

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

April 28, 2003

To: Board of Health
From: Dr. Sheela V. Basrur, Medical Officer of Health
Subject: Toronto Heart Health Partnership

Purpose:

This report provides the Board of Health with an update on the implementation of the Ontario Heart Health Program (OHHP) in the City of Toronto and provides highlights of the previous 5 years. It confirms the renewal of funding from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) for an additional 5 years (April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2008 and identifies preliminary plans set forth by the Toronto Heart Health Partnership (THHP) for this period.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

In April 1998, the Toronto Board of Health successfully applied for a provincial grant of \$2.8 million over five years for the purpose of developing and sustaining a city-wide heart health partnership to promote heart health in the City of Toronto.

The provincial grant was based on a community partnership model, which required that direct funds be matched with in-kind contributions from both Toronto Public Health and community partners. As a result the Toronto Heart Health Partnership (THHP) has successfully leveraged partnership involvement from over 150 community agencies, and individuals with almost \$10 million in actual and in-kind resources having been directed towards the provision of Heart Health programming in the City of Toronto.

On November 19, 2002 Provincial Health Minister Tony Clement announced provincial funding for Phase II of the Ontario Heart Health Program (OHHP), in the amount of \$17 million (\$3.4 million per year) over 5 years. Phase II officially began April 1, 2003. Toronto's funding allocation from this provincial total remains \$2.8 million over 5 years. This allocation was included in the Toronto Public Health 2003 operating budget.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

The goal of the Ontario Heart Health Program is to utilize a comprehensive health promotion approach to create sustainable community change that supports the reduced prevalence of multiple risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease. The risk factors being addressed include tobacco use, unhealthy eating and physical inactivity.

The four key objectives for the Ontario Heart Health Program are:

- (1) To increase the level of knowledge of the risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease and their consequences;
- (2) To develop comprehensive multi-risk factor programs addressing tobacco use, physical inactivity and unhealthy eating;
- (3) To utilize multi-faceted health promotion strategies to reach a number of people and communities; and
- (4) To optimize the use of a variety of key channels (schools, worksites, retail establishments, community at large) for program implementation.

Boards of Health have provided the leadership in this collaborative initiative and carried overall accountability for the program. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), using an equity funding formula, determined the level of heart health funding for each Board of Health within Ontario. Under this formula the Toronto Board of Health was allocated a total of \$2.8 million in direct funding over a period of 5 years. The initial 5 years of funding (Phase I) commenced in April 1998 and concluded on March 31, 2003.

Phase II of the OHHP began April 1, 2003 with a year of transition. For this transitional year 6, the THHP will continue their existing programs in their current format, and participate in a strategic planning process in collaboration with the Ontario Heart Health Network and the MOHLTC. This next year will be an exciting time of transition, evolution, revitalization and change for Heart Health coalitions across the province, including the THHP.

Ontario Heart Health Program funding is based on a community partnership model which requires that at a minimum, each Health Unit match the provincial funding on a 2:1 ratio through in-kind contributions from both community partners and public health. In Toronto the in-kind contribution requirement has been achieved through contributions of program materials, staff time and volunteer hours by partner organizations and through the dedication of Toronto Public Health staff to heart health initiatives. Over the past 5 years Toronto has leveraged almost \$10 million of actual and in-kind resources for this project (funding ratio of 3.5 : 1 for in-kind

contributions: direct Ministry funding) and the partnership has grown to include over 150 community partners.

Comments:

The community partnership model that guides the Ontario Heart Health Program encourages a very participatory approach to planning and decision-making. Consequently, the strategic plan, organizational structure and program plans developed for the Toronto Heart Health Partnership are a reflection of the community's health needs and the organizational priorities of all of our Heart Health partners.

At the end of Year 5, the Toronto Heart Health Partnership structure consists of a citywide steering committee made up of representatives of partner organizations with city-wide heart health mandates (e.g. Toronto Catholic District School Board, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Public Health, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Active Living Community Action Project), a non-voting chair and representatives from each of the 4 local heart health networks. This organizational structure guides decision making and has enabled the Partnership to move forward with building and strengthening its capacity and programming at all levels. This structure will be reviewed by key community stakeholders (members of an Interim THHP Steering Committee retained and recruited for Transitional Year 6 planning), and potentially revised during transitional Year 6.

The Toronto Heart Health Partnership utilizes a comprehensive health promotion approach in all of its programming. This approach includes 5 key areas:

- (1) Establishment of objectives consistent with the provincial heart health program;
- (2) Addressing the needs of different target groups (eg. women and children, in concert with consideration of such determinants of health as education, socio-economic status, language and culture);
- (3) Working through various channels or sites to reach intended audiences (e.g. schools, worksites, health care settings, homes, food premises, retail establishments);
- (4) Using a variety of intervention strategies to support behaviour change (e.g. education which includes media, self-help and skill building activities; environmental support; policy development; and community mobilization); and
- (5) Addressing different risk factors (e.g. smoking, physical activity, healthy eating).

Over the past five years the Toronto Heart Health Partnership has significantly increased knowledge and skills about the risk factors associated with heart disease; created opportunities for Toronto residents to adopt heart healthy behaviours and lifestyles; and created sustainable community based changes aimed at improving cardiovascular health

in the City of Toronto. Highlights of the Partnership's key successes can be found in Appendix A.

The provincial heart health program represents a significant commitment from the provincial government to address the prevention of cardiovascular disease across Ontario. The program endorses the importance of health promotion and disease prevention in our health care system and acknowledges the critical role that community partners and Boards of Health play in implementing community-based action aimed at improving heart health.

