



COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight- Executive Council Office

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Why Is This Important?

- COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives of all New Brunswickers
- The government had to make difficult choices, including the curtailment of individual freedoms, the closure and reopening of public spaces, schools, and businesses, among many other measures to ensure the safety of New Brunswickers
- Effective oversight supports sound decision-making, policy and strategy implementation, risk mitigation and performance management

Overall Conclusions

- The Province reacted quickly with unprecedented measures aimed at saving lives
- The structures and processes established by the Province for the COVID-19 response set a framework for effective oversight
- There are opportunities to improve oversight to be better prepared for a future pandemic

What We Found

Responsibilities of Executive Committees

- No formal documents exist that define the purpose, expectations, and roles and responsibilities of COVID Core, the group of senior officials who supported Cabinet Committee on COVID-19
- COVID Core did not maintain records of its meetings
- Roles of the Deputy Ministers' Security and Emergency Committee and Assistant Deputy Ministers' Security and Emergency Committee in the pandemic response were not clearly defined

Level of Preparedness

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic lessons learned from the H1N1 experience were not incorporated into an updated provincial pandemic plan
- The Province created new committee structures and processes in March 2020

Pandemic Preparedness Going Forward

- Province needs to incorporate lessons learned from COVID-19 pandemic into an updated provincial pandemic emergency plan and communication plan

Documentation Supporting Public Health Measures

- Public Health measures at times were supported only by verbal updates from Department of Health, especially in the early stages of the pandemic
- One Mandatory Order was revised the next day after decision-makers asserted that it did not reflect the intended decision
- Documentation of Department of Health recommendations improved over time

Mandatory Order Process

- Justice and Public Safety did not always have time to seek Public Health feedback on draft Mandatory Order requirements
- The short time between the announcement of the Mandatory Order and when it became effective was challenging