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## Public health champions announced

The recipients of the first Public Health Champion Awards were honoured recently by Mayor David Miller and the Board of Health at the opening reception of the City of Toronto Archives exhibit “An Infectious Idea: 125 Years of Public Health in Toronto” (see related story on page 4).

Created as a legacy of the 125th anniversary of Toronto Public Health, the annual awards recognize one individual and one agency that have made outstanding contributions to protecting and promoting the health of Toronto residents.

Board of Health citizen members Vaijyanthi Chari and Wangari Muriuki, co-chairs of the Public Health Champion Awards Selection Committee, announced this year's very deserving recipients.



Mayor David Miller presents Wendy Babcock with her Public Health Champion Award, along with Board of Health Chair Councillor John Filion, City Archivist Karen Teeple, and Medical Officer of Health Dr. David McKeown.

### *Individual category:*

Wendy Babcock, who works as a harm reduction worker at Street Health, has a track record of achievement that includes initiating a partnership with Toronto Police Services to ensure sex workers can report assault without fear of persecution or prosecution. She is also a member of the advisory group to the Special Victims Unit. Wendy helped create numerous projects focused on the safety of sex workers.

### *Agency category:*

The Volunteer Physicians and Dentists at the Scarborough Urban Health Outreach Centre provide care to uninsured and vulnerable individuals and families. Their work includes providing health examinations, diagnosis, treatment, counselling, referrals and vaccinations for more than 10,000 Scarborough residents since 2000. They have also provided dental services to more than 800 adults since 2005.

## Mark your calendars

**January 5** [Flu Clinic](#) – East York Civic Centre, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. (check the website for more clinics in the South Region)

**January 6** [Flu Clinic](#), North York Civic Centre, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. (check the website for more clinics in the North Region)

**January 7** [Flu Clinic](#) – Etobicoke Civic Centre, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. (check the website for more clinics in the West Region)

**January 7** [Toronto a la Cart](#), Information Session, City Hall, Committee Room 1, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**January 7** [Toronto a la Cart](#), Information Session, North York Civic Centre, Council Chambers, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

**January 8** [Flu Clinic](#) – Scarborough Civic Centre, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. (check out the website for more clinics in the East Region)

**January 19** [Board of Health](#), City Hall, Committee Room 1, 1:00 p.m.

**February 10** [Board of Health](#), City Hall, Committee Room 1, 1:00 p.m.

**April 20** [Board of Health](#), City Hall, Committee Room 1, 1:00 p.m.

**May 19** [Board of Health](#), City Hall, Committee Room 1, 1:00 p.m.

**June 15** [Board of Health](#), City Hall, Committee Room 1, 1:00 p.m.

## Give a gift that lasts a lifetime this holiday season – Reduce home and vehicle energy use by 20%

The winter holidays are traditionally a time to celebrate with delicious food, decorating our homes and hosting parties. All this fun, however, means energy use is high. Increased energy consumption causes more air pollution, which can aggravate health issues for people with heart or breathing problems. At the same time, rising energy prices means that increased holiday energy consumption is costing you more money.

Toronto Public Health's 20/20 The Way to Clean Air campaign, including the free [20/20 Planner](#), helps reduce home and vehicle energy use by 20 percent.

“Reducing your home energy and vehicle use this holiday season will give the gift of improved air quality and health for your family and your neighbours,” said Toronto Medical Officer of Health Dr. David McKeown.

The following are ten easy tips to reduce air pollution and save money:

### At home

- Clean or replace your furnace filter regularly (e.g., every two months).
- Replace your showerheads with low-flow showerheads.
- Clean the coils on the back of your refrigerator by brushing off or vacuuming the dust.
- Replace standard light bulbs with energy efficient bulbs.
- Seal and weather-strip doors and windows.

### In your car

- Keep your tires properly inflated; check your tire pressure at least twice a month and add air when needed.
- Keep your engine properly tuned.
- Take your time speeding up and slowing down.
- Choose an energy-efficient vehicle; larger cars and engines often burn more fuel and cost more money to run.
- Limit the amount you idle your engine—it wastes gas and creates air pollution. (Toronto has a by-law that limits idling to no more than 3 minutes in a given 60 minute period.)

# Council supports program to reduce pollution and stimulate a greener economy

In an urban environment like Toronto, businesses and institutions share the environment with local residents. Residents have a right to know what toxic substances are being used and released in their neighbourhoods—and Toronto City Council recently agreed.

