

**Information on Bed Bug Infestations in City Owned
Housing and the Shelter System**

Date:	May 7, 2012
To:	Toronto City Council
From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All Wards
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

Toronto Public Health (TPH) has been involved in supporting bed bug control activities since 2005. During the period May 1, 2011, to March 31, 2012, a dedicated multi-disciplinary team realized substantial service accomplishments. This new approach was the result of provincial funding received after extensive advocacy over the past few years, and included on-going provincial funding for three public health nurses (\$255,060), and an additional \$1,216,518 in one-time provincial funding for bed bug related activities.

In 2011-12, bed bug control activities led by the TPH team included: prevention, identification, inspection and assessment, and extreme cleaning/unit preparation for treatment of bed bug infestations, as well as comprehensive nursing assessment, health services referral and supports for those clients with multiple health issues and who lack basic necessities. The one-time provincial funding (\$1,216,518) supported the development and implementation of a comprehensive bed bug control mandate that included supports to other key City partners including Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA).

One-time provincial funding ended March 31, 2012. As a result, TPH has had to wind down its Bed Bug Team (with the exception of the three Public Health Nurses (PHNs) as these positions receive on-going funding from the provincial government). This report provides information on bed bug infestations in City owned housing and the shelter system as requested at the April 30, 2012 meeting of the Board of Health (BOH).

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

There is a history of reports, decisions and recommendations made by the BOH and City Council regarding bed bug control activities dating back to 2008. On April 30, 2012, TPH provided a Staff Report - Information Only to the BOH. Upon receiving the report, the BOH passed a motion as follows:

1. The Medical Officer of Health to report directly to City Council on:
 - a. the number of City-owned buildings, including Toronto Community Housing Corporation buildings and shelters, in which the Bed Bug Project has undertaken treatments, and the frequency of visits for each location;
 - b. an update on continued provincial funding for the Bed Bug Team.

Background Information

2008: HL12.4 – Bed Bug Issues in Toronto – Staff Report

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2008.HL12.4>)

HL19.8 - Toronto Bed Bug Project Update - Staff Report

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-17412.pdf>)

2009: HL26.6 - Toronto Public Health's Response to Bed Bugs - Staff Report

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-25109.pdf>)

2010: Toronto Bed Bug Project - 2010 Update - Staff Report

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-33847.pdf>)

2011: HL5.6 - Budget Adjustments to the Toronto Public Health 2011 Approved Operating Budget – Staff Report

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-38326.pdf>)

HL6.2 - Bed Bug Control Strategy Update – Staff report

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-39646.pdf>)

BU13.4 and EX9.9 - Supplementary Report regarding the Budget Adjustments to the Toronto Public Health 2011 Operating Budget: Bed Bug Control Strategy

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-39941.pdf>)

2012: HL10.3 Bed Bug Control Strategy Update

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-44349.pdf>)

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL10.3>)

HL 12.3 Bed Bug Control Strategy Update

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL12.3>)

LS12.7 Provincial Support for Municipal Bed Bug Teams

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.LS12.7>)

HL13.3 Toronto Public Health Bed Bug Control Activities 2012

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL13.3>)

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Bed bug infestations in the City of Toronto continue to occur in all parts of the City and across all social and economic strata. Based on research (including TPH data) the population most severely impacted by bed bug infestations – and reinfestations – continues to be the City's vulnerable, which includes the frail elderly, people living with mental and physical challenges, and low income individuals and families.

One-time provincial funding allocated to fund Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) and necessary resources such as extreme cleaning/unit preparation ended March 31, 2012. The loss of dedicated provincial funding will result in a significant reduction in service levels, and the staffing complement for bed bugs is now reduced to one Public Health Inspector/ Bed Bug Specialist (for the entire city) and three PHNs. With one PHI Bed Bug Specialist available, the number of vulnerable clients that will be annually assisted will be reduced to approximately 30.

The impacts of reduced bed bug control service levels on vulnerable clients, the population as a whole, and the health care system include:

- continued chronic and/or reoccurring infestations,
- increased risk for the proliferation of bed bug infestations across the city in other residential and community settings; and
- continued restriction on access to home care services as vulnerable clients will be unable to stay in their homes, therefore resulting in costly emergency referrals to hospitals, shelters, and Long Term Care homes (these referrals to other parts of the health care system is contrary to the provincial Aging at Home strategy.)

COMMENTS

Toronto Public Health Bed Bug Team

As previously reported, TPH has been involved in supporting bed bug control activities in the City since 2005. With the receipt of provincial funding in 2011-12 (including one-time funding), TPH has taken the lead on a City-wide strategy focused on vulnerable populations.

From May 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012, bed bug service requests were received from every ward across the City. The TPH Bed Bug Team activities for the period of May 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012 included:

- 1,605 Bed Bug Service Requests
- 4,719 unit assessments (total units assessed as a result of PHIs investigations of infestations)
- 1,294 units found to have bed bug infestations, resulting in:
 - 181 extreme cleaning/ unit preparations coordinated by TPH Bed Bug Team; and of these 148 financially supported through the bed bug funding
 - Advice and direction provided to property management, landlords and tenants
- 88 educational sessions (with 2,606 people reached)

Shelter Support and Housing

Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) is a key City partner of TPH on the bed bug control strategy and related activities. The shelter system has 57 shelters with a total of 3,800 beds that are used by over 20,000 different people annually. Nineteen shelters are in City owned buildings.

