

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

October 13, 2004

To: Board of Health

From: Dr. David McKeown, Medical Officer of Health

Subject: Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto

Purpose:

To seek Board of Health and City Council approval of the proposed Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto and to seek Board of Health and City Council support for the creation of an implementation plan.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report. Any financial impacts for City departments stemming from implementation of the policy will be considered through future budget processes.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Board of Health and City Council endorse the proposed Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto (Attachment 1) developed by a multi-disciplinary committee comprised of appropriate City of Toronto departments and community partners in conjunction with the Ultraviolet Radiation Working Group of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition (Attachment 2);
- (2) City Council direct the Commissioners of Community and Neighbourhood Services, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, Urban Development Services, Corporate Services and Works and Emergency Services, in collaboration with the Medical Officer of Health, to develop implementation plans for the Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto and report back to City Council by June 2005;
- (3) the Medical Officer of Health report to the Board of Health on the progress of implementation plans by the end of 2005; and

- (4) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

In November 2002, Toronto City Council endorsed the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition's Action Plan as "the cornerstone for cancer prevention in the City of Toronto". Subsequently, City Council further indicated its support for the initiatives of the Coalition and directed that action be taken by the relevant City divisions and departments on three priority areas, one of which was:

"The Medical Officer of Health convene a multi-disciplinary team, in consultation with the Ultraviolet Radiation Working Group of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition, to produce a comprehensive policy and related guidelines aimed at providing and maintaining adequate shade (in both built and natural form) within the City's jurisdiction."

In response to City Council's directive, a multidisciplinary seminar, "Designing for Shade", was convened by Ryerson University and the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition in June 2003. Urban planners, academics, architects, dermatologists, health agencies, concerned citizens, advocates and city staff came together to discuss the issue of shade, Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) reduction strategies, the dangers of skin cancer and how to make the City of Toronto a greener and shadier place.

A significant step forward had already been made by the city through the development of a sun protection policy for all city employees who have outdoor work assignments. This policy was adopted by City Council in January 2002 and is available on the city human resources web site (<http://witoronto.ca/intra/hr/policies.nsf>).

Drawing from the "Designing for Shade" seminar and subsequent developments and discussions over the past two years, a shade policy and guidelines addressing shade creation and UVR reduction initiatives have been developed for the City of Toronto by a multi-disciplinary committee comprised of city staff, community partners including Evergreen, Toronto District School Board, Clean Air Partnership and the ultraviolet radiation working group. The document entitled, "Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto" is attached. This Shade Policy and Technical Considerations report has been endorsed by the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition and is the result of effective collaboration among a number of City of Toronto departments, community partners and the Ultraviolet Radiation Working Group of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition.

Comments:

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer, accounting for about one third of all new cancers every year. About one in seven Canadians will get some form of skin cancer during their lifetime and one in 90 will develop melanoma (Cancer Care Ontario, May 2002).

In 2002, 240 residents of Toronto were diagnosed with melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer and 67 people died from it. About (36%) of those diagnosed with melanoma were under the age of 55 (Cancer Care Ontario – Ontario Cancer Registry, 2004). Although Toronto statistics are not available for other forms of skin cancer, Canada-wide estimates suggest that over 4500 Torontonians would have been diagnosed with their first basal cell or squamous cell carcinoma in 2002 (Canadian Cancer Statistics, 2004).

Reducing overall exposure to sunlight, in particular during the summer months, is the most important way to prevent skin cancer and the other health effects of UVR. The provision of natural and artificial shade combined with personal sun protection methods (ie. hats, appropriate clothing, sunscreen) are important strategies for reducing exposure and protecting exposed skin when outdoors.

Reducing exposure to UVR for children and youth should be a high priority. This population tends to be outdoors more than adults and exposure during the early years of life is a major determinant of lifetime risk of skin cancer. Nearly 50% of Ontario children under age 12 were reported by their parents as spending more than two hours per day in the sun, on average, during the months of July and August 1996 (Ontario Sun Safety Work Group, 1998). This is in contrast to 37% of 15-24 year olds and less than 25% of older adults.

At a time where the need for physical activity is becoming increasingly important for both children and adults, creating shade and providing a cool and comfortable outdoor environment allows the public the opportunity to participate in physical activity in local parks and playgrounds without increasing exposure to UVR.

The provision of shade has other significant benefits including reducing greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions, mitigating the urban heat island effect and reducing energy costs through energy savings.

A long-term UVR protection plan for implementation throughout city-owned and operated venues shall include identifying priority areas such as childcare centres, identifying actions for each division/department, promoting education for city staff as well as the public, and a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness.

City of Toronto departments and divisions should develop implementation plans which address both the short-term and long-term policy objectives. In this way, the city will be able to increase shade provision on city-owned and operated properties in an incremental and co-operative manner. The city is also well positioned to contribute to public education initiatives regarding skin cancer prevention.

Conclusions:

The City of Toronto recognizes that skin cancer is a largely preventable disease related to high levels of exposure to UVR throughout the year and in particular during the summer months. Children and youth are particularly vulnerable.

As the public becomes more aware of the hazards of UVR exposure, the City of Toronto, as the largest municipality in Canada, should play a leadership role in comprehensively addressing the provision of shade, both natural and constructed, in city-owned and operated venues. The recommendations and technical considerations and sample designs presented in the proposed Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto, are intended to assist city staff, City Council and the general public in adopting “best practices” for maximizing protection against UVR. Through the implementation of strategies for incorporating shade at city-owned and operated sites, measurable progress towards a culture of sun safe activities can be achieved.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. McKeown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Shade Policy and Technical Considerations for the City of Toronto

Attachment 2 – Multi-disciplinary Shade Policy Committee Membership List