At its meeting in early December, Council adopted an [Environmental Reporting, Disclosure and Innovation Program](#) which is a first for a Canadian city. First unveiled in July by Toronto Medical Officer of Health Dr. David McKeown, the program would require businesses to track and report toxic substances of priority health concern. Toronto Public Health will make this information publicly available and help facilities find ways to prevent pollution.

“Providing transparent, easy-to-understand information will increase residents’ knowledge and awareness of their local environment and the businesses in their neighbourhoods,” said Dr. McKeown. “Access to this data could also help build support for environmental improvements.”

This program will fill an important gap in current reporting requirement for chemicals used and released by thousands of small and medium-sized facilities located throughout Toronto.

The Environmental Reporting, Disclosure and Innovation Program has three components: mandatory reporting on priority substances, support for implementation of pollution prevention measures, and public disclosure via a searchable website. The mandatory reporting program is designed to have minimal burden on businesses, and the pollution prevention program is designed to support environmental improvements.

“Manufacturing is central to the economy in Toronto and Ontario. So is our health and the environment,”

said Andrew King from the United Steelworkers.

“To survive and thrive, businesses must become more environmentally sustainable. The environmental reporting program can reduce occupational disease and environmental illnesses and help businesses save costs, become more competitive, and reduce liability and risk.”

Toronto Public Health spent three years consulting with residents, businesses, community organizations, worker agencies and experts to develop a program that would work best for Toronto. The new program will track 25 substances, including solvents, metals and combustion byproducts, which are commonly used or released into the environment by Toronto facilities.

*“To survive and thrive, businesses must become more environmentally sustainable.”*

Andrew King  
United Steelworkers

Reporting programs like this can protect health by stimulating businesses to reduce the use and release of hazardous chemicals. The data collected enables governments and industry associations to provide additional guidance to businesses to identify and implement measures to reduce chemicals or find safer alternatives. Also, disclosing data introduces public scrutiny and enables communities to become informed and engaged, which further motivates companies to reduce chemicals.

“A Toronto bylaw will encourage businesses to reduce their toxic chemical uses and emissions,” says Eco Cleaners owner Tim Yoo. “As a business that offers toxic free dry cleaning, it is apparent to us that not only is it profitable to be green, but this is also what the public wants.”

The reporting bylaw would come into effect on January 1, 2010. Reporting would be phased in over four years, with the facilities in the first phase required to report 2010 data by June 30, 2011.

# An infectious idea

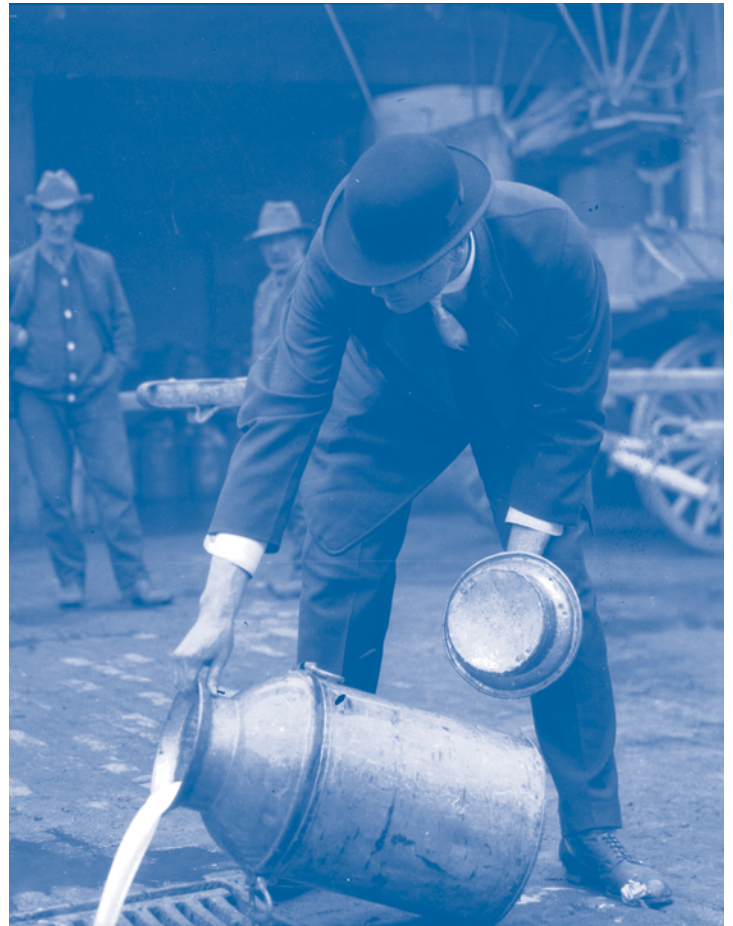
## Archives exhibit recognizes 125 years of public health in Toronto

**M**ayor David Miller and Chair of the Board of Health Councillor John Filion recently joined a large gathering of public health advocates and archival aficionados to celebrate the opening of a City of Toronto Archives exhibit, “An Infectious Idea: 125 Years of Public Health in Toronto.”

