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Nunavut

Minister of Health's 2024 *Public Health Act* Annual Report

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NUNAVUT:

I am pleased to submit the 2024 *Public Health Act* Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly.

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 report must outline reportable events, outbreaks, public health emergencies, and inspections completed under the *Public Health Act*.

This report covers the period from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. John Main
Minister of Health

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

In Canada, there are six commonly accepted functions related to public health programs:

- Population health assessment.
- Health surveillance.
- Health protection.
- Health promotion.
- Disease and injury prevention.
- Emergency preparedness and response.

Recognizing that many of these are interconnected, this annual report focuses on health surveillance and health protection, specifically for communicable diseases and environmental health.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Under the *Public Health Act*, the Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) of Nunavut may recommend to the Minister 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.

No public health emergencies were declared in 2024.

REPORTABLE EVENTS & OUTBREAKS

Under the *Public Health Act*, reportable events include the occurrence of communicable diseases and zoonotic diseases. Outbreaks are cases of a condition, usually a communicable disease, that are linked by person, place, or time, with a rise in the number of cases.

Table 1 on the following page outlines all the communicable diseases that were reported in Nunavut for 2024. Following the table, the report provides additional details on certain communicable and zoonotic diseases that occurred in 2024.

Table 1: Communicable Disease Count for 2024	
Communicable Disease	**Count**
Chlamydia	1,681
Gonorrhea	743
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)	500
COVID-19	446
Influenza A and B	405
Methicillin-resistant S. aureus (MRSA)	175
Syphilis	172
Norovirus	39
Active Tuberculosis	36
Pertussis	33
C. difficile	23
Giardiasis	19
Invasive Streptococcus pneumoniae infections	17
Invasive Group A Streptococcal infections	15
Chicken Pox (Varicella)	9
Invasive Haemophilus influenzae infections	9
Campylobacteriosis	9
Hepatitis B - Unknown	5
Hepatitis C – Acute	5
Salmonellosis	<5
Rotavirus	<5
Shigellosis	<5
Hepatitis C – Unknown	<5
Acute flaccid paralysis	<5
Brucellosis	<5
Neonatal Group B Streptococcal infections	<5
Hepatitis B - Known carrier	<5
Yersiniosis	<5
HIV	<5
Hepatitis C - Known carrier	<5
Hepatitis B – Acute	<5

COVID-19

For 2024, there were 446 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Nunavut. COVID-19 has been part of seasonal respiratory surveillance including flu and RSV since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tuberculosis (TB)

There were 36 diagnosed cases of TB in Nunavut in 2024. See Table 2 below for more information.

Table 2: Diagnosed cases of TB in Nunavut by year												
Year	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
# of Total Cases	52	83	44	54	101	57	54	34	77	53	67	36
*Health does not release community-level TB data outside of outbreaks, as it could inadvertently identify and stigmatize individuals and groups.												

As of December 31, 2024, there are currently three ongoing TB outbreaks:

- A TB outbreak was declared in Pangnirtung on November 25, 2021. Health issued the public health advisory when contact tracing was no longer adequate to identify all cases involved. A Community Wide Screening (CWS) was held in Pangnirtung between September and December 2023. The CWS achieved 96% of its goal to complete initial screening for 1,200 people in the community; this covered roughly 60% of the residents of the community.
- A TB outbreak was declared in Pond Inlet on March 17, 2023. The Department of Health is currently conducting health promotion and community engagement activities. A high school TB screening took place in November 2024.
- A TB outbreak was declared in Naujaat on May 16, 2023. Naujaat has historically had a very low TB incidence, the outbreak declaration is in response to an unusual increase in active TB detected in the community. A TB Fair was held from February 8-11, 2024, to promote education, screening and treatment of TB. A CWS campaign took place in Naujaat in April and May 2024. Nearly 90% of the goal of screening 1,000 residents was achieved; this covered roughly 65% of the residents of the community.

Since 2017, Arviat has been experiencing intermittent increase of active cases. The Arviat health team has been diligently diagnosing and providing treatment to people with newly diagnosed active TB and those with TB infection (sleeping TB) as well as screening contacts. An enhanced response to the increasing cases was announced by

the CPHO office in Summer 2024. The focus of this response was case management (diagnosis and treatment of TB infection and active TB disease) and contact investigation. A TB Fair in Arviat took place in November 2024 to promote TB awareness and build community readiness.

There are public health staff in all outbreak communities dedicated to TB follow-up, 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 teams consist 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 impacted by various social determinants of health and socio-economic factors, such as:

- Overcrowded housing.
- Population demographics (younger population), poor nutrition, and high rates of smoking.
- A colder climate that can lead to more time indoors, increasing the chances of spreading the infection to others.

Syphilis

The syphilis outbreak in Nunavut is ongoing. For 2024, there were 172 new cases of confirmed 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 from 2020-2022, 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. However, since then, syphilis infections have surged in 2024.

