

By Negar Elmieh and Tina Chen, NCCEH

The National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCCEH) promotes evidence-informed public health practice and policy making through synthesis and dissemination of scientific knowledge to support the work of environmental public health practitioners (EHPs) across Canada. To inform our work, we periodically conduct needs assessment to gather intel on priority issues from our target audiences. We are currently conducting three theme-specific surveys to identify specific needs and gaps in these areas as relevant to EHPs' work. Your input in our surveys as described below would help to align future priorities and resource allocation for addressing areas for improvement and capacity building. These surveys take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Food Safety Online Community of Practice Needs Assessment Survey

The field of food safety is an expansive area that covers an array of topics. It is estimated that about [4 million Canadians](#) are affected by foodborne illnesses due to known



and unknown causes annually. Over 30 different types of foodborne pathogens can cause foodborne illnesses. New foods and emerging food trends continuously challenge our current knowledge on safe food handling and processing. Environmental health officers/public health inspectors and other food safety specialists are tasked with the important role of keeping Canadians safe from improperly processed or prepared foods; however, there appears to be a lack of a user-friendly and easily accessible national platform for interdisciplinary collaboration and exchange of information, expertise, and experiences across Canada.

To facilitate networking, learning, and knowledge exchange, the NCCEH is exploring the feasibility and need of an online community of practice (CoP) that connects environmental public health professionals, industry and academic experts, and policy makers. The survey aims to help us better understand your interest in building a community of practice to support your work.

[Click here to access the survey](#)

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National Collaborating Centre
for Environmental Health

Centre de collaboration nationale
en santé environnementale

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Goodbye 2023, and hello to 2024!

Moving into 2024 the executive is pleased to welcome, Nicole Pogoda and Kuljeet Chattha as councilors and Casey Neathway as President Elect to the BC/YT CIPHI Branch. These members bring a commitment to the vision and purpose of the Branch and provide new ideas and perspectives on our work

2024 will see a big change on the executive as we have to say goodbye to our long standing BC Page Editor Stacey Sowa as she steps down from her role. Stacey has given many years of dedication and hard work to this role, and we extend our most sincere thank you to her, for her invaluable contributions as the BC/YK Page editor over the last 9 years. Stacey's dedication and commitment did not go unnoticed. We thank her deeply for everything she has done and her ongoing contributions to CIPHI. We will miss having her as our BC/YK Page editor and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Although we are very sad to see Stacey step down from her editor role we are excited to announce that the position was filled very quickly by Gethsemane Luttrell. Gethsemane brings with her many years of experience as an EHO and was previously a councilor on the BC/YK Branch executive from 2018-2020. Congratulations to Gethsemane Luttrell, we look forward to the wealth of experience she has to bring and to seeing the continuation of our BC/YK Branch Page Newsletter.

It is our hope that in 2024, we get an opportunity to engage more with our members, continue with advocacy initiatives and create awareness about CIPHI and what we do. We plan to maintain the momentum set by the National Advocacy Committee in continuing working towards recruitment and retention within our profession.

Advocacy

To maintain the momentum set by the National Campaign CIPHI BC/YK Branch has a regional Campaign running that began Dec, 2023 and ends Jan, 2024. This will be a continuation of the 'Made Possible by' assets and will include:

- 1 static billboard in West Kelowna (Westside Rd)
- 1 digital billboard in Vancouver (West Pender and Abbott)
- Digital display ads across Bell Media network and targeted advertising on Meta (Facebook & Instagram)

Please keep an eye out for the billboards and digital ads! If you happen to see the ads around BC please take photos, or selfies with them and send to the president email; president@ciphi.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

Valerie Jackson, CPHI(C)
BC/YT Branch President



(Continued from page 1)

One Health Survey

The World Health Organization defines One Health as an [integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems](#). One health allows us to explicitly acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health problems. Many have incorporated One Health principles in their work across Canada and worldwide.

To better understand One Health priorities for EPHPs across Canada, the NCCEH has developed a short survey to identify those in the NCCEH networks whose work includes One Health principles. If your work connects with One Health principles, we want to hear from you. Your input will help us gain a better understanding of the nature and scope of One Health in the context of EPHP work across Canada, facilitate One Health collaborations to address complex challenges, and guide future work.