The exhibit was curated by Archives staff who collaborated with Toronto Public Health to develop a program that would honour the legacy of Public Health through the generations, since the appointment of the first medical officer of health in 1883.

The [exhibit](#) presents a selection of photographs from the Archives’ holdings, with an emphasis on images from the turn of the 20th century to the 1950s. It explores the evolution of the city of Toronto through the lens of public health services for children and seniors, the struggle for clean water and air and decent and affordable housing, the development of public health nursing, and the provision of health-sustaining social services.

Continuing until the end of April, the Archives exhibit opening coincided with a two-day symposium held at Hart House on the topic “Determinants of Our Health: Toronto in a Global Village.”



# Toronto Bed Bug Project

Over the last couple of years, Toronto Public Health has received an increase in calls regarding bed bugs. The rise in bed bug infestations is world-wide due to an increase in international travel and a reduction in use of broad spectrum pesticides.

Bed bugs are small biting insects that multiply quickly and travel easily. Although anyone can be affected, vulnerable individuals with physical or mental health problems have the most difficulty dealing with an infestation.

Infestations can cause anxiety and a feeling of shame, as well as financial hardship for the vulnerable. The bites can also cause secondary infections and allergic reactions.

The best method to deal with bed bugs is Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to human health and the environment. “Collaboration between tenants and landlords is very important to eliminating bed bug infestations,” says Reg Ayre, Healthy Environment Manager with Toronto Public Health.

Toronto Public Health staff are working closely with landlord associations, pest control companies, housing providers and tenants associations to ensure a coordinated approach to prevention and treatment of bed bugs. The “[Toronto Bed Bug Project](#)” is working to coordinate current efforts, explore solutions found in other jurisdictions, and develop best practices, protocols and communication strategies.

## *The following initiatives are part of the Toronto Bed Bug Project:*

- There are currently five pilot projects through Toronto Community Housing Corporation which are investigating methods to control, reduce and prevent bed bug infestations
- There is a unique team, Bug and Scrub, through Seaton House that is working in the community to help eradicate bed bugs. Bug and Scrub teams assist vulnerable people who are unable to do the often heavy work needed to prepare an apartment for spraying, such as moving furniture away from walls.
- Multilingual fact sheets for tenants, homeowners, landlords, and healthcare professionals have been developed on bed bug identification, treatment and prevention, and are available on Toronto Public Health’s website. More public education materials are in development.
- Toronto Public Health staff are available to conduct educational seminars on bed bug detection, treatment and prevention.
- Toronto Health Connection (416-338-7600) is available to anyone concerned about bed bugs. Calls are forwarded to a Public Health Inspector for follow up.

## Consultation launched on city’s idling control bylaw

The Board of Health has asked the Medical Officer of Health to report on the implications of amending the [City’s Idling Control Bylaw](#).

In 1998, an idling control bylaw was introduced in the City of Toronto that restricts vehicle idling to 3 minutes in a given 60 minute period. As well, the bylaw provides exemptions such as idling during extreme outdoor temperatures to ensure heating or cooling inside a vehicle.

Stakeholders are being consulted to gather input into possible improvements to the bylaw, including a reduction of permitted idling time, and eliminating or adjusting the temperature exemption.

To participate in this consultation, send an email to [publichealth@toronto.ca](mailto:publichealth@toronto.ca).

Please submit comments by February 14, 2009.

# Profile: Ensuring food safety in Toronto

As the downtown manager of Toronto’s food safety program, Jim Chan has witnessed a lot of positive change over the past 30 years.

Since beginning his career with Toronto Public Health in 1977 as a certified public health inspector in the former ‘Quarantine Unit,’ Jim has been responsible for managing and implementing programs and activities dedicated to the protection of public health. Jim is an active volunteer with United Way and has the notable distinction of inspecting the production of the world’s largest sandwich. He is also well known to the media as he is regularly called upon to speak about food safety issues for Toronto Public Health.

