



Coroners Service

# Strategic Plan

## 2012-2014

Ministry of Justice  
Emergency Management BC

## VISION

# Safe and Healthy Communities

## MISSION

The Coroners Service is committed to conducting a thorough, independent examination of the factors contributing to death in order to improve community safety and quality of life of British Columbia.



## **THE ROLE OF THE CORONERS SERVICE**

Pursuant to the Coroners Act (2007), all unnatural, sudden and unexpected deaths in the province, the deaths of all children, and the deaths of all those in designated institutions, such as police lock-ups and provincial and federal prisons, must be reported to, and investigated by, a coroner. The legislation gives coroners wide powers of investigation including the authority to enter and inspect premises, inspect and seize records, authorize post mortem examinations, require individuals to provide information on oath or affirmation, and compel witnesses to attend and give evidence at an inquest. Following an investigation, coroners are required to report their findings in writing to the chief coroner setting out the identity of the deceased and how, when, where and by what means the deceased died. The coroner may also make recommendations related to the death or recommend that an inquest be held.



## The Coroners Service supports public safety by:

- Determining the facts of all sudden and unexpected deaths in BC, all children's deaths and all deaths in designated institutions.
- Providing an additional layer of analysis by also reviewing all children's deaths to discover and monitor trends..
- Ensuring that no death is concealed, overlooked or ignored.
- Producing either a Coroner's Report or a Verdict at Coroner's Inquest that reports on the findings of the coroner's investigation or the public inquest.
- Making recommendations, where appropriate, to both public and private agencies so that a similar death is less likely to occur in the future.
- Conducting inquests when mandated by the *Coroners Act* or when there is a strong public interest in the circumstances of the death or potential for prevention of death in similar circumstances in the future.
- Establishing Death Review Panels to allow for aggregate review of deaths with similar circumstances to identify opportunities for intervention to prevent future deaths.
- Collecting information regarding the circumstances of death and conducting statistical analysis to identify risks to public safety and trends over time.
- Supporting research by public and private agencies, academic institutions and other jurisdictions by sharing information about factors related to death in British Columbia.
- Preparing and disseminating Public Safety Advisories when warranted to warn the public about risks to public safety.
- Providing statistical information and analysis to agencies, ministries of government, and other decision-makers to inform policies and legislation in support of public safety.
- Supporting criminal investigations by authorizing post mortem examinations to confirm identification and when necessary, to establish cause and manner of death.
- Maintaining sophisticated missing persons/found human remains database and applying innovative geospatial, DNA, dental and/or other comparative analyses to support the identification of found human remains for critical legal/criminal/estate purposes.
- Ensuring necessary planning, training and resources are in place to respond to mass fatality incidents to accomplish appropriate recovery and achieve time-sensitive determinations regarding identification and cause and manner of death.
- Collaborating with other provinces and jurisdictions to exchange information, support research and develop recommendations.

## VALUES

### ***Integrity***

- We perform a public duty and make findings without fear of, prejudice against, or bias towards any person or organization.
- Our investigations are objective and impartial.

### ***Respect***

- We ensure the dignity of the deceased.
- We are considerate of the views and beliefs of each other and those with whom we interact and serve.

### ***Accountability***

- We carry out our duties diligently, independently and promptly.
- We are responsible to the public and the government for our actions and our outcomes.

### ***Healthy and Dynamic Work Environment***

- We support the health, safety and well being of our staff.
- We foster open communication and mutual respect.
- We encourage continuous learning and professional development.
- We promote inclusiveness and strive to work collaboratively.

### ***Quality Service***

- We strive for high standards of professional practice.



## GOALS

### ***Goal #1: Deliver Exceptional Service:***

- The Coroners Service conducts thorough, objective, independent and timely investigations, inquests and death review panels.

#### Strategies:

- Review, update and consolidate Coroners Service policy.
  - Target Date: December 2012
- Implement a Quality Assurance program to ensure that investigative requirements, policies and protocols are consistently applied.
  - Target Date: June 2012
- Establish performance targets for timeliness of investigations, reviews and inquests.
  - Target Date: October 2012
- Implement an enhanced Lower Mainland Service Delivery model to address caseload and response concerns.
  - Target Date: May 2012
- Implement an enhanced Service Delivery model for Island, Interior and Northern regions to ensure efficient and effective investigations.
  - Target Date: October 2012

***Goal #2: Inform and Educate Communities:***

- The Coroners Service provides timely and accurate information about deaths and makes recommendations in support of public health and safety initiatives.

Strategies:

- Develop a Communications Plan to inform the public about the purpose, role, goals and priorities of the agency
  - Target Date: September 2012
- Continue to build research strength for analysis of reported deaths to identify risks to public safety and trends over time
- Prepare Public Safety Advisories when appropriate
- Continue to support improvements to public safety by providing statistical information and analysis for agencies and ministries

### **Goal #3: Build Capacity:**

- The Coroners Service is an organization that attracts, values and retains innovative, engaged, knowledgeable people who demonstrate professionalism.

#### Strategies:

- Identify the skills, knowledge and abilities critical to the coroner's role and the most effective and efficient curriculum and training delivery method(s).
  - Target Date: October 2012
- Implement the redesigned coroners' training program, including basic and on-going training and development.
  - Target Date: April 2013
- Develop and implement inquest training for presiding coroners and coroners chairing Death Review Panels.
  - Target Date: December 2012
- Complete the review of community coroner options and implement a model that will better serve the long term effectiveness of the BC Coroners Service.
  - Target Date: October 2012
- Update the coroner's job description and ensure consistency in the hiring process.
  - Target Date: April 2012



#### ***Goal #4: Enhance Relationships:***

- The Coroners Service builds relationships to enhance the quality and impact of our investigations and reviews and our credibility with the public and other public safety organizations.
- The well-being of our staff is integral to the success of our agency.

#### Strategies:

- Review and revise existing Memorandums of Understanding to reflect respective goals
  - Target Date: April 2013
- Engage local stakeholders and public safety organizations through public presentations and representation on local committees
- Engage with agencies receiving coroners' recommendations to track progress and measure impacts
- Engage representatives of diverse disciplines in public safety through the death review panel process
- Build a culture of recognition
- Develop performance plans for all staff
- Create Internal and External Opportunities for Professional Development
- Improve internal communications
- Implement an enhanced Safety Program