One of the innovative and supportive aspects of the current Ontario Heart Health Program has been the in-kind requirement. Having to match the provincial funds 2:1 has leveraged local resources for heart health programs and assisted Toronto Public Health and community partners in quantifying the value of the tremendous input of others towards the goal of heart health.

An independent evaluation of the first 5-year phase of the OHHP is providing information and recommendations to support public health policy decisions. In March 2002, the Preliminary Evaluation Report of the OHHP provided interim recommendations to the Public Health Branch about the continuation and modification of the OHHP. This report offered clear demonstration that the OHHP is progressing well towards the provincial objectives. It also identified areas for improvement. Most importantly, the OHHP provincial evaluation team stated that the current program momentum must be maintained. They recommended that continued funding at no less than current funding levels be immediately confirmed for the next 2 years, with the expectation that funding continue beyond that period (pending final evaluation results due February, 2004).

The "Continuation Plan for 2003 and Beyond" prepared by the Continuation Workgroup for the Ontario Heart Health Network (OHHN) in February 2003, sets out short-term and long-term recommendations for the continuation and enhancement of the Ontario Heart Health Program beyond 2003. In its report, the Continuation Workgroup cites that the involvement of communities in health promotion and disease prevention programs is critical and that communities and their members need to acquire the capacity for a stronger health promotion and disease prevention role. The report also states "funding is a core service of an enabling system".

In response to the reports of the OHHP evaluation team and the OHHN Continuation Workgroup, the MOHLTC has renewed heart health funding for 5 more years, and will participate in a joint planning process for this Phase II program with representatives from the OHHN and other Heart Health partners.

At a local level, Toronto Public Health is engaged in the process of reviewing current trends related to Chronic Disease Prevention, and the implications for our present program structure. This local strategic reflection and planning work is well timed to support the OHHP. The OHHP preliminary evaluation report recommended specific actions to help create a supportive environment for Phase II, including: the coordination and direction for chronic disease prevention in Ontario, additional resources for chronic disease prevention, and a comprehensive system of supports for local chronic disease prevention activities. There is much synergy at local and provincial levels for OHHP Phase II.

Conclusions:

The provincial heart health funding provided the stimulus for Toronto Public Health and our community partners to create a broad based partnership to promote heart health in Toronto. Over the past 5 years the THHP has been strengthened by contributions from its partners and has made tremendous strides in the development and implementation of heart health programming to initiate sustainable community changes that will support the reduced prevalence of risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease. The Partnership however has come to recognize that the goal of sustainable community change takes time, dedication and the investment of resources.

Anticipating the end of funding in March 2003, the Partnership initiated sustainability planning in 1999, to ensure that the Partnership would be able to continue with its work. During this planning it became evident that while the partners remain committed to heart health, and wish to continue to offer their time and other in-kind resources to support this initiative, they are not able to financially sustain the projects.

The decision of the MOHLTC to renew funding of the OHHP is a much-anticipated opportunity. Continuation and enhancement of a funding base for local programming aimed at reducing tobacco use, unhealthy eating and physical inactivity will ensure continued success of the Toronto Heart Health Partnership infrastructure and its work. The Toronto Heart Health Partnership looks forward to the next 5 years of heart health promotion, and envisions growth and eventual sustainability of our heart health messages, programs, partners, and behaviour change.

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List of Attachments:

Appendix A: Highlights of the Toronto Heart Health Partnership's Key Successes

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Highlights of the Toronto Heart Health Partnership's Key Successes

- (1) Social Marketing: The development of a Partnership visual identifier "Love Your Heart" and the implementation of a five-year social marketing plan.
- (2) City-wide Walking: The Partnership has supported city-wide Discovery Walks, developed an inventory of city based walking clubs, and provided walk leader training and skills workshops to help promote and create new walking clubs. Recently the Partnership has begun working with Toronto Parks and Recreation to incorporate walking programs as a base service.
- (3) Smoking Cessation: The Partnership has established 6 smoking cessation counselling and support programs across the City.
- (4) Plant-A-Row Grow-A-Row Community Garden Initiatives: The Partnership has promoted the physical and nutritional benefits of produce gardening, increased access to community gardens and yielded 20,000 lbs. of fresh produce which was donated to local food programs across the city.
- (5) Cooking Club and Food Skill Projects: The Partnership supported the development of healthy cooking skills among women and children and established 11 new Healthy Cooking Club sites reaching 615 more children across the City with food skills programming.
- (6) Social Determinants: The Partnership developed a report exploring the linkage between the determinants of health and heart disease, and sponsored a community forum to explore actions that can be taken at the community level to address these links.
- (7) School Interventions: The Partnership reached 1,200 students with Heart Health curriculum programming during February (Heart Month), trained 1,500 teachers on the new Ontario Health Curriculum, and reached 153 schools across the City with the national "Walk to School" campaign.
- (8) Food Policy: The Partnership incorporated healthy food choices criteria into the City's tendering and food vendor selection process.
- (9) Multicultural Heart Health Interventions: The Partnership established the first ever province wide inventory of multi-cultural and multi-lingual heart health resources; conducted a needs assessment of multicultural groups in Toronto to determine their heart health programming needs; and developed a multicultural heart health tool kit for community facilitators.
- (10) Community Partnership Initiatives: The Partnership has supported over 300 community based groups in developing and implementing grassroots projects aimed at promoting heart health in communities throughout Toronto.