“The food safety program’s main goal is to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness through education of food handlers and enforcement of the regulations during inspections,” said Jim.

The public has become very familiar with DineSafe - Toronto Public Health’s Food Premises Inspection and Disclosure system. This system of posting colour-coded inspection results in restaurant windows and on the web has been replicated by many municipalities throughout the country. The program was initiated by the late former Medical Officer of Health Dr. Sheela Basur, and the first ‘Green’ pass sign was posted in early 2001.

There were a number of challenges during the start up, said Jim, including the training of public health inspectors, dealing with amalgamation issues and legal challenges. During the first year of DineSafe, 78 percent of restaurants were in compliance with food safety

regulations, and over 1,000 charges were laid. By 2007, however, the compliance rate had increased to an average of 94 percent with 600 charges laid annually, Jim said. Toronto Public Health inspects over 16,000 food premises in the City of Toronto.

“The program allows the public to make informed consumer decisions while providing an incentive to operators to comply with the food safety requirements,” said Jim.

**DineSafe** has two features—inspection of food premises and informing the public of the inspection results through an easily accessible website. There are now 81 public health inspectors, who speak a variety of languages working with Toronto Public Health.

As required under the Mandatory Food Handler Certification By-law, all food premises must have food handlers who are trained and certified. Jim looks forward to continuing to work with his colleagues and the thousands of owners and operators in this city to ensure our restaurants are the cleanest they can be.



Jim Chan



# Mumps campaign launched across Ontario

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care recently announced a mumps catch up campaign for post-secondary students.

The incidence of mumps has been increasing throughout Canada with recent outbreaks reported in four provinces. To prevent similar outbreaks of mumps in Ontario, the province is offering mumps-containing vaccine given as MMR (combined measles, mumps and rubella) to all students attending a postsecondary institution (both within and outside of Ontario).

Throughout the first few months of 2009, free clinics will be held across Ontario. Toronto Public Health will hold clinics in the city and information on mumps will be sent to campus newspapers, websites, doctor's office and parents.

Communal living, socializing, and other lifestyle factors can increase the risk of disease and promote the spread of the virus among post-secondary students.

In Ontario, people born between 1975 and 1995 were likely offered only a single dose of the vaccine as a young child. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that students at postsecondary institutions should be offered a second dose of MMR vaccine if they have not already had two doses of vaccine.

Since 1996, most children have been offered a second dose of MMR vaccine before starting elementary school.



**No tissue?**

**Do the Sleeve Sneeze.**

- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve
- Keep your hands clean
- Stop the spread of GERMS

416.338.7600 | [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health) | TORONTO Public Health

# Get active Toronto!

Mayor David Miller and partners joined with members of the private, public and voluntary sectors recently at the [Get Active Toronto: Access to Activity Summit](#) to find a solution to the physical inactivity problem in Toronto.

At the summit, the Mayor and representatives from 40 organizations signed a Declaration of Commitment to a physically active Toronto. Toronto stakeholders were asked to commit to working together to: build awareness of the need for a physically active City; reduce barriers to physical activity in Toronto; and expand opportunities for physical activity for all Torontonians.

Get Active Toronto unveiled a report card on access to activity at the summit to help identify areas where new or improved initiatives are needed. The report card includes data about physical activity levels in populations, geographic areas, socio-economic and socio-cultural groups. The report card allows organizations to address a variety of physical inactivity issues to develop a reliable benchmark for improvement.



## Editor's Update

This is the final issue for 2008 of the Toronto Public Health Bulletin; a newsletter initially published as part of our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities. The objective of the newsletter is to share information with our stakeholders about new initiatives and resources to help promote a healthier city.

As one of our community partners, you have received the Bulletin. Thank you for taking the time to read it and for your efforts to support public health in the City of Toronto. Please feel free to share the newsletter with your own partners and colleagues. Send your ideas or feedback, or request to be removed from the mailing list, to [tphbulletin@toronto.ca](mailto:tphbulletin@toronto.ca). Thank you for your continued support.

## Calling All Cooks

Cooks from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds are invited to apply to become a street food vendor serving ethnically diverse, nutritious food as part of the new *Toronto a la Cart* project. You must attend a mandatory information session for your application to be processed, or send a representative to the session if you are unavailable.

Pre-registration is not required.

**For more information:**  
[www.toronto.ca/alacart](http://www.toronto.ca/alacart)  
[streetfood@toronto.ca](mailto:streetfood@toronto.ca)  
 416-397-4637

