

## **Promoting the role of Toronto Public Health in a Healthy City**

<b>Date:</b>	October 29, 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 outlines current and proposed communications initiatives which assist in raising awareness of Toronto Public Health programs and services, and reinforcing the importance of a well funded, well supported public health system.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its September 11, 2007 meeting, the Budget Sub-Committee of the Board of Health requested that the Medical Officer of Health submit a strategy for communicating with Toronto Public Health clients, partner agencies and the public regarding public health services and City finances.

The initiatives outlined in this report address the objectives of the Budget Sub-Committee request.

### **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

For over a century Toronto Public Health and the Board of Health have played an important role in shaping the health of the City of Toronto. Public health services and advocacy for healthy public policy continue to support the health of the whole Toronto population as well as disadvantaged communities.

In July 2007, the City manager's office asked all Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Divisions to implement cost containment measures and service level adjustments to offset

the City's 2008 projected budget shortfall. These measures resulted in reduced expenditures on public health programs and services by \$5,384,200 and produced projected net savings to the City of \$1,616,000 for 2007. Several programs have been impacted by these cost containment measures, and services to the public, including those for vulnerable populations, have been reduced in some areas.

## **COMMENTS**

A number of initiatives are underway or planned that will help raise awareness among clients, partner agencies and the public, of the important role of TPH programs and services.

### **Board of Health Presentations on Health Inequalities**

At the October Board of Health meeting seven staff spoke directly to the Board about the health inequalities they see while delivering a range of public health services to vulnerable populations in Toronto. The presentations helped raised awareness of the media, Board Members and other city staff about the important services that TPH delivers. An article in The Toronto Star on these presentations served to broaden the audience for these powerful public health stories.

The presentations were taped, and discussions are underway about how best to use the tape to promote the work of TPH to clients, partner agencies and the public.

### **Local Health Committees**

Local Health Committee members represent a cross section of communities in their respective jurisdictions. TPH is working with committee members to ensure they are aware of the range of programs and services offered to communities across the City, so that members can help raise awareness of TPH within their respective communities and neighbourhoods. Staff presentations on health inequalities will also be given to the local health committees, and will assist committee members as they determine local health priorities.

### **Ontario Public Health Association Annual Conference, November 2007**

Ontario's largest annual public health conference is being co-hosted this year by TPH. This year's theme is Public Health: "Who's at risk? What's at stake?" Representatives of many Toronto and Ontario agencies attend the meeting, and some sessions are open to the media. The conference will showcase the role of Toronto Public Health in shaping a progressive public health agenda in Ontario.

### **Toronto Public Health 125th Anniversary**

Toronto Public Health celebrates 125 years of serving the people of Toronto in 2008. The theme for the celebration is "**125 Years and Counting: Toward a Healthy City.**" The purpose of the theme is to promote awareness of the vital role of public health in the evolution of Toronto. Several initiatives are being planned for 2008, many of which will deliver on the objectives of the Budget Sub-Committee's motion by raising the profile of public health with the public, partner agencies and the media. Publication of an historical

booklet on the life and accomplishments of TPH is planned, along with the production of an archival exhibit of 125 years of TPH. Discussions are underway to partner with a number of community agencies to sponsor a public health symposium that will provide a platform for learning and advocacy and serve as a legacy for the anniversary.

### **Public Health Champion Awards**

TPH staff are currently assessing the feasibility of establishing public health champion awards. The awards would recognize the achievements of individuals and organizations outside the formal public health sector in improving the health of the public. Details will be included in a future report to the Board of Health

### **Conclusion:**

TPH constantly demonstrates the value of public health services through health promotion, education and outreach initiatives, through contact with clients, the public and the media, and by responding to public health needs in the community. Staff will continue to assess new opportunities to promote the role and contributions of TPH through these activities, and to demonstrate that strong support for public health programs and services will benefit the health of the Toronto population.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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