



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

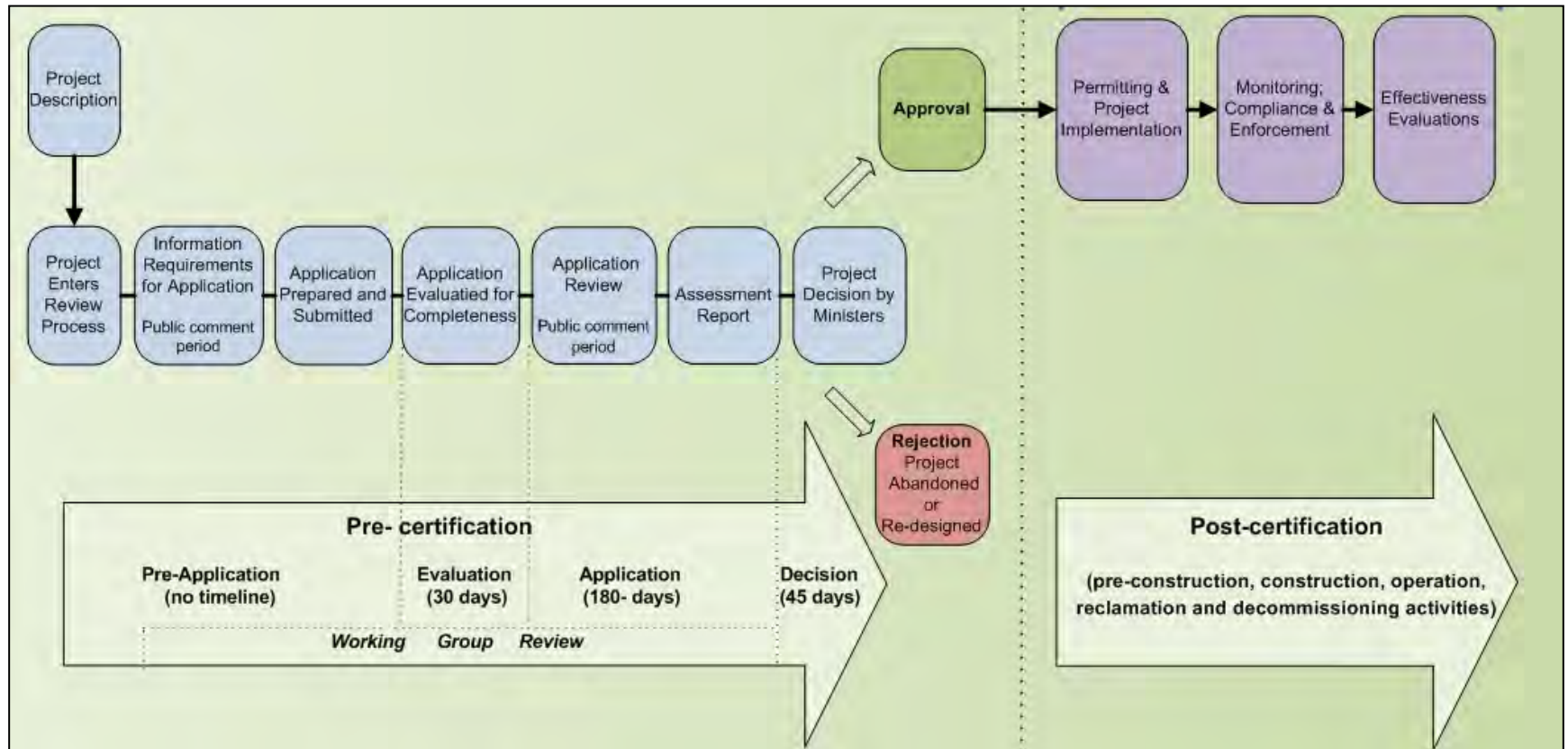
Readiness of BC's health authorities to stand for health in mandated environmental assessments

a summer 2014 survey
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BC Environmental Assessment Act

- The *British Columbia Environmental Assessment Act* (2002) created the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) which is responsible for ensuring that potential environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects of proposed major projects are considered
- The EAO oversees a single integrated process to review proposed major projects in BC eliminating the requirement that individual BC ministries and agencies conduct their own separate review processes

Environmental Assessment in BC



BC Public Health Act and EA

- The British Columbia Public Health Act (2008) requires PHIs and MOHs to investigate and take actions to prevent or arrest health hazards including issuing orders under the Act
- The Act also requires MOHs to monitor the health of the population, to advise authorities and local government on public health issues and to report to the public on matters affecting public health

Public Health in EA in BC

- Procedures for routine notification of health authorities regarding EAO assessments are in place in all provinces except BC
- Health impacts related to proposed major projects in BC are assessed as a pillar of the Environmental Assessment (EA) process
- Health Canada has in the past participated actively on BC EAO Working Groups

