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Building *Nunavut* Together
Nunavut liuqatigiingniq
Bâtir le *Nunavut* ensemble

Minister of Health's 2021 Public Health Act Annual Report



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to submit the *2021 Public Health Act Annual Report* to the Legislative Assembly. The 2021 report marks the second year of reporting since Bill 14, the *Public Health Act*, came into force (January 2020).

With the passing of Bill 14, the *Public Health Act* requires the Minister to prepare an annual report within six months of the end of each calendar year and table the report in the Legislative Assembly during the first sitting of the Assembly after each report is prepared. The preparation and tabling of an annual report is an important practice in Tunnganarniq and Pijitsirniq, acting as a tool to increase transparency and accountability to Nunavummiut.

The report covers the period from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, and includes reportable events, outbreaks, public health emergencies, and inspections completed under the *Public Health Act*.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. John Main
Minister of Health



PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Under the *Public Health Act*, the Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) of Nunavut may recommend that a public health emergency be declared if additional special measures, such as public health orders, are needed to protect the public health and prevent, remedy, or mitigate the effects of the emergency.

In response to COVID-19, in March 2020, the Minister of Health declared a State of Public Health Emergency. The Public Health Emergency was subsequently extended every two weeks until April 11, 2022, when it was allowed to lapse.

While the Public Health Emergency was in place, the CPHO also issued public health orders that restricted travel, mandated self-isolation, physical distancing, and placed limits on capacity gatherings and within food service and licensed establishments.

REPORTABLE EVENTS & OUTBREAKS

Under the *Public Health Act*, reportable events are defined as the occurrence of communicable diseases and zoonotic diseases. Outbreaks are defined as a cluster of cases of a condition, usually a communicable disease, that is linked by person, place, or time, and includes clusters of cases where no specific cause has been identified.

The below table outlines all the communicable diseases that were reported in Nunavut for 2021. Following the table, the report provides additional details on certain communicable and zoonotic diseases that occurred in 2021.

Communicable Disease Count for 2021	
Communicable Disease	Count*
Chlamydia	1241
COVID-19	598
Gonorrhea	564
Methicillin-resistant S. aureus (MRSA)	289
Tuberculosis	77
Clostridium difficile	13
Campylobacteriosis	13
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)	13
Salmonellosis	11
Syphilis	53
Invasive Group A Streptococcal infections	10
Giardiasis	8
Trichinosis	6
Norovirus	5
Botulism	<5**
Chicken Pox (Varicella)	<5
Influenza B	<5
Invasive Streptococcus pneumoniae infections	<5



Invasive Haemophilus influenzae infections	<5
Invasive Neisseria meningitidis infections	<5
Hepatitis B	<5
Hepatitis B - Known carrier	<5
Hepatitis B - Unknown	<5
Hepatitis C	<5
Hepatitis C - Known carrier	<5
Hepatitis C - Unknown	<5
HIV/AIDS	<5
Malaria	<5
Rotavirus	<5
Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE)	<5
Yersiniosis	<5
*These are preliminary counts. On an annual basis, Health validates its data related to communicable diseases. This process is not complete for 2021. Major changes are not anticipated.	
**Health does not release counts under 5 to due to privacy reasons.	

COVID-19

For 2021, there were 598 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Nunavut. There were three COVID-19 outbreaks prior to the onset of the Omicron variant wave in December 2021. The three outbreaks were in Iqaluit, Arviat, and Whale Cove. As of December 31, 2021, 13 out of 25 communities were reporting cases.

Tuberculosis (TB)

There were 77 diagnosed cases of TB in Nunavut in 2021. See below table for more information.

Diagnosed cases of TB in Nunavut by year										
Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
# of Total Cases	80	52	84	44	54	101	57	54	34	77
*Health does not release community-level TB data outside of outbreaks, as it could inadvertently identify and stigmatize individuals and groups.										

On November 25, 2021, Health declared a TB outbreak in Pangnirtung. Health issued the public health advisory when contact tracing was no longer adequate to identify all cases involved. Prior to late November, all cases identified were found to be linked to one another.

