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REDUCTION OF PROVINCIAL SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO FUNDING AND *EAT SMART!* PROGRAM SUPPORT

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the following report dated September 3, 2009, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services be deferred to the October 14, 2009 Community and Health Services Committee meeting.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to local municipalities for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report is prepared for Regional Council in order for it to carry out its legislative duties and responsibilities as the Board of Health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. It informs Council of the reductions to 100% funded components of the provincial Smoke-Free Ontario Campaign, including human resource implications, and to provincial support of the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program. The report outlines future directions of both Smoke-Free Ontario and *Eat Smart!* programs.

3. BACKGROUND

The provincial Smoke-Free Ontario Campaign was established in 2005 to combine public education with programs, policies and legislation to encourage young people not to smoke, help smokers quit, and protect people from exposure to second-hand smoke. It aimed to engage youth as key participants in the development and execution of the campaign. This strategy provided 100% funding to health units for local capacity building and enforcement of legislation, as well as opportunities for health units to access additional tobacco program enhancement funds through a competitive bid process.

Youth Action Alliance Program developed peer leadership

The Province provided 100% funding to York Region for the Smoke-Free Ontario Youth Action Alliance Program, which engaged youth in program policy and social marketing activities relating to tobacco control, and helped youth develop employment experience and skills. The program provided training for peer leaders to plan health promotion strategies aimed both at Georgina secondary schools and the community. A Community Program Coordinator was responsible for supervising and co-ordinating youth peer

leaders participating in the program, and for planning initiatives related to service delivery.

High School Grants Program supported student-led initiatives

The Smoke-Free Ontario High School Grants Program was based on youth engagement principles to motivate and support student action that improved awareness of tobacco control issues within the school and local community. These grants, awarded through an application process, provided each school with \$1,000. This money was utilized to implement a school-based, student-led action plan with support and consultation from staff in the York Region Public Health Branch of the Community and Health Services Department. A total of \$23,000 was awarded to York Region high schools in the 2008-2009 school year.

Tobacco Control Coordination Program provides leadership and coordination to facilitate collaboration

The Smoke-Free Ontario Tobacco Control Coordination Program for the Public Health Branch is currently funded through 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and a program budget. The primary role of the Tobacco Control Coordinator is to provide leadership and coordination both within the public health unit and in the community, facilitating joint planning, implementation and evaluation of tobacco control activities.

Tobacco Education and Enforcement team ensures compliance with *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*

On May 31, 2006, new tobacco control legislation, the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*, came into force. The Public Health Branch Tobacco Education and Enforcement team enforces this legislation, which prohibits smoking in all enclosed workplaces, enclosed public places, and on school property, strengthens measures to ensure only those 19 years of age and older can buy tobacco products, and restricts the display of tobacco products in retail establishments. As a result of their routine work the officers also refer the sale and/or supply of contraband and counterfeit cigarettes to the Ministry of Revenue.

EAT SMART! PROGRAM

York Region has participated in *Eat Smart!* Restaurant, School, and Workplace Programs

Eat Smart! is a provincially coordinated award program that recognizes eating establishments for providing healthy choices and environments to their customers. The Public Health Branch has been responsible for identifying *Eat Smart!* restaurant, school, and workplace winners based on food safety standards, healthy menu choices, and 100% smoke-free dining. In York Region, the program has also served as a vehicle to identify locations that provide barrier-free access for people with disabilities or mobility related

impairments, as well as to meet Ontario Public Health Standards requirements related to creating or enhancing supportive environments for and increasing public awareness of breastfeeding.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO

Youth Action Alliance Program will be discontinued, impacting staffing levels

Effective September 1, 2009, the province is no longer funding the Youth Action Alliance Program. As of this date, there is no longer money to support 1.0 FTE Community Program Coordinator. Funding for six youth peer leaders will also cease. This will result in a significant reduction in staff and program resources dedicated to preventing smoking and reducing smoking rates among youth in the Town of Georgina.

High School Grants Program will be discontinued

The Province is no longer funding the High School Grants Program. The discontinuation of this program reduces opportunities for student-led tobacco control initiatives in secondary schools across York Region.

Future of Smoke-Free Ontario Tobacco Control Coordination is unknown

The Tobacco Control Coordinator position has been funded to the end of December 2009. While no notice of discontinuation has been given, neither has there been further indication of ongoing funding.

***Smoke-Free Ontario Act* enforcement budget will be reduced, impacting staffing levels**

On May 25, 2009, the Ministry of Health Promotion indicated that there would be an 11% (\$1.2 million) reduction in funding for the enforcement of the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* across the province. In August 2009, York Region was notified that a total reduction of \$99,561 would be applied to the health unit's funding based on the fiscal year April 2009-March 2010. Criteria and factors that were applied to determine funding cuts included the current number of FTE's at the health unit, the tobacco vendor and total population within the health unit's catchment area, the geographic area covered, and local smoking rates.

As a result of this funding cut, there is no longer money to support 1.0 FTE Health Educator and 0.5 FTE Tobacco Control Officer. A total of two staff members will be affected.

According to the Ministry of Health Promotion, the 2009 enforcement scopes of service will be revised so that minimum requirements for enforcement and compliance checks are adjusted for health units affected by funding reductions and consequential staffing reductions.

