

## This is Public Health: A Canadian History

# Foreword and Prefaces

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By Christopher Rutt, PhD, and Sue C. Sullivan

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Canadian Public Health Association

400-1565 Carling Avenue

Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 8R1

Tel: 613.725.3769

Fax: 613.725.9826

Email: [info@cpha.ca](mailto:info@cpha.ca)

The Canadian Public Health Association is a national, independent, not-for-profit, voluntary association representing public health in Canada with links to the international public health community. CPHA's members believe in universal and equitable access to the basic conditions which are necessary to achieve health for all Canadians.

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Glossary Definitions: *A Dictionary of Public Health*, Edited by John M. Last (2007), Oxford University Press

## Message from the Board of Directors

When the Canadian Public Health Association started its work in April 2009 to produce a history of public health on the occasion of its centenary, a decision was made to go beyond the history of CPHA itself and tell the broader story of public health in Canada. The story needed to be told because the public health component of the health system continues to be misunderstood. Indeed, many do not realize that health is determined by factors that lay outside the health care system.

This history covers the period from before Canada was a nation through to 1986, when the First International Conference on Health Promotion launched a new era of public health with the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Public health had a significant impact throughout these decades and its role evolved, from controlling infectious diseases to focusing on population health, health promotion, health protection, and primary prevention of diseases and injuries.

It is a remarkable story. I would like to thank the Public Health Agency of Canada for its significant financial contribution towards this effort along with the other centenary sponsors. I would also like to thank members of CPHA's Centenary Steering Committee, and in particular, members of the History Working Group, chaired by Margaret Hilson, for their outstanding contribution to this endeavour.

*Cory Neudorf, Chair*

CPHA Board of Directors

## This is Public Health: A Canadian History

### Foreword

This history of public health in Canada was a centenary project of the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA). CPHA was formed in 1910 by a small group of physicians who were concerned about the state of public health in Canada. CPHA held its first annual conference at McGill University in December 1911 and was constituted through an Act of Parliament in April 1912.

This book came into being through the efforts of many. Christopher Ruty, PhD, wrote the first draft. This draft was edited by Sue Sullivan and reviewed both externally and by members of CPHA's Centenary History Working Group. Sue Sullivan responded to the reviewers' comments by conducting additional research and writing a second draft, which was copy-edited by me and Dr. Ruty. I researched the minutes of the Dominion Council of Health and selected and wrote the profiles. All three of us identified the photos and illustrations.

John M. Last, MD, DPH, MD (honoris causa) Uppsala and Edinburgh, a member of the History Working Group, added additional commentaries and, with others, wrote the epilogue.

Drs. Maureen Malowany and Shannon Tania Waters agreed to be the official external reviewers of the first draft of the book. They worked independently and their detailed and thoughtful commentaries and suggestions for additional resources greatly strengthened the manuscript.

Maureen Malowany, PhD, is the Associate Director of the Strategic Training Program in Transdisciplinary Research on Public and Population Health Interventions: Promotion, Prevention and Public Policy (4P) at McGill University and guest editor of a series of historical articles that commemorated 100 years of the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. Shannon Tania Waters, MD, MHSc, FRCPC, is Director of Health Surveillance, First Nations and Inuit Health, Health Canada, BC Region, a community medicine specialist and a member of Stz'uminus First Nation from Vancouver Island, BC.

## **This is Public Health: A Canadian History**

CPHA's Centenary Steering Committee, chaired by Gerry Dafoe, struck the History Working Group to oversee the development of historical products. Members of this committee carried out their work with a great deal of heart, and CPHA is indebted to them. The following members reviewed draft chapters of the book:

Margaret Hilson, Committee Chair (former director of CPHA's Global Health Programs)

James Chauvin (current Director of Policy and Global Health Programs, CPHA)

Dr. Jamie Hockin (former director of Professional Development,  
Office of Public Health Practice, Public Health Agency of Canada)

Dr. John M. Last (Emeritus Professor of Epidemiology, University of Ottawa)

Dr. Maureen Law (former deputy minister of the National Department of Health and Welfare)

Klaus Seeger (life member of the Canadian Institute of the Public Health Inspectors and  
recipient of the Alex Cross Award)

This book was researched, drafted, reviewed, revised, and designed within a year, which was an arduous undertaking, requiring countless volunteer hours from all those involved along with a lot of good will. Thanks to Leah Gryfe, who showed us that an interactive e-book has many advantages over a static, printed book.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy; however, if errors have crept in, please let CPHA know (one of those e-book advantages is that corrections are a lot easier to make.)