[Click here to access the survey](#)

Emergency Preparedness and Response Survey

Environmental public health professionals perform many critical functions during emergency response and recovery. You keep water, food, land, air, and facilities safe even when severe disruptions arise during and after emergency events. The NCCEH continues to support EPHPs by providing evidence-informed resources. Through this survey we want to know how you are involved in Emergency preparedness and response and what information would be helpful in your role and responsibilities. This information will allow us to better understand the expertise in our networks, facilitate network building, and guide future work to support Emergency preparedness and response.



[Click here to access the survey](#)

As a token of appreciation for participating in our surveys, respondents who completed one or more surveys of your choice are eligible to win a \$20 gift card per survey (a total of 15 gift cards are available and winners will be determined by random draw). Surveys close February 9, 2024. Please direct inquiries to ncceh@bccdc.ca. Thank you for your contributions!



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BC Branch AGM and Holiday Luncheon

The 2023 CIPHI BC/Yukon Branch Annual Christmas Luncheon was a great success! The attendance for the lunch was almost 70 people! This is in part due to the support of Tim Roark & Associates, Environmental Health Consultants co-sponsoring the event reducing the fees payable by the participants, especially for the students and retirees! Among the attendees were a group of retirees, managers from the Health Authorities, food specialists from BCCDC, EHOs, students and BCIT Faculty members! The venue and the food were great. There were lots of opportunities for people to network and catch up after a long time of not able to meet and greet each other in person. Many of them stayed behind to chat long after lunch was over!

At the Luncheon, Awards were given out to those in attendance and the recipients were surprised as they did not know of their nomination and award. The Member of the Year Award went to Ann Thomas. The Alex Nilsson Award went to Gary Tam. The BC Honorary Membership Award goes to Lydia Ma and the 50 year Membership Award went to Brigitte Bauman. In addition, Tim Roark, Branch and National Historian brought and set up a display of pictures of Award recipients over time. They were very interesting. It showed the long history of the Branch (as seen in the pictures). During the AGM, Tim gave a brief description of the Branch history including some famous people and the story of our Crest; how it was lost and recrafted. A picture of this was also displayed at the luncheon.

In the past few years that I have organized the Luncheon, I did not remember such a big turnout! There were door prizes and lots of excitement in the air. The energy in the room was great. It was a success and it was well worth the effort! I hope in the coming years, more will come and join in to share the camaraderie of what a great professional body that his Environmental Health!

Jessica Ip, VCH

Brigitte Bauman accepting her
50 Year Membership Pin.

Congrats!



Alex Nilsson Award

Gary Tam is a household name if you're linked in any capacity with CIPHI and Environmental Public Health. It's no surprise that his contributions are being deservedly honoured with the 2023 Alex Nilsson Award. Below is the nomination letter from Casey Neathway, CIPHI National President and Stephanie Tooke, BC Branch Past-President.

Dear Awards Committee,

I am writing to nominate Mr. Gary Tam for the CIPHI BC Alex Nilsson Award. Given his unwavering dedication, selfless service, and remarkable contributions to both the BC Branch and CIPHI as a whole, Gary epitomizes the spirit and ethos of this accolade.

Gary's environmental public health journey began in a small town in Alberta, exploring the multifaceted domain of public health. His dedication brought him to the West Coast, where he shone brightly as a generalist EHO in the Richmond/Vancouver region. His passion for enhancing the training experience for practicum students has always been evident, and his hands-on approach in formulating robust training programs has played a pivotal role in shaping the competencies of budding EHOs.

While his professional achievements are commendable, it is his voluntary contributions to CIPHI that truly stand out. At both the provincial and national levels, Gary has been an ardent supporter and a backbone of CIPHI's numerous initiatives. From being a photographer at educational conferences to spearheading various planning committees and managing critical projects in the BC Branch and NEC, his efforts are unparalleled. Furthermore, his tenure as a Branch President and National Treasurer from 2011-2013 is a testament to his leadership abilities and commitment to CIPHI's vision.

