

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

April 28, 2003

To: Board of Health

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

Subject: Sole Source Contract for Interpretation Services with Access Alliance
Multicultural Community Health Centre

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to request authority to extend the sole source contract with Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre for the provision of interpretation services required to deliver Toronto Public Health services to the City's multicultural community.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The City had a purchase of service contract with Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre for \$315,000.00 for the period January 1/01 to December 31/02. Additional purchases of \$784,700 (for a total of \$1,099,700) from Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre for interpretation services were made in 2001 and 2002. These expenses were done within the approved Public Health Operating Budget primarily to assist the delivery of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program which is 100% funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

This report requests the authority to extend the sole source contract for the first two quarters of 2003 for \$350,000.00. Funds have been approved for 2003 within the 2003 Public Health Operating budget and will be included in the 2003 Healthy Babies Healthy Children budget submission to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

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

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) Concurrence be given for 2001/02 expenditures through Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre for the purchase of additional cultural interpretation services to support the delivery of Toronto Public Health programs, in the amount of \$784,700.00;
- (2) The sole source contract with Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre for the purchase of cultural interpretation services be extended from January 1 to July 31, 2003 in the amount of \$350,000.00 with the understanding that a Request for Proposals has been initiated in order to establish a new purchase of service contract; and
- (3) The appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

In 2001, through a sole source request authorized by the Medical Officer of Health, an open contract for the amount of \$100,000 was established with Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre for the period of January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2002. The purpose of this contract was to purchase interpretation services to support health care providers such as dentists, dieticians, and public health nurses to deliver services in clinic, home and community settings. Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre was established as a sole source contractor because of its unique ability to provide interpretation services specifically oriented to health programs and services.

In July 2001, it became clear that the need for interpretation services to support the 100% funded Healthy Babies Healthy Children program had grown and a \$100,000 increase in the contract value was approved by the Medical Officer of Health. This additional cost for interpretation services was accommodated within the approved 2001 Healthy Babies Healthy Children Operating Budget.

In July 2002, the Medical Officer of Health approved a further increase of \$115,000, bringing the total value of the contract to \$315,000. The budget for this was approved as part of the CYAC 2001 Action Plan recommendation to expand Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) partnership programs throughout the City and was included in the approved Toronto Public Health 2002 Operating Budget.

Comments:

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Mandatory Programs and Services Guidelines, Equal Access program standard has as its goal that Health Units will ensure that all Ontarians

have access to public health programs. In addition, Toronto Public Health's Access and Equity Policy includes a goal that "Toronto Public Health programs, services and resources will be equitable and accessible for all populations and communities in Toronto". In order to be compliant with this service requirement and to meet this policy goal, interpretation services are essential to the delivery of a number of Toronto Public Health programs. Dental, Tuberculosis, Healthiest Babies Possible, Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) partnership programs, and the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program all require the support of interpreters to ensure that children, adults and families from Toronto's diverse ethno-racial communities have equal access to services.

Throughout 2001 and 2002, Public Health programs made use of Access Alliance Multicultural Health Centre interpreters as necessary to meet the individual needs of their very diverse client populations. In 2002, Access Alliance provided interpretation services for more than 4,800 public health telephone contacts and approximately 3,260 individual counselling sessions (e.g. home visits) in 39 different languages.

The expansion of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program to include a postpartum telephone call and home visit to all new mothers had a significant impact on the demand for interpretation services. This component of the HBHC program provides assessment, education, counselling and referral to the 32,000 families who have babies in the City each year. Approximately, 12% of the families that receive HBHC home visits require interpretation services. Although only \$50,000 in 2001 and \$151,000 in 2002 were budgeted for interpretations services in the HBHC budget, the demand for service grew as the community became more aware of the HBHC program and actual expenditures for 2001 and 2002 were \$838,500. These costs were carefully monitored and other expenditures were adjusted to ensure that overall spending did not exceed either the approved 2001 or 2002 HBHC operating budgets.

Through an oversight in the financial procurement protocol, the contract amount with Access Alliance was not adjusted to reflect this increased spending. Consequently, by the end of the Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre contract on December 31/02, interpretation costs had exceeded the original \$315,000 contract by \$784,700, for a total two year expenditure of \$1,099,700.00.

Billing from Access Alliance Multicultural Community Centre is done on a weekly basis and is specific to each program. While this facilitates program-based budgeting, it makes it difficult to assess the cumulative impact on the overall contract. The need to address the issue of spending that exceeds contracts was identified in the Procurement Process Review report, dated March 31, 2003, from the Auditor General to Audit Committee. This report identified areas where action is required to further improve procurement processes in the City, including the need to ensure effective mechanisms exist throughout the corporation to prevent contracts from being exceeded. Within Toronto Public Health, a manual check of purchase of service contracts prior to processing the invoice has been put in place.

The need for interpretation services will continue into 2003 and a total of \$897,400 for translations/interpreter (cost element 4086) has been approved in the Toronto Public Health 2003 Operating Budget. This includes \$475,000 in the 100% funded Healthy Babies Healthy Children

budget. Because there are now a number of agencies in the city that may have the capacity to meet the interpretation needs for public health, a Request for Proposal has been initiated to secure a contract for interpretation services for 2003/04. This RFP process should be completed by early July. In the meantime, despite the fact that their contract expired on December 31/02, Access Alliance has continued to provide this service. Therefore, in order to ensure that clients who require an interpreter continue to have access to Public Health services, it is necessary to extend the sole source contract with Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre from January 1 to July 31, 2003 for the amount of \$350,000. This projection of interpreter expenses in the first two quarters is based on previous year actual spending and is within the approved Toronto Public Health 2003 operating budget.

Conclusions:

The use of interpretation services is a critical component of Toronto Public Health's commitment to ensuring that the City's diverse community has full access to programs and service. Although, a service contract with Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre was established to meet this need, the actual need far exceeded projections. This was largely due to the expansion of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program to include universal postpartum follow-up. Although, provincial and municipal operating budgets were adjusted to meet this growing demand for service and spending to-date has not exceeded approved budgets, the service contract was not appropriately adjusted. Consequently, it is necessary to extend the current service contract to July 31, 2003 for the amount of \$784,700 for previous spending and \$350,000 for spending in 2003 until a Request for Proposal can be completed.

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