

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

September 10, 2003

To: Board of Health

From: Dr. Sheela Basrur, Medical Officer of Health

Subject: Coroner's Inquest on Tuberculosis Death of a Homeless Man who lived in a City of Toronto Shelter

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to obtain Board of Health and Council authorization for the Medical Officer of Health and the City Solicitor to take all steps that are reasonably necessary to protect the interests of the City of Toronto and the Board of Health in the upcoming inquest into the tuberculosis (TB) death of a homeless man who lived in a City of Toronto shelter, which may include seeking standing at the inquest.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no direct financial implications for the inquest itself. Any financial implications emerging from the jury's recommendations will be incorporated into future Toronto Public Health budget requests.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- (1) direct the Medical Officer of Health and the City Solicitor to take all steps that are reasonably necessary to protect the interests of the City of Toronto and the Board of Health at the upcoming inquest into the death from TB of a homeless man in a City of Toronto shelter, which may include seeking standing; and
- (2) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

On December 7th, 2001, a 63 year old male, born in Hungary, collapsed outside a men's shelter in downtown Toronto and was admitted to St Michael's Hospital where he was diagnosed with a highly infectious case of tuberculosis (TB). He died on December 13th, 2001. This man had stayed predominantly at 2 men's shelters for the previous couple of years.

Comments:

DNA fingerprint testing revealed that he had a strain of TB which matched other recent cases that had occurred at one of these shelters. An intensive and prolonged investigation was launched, with the assistance of key community agencies and a number of City of Toronto shelters and drop-ins. Eventually there were 15 cases of active TB linked to the outbreak. At this point, the outbreak appears to be over.

The Office of the Chief Coroner, in response to requests from community organizations, has agreed to hold an inquest into the death of this individual. The inquest is scheduled to take place some time in Fall 2003. Toronto Public Health's TB Prevention and Control Program will be a key focus of the inquest.

Toronto Public Health will work in close collaboration with the City's Shelter Housing and Support Division to prepare for the inquest.

Conclusions:

Toronto Public Health's TB Prevention and Control Program and the two shelters involved will be a key focus of the upcoming coroner's inquest into the TB-related death of a homeless man. It is therefore necessary that the Board of Health and Council authorize the Medical Officer of Health and the City Solicitor to take any necessary steps to protect the City of Toronto and the Board of Health, which may include seeking standing at this inquest.

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