

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

**REPORT NO. 4
OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH**

**For Consideration by
The Council of The Regional Municipality of York
on June 23, 2005**

**1
ONTARIO TOBACCO STRATEGY
YOUTH ACTION ALLIANCE**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Committee and Council approve the receipt and expenditure of \$110,000, a 100% funded grant, from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) related to the Ontario Tobacco Strategy to develop a Youth Action Alliance (YAA) program in York Region.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to receive and expend funding from the MOHLTC for the development of a YAA program and outline how the funds will be utilized to support the enhanced Ontario Tobacco Strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

In December 2004, the MOHLTC announced its Ontario Tobacco Strategy and the role Public Health Units would undertake in its implementation. This strategy is discussed in greater detail in the June 2005 Report of the Commissioner of Health Services entitled *Ontario Tobacco Strategy, Basic Public Health Department Programs*.

The goal of the Ontario Tobacco Strategy is to eliminate tobacco related illness and death by:

- Eliminating involuntary exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.
- Preventing smoking initiation and habitual use among children and young adults.
- Reducing smoking in Ontario.

The MOHLTC has, in addition to the 100% grants allocated to health units for the Ontario Tobacco Strategy, Basic Public Health Department Programs, provided opportunities for health units to access additional tobacco program enhancement dollars. The YAA Program required the submission of proposals in a competitive bid process. The MOHLTC YAA Program is intended to engage youth in civic actions aimed at improving the health status of their communities through tobacco control initiatives. York Region Health Services submitted a proposal for the development of a community based YAA Program in York Region and was successful in receiving an award of \$110,000 of the 100% MOHLTC funding.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Youth Action Alliance

The Ontario Tobacco Strategy aims to prevent and reduce smoking in youth by directly engaging them as key participants in the development and execution of the campaign. YAAs will be the cornerstone of community-based youth tobacco control programs in Ontario. Fifteen Health Units in Ontario have been approved for this program with a total of 23 YAA initiatives. These new peer leadership programs will engage youth in local action campaigns to prevent smoking, encourage quit attempts, reduce exposure to second-hand smoke, and increase awareness of tobacco issues in local communities across the province.

YAAs are skill building, peer leadership programs in which youth will learn to:

- Conduct surveys related to community attitude and behaviour.
- Map tobacco marketing and distribution practices (especially exposing deceptive industry practices).
- Provide public education and participate in enforcement activities that limit youth access to tobacco products.
- Develop media advocacy projects.
- Provide linkages to treatment centers for parents and youth who smoke.

YAAs will employ a core group of youth and engage their peers in a combination of voluntary and paid activities (e.g. participate in compliance checks to prevent the illegal sale of tobacco products to underage youth).

York Region Health Services proposes to pilot a YAA in Georgina. Adults in Georgina have the highest rate for smoking in York Region (Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance

System, 2003). A number of studies have indicated that over 80% of adults who currently smoke, started in their teenage years. The message is clear that prevention efforts need to be directed to adolescents at a younger age. By discouraging youth from starting to smoke in their teenage years or younger, they may be smoke-free for life.

York Region Health Services will work closely with the Georgina Multi-Sector Pilot that was created in 2002. The purpose of the Georgina Multi-Sector Pilot is to develop, implement and monitor new methods of integrated multi-sector planning and service delivery to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and families in the Town of Georgina. The guiding principles of the Georgina Multi-Sector Pilot include:

- Engage and build on existing strengths and assets of children, families and communities.
- Maintain a comprehensive menu of coordinated services and supports.
- Develop community capacity and resilience.
- Respect and nurture diversity, innovation and partnerships.
- Align with the attributes of a Character Community.

The Georgina Multi-Sector Pilot Group will play an important role in promoting the activities of the YAA, recruiting Peer Leaders, mobilizing youth and engaging adult support. The Peer Leaders will receive mentorship and leadership training that will focus on the importance of youth recruiting youth.

4.1.1 Proposed Activities

The YAA will develop the policy initiatives and activities that it will implement in the first year of the program. Some of the proposed activities are outlined below.

A comprehensive orientation for Peer Leaders will be developed that will include:

- an overview of the York Region No-Smoking By-law and its impact on Georgina
- an overview of provincial legislation
- an overview of the Ontario *Tobacco Control Act, 1994*
- team building exercises
- information related to the importance of youth activism
- an exploration of linkages with other stakeholders

This orientation will be facilitated by the Youth Advisor and supported by key staff from the health unit and other community partners.

A survey of Georgina will be conducted under the direction of the Youth Advisor. Results will include:

- mapping the promixity of tobacco retailers to schools
- identifying tobacco retail displays
- examining tobacco trends in use of tobacco products by Georgina youth

Presentations will be designed for the 15 elementary feeder schools in Georgina. Peer Leaders will visit the assigned feeder schools to educate students about the health hazards

associated with tobacco use, the Ontario *Tobacco Control Act, 1994* and the tobacco industry manipulation of youth. The sessions will also be a “call to action” for younger students to become anti-tobacco advocates in the Georgina community.

A community media campaign will also be conducted. In this initiative, Peer Leaders “challenge” art departments within the three Georgina high schools to design a community campaign that supports changing attitude, tobacco denormalization and behaviour change. The winning design will be featured throughout Georgina through partnerships with the local media, York Region Heart Health Program and Upper Canada Mall.

The Youth Action Alliance will be the first York Region tobacco education program that is Georgina-specific and will employ youth leaders in a peer-to-peer format.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

The implementation of the YAA program supports Vision 2026 by promoting wellness and encouraging healthy lifestyles through information, education and prevention regarding the ill-health effects of tobacco. Furthermore, this community-based initiative engages youth in the Georgina community to develop effective strategies and actions to address tobacco education and control.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

York Region has been awarded \$110,000 in 100% MOHLTC funding for the Youth Action Alliance Program. As noted in the following table, York Region will use its grant to hire one temporary full-time Youth Advisor and nine temporary part-time Peer Leaders (students) (approximately 320 hours each). The target area for this program will be Town of Georgina in 2005.

Table 1
Youth Action Alliance Budget
April – December 2005

	Budget
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 82,117
Mileage, Printing, Training & Supplies	4,588
Furniture/Computer Equipment	8,060
Software	1,540
Administrative & Corporate Support Costs	13,695
Total Gross Expenditures	\$110,000
100% Provincial Funding	110,000
Total Net Expenditures	\$ -

The funding for the Youth Action Alliance is confirmed to the end of 2005 and an announcement from the MOHLTC is expected to extend the funding into future years.

However, should MOHLTC funding not be extended beyond 2005, all temporary assignments identified within this report will end effective December 31, 2005.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The implementation of the YAA program will result in an increased youth led, tobacco awareness initiative in the Georgina area. This pilot project will form the foundation and framework for the development of YAAs in other municipalities throughout York Region pending Ministry funding.

7. CONCLUSION

The engagement of youth is a central feature of tobacco use prevention within the Ontario Tobacco Strategy. The YAA pilot program in Georgina will involve youth in community-based peer tobacco control activities that promote the participants' understanding of how, through collective action, they can positively affect change in their community.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

Respectfully submitted,

**June 21, 2005
Newmarket, Ontario**

**Helena Jaczek
Commissioner of Health Services**

(Report No. 4 of the Commissioner of Health was adopted, without amendment, by Regional Council at its meeting held on June 23, 2005.)