

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

August 26, 2003

To: Board of Health
From: Dr. Sheela V. Basrur, Medical Officer of Health
Subject: Contracts for Food Coupons

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval for the sole source purchase of food coupons and to authorize the Medical Officer of Health to award and execute one year contracts with the grocery retailers, with option to renew for a second year under the same terms and conditions.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Approximately \$524,000 is approved in the 2003 Public Health Operating Budget for the purchase of food coupons that are distributed to high-risk pregnant women and families through the Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Healthiest Babies Possible and Peer Nutrition programs. Funds required for 2004 will be included in the related operating budget submissions to both the City and the Province.

Food coupons are acquired through a sole source purchase with each of the 3 major grocery retail chains in the City, as follows:

Loblaws	\$300,000 annually – Total for 2 year contract \$600,000
Sobeys	\$ 95,000 annually – Total for 2 year contract \$190,000
A & P	\$100,000 annually – Total for 2 year contract \$200,000

Sole source purchases from Sobeys and A & P are within the authority of the CAO to approve and have already been approved. However, in accordance with Municipal Code 195-4C and 195-5D, sole source purchases above \$500,000, as is the case for Loblaws food coupons, require approval by City Council.

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 request City Council to:

- (1) approve a sole source purchase of food coupons from Loblaws to ensure that Toronto Public Health can continue to provide food coupons to high-risk pregnant women and families through the Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Healthiest Babies Possible, and Peer Nutrition programs;
- (2) authorize the Medical Officer of Health to award and execute a contract with Loblaws, within the approved budget and in accordance with divisional distribution protocol and corporate financial and legal protocols; and
- (3) authorize and direct the appropriate City Officials to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program provides universal screening and postpartum follow-up to all new mothers and families. It also provides prenatal and parenting support and service co-ordination to high-risk families with children up to 6 years of age. The Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program is 100% funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, who have established guidelines/standards for the program. The Provincial Prenatal Guidelines has, as one of its objectives for this program “to support families during the prenatal period who are experiencing psychosocial and/or other health risk factors”. One of the strategies required to achieve this objective is the distribution of milk/food coupons to pregnant women participating in the program.

The Healthiest Babies Possible program provides dietician counselling to at-risk and high-risk pregnant women with the aim of reducing low birth weight rates. Food supplements in the form of food coupons are a vital component of this program.

The Peer Nutrition program provides nutrition workshops and support groups to families with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of multicultural families throughout the City. Services are delivered in more than 23 different languages. The goal of this program is to enhance the nutritional status of children between the ages of 6 months to 6 years. Food coupons are distributed as part of the community outreach and support strategies.

The distribution of coupons through all these programs has been fully co-ordinated in order to ensure equal access and avoid duplication. Food coupons are distributed in accordance with an established protocol that reflects the needs of the individual or family, the Toronto Public Health services that they are receiving, and the resources that are available within the community.

Comments:

In order to ensure that high-risk pregnant women and families have access to nutritional food, each client/family is provided with a food coupon for a major grocery store in their community.

By purchasing food coupons from each of the 3 major grocery chains, Toronto Public Health is able to offer clients access to the majority of grocery stores throughout Toronto. Loblaws certificates are redeemable at Loblaws, No Frills, Value Mart and Fortinos. Sobeys certificates are redeemable at Sobeys, IGA and Price Choppers. A & P certificates are redeemable at A & P, Dominion and Food Basics. Food coupons are being acquired through sole source purchases with each of these three grocery retailers. Annual contract amounts for each grocery chain have been based on previous year distribution patterns.

Conclusions:

Supporting the access of pregnant women and young families to nutritional food is a critical component of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Healthiest Babies Possible, and Peer Nutrition programs. Acquiring food coupons from the major grocery retailers in the City ensures access by allowing clients to purchase food from the grocery retailers of their own choice.

This requires Council approval of a sole source purchase from Loblaws and the authority for the Medical Officer of Health to award and execute contracts to purchase the necessary food coupons within the approved budget, for distribution in accordance with established protocol.

Contact:

Sue Makin,
Regional Director
Toronto Public Health
Phone: (416) 338-7832
Fax: (416) 392-0713
E-Mail: smakin@toronto.ca

Dr. Sheela V. Basrur
Medical Officer of Health