



National Citizens Inquiry Commissioners' Final Report of November 2023

Executive Summary

Introduction

The National Citizens Inquiry (NCI) was established to investigate the appropriateness and efficacy of the Canadian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The inquiry was driven by citizen concerns and aimed to provide a thorough, impartial, and transparent examination of the measures taken during the pandemic.

Purpose

The main objectives of the NCI were:

1. **To assess government responses:** Evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of decisions and policies.
2. **To ensure accountability:** Holding public officials and institutions accountable for their actions during the pandemic.
3. **To provide recommendations:** Suggesting improvements for future crisis management and public health responses.

Process

The inquiry followed a detailed and inclusive process:

1. **Public Hearings:** Conducted across eight Canadian cities to gather testimonies from citizens, experts, and stakeholders.
2. **Evidence Collection:** Collected a wide range of evidence, including testimonies, documents, and expert reports.
3. **Transparency and Engagement:** Ensured public access to proceedings and findings, fostering transparency and public trust.
4. **Evaluation and Reporting:** Commissioners thoroughly reviewed and analyzed the evidence to draft the final report, which includes findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Key Findings

The NCI identified several critical areas of concern and made key findings in its final report:

1. **Government Accountability:** There was a significant erosion of public trust in the government's handling of the pandemic due to a lack of transparency and accountability.
2. **Impact on Public Health and Wellbeing:** The measures taken had profound impacts on public health, economic stability, and mental wellbeing, with particularly adverse effects on vulnerable populations such as the elderly and children.
3. **Inconsistencies in Implementation:** There were notable inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the application of public health measures across different regions.
4. **Communication Failures:** Ineffective communication strategies led to widespread misinformation and public confusion .

Recommendations

The NCI provided comprehensive recommendations to address the identified issues and improve future responses:

1. **Enhancing Transparency:** Public institutions should disclose all relevant information and maintain transparency in their operations.
2. **Improving Accountability:** Establish independent oversight bodies to ensure government accountability.
3. **Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure:** Invest in healthcare infrastructure to enhance capacity and readiness for future crises.
4. **Balanced Crisis Management:** Develop approaches that balance public health measures with economic, social, and mental wellbeing considerations.
5. **Effective Communication:** Implement clear, consistent, and honest communication strategies during crises.

Conclusion

The NCI's final report emphasized the need for significant improvements in how government responses to public health crises are managed.

The recommendations aim to restore public trust, ensure accountability, and better prepare Canada for future emergencies.

The inquiry highlighted the importance of learning from past mistakes and fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and public engagement in decision-making processes.