It has been a real privilege to be part of the making of this book on the history of public health, of learning about the men and women who worked to advance the health of the community long before the health system that we rely upon today was in place. I trust this electronic book will make them forever visible.

*Sylvia Fanjoy*

Director, CPHA's Centenary

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### Authors' Prefaces

#### Christopher Rutty

Tackling the task of researching and writing the history of public health in Canada from the beginning to almost the present, and within a year, has been a daunting, though rewarding one, and made possible with the help of a number of key people, especially Sylvia Fanjoy and Sue Sullivan. Sylvia kept the project moving forward efficiently and provided encouragement and helpful input on many levels as I researched and drafted the manuscript. Sue's contributions extended well beyond her initial role as editor to one of co-researcher and co-writer, not only reworking my initial drafts, but also finalizing the manuscript and adding considerable material to it. I also must thank the members of the History Working Group and the reviewers for their commitment to the project and their helpful suggestions.

Special acknowledgement must be given to Sanofi Pasteur Limited's Connaught Campus Library in Toronto, and especially Hugh McNaught, Manager of Library Services at Sanofi Pasteur, for providing access to an almost complete run of the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* from its beginning in 1910, and also to a rare collection of early Canadian public health journals published during the 1870s and 1880s. Also of practical importance was having free access to a photocopier to enable me to undertake a thorough review of these journals upon which much of this book has been based. Access to the extensive archives of Connaught Laboratories, especially the historical photo collection, is also greatly appreciated.

Special acknowledgement must also be made to Dr. Luis Barreto, Vice-President, Immunization Policy & Scientific and Medical Affairs at Sanofi Pasteur's Connaught Campus, for facilitating my involvement in this project and for his confidence in my abilities to get the job done. Dr. Barreto has been a great supporter of the history of public health and has made



## **This is Public Health: A Canadian History**

it possible for me to develop a broad research and knowledge base in many areas covered in this book. Such work enabled me to use the limited time I had to expand that base into areas of public health history that I was less familiar with when I started.

On a personal level, my wife Andrea and my daughter Alessandra deserve special acknowledgement in putting up with me as I toiled away in my basement office going through many boxes of photocopied articles and historical documents and often spending late nights drafting this almost overwhelming story. They kept me going, but there were times when they didn't see me much. However, I think it was all worth it. The story you are about to read was a challenge to tell, and one that hasn't been told before on this scale. I learned a lot putting all the pieces together into what I'm confident readers will find is a dynamic, dramatic and engaging book.

My involvement in this project follows an extensive academic and professional background as a historian of medicine that began during an undergraduate program in history and the history of science at the University of Western Ontario, a Master's degree in History at UWO and a PhD in History at the University of Toronto. The history of polio in Canada has been of special interest since an undergraduate essay on musician Neil Young's personal experience with the disease as a five-year-old in 1951, followed by a MA thesis on polio in Ontario and a national study for my PhD, which took me into studying the development of polio vaccines and broader scientific, social and political aspects of public health in Canada. After completing my PhD in 1995, I established myself as a medical historian/consultant with the creation of "Health Heritage Research Services," through which I have provided research, writing and creative services for a variety of clients. The HHRS website includes more information about my background and experience, as well as extensive content related to many aspects of the history of public health in Canada.

**Sue Sullivan**

The production of *This is Public Health: A Canadian History* has been a collaborative, evolutionary process, thanks in large part to the History Working Group and the external reviewers who told us that we needed to paint a broader picture and reflect the diversity of the public health community of the past. I'd also like to thank Sylvia Fanjoy for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this history and for motivating and coordinating the whole team behind it. We looked beyond the official records of the traditional elites for stories of public health nurses, sanitary inspectors and the many others who toiled on the "front lines" of public health. We added context and commentary from a variety of sources, including other CPHA centenary products in development. I am acutely aware this is *a* history and not *the* history of public health in Canada. With neither a scholarly nor a public health background, my goal has been to engage a broad audience so that like me, readers gain a new appreciation for everything that public health encompasses and why our history is important today. The public's health has improved enormously over the past 100 years and this is due in large part to the commitment of individuals who fought to change the status quo because they wanted to improve the health of the community, especially history's voiceless, powerless and invisible. Ann Robertson of the University of Toronto's Department of Public Health Sciences, in a 1998 article on "Shifting Discourses on Health in Canada" says, "The ways in which we conceptualize and speak and write about health are never just about health; they also function as repositories and mirrors of our ideas and beliefs about human nature and the nature of reality, as well as about the kind of society we can imagine creating and how best to achieve it." I hope that this history of public health brings alive the public health reformers of the past and inspires us all to imagine a healthier society for today and tomorrow.

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## Acknowledgements

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