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PROMOTING A SUN SAFETY CALENDAR SKIN CANCER PREVENTION PROJECT

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, January 15, 2004, from the Commissioner of Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee and Regional Council authorize the Health Services Department, Public Health Branch, to receive 100% provincial funding from Cancer Care Ontario in the amount of \$4,500 for the production, distribution and evaluation of a Sun Safety Calendar on behalf of the York Region Sunsense Coalition.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee and Regional Council with an overview of the Sun Safety Calendar Skin Cancer Prevention project. This project has been initiated by the York Region Sunsense Coalition, which was successful in receiving funding from Cancer Care Ontario in August 2003.

3. BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has mandated all public health units through the *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, 1997* to work with local groups and individuals to provide education and promote healthy public policies that reduce the risk of developing skin cancer. In compliance with this mandate, York Region Health Services Department, Public Health Branch, initiated the development of the York Region Sunsense Coalition in November 2001.

York Region Sunsense Coalition is a community partnership comprised of representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society, Toronto-Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre, Ontario Early Years Centre (Richmond Hill), Public Works and Environmental Services (Town of Newmarket) and staff representatives from York Region Health Services Department, Public Health Branch. The goal of the Coalition is to decrease the incidence of skin cancer in residents, primarily children, of York Region. The members of the Coalition work collaboratively to promote sun safety through education, awareness and healthy public policy development.

The idea for the Sun Safety Calendar Skin Cancer Prevention project evolved out of the evaluation of the Promoting Shade initiative that was implemented by the Coalition in 2002, as tabled at the November 7, 2002, meeting of the Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee. The Promoting Shade initiative resulted in 455 Grade 1 students creating drawings for a Shade Smart Poster Contest. An awards ceremony was held at the participating school with representation and support from community members, students, parents and school staff.

The Sun Safety Calendar Skin Cancer Prevention project builds on the success and enthusiasm of the children, students, parents, teachers and other child care givers who participated in the 2002 Promoting Shade initiative. All of the posters submitted by the Grade 1 students in 2002 were reviewed by the Coalition members and several were chosen to create the 2004 Sun Safety Calendar. The Sun Safety Calendar Skin Cancer Prevention project reinforces the health messages contained in the mass media campaigns of Health Canada and the Canadian Cancer Society at both the federal and provincial level. These messages include reinforcing the importance of using sunscreen, wearing sunglasses, and reducing sun exposure between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

In order to address the financial needs for this initiative, the Coalition responded to a Request for Proposal (RFP) from Cancer Care Ontario in August 2003 and was eligible for receiving funds in the amount of \$4,500.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

According to the National Cancer Institute of Canada, there will be an estimated 75,000 new cases of non-melanoma cancer in 2003, the most common form of skin cancer. There is also an increase in the incidence and mortality rates of malignant melanoma since 1988 in both men and women. It is projected that in 2003, more than 3,900 Canadians will be diagnosed with malignant melanoma resulting in approximately 840 deaths (16 deaths in York Region in 2000) (*Canadian Cancer Statistic, 2003*).

Health Canada (*It's your health: preventing skin cancer, 2003*) and Environment Canada concur that the increase in the incidence and death rate of skin cancer is related to increased exposure of our population to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) due to the depletion of the ozone layer and insufficient sun protection. Children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects from UVR because their skin is thinner and more sensitive.

Given that 80% of exposure to UVR happens before a person is 20 years of age (Health Canada, 2003), that sun damage is cumulative and irreversible, and that there is a 10–30 year lag time between initial skin damage from exposure to the development of skin cancer, health professionals need to target children and their caregivers in order to have a positive impact on the incidence of skin cancer in later life (*Children's UV Index Sun Awareness Program, 2002*).

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

The partnership approach of the Sun Safety Calendar Skin Cancer Prevention project is consistent with the Vision 2026 goal of *Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region*. The reinforcement of sun safety messages encourages healthy lifestyle choices and is related to the *Responding to the Health Needs of Our Residents* goal, particularly with respect to children.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The \$4,500 was made available by Cancer Care Ontario for the development, printing, distribution and evaluation of 1,000 Sun Safety Calendars. The calendars have been produced and distributed by Health Services Department staff. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the project and providing sun safety information and support to participating institutions is now being conducted. Members of the York Region Sunsense Coalition also committed to additional in-kind contributions of meeting space, photocopying, faxing and clerical support for this project.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

It is anticipated that the Sun Safety Calendar Skin Cancer Prevention project will increase the awareness of parents and caregivers of young children to practise safe sun behaviours as an important strategy to reduce the risk of skin cancer. Of the 1,000 calendars printed, 993 calendars have been distributed to various organizations including the 15 participating elementary schools, and 5 Early Years Centres. These calendars will be of benefit to children in all municipalities in York Region.

7. CONCLUSION

Health behaviours adopted today will help to reduce the burden of disease on our community tomorrow. The \$4,500 funds received from Cancer Care Ontario has assisted the York Region Sunsense Coalition pursue its goal and engages key stakeholders, including children who are at most risk, to address this important health issue.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.