Assessments Performed (2011-13)

Projects completed in 2011-2013	15	(%)
Health Assessment	14	93
Air quality	14	93
Water quality	15	100
Food/soil quality	8	53
Noise	12	80
Infrasound	1	7
Electromagnetic radiation	5	33
Healthy living	6	40
Visual/aesthetic impact	5	33
Housing	1	7
Injuries	2	13
Emergency services	8	53
Occupational health	8	53
Social Assessment	15	100
Economic Assessment	15	100

Health Representation on EAO Working Groups (2011-13)

Projects completed in 2011-2013	15	(%)
Any health representation	14	93%
Health Canada	10	67%
BC Ministry of Health	0	0%
BC CDC	0	0%
Regional Health Authority	11	73%
Fraser	5	33%
Interior	1	7%
Northern	3	20%
Vancouver Coastal	1	7%
Vancouver Island	1	7%

2014 organizational readiness survey

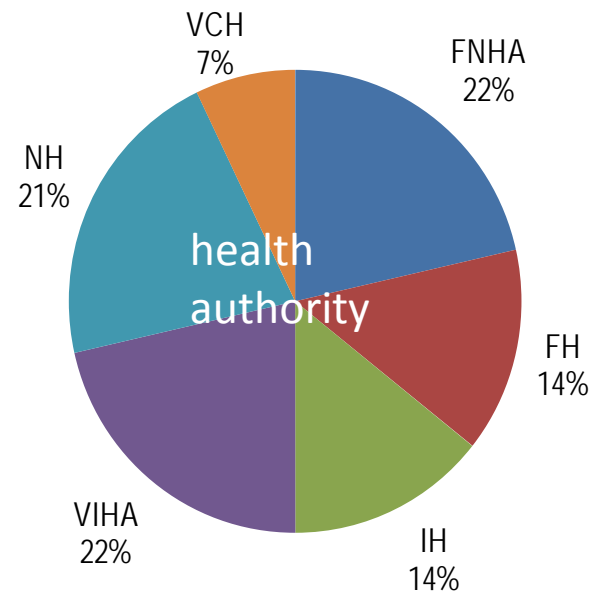
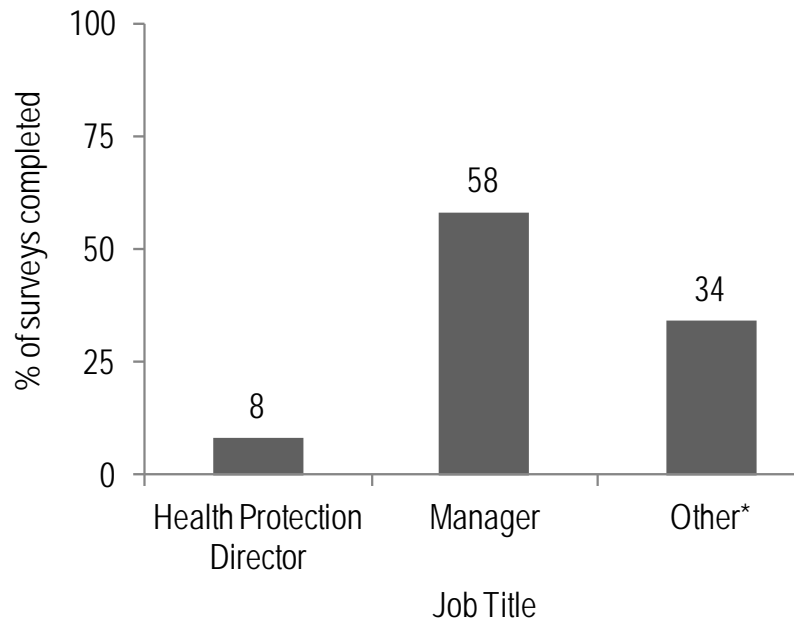
- Mandated by the BC EH Policy advisory Committee, conducted by BCCDC
- Aimed to review BC's PHI involvement in mandated EA, as well as the capacity and willingness of PHIs and their health authorities for further involvement
- Regional Directors of EH agreed to promote the survey among PHIs working in their health authorities

BC PHIs/Specialists/Managers/Health Protection Directors to whom the EHA Readiness survey was sent and responses received, by Health Authority, July 2014

	PHIs/Specialists to whom survey was sent	Survey opened	Skills section completed	Entire survey completed	Managers and Directors to whom survey was sent	Survey opened	Surveys completed
FH	81	24	11	9	9	4	2
FNHA	23	14	10	8	3	2	1
IH	3	4	4	3	2	2	2
NH	24	9	7	6	4	3	3
VCH	70	26	15	10	5	2	1
VIHA	37	22	13	11	5	4	3
Total	238	99	60	47	28	17	12

