

Partnership for Healthy Cities - Seeking Authority to Receive External Funds for the 2024 Budget Year

Date: April 15, 2024

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The City of Toronto has been a participating city in the [Partnership for Healthy Cities](#) (PHC) initiative since 2017. The PHC program is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, in partnership with the World Health Organization, with Vital Strategies as the implementing partner.

As part of the recently re-established commitment to monitor climate change health impacts in the city, Toronto Public Health (TPH) has collaborated with Environment and Climate division to implement a new project exploring public awareness and health behaviours during heat or wildfire smoke events. While TPH will lead implementation of the project, this work will advance the mandates of both divisions, as well as key initiatives TPH has committed to in climate change and health actions that reduce health inequities. This project will be funded by a commitment from Vital Strategies for a one-time grant as part of the City's involvement in the PHC.

This report provides a summary of the proposed project to support City Council's approval to increase the 2024 Operating Budget of Toronto Public Health by \$68.0 thousand (\$50.0 thousand USD) gross, \$0 net to receive the one-time PHC grant. This grant is subject to execution of the subgrant agreement with Vital Strategies, Inc., in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Medical Officer to enter into an agreement with Vital Strategies Inc to implement a public health surveillance initiative related to health behaviours during extreme heat or wildfire smoke events in Toronto on such terms and

conditions that are satisfactory to the Medical Officer of Health and in a form approved by the City Solicitor.

2. City Council increase Toronto Public Health's 2024 Operating Budget by \$68.0 thousand gross, \$0 net for Toronto Public Health to accept and spend the one-time grant from Vital Strategies Inc. to implement a public health surveillance initiative.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Vital Strategies Inc. has given Toronto Public Health a commitment letter stating its intention to provide a grant of up to \$50.0 thousand USD (\$68.0 thousand CDN) to implement a public health surveillance initiative related to health behaviours during extreme heat or wildfire smoke events in Toronto.

Toronto Public Health is requesting an increase of \$68.0 thousand gross, \$0 net to its City Approved 2024 Operating Budget.

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

DECISION HISTORY

On November 27, 2023, the Board of Health approved recommendations in HL8.3 - Public Health Impacts of Climate Change in Toronto: A Path Forward for Responding to the Climate Crisis, which identified a commitment from the Medical Officer of Health to use new and improved data and evidence to inform future priority actions for climate change and health for the City of Toronto

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.HL8.3>

COMMENTS

Partnership for Healthy Cities

The [Partnership for Healthy Cities](#) (PHC) supports cities in the planning and implementation of policy interventions to strengthen noncommunicable disease and injury prevention. The PHC program is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, in partnership with the World Health Organization with Vital Strategies as the implementing partner.

The intervention areas that PHC focuses on include tobacco control, food policy, road safety, safe and active mobility, opioid overdose prevention, and noncommunicable disease surveillance.

Participating cities in the PHC network have access to in-kind technical assistance, grant funding, and in-kind communications and public relations support to highlight

successes. In addition, the Partnership creates opportunities to connect city leaders through in-person workshops/convenings and virtual technical exchanges.

Toronto's Involvement in the Partnership

Toronto has been a participating city in the PHC initiative since its inception. From 2017 to 2021, the PHC collaborated with Transportation Services division to increase walking and biking to and from schools and to improve safety for vulnerable road users in school areas. PHC funded the [Active and Safe Routes to School](#) pilot project in which TPH was a partner.

In spring 2023, Vital Strategies invited Toronto Public Health to submit a proposal for a project related to noncommunicable disease and injury prevention for a grant opportunity. In consulting with Environment and Climate division, a proposal was put forward for a surveillance initiative related to health behaviours during extreme heat or wildfire smoke events in Toronto. On November 7, 2023, Vital Strategies Inc., shared a commitment letter with TPH stating its intention to fund the proposal (Attachment 1).

Current Initiative

In 2023, Canada experienced the most destructive wildfire season ever recorded. Toronto experienced several days with deteriorated air quality. Similar to extreme heat, the impacts of wildfire smoke exposure were not uniform across Toronto's population. Some individuals may have higher exposures to wildfire smoke while others may be [more sensitive](#) to wildfire smoke due to their age or existing health conditions. With an anticipated active wildfire season in 2024 across Canada, current data can better inform policy interventions and plans for how the City of Toronto can effectively mitigate heat, poor air quality and wildfire impacts.

Therefore, the project will collect representative survey data from Toronto residents regarding awareness and behaviours related to heat and wildfire smoke events. The project's objectives include increased understanding of the distribution of risks of exposure and health harms, adaptive capacity, and potential for health impacts in the population. Environment and Climate division will participate on the project steering committee and will collaborate on survey design and sampling strategy. The proposed project builds on a [survey](#) conducted by TPH in 2010, which focused on access to cooling and exposure to extreme heat. The new survey will expand to include heat, urban air pollution and wildfire smoke exposure.

This project will also inform ongoing work by City divisional partners, such as the climate resilience work of Environment and Climate division. The findings of this project may also be of interest to various community members.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Vital Strategies Commitment letter