



## STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

### Towards A Healthy City: Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan Update

<b>Date:</b>	September 4, 2007
<b>To:</b>	Board of Health
<b>From:</b>	Medical Officer of Health
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

#### SUMMARY

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This report provides an update on the implementation of the Toronto Public Health (TPH) Strategic Plan “Toward a Healthy City” over the past year. It outlines selected accomplishments within each of the six Strategic Directions and describes the progress of TPH in achieving the overall mission of improving the health of the whole population while reducing health disparities.

#### Financial Impact

There are no financial implications stemming from this report.

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#### DECISION HISTORY

At its July 11, 2005 meeting, the Board of Health approved the Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan for 2005 - 2009, “Toward a Healthy City”. The Strategic Plan was developed with extensive input from the Board of Health, the TPH divisional management team, managers and staff as well as community leaders and members of the four Local Health Committees. The Plan contains a renewed vision and mission for TPH, a set of guiding principles and six strategic directions, each containing a number of goals. In July 2006, the Board of Health received an update report on implementation of the Plan one year after approval. This is the second annual strategic plan implementation report.

#### ISSUE BACKGROUND

"Toward a Healthy City", the Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan, 2005 - 2009 provides a road map for Toronto Public Health to improve the overall health of Toronto's population while reducing health disparities. It builds extensively on the proud and rich

history of Toronto Public Health in promoting and protecting the health of Toronto's population by ensuring responsive services; advocating for healthy public policy; responding effectively to public health emergencies; working in partnership with others to address health needs; and being an innovative and effective public health organization. The Plan positions the Board of Health and TPH to act within a changing public health environment by providing a foundation and guide for planning, decision making and advocacy.

## **COMMENTS**

The mission statement, "Toronto Public Health improves the health of the whole population and reduces health inequalities" fully situates TPH's work in reducing health disparities within a population health approach. This means that addressing the needs of vulnerable or "at risk" populations, is seen as integral to improving the health of the population as a whole. This approach reconciles the broad mandate of public health with the realities of working in a large, complex and diverse urban region. It also situates the work of TPH firmly within a determinants of health approach.

The implementation of the TPH Practice Framework, approved by the Board of Health in September, 2005, has provided a foundation for operationalizing TPH's mission. The access and equity training currently taking place division-wide, serves to reinforce this mission within the organization itself, while supporting service delivery in the community.

The following provides an overview of TPH's implementation of each Strategic Direction with examples from across TPH programs and services. While some pertain to more than one strategic direction, for clarity purposes they are placed under only one.

### **Strategic Direction #1 – Improve the Health of the City's Diverse Population Through Responsive Services:**

TPH has always strived to improve the health of Toronto's population through responsive services. Pre-amalgamation, the six separate health units worked closely with their local communities to ensure specific needs were addressed while improving the health of the overall population. Ethno-racial diversity, poverty and increasing gaps between rich and poor are a reality across the City. To be effective, TPH programs must continue to adapt to changing needs.

There have been many changes in TPH programs since amalgamation, to harmonize services across the city and to ensure that they are responsive to diverse needs. "Toward a Healthy City" has helped TPH as a whole work toward this goal. This requires continuous planning and assessment of priorities and service delivery mechanisms.

It is important to note that the needs of Toronto's diverse ethno-racial communities are taken into account in all TPH programs. In addition, TPH strives to make all programs and services as efficient and effective as possible.

A sample of accomplishments related to this strategic direction over the past year include:

- Implemented mandatory food handler training and certification supported by an amended City of Toronto licensing by-law. This was implemented in consultation with industry stakeholders with the view to reducing food-borne illness.
- Implemented a dog and cat licensing strategy with online service. Enhanced pet licensing will generate revenue to improve field and animal shelter services provided by the City of Toronto.
- Implemented an expanded hot weather response strategy with particular emphasis on outreach and support for vulnerable adults and seniors as well as the homeless population.
- TPH staff played an active role in the City’s neighbourhood action teams which provide support and strive to enable more integrated City of Toronto and community service delivery to priority neighbourhoods. This has meant that a public health perspective is brought to this collaborative initiative at both the neighbourhood and interdivisional levels.
- Initiated the Air Quality Health Index pilot project in collaboration with the federal and provincial governments and key local stakeholders.
- Implemented an early detection and screening of cancer initiative for Farsi, Ukrainian and Punjabi women.
- Developed and distributed reports on the “Impact of Poverty on Children’s Current and Future Health”, “Meeting Current Nutrition Needs of Toronto’s Children and Youth” and “Impact of Poverty on Children in Racialized Communities”.
- Conducted an evaluation of the Peer Nutrition Program using an action research approach (with Health Canada funding).
- Expanded support to services for homeless and at-risk pregnant women.
- Initiated a community planning process to develop and implement a new Blind-Low Vision program for children 0 to 6 years of age and their families.
- Evaluated local health committees and established new membership requirements and outreach strategies to better reflect the diversity of the communities they represent.
- Continued to play a leadership role in the Toronto Oral Health Coalition to address inadequate access to dental services for low/no income adults in the City of Toronto;
- Continued to be involved in the Scarborough Urban Health Outreach Clinic, which includes a dental clinic that provides free emergency dental treatment to low/no income adults.

## **Strategic Direction #2 – Championing Public Health for Toronto:**

Toronto Public Health has always been an advocate for healthy public policy in the city, the province and the nation. This Strategic Direction articulates the importance of

continuing to make public health advocacy a priority for TPH and to ensure that health implications are considered in all decision making.

