



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Ministry of Health Promotion Funding Reductions to Smoke-Free Ontario Public Health Unit Programs

<b>Date:</b>	June 4, 2009
<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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The purpose of this report is to advise the Board of Health about Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) funding reductions to 100% provincially funded Smoke-Free Ontario (SFO) programs and outline the implications of these reductions.

MHP notified Toronto Public Health (TPH) on May 25, 2009 that there will be funding reductions related to the Youth Action Alliance program (YAA), the High School Grants programs and enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) across Ontario.

The MHP will be discontinuing funding for the YAA program as of August 31, 2009. The High School Grants program will also be discontinued for the 2009-2010 school year. The Ministry is also reducing its budget for enforcement of the SFOA by \$1.2 million provincially during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The impact on Toronto's tobacco enforcement budget will not be known until further direction is received from the Ministry.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:**

1. The Board of Health write to the Premier and the Minister of Health Promotion expressing concern about the anticipated impact of funding reductions to Youth Action Alliances, High School Grants, and enforcement under the Smoke-Free

Ontario Strategy and requesting that the Ministry of Health Promotion maintain the same level of financial investment in future programs for at-risk youth.

## Financial Impact

The table below summarizes the financial impact of the recent announcement by the Ministry of Health Promotion regarding funding reductions for the Smoke-Free Ontario program. No funding will be provided for the High School Grant (HSG) program in 2009. Funding for the Youth Action Alliance (YAA) program will be discontinued as of August 31, 2009. Thus, the projected actual funding from the Province for YAA will be reduced by \$153,300 in 2009. No provincial funding will be provided for YAA in 2010. In total, four positions supporting Youth Action Alliance will be eliminated in 2010. The service level impact on Toronto's tobacco enforcement will not be known until further direction is received from the Ministry of Health Promotion.

SMOKE FREE ONTARIO FUNDING REDUCTION									
Program	2008			2009			2010		
	Approved			Projected Actual			Projection		
	Gross (\$000s)	Net (\$000s)	Position	Gross (\$000s)	Net (\$000s)	Position	Gross (\$000s)	Net (\$000s)	Position
YAA*	460.0	0.0	4.0	306.7	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
HSG**	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	500.0	0.0	4.0	306.7	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0

\* Provincial funding for the YAA program will be eliminated beginning August 31, 2009, as confirmed by the Ministry of Health Promotion on May 25th, 2009.

\*\* Provincial funding for the HSG program is eliminated in 2009, as confirmed by the Ministry of Health Promotion on May 25th, 2009.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2005, the province announced funding for tobacco control programs under the newly created Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. TPH has received 100% provincial funding to support a Tobacco Control Area Network (TCAN), Tobacco Control Coordination, the Youth Action Alliance Program, High School Grants and enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. In 2008, TPH received \$2,549,233 million from the Ministry of Health Promotion for these Smoke-Free Ontario Programs.

The Youth Action Alliance (YAA) is an innovative program of the SFO Strategy to engage youth in the attainment of SFO's goals of preventing tobacco use initiation and addiction among children, youth, and young adults and to reduce tobacco use in Ontario.

TPH has allocated High School grants to Toronto secondary schools to create student teams for peer-to-peer activities relating to tobacco control and other chronic disease risk factors. The grants have supported public health nurses in building and strengthening relationships with secondary schools through the provision of a concrete initiative that can be implemented throughout the school year.

Prior to the 2005 commitment of 100% provincial funding, tobacco enforcement in Toronto was funded on a cost shared basis. Tobacco enforcement at the time included enforcement of the Tobacco Control Act in retail establishments, schools and institutional settings such as hospitals and long term care facilities. It also included enforcement of Toronto's No Smoking By-law that prohibited smoking in workplaces and public places. TPH received 100% provincial funding with the introduction of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, including funding for additional enforcement officers. The increased funds allowed for the addition of two enforcement positions and the conversion of six temporary positions that were previously funded on a one-time basis to permanent positions. There are presently 20 enforcement officers funded under the Smoke-Free Ontario program in Toronto.

## **COMMENTS**

A reduction in tobacco-specific program funding can have implications for population tobacco use. In the U.S. such as Massachusetts, California and Florida that had very successful, well-funded tobacco-control programs found that funding cuts to tobacco reduction programming resulted in declines in smoking cessation rates and increases in smoking initiation and sales to youth.<sup>2</sup>

Research from the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) has demonstrated how tobacco program funding cuts as well as efforts to incorporate programs unrelated to tobacco into funding initiatives can result in losses in desired outcomes. This research also indicates that any monetary savings from reduced funding will be accompanied by an increase in health care costs and productivity losses related to morbidity and mortality from tobacco use.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence shows that decreasing funding will most likely reduce the efficacy and impact of current tobacco control programs and may even reverse gains made to date. TPH is concerned about the impact these provincial cuts will have on our ability to effectively implement tobacco prevention strategies and to sustain the effective youth engagement approaches that have been carried out over the past four years.

