottawa (September 2005)
- Website development (2003 & 2005)
- Many letters to comment on or respond to government initiatives and strategies
- The Renewal of Public Health in Nova Scotia: building a public health system to meet the needs of Nova Scotians (2005 and ongoing)
- A Survey of PHANS Members – their expectations, involvement and satisfaction with PHANS (2006)
- Supporting Resolutions made by PHANS members to support Skills Enhancement for Public Health and the Core Competencies for Public Health (2007)
- Supporting a Resolution made by PHANS members to support Prevent Violence Canada (2007)
- Supporting the Annual Canadian Public Health Association Conference "Reducing Health Inequalities through Evidence & Action" when it was held in Halifax June 01 to 04, 2008
- Increasing membership in PHANS (from 69 in 2004 to 114 in 2008)

PHANS has a long history of advocacy and volunteer engagement in Nova Scotia. It has been and continues to be, an organization with few physical assets whose activities are dependent on the talent, resources and energy of its Board and members.

2009-2011

- On September 23, 2009, PHANS provided a one day workshop for public health practitioners about the *Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada: Release 1.0* entitled, “Translating the Core Competencies for

Public Health into Action". One hundred sixty-six (166) persons registered to attend the workshop. Most were from Public Health Services of Nova Scotia's District Health Authorities, the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, universities and First Nations organizations.

- **A Tobacco Survey** - PHANS collaborated with Smoke Free Nova Scotia (SFNS) to coordinate implementation and completion of this survey within Nova Scotia's nine health regions. Funding came from the Canadian Public Health Association (under contract from Health Canada) to undertake a project titled *The Next Stage: Delivering Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Knowledge through Public Health Networks* - a survey on public health and tobacco control targeted to provincial/territorial health regions and units.
- In 2008/09 and again in 2011, PHANS met with the New Democratic Party Caucus, Progressive Conservative Caucus and the Liberal Caucus. These meetings presented an opportunity to provide information regarding the work of PHANS, as well as, to highlight PHANS position statements on three public health issues: the renewal of public health; poverty reduction; and early child development.
- **PHANS Strategic Plan 2010-2012** - The Board approved a Strategic Plan at its September 2010 meeting, following several months of discussion and a face-to-face Board workshop in June. The face-to-face session also included a Board self evaluation and a review of members ideas voiced at PHANS 2009 Annual General meeting. Several of the ideas voiced influenced the plan including suggestions for another conference/workshop, the need to advocate for social justice, equity, mother/child health and Aboriginal health, citizen engagement, follow-up with the new government, promoting PHANS and seeking ways to better link the different public health disciplines. The Plan is posted on PHANS website. Three priority areas have been selected to be the main focus of PHANS' action and advocacy work.
 1. Early child development
 2. Reduction of health inequity and poverty
 3. Enhancing the capacity of the public health workforce

Short and long term action plans for each of the three priority areas are being developed by three working groups: Each working group has started off with a few directors from PHANS' Board and is (or will be soon) expanding its membership to include PHANS members and external members from the community.

In addition to the three working groups, the plan includes commitment to:

- Deliver a conference /workshop within the next two years
- Recruit, retain and engage members and new members

- Establish a Public Health Hero Award
- Meet with the NDP government and Liberal and Conservative party caucus early in 2011.
- **Public Health Renewal** - PHANS contributed to the review of public health in 2005 and maintains an active presence in the renewal process. This past June three Board members met with Dr Robert Strang and Janet Braunstein Moody of the NS Dept of Health Promotion and Protection regarding the actions underway to renew the public health system in Nova Scotia. We were encouraged to hear about the ongoing accomplishments being made on the 21 renewal actions. However, there is more work to do to ensure that prevention is recognized as a key component of a strong and sustainable health care system and concern about the sustainability of the renewal process at this time of severe fiscal restraint.

PHANS Presidents

1973: E. Margaret Bentley (Peggy)
 1974: Mr. C. Edward Tupper
 1975: Miriam J. Hayman (Bunny)
 1976: Mr. Gerry A. Reno
 1977: Mr. Ralph E. J. Ricketts
 1978: Mr. Ralph E. J. Ricketts
 1979: Mr. Michael Mac Phee
 1980: Mrs. M. Grantham
 1981: Mr. Sandy Morrison
 1982: Mr. Steven R. Kenny
 1983: Mrs. Elizabeth Lambie
 1984: Dr. David Mac Lean
 1985: Dr. David Mac Lean
 1986: Mr. Merv Ungurain
 1987: Ms. Janet Braunstein
 1988: Ms. Janet Braunstein
 1989: Ms. Sharon MacIntosh
 1990: Vacant
 1991: Dr. Lynn McIntyre
 1992: Dr. Lynn McIntyre
 1993: Mike Marentette
 1994: Mike Marentette
 1995: Marjorie Willison
 1996: Marjorie Willison
 1997: Todd Leader
 1998: Todd Leader
 1999: Todd Leader
 2000: Todd Leader
 2001: Susan McBroom

2002: Susan McBroom
2003: Susan McBroom
2004: Florence Tarrant
2005: Andrea Hilchie-Pye
2006: Andrea Hilchie-Pye
2007: Marie McCully Collier
2008: Marie McCully Collier
2009: Marie McCully Collier
2010: Marie McCully Collier
2011: Marian MacLellan