



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Authorize City Manager to Negotiate and Enter Into Mutual Aid Agreements with Boards of Health

Date:	May 31, 2010
To:	Board of Health
From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend that City Council authorize the City Manager to enter into Mutual Aid Agreements (MAA) with Boards of Health to provide for public health mutual aid and assistance during emergencies. A recent request to enter into a MAA has been made by the Medical Officer of Health for the Simcoe-Muskoka Board of Health.

The City of Toronto has an emergency management program spanning the broad scope of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities, in compliance with the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. An important element of preparedness and response is to make arrangements that will ensure adequate assistance in the form of qualified personnel, services, equipment, or materials to initiate and sustain an effective emergency response. The Ontario Public Health Standards also encourage the use of formal Mutual Aid Agreements to enhance capacity that may be needed by Boards of Health.

Such MAAs would allow for requests for assistance, the ability to accept offers to provide assistance or providing assistance to others based on the contents of the agreement, particularly as a way to mitigate capacity issues related to the need for credentialed and specialized staff skills during an emergency. The health and well-being of a community is best protected through the concerted efforts of multiple public health agencies providing assistance to one another when in need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate and enter into Mutual Aid Agreements with Boards of Health as appropriate;
2. the City Solicitor and Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer be instructed to prepare and review each Mutual Aid Agreement as required; and
3. the Medical Officer of Health in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management implement and maintain these agreements on an ongoing basis and provide timely information reports to City Council subsequent to the activation of any mutual aid agreement.

Financial Impact

There are no immediate financial impacts as a result of this report. The MAA provides for payment for services provided to the City of Toronto and for the City's recovery of costs when assistance is provided.

DECISION HISTORY

The City Manager or his designate currently has the authority to negotiate and enter into MAA with regions and municipalities as appropriate (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2001/agendas/council/cc010130/cms1rpt/cl009.pdf>). MAAs currently exist between the City of Toronto and the Regions of York and Durham.

Mutual Aid Agreements provide an opportunity to obtain valuable resources when required during an emergency when Boards of Health may find that their own resources quickly become strained. This necessitates obtaining additional resources. The ability to share resources is an effective, cost-efficient method to supplement existing resources.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto Public Health has been working collaboratively since the fall of 2009 with other G8-impacted health units, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC), Health Canada and other health sector partners to ensure that health related planning and preparedness activities were taking place in advance of the G8 and G20 Summits. As in similar past planning situations, capacity issues, credentials and specialized staff skills required for potential emergency situations were raised as concerns during the planning process. A number of these issues could be mitigated through a MAA with other Boards

of Health. The Medical Officer of Health of the Simcoe Muskoka Board of Health has officially approached the City to pursue a MAA. The health and well-being of a community is best protected through the concerted efforts of multiple public health agencies providing assistance to one another as necessary. MAAs could be negotiated to provide for mutual aid and assistance between Boards of Health when the resources normally available are not sufficient to cope with a situation that requires public health action.

Toronto Public Health continues to work together with the City's Office of Emergency Management and is the lead agency for Toronto's pandemic influenza preparedness and response as well as other contingencies. An important element of preparedness and response is to make arrangements that will ensure availability and access to the necessary facilities, services and resources needed by the City to initiate and sustain an effective emergency response. In 2006, for example, Toronto Public Health entered into discussions with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) respecting the use of schools as mass vaccination sites. The discussions were expanded to include the City's Office of Emergency Management and the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division, given the potential for use of the schools in a wide variety of emergency situations. These three City divisions negotiated with the TDSB to create a MAA that addressed the use of TDSB facilities in a variety of emergency situations. As a result, in December 2007 the City Manager entered into a MAA with the TDSB for the use of school facilities in various emergency situations. The use of school facilities included, for example: mass vaccination clinics in the event of an influenza pandemic; facilities for the shelter of emergency evacuees; the use of warehouse space to accommodate an influx of donations, materials or supplies; and priority provision of goods from suppliers. The MAA with the TDSB served as a model for the agreement with the TCDSB that was negotiated in October 2008.

It is recommended that the City Manager or his designate have the authority to negotiate and enter into MAAs with Boards of Health when appropriate.

COMMENTS

The MAA would authorize the City Manager, or his designate, to determine the nature and scope of assistance to be offered or requested in an emergency situation. Other specific provisions would include:

- payment by the City of the cost of any assistance received from a Board of Health;
- recovery by the City of costs for any assistance provided to a Board of Health;
- insurance and indemnity provisions;
- information sharing capabilities, including advance information on available personnel, services, equipment or material; and
- assignment of a liaison officer to the Emergency Control Group of the Board of Health for exchanging information during an emergency.

By signing the Mutual Aid Agreement, the City would not be obligated or committed to provide assistance if and when a request is made. The Agreement would specifically exempt the City from any liability should it refuse a request for assistance, and further provides that the City may withdraw assistance once provided. In the MAA with Simcoe-Muskoka Board of Health, either party may terminate the agreement upon 60 days written notice to the other party. The MAA will mirror the protocols for financial commitments that are in place with existing MAA's between the City of Toronto and Regional Municipalities.

MAAs provide an opportunity to obtain valuable resources when required during an emergency situation.

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SIGNATURE

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