

# **TORONTO** STAFF REPORT

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January 7, 2003

To: Board of Health

From: Dr. Sheela V. Basrur, Medical Officer of Health

Subject: National Conference on Migration Health "Towards a Migration Health Framework for the 21st Century"

Purpose:

This report provides information on a national conference addressing migration and health in Canada sponsored by Toronto Public Health and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies in Ottawa, Ontario on March 25 & 26, 2003.

Financial Implications:

Costs to the City are limited to staff time for a Board of Health representative and travel costs estimated at \$1,200 to be provided in the 2003 operating base budget.

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

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Board of Health approve the attendance of the Chair (or designate) to the National Conference on Migration Health, in Ottawa, March 25 & 26, 2003; and
- (2) the appropriate city officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

Globalization has increased over the past five decades by advances in telecommunication, technology, trade and transportation. This has resulted in a highly mobile population. The process of globalization and migration has significant impact on local population demographics and distribution. In the past migration to North America has been predominantly from Europe. The current picture of migration in the Canadian context, as demonstrated by Statistics Canada reports on tracking census in metropolitan areas and migration patterns, shows increasing diversity.

In Canada, approximately 100 million international border crossings occur annually. Migrating populations include immigrants, refugees, temporary workers, students, smuggled and trafficked persons, international travellers and returning citizens. Migration can also happen very quickly over vast distances, since it is possible to fly almost anywhere in the world within 24 hours. In 2000, Toronto received 40% of all immigrants to Canada and Lester B. Pearson International Airport is Canada's busiest terminal for business and tourism.

The movement of people around the globe is an increasingly important health determinant. It is estimated that three million people cross international boundaries every day. The health status of migrants is affected by their genetic makeup, environmental exposures, quality of health care in their country of origin, and cultural and behavioural practices. Migrants may be as healthy or healthier than the general population into which they migrate, or their health status may be worse. Migrants often bring with them different languages, cultural beliefs, and health practices. In addition, diseases that are not common or easy to identify in the receiving nation, such as tuberculosis, malaria, or emerging infectious diseases such as Ebola may be imported. The health care systems of receiving countries are often ill equipped to deal with these health conditions and cultural differences.

Governments have long recognized the health implications of population mobility. Beginning in the Middle Ages, quarantine regulations were put in place to prevent the importation of communicable disease by permitting the inspection of people, goods and conveyances. People with certain communicable diseases could be detained, or denied entry. These measures continue today. However, recent global changes in the nature, speed and scale of human migration described above mean that current policy responses to migration health issues are inadequate. A new policy framework is needed; and will be an explicit objective of the conference.

Comments:

The Health Policy Research Division of Health Canada has awarded funding to Toronto Public Health (TPH) and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) to conduct a national migration health conference in Ottawa.

This conference will create a forum for policy advisors, administrators, and client representatives from all levels of government and non-governmental organizations to meet and highlight the current state of research and policy in responding to migration and health in Canada. Discussions will progress to determine a consensus for the future direction of policy and research strategies in the further development of a new migration health policy framework for Canada.

The conference will feature a half-day plenary introduced by Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, who will discuss a New Migration Health framework within the local context. This will be followed by remarks from leading Migration Health experts. The speakers will introduce four main themes:

- 1) What is migration?
- 2) What is the relationship between migration and health?
- 3) What is the history behind the current migration health paradigm?
- 4) Who are the key players (i.e. international agreements, national, provincial and local)?

These four themes will provide background to the four topic areas of the second day:

- 1) Approach to communicable diseases (including TB)
- 2) Approach to non-communicable diseases
- 3) Access to health services after entry into Canada
- 4) Other issues (e.g. settlement and integration)

The final afternoon will pull the discussions together under three strategic directions – framework, research, and strategy. The final report of the conference will be widely distributed in electronic form within three months after the conference to researchers, clinicians, policy advisors, decision-makers, and client groups in order to inform them of the conference's findings and to generate debate and consensus.

### Conclusions:

Canada's current migration health model does not meet current health challenges. Toronto Public Health, in collaboration with ALPHA and Health Canada has created an opportunity for a forum to develop consensus for a migration health strategy. The conference will focus on local/municipal issues within the broad discussion of nationalization and internationalization of health and population movement.

Globalization and migration have a significant impact on Toronto's population demographics and distribution. The City of Toronto has an interest in contributing towards a policy shift for a new Migration Health paradigm. This opportunity may open the door for future discussions among the key players and strengthen Toronto Public Health's role in proactive policy setting.

Contact:

Wendy Kwong  
Multicultural Health Consultant  
Toronto Public Health Planning & Policy  
Tel: 416-392-7451  
Fax: 416-392-1483  
Email: wkwong@toronto.ca

Fran Scott  
Director, Planning & Policy  
Toronto Public Health  
Tel: 416-392-7463  
Fax: 416-392-0713  
Email: fscott@toronto.ca

Dr. Sheela V. Basrur  
Medical Officer of Health

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