
2007 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Dental Care to Street Youth and Low Income Adults

Issue/Background:

At its April 4, 2007 meeting, the Budget Committee approved a motion to increase the funding of the Toronto Dental Services Program within Toronto Public Health (TPH) by \$54,700. These funds are to be used to provide dental care to street youth and low income adults. The Medical Officer of Health was requested to report on a breakdown for the use of the funds, including details on one-time and ongoing expenditures to Budget Committee at its final wrap up meeting on April 12, 2007.

Key Points:

1. Street Youth and low income adults age 18 years to 64 years are not eligible for the TPH dental program. One of the major gaps in service that is consistently identified by the Toronto adults in surveys is access to dental care for the relief of pain, infection and to support them in their efforts to become employable.
2. Currently some of these people access minimal dental services at health and social services agencies that over a period of time have acquired some dental equipment and enjoyed a few soundly responsible dentists to volunteer to promote dental care. The path of volunteer dentists is very unpredictable and unstable and does not meet the need for this service. Residents with pain and infection are sometimes told that they will have to wait three months before being able to see a dentist.
3. This funding would be used to stabilize these community programs, take advantage of existing dental clinics, equipment located in these facilities and ensure consistent access to necessary dental care for the most vulnerable residents of Toronto.

In 2007, these funds would be used as follows:

Purchase of Dental Equipment & Supplies	\$10,000.00
Purchase of contracted dental services to provide dental care at SHOUT, Evergreen, Scarborough Urban Health Outreach, Parkdale Partners for Oral Health dental clinics (May–December)	\$44,700.00

In 2008, additional funding of \$22,350 will be required to provide services on a full year basis. The total of these expenditures is ongoing.

Questions & Answers:

Q: What is meant by the purchase of contracted dental services?

A: To purchase dental services, Toronto Public Health in partnership with the four agencies named above would enter into a contract with one or more dentists to provide dental services.

Q: What dental equipment and supplies are needed?

A: The dental equipment and supplies that are needed are:

- Dental hand pieces (drills), tooth filling materials
- Dental hand instruments

Q: What other advocacy efforts are in place?

A: Local Health Committees across Toronto have identified access to dental care for low or no income groups as a gap in health services and have requested that the Board of Health advocate vigorously to the Province to include dental care in OHIP. In addition, the Toronto Oral Health Coalition, a group of health and social access agencies, has submitted a proposal to the Minister of Health for funding to meet this gap in health care services. Other provincial coalitions and associations are also lobbying to the provincial government to act expeditiously to address this need in communities across Ontario.

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