Of particular note is Gary's current and instrumental role as the Chair of the Board of Certification (BOC). He has not only led the modernization of the BOC's written exam portion, ensuring its relevancy and comprehensiveness, but also fostered a collaborative spirit by supporting stronger linkages between the BOC and NEC. This partnership under his leadership has bolstered the effectiveness and efficiency of both entities, driving forward our collective mission. On a National scale, Gary is the current CIPHI representative to PHAC's modernization of public health competencies, ensuring the voice of CPHI(C)s are represented in frameworks for training and ongoing competencies. Gary's contributions, both tangible and intangible, make him an outstanding candidate for the CIPHI BC Alex Nilsson Award.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Warm regards,

Casey Neathway and Stephanie Tooke



Member of the Year Award

Ann Thomas has been a strong supporter and a tireless contributor to CIPHI. Ann has held more positions provincially Nationally and Provincially than one can count. Below is the nomination letter from CIPHI National President Casey Neathway and Valerie Jackson, BC Branch President.

To the CIPHI BC/YT Awards Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm that we nominate Ann Thomas for the CIPHI BC Branch Member of the Year Award for 2023. Ann's tireless dedication and significant contributions to the field of environmental public health, both within British Columbia and on a national level, make her a standout candidate for this honour.

Ann's journey with the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) began in 1986, beginning a career spanning over three decades with unwavering commitment to the principles of environmental health protection. Her dedication was nationally recognized when she received a Life Membership in 2020, a testament to her lifelong devotion to the Institute.

One of Ann's most notable achievements was her leadership as President of CIPHI for two consecutive terms, from 2015 to 2019. During her tenure, she exemplified visionary leadership and was instrumental in navigating the organization through numerous challenges and transformations, leaving a lasting impact on the Institute.

As Chair of the Board of Certification (BOC) from 2004 to 2011, Ann played a crucial role in upholding the standards of professionalism and excellence in the field. Her efforts ensured that environmental health professionals across Canada were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles. In 2022, Ann was appointed to the CIPHI National Executive Council (NEC) to fill one of the newly created National Director positions. This role allowed her to lead the modernization and improvement of policy and governance, ensuring the Institute is set up for success for future generations.

Ann's advocacy for mandatory membership and the need for continuous professional development has been pivotal in establishing Certified Public Health Inspectors (CPHI(C)s) as vital members of the health professional community in Canada. Her vision for a well-trained, highly skilled workforce has greatly contributed to the professional development and recognition of CPHI(C)s.

2023 has been a hallmark year for policy development and improvement within the CIPHI organization thanks to the leadership of Ann Thomas. Her leadership is respected amongst all who have had the privilege of working alongside her, and it is her commitment and knowledge that has led CIPHI to the successful position it currently finds itself.

I trust that the Awards Committee will find Ann's outstanding contributions to the field, her visionary leadership, and her unwavering commitment to public health worthy of recognition through the Member of the Year award.

Sincerely,

Casey Neathway and Valerie Jackson



Honorary Membership Award

Lydia Ma was the recipient of the 2023 Honorary Membership Award. For anyone who has worked with Lydia, you are well aware of the immense impact she has on the field of Environmental Public Health and the work that EPHPs do. Below is the nomination letter from CIPHI National President Casey Neathway and Valerie Jackson, BC Branch President.

Dear Awards Committee,

We are writing to nominate Ms. Lydia Ma for the CIPHI BC Honorary Membership Award. Given her outstanding contributions to public health and society, especially within the realm of environmental health, I firmly believe that Ms. Ma is an exemplary candidate for this honor.

Lydia serves as the Manager of the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCCEH) and holds an adjunct professorship at the School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia. Under her leadership at the NCCEH, she has successfully managed a dedicated team of environmental health and knowledge translation scientists to respond to research and information requests from environmental public health professionals across Canada. Lydia has ensured that NCCEH programmatic development is aligned with their mandate to provide knowledge products and services that bolster the public health sector, particularly in addressing current and emerging environmental health issues.

Beyond her administrative and management contributions, Lydia's academic accomplishments are equally commendable. Holding a PhD in Pathology and an MSc in Occupational and Environmental Hygiene from the University of British Columbia, her educational background has been instrumental in pioneering public health initiatives. These credentials not only solidify her deep understanding of public health complexities but also signify her commitment to continual learning and dedication to the domain.