See Table 3 for more information.

Table 3: Syphilis cases by region from 2012 to 2024				
Year	**Qikiqtani**	**Kitikmeot**	**Kivalliq**	**Total**
2012	30	<5*	<5*	<40
2013	59	<5*	<5*	<69
2014	93	0	<5*	<98
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*	27	<58
2021	41	<5*	10	<56
2022	48	<5*	11	<64
2023	91	13	14	118
2024	123	13	36	172

*Health does not release case counts under 5 due to privacy reasons and a < is included to account for these in the total. Counts may be underestimated due to the ongoing follow-up required for some case report forms.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The Environmental Health Program is designed to protect the public by addressing issues such as food safety, drinking water quality, sanitation, pest control, contaminants, and diseases in animals that can affect people, such as rabies. The Environmental Health Program is carried out by certified Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) in each region. EHOs have the authority to enforce the *Public Health Act* and regulations, along with the *Tobacco and Smoking Act*. They carry out inspections to ensure compliance.

The majority of EHOs' work focuses on:

- Food safety.
- Drinking water quality and quantity.
- Inspection of facilities such as schools, childcare centres, recreational centres, and swimming pools.
- Rabies prevention.
- Food and waterborne communicable disease investigations.
- Tobacco retailer inspections.

Reportable Zoonotic Diseases in Animals

Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. These include foodborne illnesses transmitted by handling or eating meat from an infected animal, and other diseases such as influenza and rabies that can be transmitted through contact.

Rabies

There were two confirmed cases of rabies in animals in 2024. Cases were identified in foxes in two communities across the territory.

Trichinellosis

Trichinella parasites can be found in the meat of mammals, and the disease can be passed to people who eat this raw meat. Testing of meat samples (walrus, polar bear, whale) is carried out in Iqaluit by the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) under a partnership between NRI, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), and Health.

In 2024, 23 walrus samples were tested with one positive sample and 18 polar bear samples were tested with 7 positive samples with trichinella.

Avian Influenza

The Government of Canada records cases of high pathogenicity avian influenza in wildlife, from animal carcasses sent from across the country, including Nunavut. One confirmed case of avian influenza was detected in a wild bird, and one confirmed case in a ringed seal in Nunavut during 2024.

Facility 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 EHO, all public facilities are inspected, complaints are investigated, and relevant education is provided.

Community Visits

In 2024, EHOs conducted 38 community visits and carried out a total of 1,026 facility inspections. Health aims to conduct environmental health inspections of facilities twice a year. This is sometimes not possible because of staffing challenges and/or delays that occur due to weather conditions or lack of accommodations in the community.

See Table 4 for visits that took place in 2024.

Table 4: Site visits conducted by community in 2024	
Community	**Visits**
Qikiqtani	
Arctic Bay	March, November
Clyde River	February, June
Grise Fiord	March
Igloolik	January, August
Iqaluit	Position is based in Iqaluit, and inspections are conducted regularly
Kimmirut	January, December
Kinngait	March, July
Pangnirtung	Position is based in Pangnirtung, and inspections are conducted regularly
Pond Inlet	July
Qikiqtarjuaq	February, September
Resolute Bay	March, September
Sanirajak	July
Kivalliq	
Arviat	February, August, November
Baker Lake	January, August, November
Chesterfield Inlet	March
Coral Harbour	May, October
Naujaat	January, July
Rankin Inlet	Position is based in Rankin Inlet, and inspections are conducted regularly
Sanikiluaq	March, June
Whale Cove	October
Kitikmeot	
Cambridge Bay	Position is based in Cambridge Bay, and inspections are conducted regularly
Gjoa Haven	March
Kugaaruk	March
Kugluktuk	April
Taloyoak	April

Food Premise Inspections

Many routine inspections are conducted on food premises. If an EHO identifies infractions on a food premise, a written inspection report is provided to the owner/operator that details regulatory infractions and non-compliant public health conditions present at the time of inspection, as well as actions necessary to resolve those infractions or conditions.

The majority of infractions are rectified during the inspection, however the EHO can take the following actions if warranted:

- Give a verbal order, followed by a written one, regarding a health hazard.
- Seize and destroy food that could put the public's health and safety at risk.
- Close a restaurant if a health hazard exists that can affect the health of the public.

See Table 5 below for food premise inspections, including the number of violations.

Table 5: Environmental Health Food Premise Inspections conducted in 2024	
Total number of food premise inspections	428
Number of inspections with no infractions	145
Total number of food premises with at least 1 inspection	301
Number of inspections with at least 1 infraction	283
Number of inspections with at least 1 critical infraction	168
Total number of critical infractions*	259
*The same restaurant inspection may be accounted for more than once. For example, one inspection may have resulted in 1 infraction and 2 critical infractions.	