

## POSITION STATEMENT

### ISSUE

Audits of the Environmental Health programs in the Northern Lights, East Central, Peace Country and Palliser regions have warned that shortages of public health inspectors and a lack of adherence to food safety standards pose health risks to Albertans.

### BACKGROUND

Recent news articles entitled, "**Rural health regions ailing; Audit finds patient safety risks, rogue community hospitals**" (Edmonton Journal, June 6/08); "**Health inspector shortage puts Peace region at potential risk**" (The Edmonton Journal, January 26/08); "**Audit spotlights floundering system**" (Calgary Herald, June 6/08), have echoed the summation of an audit completed by Deloitte in 2006 and 2007. These articles point to real and identifiable issues observed by the auditor that create potential health risks to Albertans. Specifically, the audits found that in the Northern Lights, East Central, Peace Country and Palliser regions, shortages of health inspectors, rising public health workloads and a lack of adherence to food safety standards pose "significant potential risks" to Albertans.

### CIPHI ALBERTA'S POSITION

CIPHI Alberta believes that health protection is one of the cornerstones of public health. In Alberta, Public Health Inspectors and Environmental Health Officers are the professionals appointed to protect the health of the public. They are trusted to consistently ensure safe environments, safe air, safe water, and safe food through assessments, inspections and investigations. These professionals undertake advanced educational training and are nationally certified to ensure the highest level of service and competence possible. With the continuing upward population growth in Alberta, it is imperative to ensure that the public facilities Albertans use and the environments in which Albertans live in receive the expected amount of attention.

CIPHI Alberta believes that Albertans should not have to compromise their expected standards of public health because of economically prosperous times. Furthermore, to rationalize these identified potential risks to the public by waiting for the system to "catch up" is a dangerous precedent. As the Government of Alberta embarks on the restructuring of the health care system under the newly formed Alberta Health Services Board, we would urge that support be given to rural and urban areas to recruit and retain Public Health Inspectors and Environmental Health Officers.

### ABOUT CIPHI ALBERTA

Incorporated in 1934, the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) is committed to the advancement and promotion of Environmental Public Health in Canada. As one of the provincial branches, CIPHI Alberta is tasked with representing CIPHI and its members in Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

CIPHI's mission is to advance the profession, science and field of environmental public health through certification, advocacy, education and setting standards. We protect the health of Canadians and represent environmental public health professionals across Canada.