The shelter standards require that "Shelters must have a contract with a licensed pest control operator, and have a scheduled inspection and treatment plan." Shelters use contracted pest control operators for both prevention and treatment as required. The TPH Bed Bug team does not undertake treatment, including in shelters, which are proactive in addressing issues for bed bug infestations in their own facilities. Due to regular inspections and immediate follow up, infestations in shelters are generally localized to a single bed or one area of a facility.

Hostel Services conducts an annual operator survey regarding bed bug infestation rates, prevention measures and treatment. Based on the most recent survey:

- 10 shelters reported a current infestation. As noted above, the term infestation could mean as few as 1 bed being infested - it does not imply the involvement of the full facility;
- 32 shelters reported at least one infestation in the last 12 months; and
- those shelters having infestations reported an average of 8 infestations per year.

Preventative measures used by shelters includes: screening at admission, visual inspections of beds, bed frames and furniture in common areas, steaming and vacuuming beds furniture and flooring, installation of bed bug proof mattress and box spring encasements, comprehensive cleaning protocols, washing and high heat drying of articles that may be infested, caulking of buildings, replacement of flooring and furniture with more bed bug resistant surfaces, monthly pest control treatments, and semi-annual full facility treatments.

In 2011-12, TPH Bed Bug Team worked closely with SSHA on implementing components of the bed bug strategy. This includes the allocation of \$100,000 from the one-time provincial funding to support bed bug control activities in the City's shelter system; and an additional \$100,000 to support community agencies providing housing help and drop in services.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Toronto Community Housing Corporation is also a key City partner of TPH on the bed bug control strategy and related activities.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation is the largest social housing provider in Canada and the second largest in North America. It is home to approximately 164,000 low and moderate-income tenants in 58,500 households, including seniors, families, singles, refugees, recent immigrants to Canada and people with special needs. The portfolio includes more than 360 high-rise and low-rise apartment buildings throughout the city.

TCH's diverse population includes the City's most vulnerable; and has partnered with TPH on the issue of bed bug infestations to support successful tenancy over the last few years. In 2011-12, the TPH Bed Bug Team worked closely with TCHC on implementing the bed bug control strategy. This includes the allocation of \$100,000 from the one-time provincial funding to support expanding existing capacity to respond to bed bug infestations and reoccurring infestations, including identification.

TCHC does not have available statistics on the number of extreme cleans/unit preparation assistance for the treatment of bed bug infestations; nor the number of units or buildings that have had bed bug infestations or reoccurring infestations. The challenge regarding tracking and surveillance is that in many cases TCHC is not informed of unit preparation/extreme clean services that have been secured by, or on behalf of a tenant (e.g., TPH, support agencies and/or family are not obligated to inform). Furthermore, due to privacy, TCHC cannot collect or mandate this information be reported by the tenants, property management or pest control companies.

TCHC is working to develop more effective tracking of the occurrence and treatment of bed bugs in TCHC own buildings. In the interim, what is available (and reported on) is the number of pest control treatments for bed bug infestations in TCHC buildings, which was a total of 12,332 in 2011-12 (January 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012).

In addition, statistics on support provided to clients captured by the TPH Bed Bug Team give an indication of the level of infestation of vulnerable tenants in TCHC buildings. Between May 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012, the public health nurses of the TPH Bed Bug Team assessed and supported 180 vulnerable clients dealing with bed bug infestations, and of these, 80 (or 44%) lived in 43 TCHC buildings. The breakdown is as follows:

- one TCHC building had 17 vulnerable clients/units with bed bugs that the PHNs supported (of these 17 clients/units, 4 were recurring infestations);
- one TCHC building had 6 vulnerable clients/units with bed bugs that the PHNs supported;
- four TCHC buildings had 3 vulnerable clients/units each with bed bugs that the PHNs supported;
- eight TCHC building had 2 vulnerable clients/units each with bed bugs that the PHNs supported; and
- 29 TCHC buildings had one vulnerable client/unit each with bed bugs that the PHNs supported.

Note: The above refer to those vulnerable clients that live in TCHC buildings who were referred to the public health nurses on the TPH Bed Bug Team (for support), and does not necessarily reflect the full rate of bed bug infestations (units) in TCHC owned housing.

CONCLUSION

The anticipated reduction in dedicated provincial funding will lead to a reduction in bedbug services by TPH. The service level reduction plan for the TPH Bed Bug Team has been prepared and certain services (extreme cleaning and unit preparation) have

already ceased. In addition, TPH anticipates full service reductions to be in place by May 14, 2012, unless continued funding is secured. Toronto Public Health received a letter on April 20, 2012 from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This letter indicated that while the ministry cannot commit to providing additional funding at this time, the matter will be reviewed based on bed bug reports submitted by TPH and other health units in Ontario (Attachment 1)

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Letter from the Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (received April 20, 2012)