

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

December 31, 2003

To: Board of Health
From: Dr. Sheela V. Basrur, Medical Officer of Health
Subject: Request for Additional Funds for the Drug Prevention Grants Program

Purpose:

This report details the budget required to better address existing and emerging drug prevention needs across the City of Toronto through the 2004 Drug Prevention Grants.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Approval of this request through the 2004 budget process will result in an increase of \$200,000 gross and net in the 2004 Operating Budget for the Consolidated Grants Program.

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

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Board of Health endorse the request for an additional \$200,000 for a total annual allocation of \$861,460 to the Drug Prevention Grants program, to help more community organizations address drug prevention needs in designated areas of the City of Toronto;
- (2) this report be referred to the Grants Sub-Committee for consideration in the 2004 Operating Budget for the Consolidated Grants Program;
- (3) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At its meeting on June 24, 25 and 26, 2003 City Council adopted recommendations from the Board of Health (May 30, 2003) requesting the Medical Officer of Health to submit a report through the Board of Health Budget Subcommittee that details the unmet needs and the budget required for the 2004 Drug Prevention Grants.

The Drug Prevention Grants mandate is to build community capacity for local youth initiatives in drug prevention. Drug Prevention Grants are part of a comprehensive strategy on substance abuse prevention and are consistent with the requirements of Ontario's Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines. The integration of grants with City delivered programs helps ensure responsiveness to emerging public health trends and timely access to community expertise in local organizations. The types of projects funded by the Drug Prevention Grants Program include after-school drop-ins, community outreach, workshops, theatre productions, arts and cultural activities, all aimed at providing alternative activities for youth while incorporating an educational component regarding drug prevention.

In 2003 the Drug Prevention Grants Program received 75 applications requesting \$1,532,512 in funding. From the approved budget of \$661,460, 51 projects were funded. In the South region 34 out of 44 applicants received funding, in the North region 7 out of 8 applicants were funded, East region saw 7 out of 13 applicants funded and only 3 out of 10 were funded in the West region. Given the annual funding disbursement of approximately \$660,000, the Drug Prevention Grants program was unable to fund all eligible projects. Therefore, additional financial support is necessary to enable community groups to more adequately address the unique needs of their communities.

Comments:

The Impact of Drug Use on Toronto Youth:

Illicit drug use in junior high and high schools students in Toronto remains high and the impact of drug use on youth can be severe. Youth are initiating drug use at an earlier age, and are engaging in high-risk behaviour such as driving after using drugs and trying alternative drugs such as designer drugs and solvents. Youth are requesting treatment placement and are attending hospital emergency departments as a result of drug use. Furthermore, youth have concerns about personal safety related to drug use activity in their communities.

The 2001 Drug Use in Toronto report indicated an increasing trend in drug use among adolescents. Marijuana remains the most popular illicit drug, with 23% of junior high and high school students and 72% of street youth using marijuana (1). Furthermore, youth today are trying cannabis for the first time at a younger age compared to a decade ago. In 2003, the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey found that about 5% of 7th grade students reported using cannabis before the end of grade 6 compared to 1% in 1993 (2).

The Ontario Student Drug Use Survey also indicates that approximately one in five drivers in grades 10 to 12 report driving a vehicle within one hour of using cannabis at least once during the 12 months before the survey and 1% of students indicated that they had received either alcohol and/or drug treatment in the 12 months before the survey (2).

Designer drugs, such as Ecstasy (or MDMA), continue to be popular among youth and there is also an increase in solvent use reported by junior high and high school students. In the most recent data, approximately 5% of Toronto students reported inhaling glue, while 9% used other solvents such as gasoline and nail polish remover. This compares to 1 to 2% reporting use of these substances in the early 1990s. This addictive and potentially lethal practice is also common among street youth, 2% of who reported daily solvent use (1). In terms of designer drugs, five deaths were known to be associated with Ecstasy (or MDMA) use in Toronto in 1998 and 1999 (1).

Reports such as the Toronto Youth Survey and the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey have identified drug activity as the main factor influencing perception of personal safety among youth. The 2003 Toronto Youth Profile respondents “called for initiatives to eliminate drugs, gangs, hate crimes and discrimination”. Respondents also requested “more opportunities for youth involvement in addressing social problems and ensuring further funding and availability of community programs”. Specifically, there is heightened concern about drug activity in Regent Park. Other communities identified at greater risk include Malvern, Parkdale, Jane-Finch and Rexdale (3).

In 2003 the Drug Prevention Grants Program funded 11 projects in these higher-risk areas. Six projects were funded in Regent Park, two in Parkdale, one in Rexdale, and two in Jane-Finch. No projects were funded in the Malvern area. Concerted efforts have been made to increase the number of projects in the identified at-risk communities but current funding levels are inadequate to fund all projects that meet the Drug Prevention Grants mandate and contain strategies that are considered effective in preventing drug use among youth throughout the city.

Current and Proposed Service Levels:

Drug Prevention Grants enable the City to leverage additional resources such that in 2002/2003, City-funded projects served an estimated 4,200 individuals in ongoing programming, utilized 705 community volunteers for 16,610 hours of service and hired 89 individuals. Twenty-one one-time events such as camps and cultural recreational activities reached an estimated 5,100 participants and 103 performances reached an estimated 14,000 attendees.

Based on the Drug Prevention Grants mandate and funding criteria, an additional \$200,000 would be required to address unmet local needs. With an additional \$200,000 annually, investments in high needs, under-serviced communities will be enhanced. Based on last year’s applications, the additional budget would allow for approximately 15 new projects to be funded (attached). Services would include ethnocultural outreach; community partnerships; youth leadership projects; advocacy and project evaluation.

Based on past history, it is estimated that these additional 15 projects would serve about 250 individuals in ongoing programming. In addition, one-time events such as camps and cultural recreational activities would reach an estimated 1,300 participants and four new productions, and 45 performances would reach an estimated 3,500 attendees. Approximately 15 individuals would be hired by local organizations to implement these projects. This increase in funding would be leveraged even further since the additional funded projects would also utilize close to 200 community volunteers for approximately 4,000 hours of service.

Conclusions:

The report recommends additional annual funding of \$200,000 to the Consolidated Grants Budget for Drug Prevention Grants to reduce unmet health needs. Funds will be allocated to community partners to provide service levels that better address continued and emerging drug prevention trends, in designated regions, across the City of Toronto.

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Dr. Sheela V. Basrur
Medical Officer of Health

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1: Non-Funded Eligible Applicants for the 2002/2003 Drug Prevention Grants

References:

- (1) Research Group on Drug Use (2001). 2001 Drug Use in Toronto Report
www.toronto.ca/drugcentre/index.htm
- (2) Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2003). Ontario Student Drug Use Survey
- (3) City of Toronto (2003). Toronto Youth Profile 2003

Appendix 1

Non-Funded Eligible Applications
Drug Prevention Grants 2003

Organization:

Alcohol and Drug Concerns Inc.
Cabbagetown Youth Centre
Central Toronto Community Health Centres
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre
Fred Victor Centre
Harbourfront Community Centre
Midaynta Association Of Somali Service Agencies
North York Community House
Northwood Neighbourhood Services
Roma Community & Advocacy Centre
Scadding Court Community Centre
Society for the Aid of Sri Lanka Minorities SACEM
South Asian Family Support Services (SAFSS)
St. Alban's Boys' and Girls' Club (Jane & Finch)
Syme-Woolner Neighbourhood & Family Centre