

Friday, April 23, 2010

Mr. Grant Main
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
1515 Blanshard Street
Victoria, BC V8W 3C8

Dear Mr. Main:

I am taking this opportunity to write to you in regard to recent correspondence sent by your Ministry to the Health Authorities of British Columbia. The concerns brought forth by the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport which relate to the practices of Environmental Public Health Professionals (EHP's) practicing in BC are of great concern to our Association, the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, BC Branch.

Your concerns speak specifically to the importance of maintaining a climate of consultation between practicing Environmental Public Health Professionals working for the BC Health Authorities with our many stakeholders out in our communities. It further advises regarding our BC Government's expectations in relation to the discharge of our regulatory duties as EHP's. It refers to occasions where improper application and use of discretionary powers have been identified and have been deemed unacceptable. It stresses a regulatory approach that is transparent, accountable, consultative, communicative, and relevant. You also acknowledge the challenging work our members perform in their day to day duties and your appreciation for the admirable work that is most often done under challenging circumstances.

I write to provide assurances to your Ministry that our Association and members aspire to the expectations described in your letter. These are at the core of our Code of Ethics and our defined Standards of Practice. We work closely with the Educational Faculties at the Schools of Environmental Health across Canada to ensure that curriculums are current and relevant, and we have developed a streamlined practicum training program in BC that prepares our future members for the many challenges they will face in their careers as EHP's. The Canadian Board of Certification Examination has been streamlined for consistency nationwide to provide a reliable and diligent process for setting entry to practice standards.

We launched our Continuing Professional Competencies (CPC) program in January of this year as the endorsed standard for ongoing professional development for EHP's in Canada. This most recent achievement is a milestone for Environmental Public Health in Canada which aligns with the Pan Canadian recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada for capacity building in the Core Programs in Public Health. Ours is a profession that relies on collaboration for its growth and development, and this is embodied in the successful relationships we maintain with our learning institutes, industry, the communities we serve, as well as the various levels of government with which we interact at the Municipal, Provincial, and Federal levels.

I will not question the foundation from which your Ministry has chosen to query the practices of our members and will trust that your concerns are not the result of isolated incidents. I am sure you are aware of the efforts taken by our members to provide services that are valuable to the protection of the health of British Columbians. I am also sure you are aware of the challenges faced in delivering these services and the various roles we serve as consultants, educators, mediators, negotiators, regulators, and enforcers. We are all aware of the financial challenges we face in establishing programs that are fiscally responsible and effective in protecting the health of British Columbians.

Please be assured that the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, BC Branch, strongly supports responsible environmental public health programs that are delivered using a consistent, consultative, and accountable approach. We must have the capacity through adequate resourcing from our government to maintain and deliver such programs effectively and to allow for the protection of safe water supplies, food supplies, land development practices, safe air quality, and safe public areas in our built environment. It is with this resourcing that we can assure that shifts in public needs are balanced with sound messaging, progressive policy, the necessary regulatory change or interpretation, and consistent application of best practices to protect public health.

The BC Branch totally supports the use of sound risk assessment, education, and where necessary, progressive enforcement to achieve outcome based performance principles. However, our members are often tasked with informing clients of legislative policy that dates back many years and lacks the flexibility to meet modern day outcome based philosophy. For this reason we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with Government to discuss the development of regulatory policy that allows this flexible outcome based approach.

I also encourage you to become familiar with our newly launched Continuing Professional Competencies program, and the ongoing activities of CIPHI BC Branch. It is with familiarity that we can strengthen our partnership with your Ministry and ensure the best protection of the people and communities in BC. It is in the specific interest of our Association to ensure that we follow best practices in our service delivery to the public.

I welcome any opportunity to meet with you, or your program staff, in person to discuss our Association, activities, and practices further. Alternately, do not hesitate to contact me at 250 335 0195 or e-mail at bcbranchpresident@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Keir Cordner
CIPHI BC Branch President

cc. Mr. Andrew Hazelwood, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health, Ministry of Health Services
encl. CIPHI Continuing Professional Competencies (CPC) Program, Reference Guide, Release 1.1