Organizational readiness for Environmental Health Impact Assessment in BC:

2014 survey of 12 EH managers with BC's health authorities



My RHA has participated in an EA coordinated by the BC Environmental Assessment Office

Health Authority	Percent who replied yes, their RHA had participated in EHA / EA in the 5 years prior to the survey
FH	50
FNHA	0
IH	100
NH	100
VCH	50
VIHA	50

Besides participating formally in a BC EA, my RHA has also ... *(according to directors/managers)*

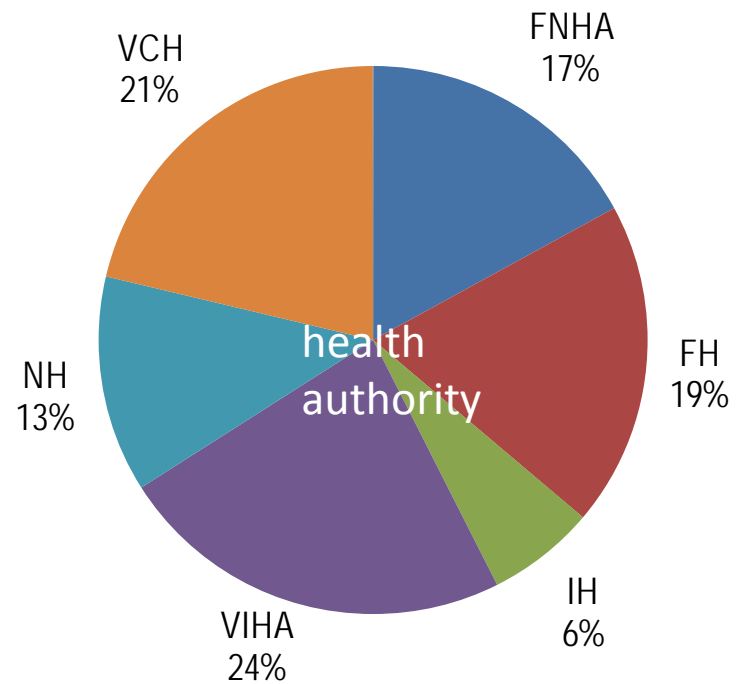
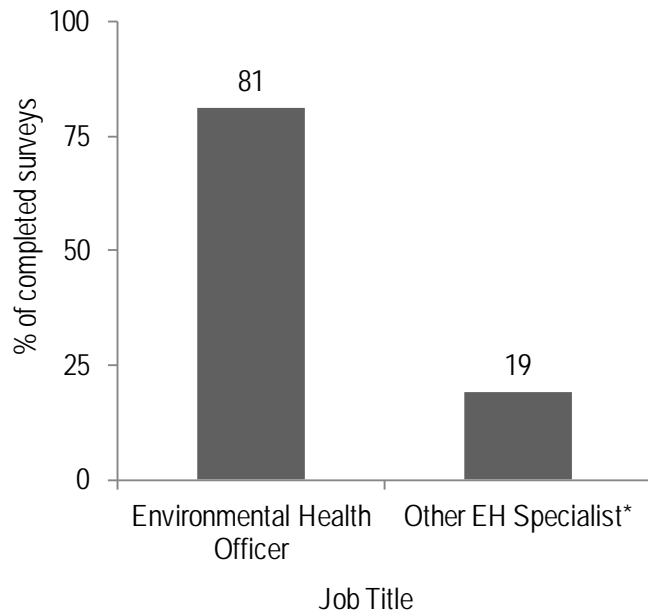
Activities	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Answered questions from the proponent about the project	5	--	--	1
Conducted an independent risk assessment	2	3	--	1
Answered questions from a regional or municipal government about the project	5		--	1
Issued a public communication concerning the EHA	--	5	--	1
Commented at a public meeting about the project	4	--	1	1
Assessed impacts as part of a permit Application (air, water quality, land use)	3	1	1	1
Advised a municipal or regional government	3	2	--	1
Advocated	2	1	2	1
Participated in another way*	2	2	1	1

PHIs/specialists surveyed by Health Authority---July 2014

Health Authority	# surveyed	# completed	% completed
FH	81	9	11
FNHA	23	8	35
IH	3	3	100
NH	24	6	25
VCH	70	10	14
VIHA	37	11	30
Total	238	47	20

Organizational readiness for Environmental Health Impact Assessment in BC:

2014 survey of 238 PHIs and EH specialists with BC's health authorities



Primary responsibility(s*) of PHI/specialist survey respondents

Primary responsibility*	#	%
Food Safety	33	72
Water	33	72
Land Use / Built Environment	23	50
Air Quality	13	28
Personal Service Establishment Inspections	14	30
Recreational Facilities/Water (Pools, hot tubs, beaches)	12	26
Communicable Disease / Outbreaks	9	20
Other	11	24

* Many respondents reported multiple primary responsibilities

Areas of training and familiarity among 59 PHI/specialist survey respondents

Field	Received training (of respondents to this question)	Percent	Reported feeling comfortable using this skill set in an EA (of respondents to this question)	Percent	Reported feeling comfortable using this skill set in an EA (of those who received training)	Percent
Risk Assessment	51 / 59	86	32 / 48	67	32 / 51	63
Toxicology	49 / 59	83	16 / 46	35	16 / 49	33
Environmental Chemistry	48 / 59	81	18 / 46	39	18 / 48	38
Epidemiology	57 / 59	97	22 / 54	41	22 / 57	38
Statistics	55 / 59	93	15 / 51	29	15 / 55	27
Land Use	49 / 58	84	36 / 47	77	36 / 49	73
Air Quality	51 / 58	88	18 / 46	39	18 / 51	35
Water Quality	57 / 58	98	46 / 52	88	46 / 57	81
Soils and Hydrogeology	55 / 58	95	27 / 53	51	27 / 55	49
Environmental health surveillance / data systems	14 / 57	25	10 / 14	71	10 / 14	71
Environmental health policy / risk management	14 / 57	25	11 / 16	69	11 / 14	78
Environmental Impact Assessment (EA)	10 / 57	18	6 / 10	60	6 / 10	60

PHI/specialist comfort with screening, scoping and assessing an Environmental Assessment

Environmental assessment component	Reported feeling he/she has the necessary skills and training, of respondents to this question	Percent
1. Identifying topics or health issues around the proposed project or process under assessment that are relevant to your region	35 / 58	60
2. Screening the available resources and data to use in assessment of potential population health impacts associated with a proposed project or process	25 / 56	45
3. Consulting with the public and relevant content experts	30 / 56	54
4. Accessing relevant data for the assessment	20 / 55	36
5. Scoping which issues to include in a population health assessment (establishing the scope of an assessment)	15 / 55	27
6. Reviewing a quantitative assessment of environmental health impacts (e.g., generating prediction models, performing calculations of environmental health impacts and considerations / areas of uncertainty)	7 / 55	13
7. Reviewing a qualitative assessment of environmental health impacts (e.g., analysis of responses to community surveys in areas where quantitative health impact data may be limited)	22 / 54	41
8. Formulating recommendations to mitigate potential threats to population health associated with a proposed project or process	31 / 55	56
9. Assessing the population health benefits of a project	24 / 55	44
10. Communicating environmental health assessment findings to your communities	37 / 54	68
11. Monitoring and evaluation of environmental health endpoints once the proposed project or processes are underway	21 / 55	38
12. Facilitating or participating in environmental health assessment for Aboriginal communities	20 / 56	36
13. Participating in a working group for a project under EA review (particularly a working group of the BC Environmental Assessment Office)	33 / 55	60

Other activities among 8 PHI/specialists with EA Working group experience

Activities	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Answered questions from the proponent about the project	4	2	1	1
Conducted an independent risk assessment	1	6	--	1
Answered questions from a regional or municipal government about the project	2	5	--	1
Issued a public communication concerning the EHA	1	6	--	1
Commented at a public meeting about the project	2	5	--	1
Assessed impacts as part of a permit application	4	3	--	1
Advised a municipal or regional government	3	4	--	1
Advocated	2	4	1	1
Participated in another way*	4	2	--	2

PHIs/specialists: Do you agree with the following statement?

“I think Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) should participate in environmental health assessments”

Response	#	%
Strongly agree	27	51
Agree	22	41
Neutral	3	6
Disagree	1	2
Strongly Disagree	--	--
N/A	--	--
Total responses	53	100

Factors that Managers/Directors feel currently limit their human resources participating adequately in environmental health assessments

Factors	Percent
Staff availability	73
Staff training	87
Supervision	20
Other financial resources (e.g., travel to sites, hiring consultants/experts)	53
Other*	33

Factors unrelated to human resources which Managers/Directors feel are currently adequate to participate in environmental health assessments

Factors	Percent
Organizational mandate	50
Access to expertise beyond RHA for EHAs	21
Organizational experience with EHAs	28

Readiness of BC's health authorities to stand for health in mandated environmental assessments

- While BC legislation requires health impact assessment as part of mandated EA, public health involvement has to date been limited
- A 2014 survey suggested that PHIs favour involvement, and while many have the requisite training, they lack experience and direction
- Managers relate that finances/staff limit HA involvement in mandated EA



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Thank you
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