Lydia's commitment to environmental public health research and support for increasing knowledge and awareness resonates with the very essence of the CIPHI BC Honorary Membership Award, which recognizes those who have rendered outstanding service to public health and society. Given her indomitable spirit, profound expertise, and the tangible impact she has had in the field, I am confident that she is a prime candidate for this accolade.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm regards,

Casey Neathway and Valerie Jackson

Are you interested in contributing to the profession, being a part of change, and having a say in the future of the environmental public health profession in B.C. or Yukon? CIPHI has vacant councilor roles that are a great way to get involved! Contact Valerie Jackson at president@ciphi.bc.ca for more information



Holiday Luncheon Pictures



BCIT Students, Faculty, and Staff

(L to R) Nadia white, Tracie Cheung, Anastasia Wilcott, John Pickles and Dale Chan



(L to R) Ashton Erickson, Jasmina Egeler, Kuljeet Chattha and Phil Muirhead



(L to R) Esther Tong, Martin Bohdal, Sion Shyng, Jina Lee Pam Mandarino and Lorraine McIntyne





(L to R) Olga Bitzikos, Mark Ritson, Steve Chong, Randy Ash

(L to R) Gary Tam, Jackie Chiu, Sara Li, Celine Hsin



(L to R) BCIT Students – Jane You, Joyce Ann Javier, Kanwaldeep Kaur, Benson Chen, Abraham Okita, Sonya Wong, Elin Bae



(L to R) Ian Stewart, Vanessa Karakilic, Brian Moore, Patrick Chuang, Keith Herle, Kelcey Watts





(L to R) Le Truong, YJ Jeon, Jessica Parihar, Aisha Razak, Lucas Jong, Tushar Dhingra

(L to R) Tim Roark, God Steward, Timothy Millard, Claudia Kurzac, Ann Thomas, Brigitte Bauman, Roy Wong



YOU KNOW WHAT REALLY GRINDS MY GEARS. . .



When people think that the “five-second rule” is an actual food safety guideline

Please submit your “heard it a thousand time before one-liners” that you hear in the field over and over and your EPHP pet peeves to bcpageeditor@cphi.bc.ca. Let’s all share in the hilariously annoying joys of our environmental public health experiences.

Backflow Prevention, Cross Connection Control, and the Environmental Operators Certification Program

By Kalpna Solanki CPHI(C) BSc MBA

What is Cross Connection Control?

Cross Connection Control processes are to prevent contamination of potable water as a result of backflow through pipe cross connections. Whilst the terms are often used interchangeably, all Backflow Prevention is part of Cross Connection Control, but the reverse is not the same. For example, in many labs, we would often see rubber tubes dangling from taps into the sink to prevent splashing, and sometimes these tubes would be immersed in a beaker with chemical solutions. This has now resulted in a cross connection. Having no tube or a short tube results in an air gap preventing backflow. Of course, having a backflow prevention device in place is the ultimate method for preventing the foibles of undergrad science students who sometimes do things they should not.

But what exactly is backflow?

Backflow

Backflow is the undesired reversal of flow from a building or facility back into the drinking water system that is caused by either back siphonage or back pressure:

- Back siphonage occurs when there is a partial vacuum in the drinking water system from large water use events such as a watermain break or firefighting activities. This vacuum may draw contaminated water back into the drinking water system.

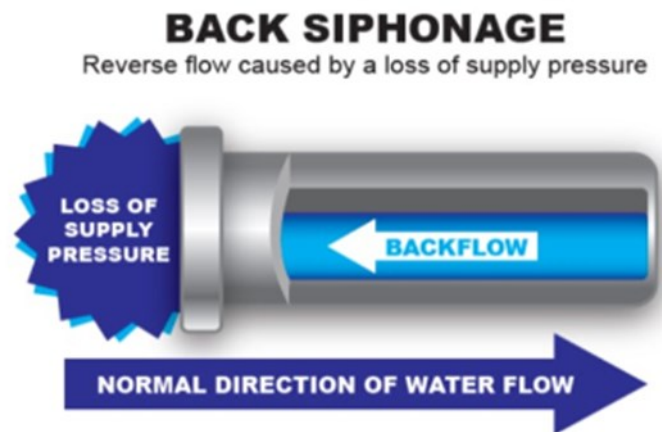


Figure 1: Back Siphonage (Source: City of Durham)

- Back pressure occurs when there is a connection to a non-potable water supply operating at a higher pressure than the drinking water system. Back pressure can be created by booster pumps, temperature increases in boilers, or elevated piping. This increased pressure may push contaminated water back into the drinking water system.