Accomplishments over the last year include development of major policy reports with associated advocacy including:

- impact of poverty on child health
- food security for young children
- physical punishment of children
- periodontal disease and adverse birth outcomes
- health implications of fish consumption
- access to environmental information (also known as Community Right to Know)
- trans fat regulation
- breastfeeding support
- reducing health impacts of perchloroethylene from dry cleaning in Toronto
- access to nutritious food for persons on social assistance and low income workers

### **Strategic Direction #3 – Anticipate, Prevent and Respond Effectively to Public Health Emergencies:**

TPH plays a major role in public health emergency preparedness and response. The experience of SARS and other emergencies has shown the importance of establishing clear and effective linkages with other levels of government, the health care sector and the community in planning and implementing effective emergency response. There has been much progress in this regard but more needs to be done to be prepared for public health emergencies such as pandemic influenza.

Over the past several years, a primary focus of TPH emergency planning has been on pandemic flu preparedness. TPH has developed the Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan through collaborative planning with the Pandemic Advisory Committee. TPH has also provided considerable input into the National and Provincial plans. In October 2006, TPH in collaboration with the Office for Emergency Management, conducted a major emergency response simulation exercise “Operation Health Guard” involving senior municipal staff and officials from key external agencies in the city such as Enbridge and Toronto Hydro. This exercise provided an excellent opportunity to practise the incident management system in a “real time” scenario. The Board of Health has played a strong advocacy role in pandemic influenza planning and preparedness. TPH plays a major role in supporting the City’s overall pandemic flu planning. This includes both the response to the emergency event itself and the maintenance of critical services. Consequently, TPH completed continuity of operation plans in the event of an emergency.

#### **Strategic Direction #4 - Work with Others to Create Integrated Health and Social Systems that Serve Toronto's Health Needs:**

Creating integrated health and social systems requires partnerships at a number of levels: local, community, city-wide, provincial and national. TPH is therefore engaged in hundreds of partnerships and collaborative initiatives, to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the health needs of Toronto's population.

TPH developed and presented responses to the provincial Capacity Review Committee (a committee mandated to assess the capacity of the public health system in Ontario), and responded to the final report of the Campbell Commission (a provincial commission established to investigate the introduction and spread of SARS). In addition, TPH's senior staff have met regularly with key officials from the five Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) that fall within the City of Toronto. In order to ensure effective collaboration with the LHINs, TPH director leads were assigned to each of the five LHINs.

TPH constantly seeks strategic opportunities for partnership and effective collaboration. For example, TPH works with Community Health Centres to provide dental services to low income families, peer nutrition programs for new Canadians, and joint programming in harm reduction. TPH works with Early Years Centres to promote positive parenting and early identification, and with Boards of Education to promote healthy living and sexual health among youth. TPH is a key partner in Best Start and Best Generation Yet planning for children's services in the City of Toronto.

#### **Strategic Direction #5 – Be an Innovative and Effective Public Health Organization:**

TPH has a strong history of managing emerging public health issues that require effective risk assessment, surveillance and public communications as well as innovative service response. Effective public health planning and responsiveness requires innovation. TPH's health planning and policy section plays a critical role including support for:

- applied research to answer pressing public health questions
- academic partnerships to enhance staff training and educate the next generation of public health professionals
- Monitoring and evaluation of best practice in service delivery
- Health surveillance to inform responsive service
- Professional practice development and maintenance

TPH has invested in quality assurance programs by applying best practice models of service delivery to individual and program performance to improve oversight of program performance. Quality assurance programs are at different stages of development in different programs. A well-established quality assurance program in Healthy Environments was expanded to Toronto Animal Services as part of the implementation of internal audit recommendations. Quality assurance programs were included in the restructuring of Healthy Families and Healthy Living directorates, and are in

development. A major organizational review of the Communicable Disease Control Directorate in 2007 identified quality assurance as a priority for implementation in 2008.

TPH carried out and implemented a major review and restructuring of the Finance and Administration directorate to support improved staffing, administration and information management functions. This has resulted in improved information management capacity across TPH whereby the storage, access and maintenance of information and knowledge has been improved. It also enables TPH to be compliant with legislation such as the Personal Health Information Protection Act. Other examples of TPH innovation, leadership and effectiveness include the following:

- Played a leadership role in the XVI International AIDS Conference held in Toronto in August 2006
- Initiated and ensured implementation of City of Toronto Internal Audit recommendations for the TB program and Animal Services
- Established online dog and cat licensing
- Implemented online STI partner notification through inSPOT Toronto
- Produced an award winning TPH orientation video
- Completed best practice reviews on bed sharing (parents with their infants), post-partum depression, early parenting and control of tuberculosis transmission in emergency shelters.

### **Strategic Direction #6 – Be the Public Health Workplace of Choice:**

The majority of TPH programs and services are delivered directly to the community by dedicated health professionals and support staff. Creating a workplace which attracts and supports all staff to do their best work is essential to the achievement of TPH objectives. Being the public health workplace of choice requires ensuring sufficient and appropriate supports to enable staff to manage the constant pressures of effective service delivery within a context of increasing community and administrative demands. TPH has made considerable progress in addressing organizational problems as they arise and in building bridges across public health professions and program areas.

Some accomplishments include:

- carried out a staff survey of public health core competencies and professional development needs in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada
- Implemented a 360 degree feedback project with all TPH management staff in collaboration with the Ontario Public Health Association.
- Implemented an Occupational Health and Safety workplan
- Initiated access and equity training for all staff.
- Conducted a best practice review and staff survey of Healthy Families staff on vicarious trauma resulting from work with high risk families
- Recruited a full complement of public health physicians after an extended period of understaffing in the face of a national labour shortage

**Conclusion:**

Toward a Healthy City outlines a bold vision for the role of Toronto Public Health in improving the health of the City and reducing health inequalities, which requires action on a wide range of initiatives with many partners over a period of years. The past year has seen significant progress toward the achievement of the objectives laid out by the Board of Health.

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**SIGNATURE**

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