Youth engagement strategy will broaden youth programming to address multiple chronic disease risk factors

Concurrently with the announcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario funding cuts, the Ministry of Health Promotion signalled the development of a youth engagement strategy focused on health promotion activities among at-risk youth including, but not limited to, tobacco control. The Province has indicated that they will provide York Region with \$9,434 in 100% funding for September to December 2009 for youth engagement. In addition, they have indicated that funding will continue in 2010. However, neither the funding amount nor cost sharing has been confirmed by the Ministry of Health Promotion. The Ministry has advised that this funding is not to be directed towards staffing positions. Instead, health units are encouraged to find youth engagement opportunities with community agencies and schools. This comprehensive health promotion approach directed at at-risk youth is supported by the York Region Public Health Branch and would fit within the existing Healthy Schools Program mandate. Further announcements are expected as the scope of services associated with this funding are received.

***EAT SMART!* PROGRAM**

The restaurant component of the *Eat Smart!* Program will discontinue in 2010

Due to challenges with implementation of the Restaurant Program within health units and declining participation rates by both health units and restaurants, the Ministry of Health Promotion will no longer provide material support and coordination for the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program. As a result, the restaurant component of the *Eat Smart!* Program will not continue in 2010. Instead, attention will be re-focused on the *Eat Smart!* School and Workplace Programs. *Eat Smart!* will be one component of the Healthy School and Workplace policy.

Public Health Branch staff will focus on food safety and school nutrition initiatives

Public Health Branch Health Protection staff conducted *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program inspections in conjunction with regular food premise compliance inspections, which will continue. The 0.4 FTE dedicated to the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program will now focus on enhancing the existing food handler certification program, the food safety at home strategy and the current disclosure program. Nutrition staff conducted the healthy eating standards review for the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program. This nutrition staff time will now be moved to supporting the nutrition components of the Healthy Schools Program, implementation of *Nutrition Tools for Schools*, and supporting schools and school boards with the expected release of new Ministry of Education Food Standards as part of Bill 8—*Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act*.

The withdrawal of the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program reduces opportunities to promote among restaurant operators supportive environments for breastfeeding and barrier-free access.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO

York Region enters into grant funding agreements annually with the Ministry of Health Promotion to accept funding allocations related to Smoke-Free Ontario. Table 1 summarizes the reduction in provincial funding allocations for 2008 through 2010, as well as the reductions in FTEs that will result. FTE reductions that cannot be managed through attrition will be implemented in accordance with the collective agreement.

Table 1
Provincial Smoke-Free Ontario Funding 2008-2010

	2008	2009	2010	Variance 2008-2010	FTE Change 2008-2010
Youth Action Alliance	\$ 115,000	\$ 76,667	0	(\$115,000)	(1)
Tobacco Control Coordination	100,000	100,000	\$100,000	0	0
High School Grants	23,000	0	0	(23,000)	0
<i>Smoke Free Ontario Act</i>	952,728	895,836	853,167	(99,561)	(1.5)
One Time Funding	10,000	0	0	(10,000)	0
Total	\$1,200,728	\$1,072,503	\$953,167	(\$247,561)	(2.5)

The Youth Action Alliance Program is discontinued effective August 31, 2009, and the 2009 funding represents a prorated share (8 months) of the 2008 allocation.

The Ministry has not indicated if funding for Tobacco Control Coordination will be discontinued in 2010.

The total provincial allocation for York Region related to enforcement of the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* for the period January 1 to December 31, 2009 is \$895,836. This is a reduction of \$56,892 compared to 2008. Based on the Ministry's fiscal year (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010), a total funding reduction of \$99,561 will be applied.

The Ministry is in the process of developing a new youth engagement strategy that focuses on multiple risk factors, including tobacco. For the period September 1 to December 31, 2009 the York Region allocation is \$9,434. Funding will continue in 2010, but no details are known.

There will be no regional tax levy impacts related to these funding changes.

EAT SMART! PROGRAM

There are no direct funding implications to York Region resulting from the loss of provincial material support and coordination of the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program. Public Health Branch staff will be realigned to focus on the school and workplace components of *Eat Smart!* as described above, and on enhanced food safety initiatives.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Discontinuation of the Youth Action Alliance Program and High School Grants Program in York Region will result in a withdrawal of resources to address youth tobacco use prevention, cessation, awareness and exposure to second-hand smoke in secondary schools and communities across the region, especially in Georgina where the Youth Action Alliance was based and higher smoking rates among youth are found.

As the reduction in *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* enforcement funding allocations will entail provincial revision of the 2009 enforcement scopes of service for health units, requirements for enforcement and compliance checks of local tobacco vendors and workplaces, including schools, will be amended.

Discontinuation of provincial coordination of the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program will mean that the Public Health Branch will no longer operate the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program in York Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Health Promotion has made funding reductions to 100% funded components of the Smoke-Free Ontario Campaign, including discontinuing the Youth Action Alliance and High School Grants Programs. The Ministry plans to introduce a Youth Engagement Strategy to address multiple chronic disease risk factors, including smoking. The province has also reduced *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* enforcement funding allocations. These reductions will impact Public Health Branch program and human resource levels.

Provincial support of the *Eat Smart!* Restaurant Program has also been withdrawn. Public Health staff will continue to focus on the *Eat Smart!* School and Workplace Programs and on food safety initiatives.

For more information on this report, please contact Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health at Ext. 4012.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.