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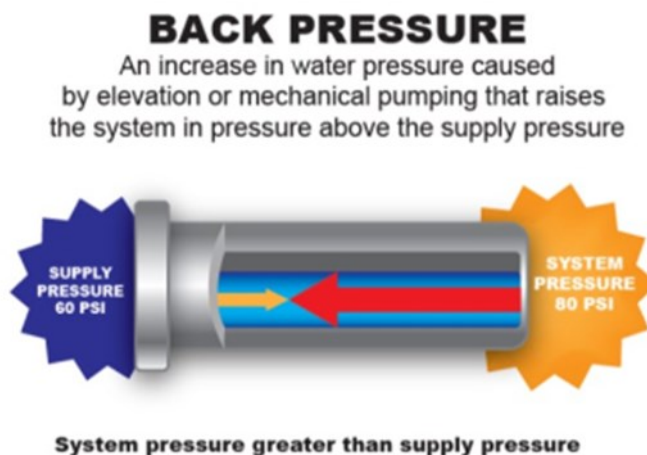


Figure 2: Back Pressure (Source: City of Durham)

So, tell me again, why is this important?

Backflow events have the potential to contaminate the water in our drinking water distribution system, which can cause implications for human health and safety. Canada has a history of backflow incidents highlighting the importance of backflow prevention programs. Some examples:

2011: An Oakville ON high school had to be closed due to cleaning chemicals entering its water lines. A backflow device successfully prevented any impact to the local drinking water supply.

2005: Stratford, ON residents discovered pink tap water following a backflow event at a local car wash. Residents of Stratford went without water for two days.

2002: An Edmonton high rise had blue caustic water flowing from the taps. The cause was backflow from the heating system after repairs to internal water lines. The issue took two weeks to correct.

1997: In Guelph, ON, petroleum chemicals back siphoned from an industry into the drinking water system impacting 50,000 residents.

1989: In Edmonton, AB, staff at the laboratory and offices of a research facility in noticed a smell coming from the hot water at the facility. A growth nutrient for microorganisms had backflowed from the laboratory into the facility's domestic hot water system. The potable water system at the facility needed to be chlorinated and flushed.

There is also a notable incident from the US from 1983: In Woodsboro, MD, Paraquat, a highly toxic pesticide, held in storage tanks connected to a town water supply caused the drinking water for 63 homes to be contaminated.

These are the events we know of. There have likely been hundreds if not thousands of similar events that we don't even know about because the impacts of the backflow were not as severe.

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Backflow Prevention, Cross Connection Control, and the EOCP continued. . .

But surely, this is preventable?

Absolutely - ALL of the aforementioned incidents could have been prevented. Backflow can be prevented through backflow prevention devices. These devices allow water to flow only in one direction, hence preventing backflow and contamination of water supplies from external sources.



Figure 3: Backflow Preventer from a Commercial Facility (Source: Watts)

Simply installing a backflow preventer is not enough, however. To ensure the device works in the manner it is supposed to, it needs routine testing (at least annually), and repair/replacement when necessary.

This is obviously important...so there must be federal, provincial, or territorial regulations mandating the installation, testing, and maintenance of backflow prevention devices. Correct?

Therein lies the problem. Backflow prevention is in the public interest, yet there is no such regulation in place federally, in British Columbia, or in Yukon. Instead, within BC and YK, there are some municipalities with bylaws that mandate backflow prevention devices, and sometimes even mandate that they get tested on an annual basis. These backflow prevention assembly testers can obtain voluntary certification through an entity approved by the municipality.

So, what does this have to do with the EOCP, and Environmental Operators?

Whilst there is no entity named in legislation as being responsible for overseeing certification related to Backflow Prevention and Cross Connection Control in British Columbia or Yukon, logic would dictate that the EOCP oversees this.

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Backflow Prevention, Cross Connection Control, and the EOCP continued. . .

