



TORONTO STAFF REPORT

January 21, 2004

To: Board of Health

From: Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services
Medical Officer of Health

Subject: Development of a Comprehensive Drug Policy Framework and Strategy for the
City of Toronto

Purpose:

To report on the proposed structure and process to develop a comprehensive drug policy framework and strategy for the City of Toronto.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) a member of Council be designated as the political lead for the development of the comprehensive drug policy framework and strategy;
- (2) Council establish a small Council Reference Group for the term of this initiative with the membership to be solicited by the designated lead, in consultation with City staff; and
- (3) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At its May 12th, 2003 meeting, the Toronto Board of Health adopted a report from the Medical Officer of Health, entitled “Harm Reduction Programs Targeting Drug Users in the City of Toronto”. This report recommended that the Medical Officer of Health and the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services report back to the Board of Health and Community Services Committee on a process, including possible sources of funding, to initiate a drug policy framework and strategy for the City of Toronto. The framework and strategy was to be comprehensive in scope and based on the four key areas or “pillars” of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement.

The staff report outlines the recommended structure and process to develop the comprehensive drug policy framework and strategy.

Comments:

Drug use and the associated personal, social and economic harms (personal pain, family disruption, public disorder, crime, etc) is of concern to the community, health and social services, law enforcement officials and government. Many of these issues and costs are preventable and often avoidable. Currently, there are numerous drug prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement initiatives across the City of Toronto. However, there is not a unifying framework or strategy to guide or co-ordinate these efforts even though they often share similar goals and objectives. In addition, not all initiatives use a comprehensive, multi-strategy approach, which the drug prevention best practices literature recommends to effectively address drug issues.

The need for a comprehensive drug policy framework and strategy has broad support from individuals and groups involved with drug issues in Toronto. As a result, this initiative provides an important and timely opportunity to develop a balanced, integrated and more comprehensive approach to addressing drug issues in Toronto over the long-term. The main focus of this initiative will be on illicit drugs; however, alcohol will also be addressed.

Project Structure:

The success of the comprehensive drug policy framework and strategy will depend on effective partnerships. Community and institutional stakeholders will be involved in various ways throughout the project. Key partners already committed to working with the City on this initiative include the Toronto Police Service and the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (CAMH). Toronto Public Health and Community and Neighbourhood Services will co-lead this project on behalf of the City of Toronto.

With respect to the overall structure for this project, several components are proposed. It is recommended that a member of Council be designated as the political lead for the development of the comprehensive drug policy framework and strategy. It is also recommended that Council establish a small Council Reference Group for the duration of the project with the membership to

be solicited by the designated lead, in consultation with City staff. The purpose of the Council Reference Group is to provide strategic advice at key points in the project.

A Project Advisory Team comprised of senior City staff from Toronto Public Health, Community and Neighbourhood Services and the Chief Administrator's Office is proposed to also provide expert and strategic advice.

Finally, a Project Management Team is proposed to guide both the content development of the policy framework and strategy and the community consultation process. This group will be comprised of policy and research staff from the key stakeholders contributing resources to this project. Specifically, membership will include staff from Toronto Public Health, Community and Neighbourhood Services, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Toronto Police Service.

Project Process:

Drug issues have been a concern locally, nationally and internationally for many years. This current initiative will consolidate the best thinking and learning on these issues and generate new information or ideas where needed to develop an approach that best meet the needs of people in Toronto.

With that in mind, a draft policy framework and strategy document will be developed first, integrating drug policy and research best practices. This draft document will be taken out for broad consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders including substance users, service providers, school boards, ethno-cultural groups, business associations, residents associations and the general public.

The issues associated with drug use are complex and people have disparate and often passionate opinions as to how these issues should be addressed. The consultation process, therefore, will provide multiple opportunities for discussion and deliberation on the specific content of the policy framework and the strategy by the various stakeholders. This flexibility will also allow people to have input at different stages in the project.

This project will also consult with and/or integrate its work with City committees such as the Task Force on Community Safety, or its successor, and program areas where drug related issues are being considered.

Project Resources:

The resources needed for this project have been secured. In June 2003, Community and Neighbourhood Services and Toronto Public Health submitted a joint funding proposal for this initiative under the Ontario Works (OW) 2005/05 Incentive Fund. In July 2003, Toronto Council approved the allocation of \$200,000 in OW Funds over two-years for this project, to begin January 1st, 2004. This funding covers one full-time Policy Development Officer for two years and the associated project expenses, for example, community consultations and meeting costs.

Staff in the Social Development and Administration Division of Community and Neighbourhood Services, Toronto Public Health, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Toronto Police Service will also contribute in-kind policy and research support.

Conclusions:

It is recommended a member of Council be designated as the political lead for this initiative. It is also recommended that Council establish a small Council Reference Group for the duration of the project with the membership to be solicited by the designated lead, in consultation with City staff. A Project Advisory Team is proposed to provide strategic advice from a senior management perspective. In addition, a Project Management Team is proposed to guide the content development of the policy framework and strategy and the community consultation process. This Team to be comprised of policy and research staff from the City of Toronto, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Toronto Police Service.

A draft drug policy framework and strategy document will be developed first that integrates current drug policy and research best practices. This draft document will then be taken out for broad consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders including substance users, service providers, school boards, ethno-cultural groups, business associations, residents associations and the general public. Relevant City committees will also be consulted as appropriate.

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