There is a public health team in Pangnirtung dedicated to managing the TB program, including testing people with symptoms of TB, medication administration and TB screening for people who have had close contact with a person with active TB. The team consists of Direct Observation Therapy (DOT) workers, nurses, and paramedics.

Most TB infections in Nunavut involve the lungs (pulmonary). High TB rates in the territory are caused and perpetuated by socio-economic factors such as:

- Overcrowded housing, poor nutrition, and high rates of smoking;
- A large population with undiagnosed or untreated latent (sleeping) TB infections (i.e., these Nunavummiut are well and not contagious but may develop active TB disease sometime in their life);
- Nunavut has a large young population and young adults are more affected by TB; and
- A cold climate necessitating more time indoors, increasing the chances of spreading the infection to others.

Syphilis

The syphilis outbreak in Nunavut is ongoing, and is currently not increasing in severity. For 2021, there were 53 new cases of syphilis infections reported. Health continues to follow the rates of syphilis closely and implements public health follow-up of all cases to keep the rates as low as possible.

While new infections of syphilis appear to have somewhat reduced in 2020 and 2021, this must be considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including travel and gathering restrictions, and possible changes to health care service delivery during COVID-19.

See below table for more information.

Syphilis cases by region from 2012 to 2021				
Year	Qikiqtani	Kitikmeot	Kivalliq	Total
2012	30	<5*	<5*	30+
2013	59	<5*	<5*	59+
2014	94	<5*	<5*	94+
2015	37	8	23	68
2016	23	10	88	121
2017	16	6	87	109
2018	34	0	76	110
2019	63	0	45	108
2020	26	<5*	20+	50
2021	41	<5*	8+	53

*Due to privacy and confidentiality the exact figure is not included (and a + is included to account for these in the total).

Counts may be underestimated due to ongoing follow-up required for some case report forms.



Zoonotic Disease

There were four confirmed cases of rabies (two in Iqaluit and two in Igloolik) in 2021. All cases were identified in foxes, and there was no transmission to humans.

NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS

Health is committed to the protection and promotion of public health through education, regular inspection of facilities, and investigation of environmental health hazards. During a community visit from an Environmental Health Officer (EHO), all public facilities are inspected, complaints are investigated, and relevant education is provided. Health aims to conduct environmental health inspections of facilities twice a year.

In 2021, EHOs conducted 36 community visits for a total of 776 site inspections. Since March 2020, all community visits and site inspections have addressed COVID-19 related issues. During these visits, EHOs worked with Health personnel and Health Centres to ensure sites were meeting certain guidelines associated with general cleaning procedures including sanitizing equipment, communicating with the public (i.e., signs enforcing masking, number of customers in stores, establishing one-way directional flow) and encouraging social distancing. See table below for inspections that took place in 2021.

Number of Inspections Conducted by Community in 2021*	
Community	Visits
Qikiqtani	
Arctic Bay	January 2021 and July 2021
Clyde River	January 2021, September 2021 and November 2021
Grise Fiord	February 2021 and August 2021
Igloolik	July 2021
Iqaluit	Position is based in Iqaluit, and inspections are conducted regularly
Kimmirut	January 2021 and December 2021
Kinngait	February 2021 and September 2021
Pangnirtung	Position is based in Pangnirtung, and inspections are conducted regularly
Pond Inlet	January 2021 and August 2021
Qikiqtarjuaq	August 2021
Resolute Bay	February 2021 and August 2021
Sanirajak	July 2021
Kivalliq	
Arviat	October 2021
Baker Lake	June 2021
Chesterfield Inlet	May 2021
Coral Harbour	May 2021
Nauyasat	February 2021 and September 2021



Rankin Inlet	Position is based in Rankin Inlet, and inspections are conducted regularly
Sanikiluaq	March 2021 and September 2021
Whale Cove	May 2021
Kitikmeot	
Cambridge Bay	Position is based in Cambridge Bay, and inspections are conducted regularly
Gjoa Haven	June 2021
Kugaaruk	February 2021 and June 2021
Kugluktuk	March 2021 and July 2021
Taloyoak	June 2021
*Due to COVID-19 restrictions and shortages in staffing, some communities received only one visit between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021.	