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STATUS OF PROPOSED ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, November 2, 2007, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Staff report back to Council once the *Ontario Public Health Standards* and accompanying protocols are finalized to outline potential implications for the Regional Municipality of York.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the proposed *Ontario Public Health Standards*.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Proposed standards will replace current *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines*

The 1997 *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines* are standards that set out the minimum requirements for public health programs and services in Ontario, pursuant to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA). The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has initiated a process to revise these standards, and has released a draft of the proposed guidelines (*Ontario Public Health Standards*). Once approved, the standards will be published as the Guidelines for the provision of Mandatory Health Programs and Services in accordance with section 7 of the HPPA.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Proposed standards include two new program areas and a new Foundational Standard

The 1997 *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines* included only three program areas: Chronic Disease and Injuries, Family Health, and Infectious Diseases. In the 2007 proposed standards, two new areas have been added: Environmental Health and Emergency Preparedness. The Environmental Health area is a new grouping of

existing programs, while the Emergency Preparedness area is an entirely new theme in the standards.

Additionally, a Foundational Standard outlines specific requirements for all programs in the areas of Population Health Assessment, Surveillance, Research and Knowledge Exchange, and Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement.

4.2 Exact resource implications of proposed standards remain unknown until accompanying protocols are published

The proposed *Ontario Public Health Standards* mention over 35 program protocols that will articulate the specific details on how health units are to plan and deliver the standards. At least 21 of these protocols are new and need to be developed by the Ministries. York Region Public Health staff have assisted in the development of the protocols. Until the MOHLTC publishes the new protocols, exact programming and resource implications of the new *Ontario Public Health Standards* remain unknown.

4.3 Proposed standards may not be as flexible as originally anticipated

While the proposed *Ontario Public Health Standards* emphasize the tailoring of public health programs and services to meet local population health needs, every board of health is required by the HPPA to comply with the published guidelines by providing all the programs and services listed, including the specific details of the protocols.

4.4 MOHLTC aiming to release new standards in 2008

The new standards and accompanying protocols are intended to be released by April 2008, though this date is subject to change. Implementation of the standards will occur gradually. Staff will report to Council on the potential implications for the Regional Municipality of York once the *Ontario Public Health Standards* and protocols are finalized.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

According to the Province, changes to programs based on the new *Ontario Public Health Standards* are intended to be revenue neutral. Until the accompanying protocols are published, however, exact resource implications of the proposed *Ontario Public Health Standards* remain unknown. Increased provincial subsidies over the years have now brought us to the expected 75/25 cost-share ratio on existing programs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The impact of the new *Ontario Public Health Standards* on local municipalities is unknown at this time.

7. CONCLUSION

As part of a strategy to strengthen public health capacity throughout Ontario, the provincial government has drafted new *Ontario Public Health Standards*.

The proposed standards mention over 35 program protocols that will provide specific details on how health units are to plan and deliver the standards. Until these protocols are published, exact resource implications of the new standards remain unknown. Staff will report to Council on the potential implications for the Region once the *Ontario Public Health Standards* are finalized and accompanying protocols are developed.

For more information on this report, contact Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health and Director of Public Health Programs, in the Public Health Branch of the Community and Health Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.