### **Successes of Youth Action Alliance Program**

TPH's four YAA clusters, known collectively as Tobacco Don't Own Toronto (T-DOT), has effectively utilized 100% Smoke-Free Ontario funding to recruit and work with youth 14-18 years of age in the city's 13 priority neighbourhoods. T-DOT uses a youth engagement program model, offering leadership opportunities and teaching employment related skills. These youth, known as peer leaders, participate in skill-building opportunities and develop and implement educational, policy, or advocacy activities on tobacco control issues identified in their communities. TPH's ability to engage at-risk youth and have them take on advocacy and policy issues in addition to education activities has contributed to the success of the program.

The T-DOT YAA has engaged youth from diverse populations across Toronto through partnerships developed with Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community and youth-serving agencies in the City of Toronto's thirteen priority

neighbourhoods. Many of these agencies have come to rely on T-DOT for the proven value of its youth leadership and employment-related experiences. It can be expected that the loss of this program will mean fewer opportunities for youth in these neighbourhoods.

Most recently, the peer leaders have been advocating for smoke-free movies, smoke-free mall property, smoke-free TTC bus/street-car stops and smoke-free playgrounds. The successful passage of the January 2009 amendment to Parks Bylaw 608 to make the city's playgrounds smoke-free was supported by T-DOT public awareness activities, advocacy letters and a deputation at the Parks and Environment Committee meeting. T-DOT peer leaders also presented a recommendation to the Ontario Film Review Board to rate movies with smoking in them as 18A.

An evaluation of the Youth Action Alliance program conducted by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit showed this model to be highly effective in reaching youth and creating significant community impact<sup>1</sup>. A subsequent case study of the T-DOT Youth Action Alliance by OTRU in 2008 documented its successes in recruitment of at-risk youth and partnerships extending beyond the public health unit.

### **Impact of High School Grants**

In 2008-2009, TPH allocated \$1,000 grants to 37 schools in Toronto. Over 300 secondary school students participated in the planning and coordinating of High School Grants activities reaching over 8000 students and community members. High school grant student teams have engaged in various activities including writing letters and making deputations regarding smoke-free car legislation, working with T-DOT to advocate for Smoke-Free Playgrounds legislation, and creating innovative multi-media presentations about smoke-free living and other healthy living topics. Schools rely on receiving these grants to help facilitate student leadership opportunities. Currently there are no initiatives to replace the high school grants program.

### **Enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act**

The reduction in funding for enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act province-wide will total approximately \$1.2 million, or 11% of the current budget. While the reduction for each health unit has yet to be determined, it was announced that in addition to examining workload (e.g. number of tobacco retailers), consideration will be given to preserving budgets for health units with a minimal enforcement presence (1-2 FTEs) and reviewing the budgets of health units that have not fully utilized previously provided funds. Ministry officials remain committed to supporting the implementation of the Tobacco Inspection System which provides a standardized data collection and storage system for tobacco enforcement across the province but they have eliminated the annual tobacco enforcement conference.

Tobacco education and enforcement has resulted in near 100% compliance with restrictions on smoking in restaurants and bars, measured by inspection visits in the 2009 OTRU Monitoring Report. Cuts to enforcement funding will put this high compliance

rate at significant risk<sup>4</sup>. The MHP has acknowledged that Toronto has unique enforcement challenges including:

- a large number of tobacco retailers with a high rate of turnover in ownership
- a large number of workplaces both large and small; and
- a diverse population with a broad range of expectations with respect to tobacco control.

In anticipation of the funding reduction, TPH is examining ways to maintain an effective enforcement presence with a reduced budget.

### **Future Developments**

The Ministry of Health Promotion has initiated a Youth Engagement Working Group involving TPH, Sudbury District Health Unit and the Ontario Lung Association. The working group will work with health units and stakeholders to establish new models for engaging Ontario's youth on a broader health promotion agenda. The MHP has indicated that some funds will be available in the future for health units and community partners to implement this new model. Funds will also be available through a newly established Healthy Communities Ontario, Local Grant Stream launched on June 1, 2009.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Funding reductions related to the Youth Action Alliance program, High School Grants program and enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act will reduce TPH's capacity in tobacco use prevention and control. It is important to communicate these negative impacts to the MHP and to encourage the provision of alternative stable funding for effective youth engagement initiatives.

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### **SIGNATURE**

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Dr. David McKeown  
Medical Officer of Health

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