The EOCP is named in legislation in BC and YK as the organization responsible for many aspects related to safe drinking water and wastewater management:

- The Drinking Water Protection Regulations (BC)
- The Municipal Wastewater Regulations (BC)
- The Public Health and Safety Act (YK)

Thus, the EOCP, as of mid-2024 will be offering [Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester and Cross Connection Control Inspector certification](#).

What will this look like?

We have worked with Subject Matter Experts to assemble a robust process for the training and certification of professionals who work in the area of Backflow Prevention and Cross Connection Control. Similar to other certifications offered through the EOCP, this new program will consist of:

- Need to Know* criteria outlining the necessary job tasks;
- Courses* need to follow the NTK criteria;
- Upon completion of the course, a practical exam will be administered by the training provider;
- A written exam, with a fee of \$150, comprising of 100 questions, will need to be completed within a time period of three hours. The exam will have a pass grade of 70% and will be available in web-based, paper, and oral formats;
- To maintain certification, 1.2 CEUs will need to be completed in every two-year reporting period.

* the NTK criteria and training will be based on the 'AWWA Canadian Cross-Connection Control Manual'

What about reciprocity and membership dues?

As with the EOCP's current process, individuals certified with acceptable valid certifications from other organizations or jurisdictions will be granted an equivalent certification by the EOCP. Along with that, as is the current process, **regardless of the number of certifications one holds, there is one annual membership fee.** So, if you are a WT, WD, WWC, and/or WWT Operator, this would be an additional certification that would be available to you at no cost to you, or your organization.

All of this sounds great, but why?

This is an area that many in the industry, as well as the EOCP directors and staff, have had concerns about for several years. We believe that with our expertise in the water and wastewater sector going all the way back to 1966, the EOCP is well-positioned to administer this program. This is what we do best...we examine and certify professionals who work in the water and wastewater industry. We believe this is in the public interest.





BCIT Updates – Learning Lunch Hour and Big Info Session

We have had great feedback on the monthly *BCIT Environmental Public Health Learning Lunch Hour* that started in September 2023. Our guests included Casey Neathway, FNHA and CIPHI; Kalpna Solanki, EOCP and Zac Dér, City of Burnaby.

The *Learning Lunch Hour* is a virtual space that connects anyone interested in environmental public health with EPH professionals and experts. Providing a comprehensive overview of the various aspects and roles within the field, the *Learning Lunch Hour* aims to foster an environment of shared learning and professional growth.

Our next session will be on **Tuesday, Feb 27th from 11:30 – 12:30 pm.**

Look for info on how to join us at bcit.ca/enviro-health or on social media:

 [@bctienvironmentalpublichealth](https://www.instagram.com/bctienvironmentalpublichealth)

 BCIT Environmental Public Health

If you are interested in becoming a speaker, please email vkarakilic@bcit.ca or tabraham@bcit.ca

BCIT Big Info session is coming up on Wed, Feb 21st from 4-7 pm at the Burnaby campus. If you know anyone interested in the program, feel free to email dchen@bcit.ca or direct them to the Big Info website.

Register in advance @ <https://www.bcit.ca/event/big-info-7/#rsvp-now> for a chance to win \$1000 off tuition.

Keep up to date on the latest news at the BC Branch website:

www.ciphi.bc.ca

The page also contains information on membership, conferences, career opportunities, documents, and much more. Check it out regularly.

Did you know the BC Branch is on Facebook and Instagram?



Click on the icon to find the BC Branch on Facebook and *Like them*.



Click on the icon and *Follow* the BC Branch on Instagram.

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Editorial Policy

The objective of this newsletter is to keep the members of the BC Branch and other colleagues informed of the local and national events that are of interest and importance to them.

The views, comments, or positions of the BC Page are those of the Editorial Team or the author and do not necessarily reflect those of either the BC Branch or the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors.

The Editorial Team reserves the right to edit material submitted, solicited or unsolicited, for brevity, clarity, and grammatical accuracy.

Advertising Policy

The BC Branch will accept advertising relating to health & environmental issues, products, and services. Advertisements that the editorial team concludes are contrary to good public health practice or environmental protection goals, or those deemed offensive or not in good taste, will not be accepted.

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