

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

June 27, 2005

To: Board of Health

From: Dr. David McKeown, Medical Officer of Health

Subject: Establishment of a Toronto Public Health Dental Clinic in the North York Civic Centre

Purpose:

To obtain approval to establish a Toronto Public Health Dental Clinic in the North York Civic Centre.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

It is estimated that the establishment of a dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre will require one-time costs of \$300,000 to renovate the available space and \$150,000 for purchase of dental equipment and ongoing operating costs.

If the establishment of this dental clinic is approved, a request for funding of \$300,000 to renovate the space will be included in the 2006 Toronto Public Health Capital Budget Request. It is estimated that restructuring the delivery of dental services in the former North York will result in annualized savings of approximately \$270,000. Upon obtaining required approval, these savings will be used in 2006 for the purchase of dental equipment at a one-time cost of \$130,000, with related ongoing operating costs of approximately \$20,000 annually. A request to use the balance of the annualized \$120,000 savings to further harmonize dental services city-wide for seniors living in Long Term Care facilities will be included in the 2006 and 2007 Operating Budget submission. The harmonization of dental services for seniors living in Long-Term Care facilities will be annualized in future years using the total savings.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Board of Health approve the establishment of a Toronto Public Health dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre to replace the North York school mobile dental program;
- (2) \$300,000 be included in the Toronto Public Health 2006 Capital Budget Request for renovation costs at the North York Civic Centre to accommodate a dental clinic;
- (3) the hours of operation of the proposed clinic be the same as other Toronto Public Health dental clinics;
- (4) \$130,000 from the 2006 savings realised from the closure of the school clinics in the north region of the City be included in the 2006 Operating Budget request on a one-time basis to purchase the required dental equipment for the dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre;
- (5) \$20,000 from the 2006 savings realised from the closures be included in the 2006 Operating Budget request for ongoing maintenance cost associated with the use of the space; and
- (6) a request be included in the 2006 Public Health Operating Budget Submission to further harmonize city-wide dental services for seniors living in Long-Term Care facilities, utilizing the \$120,000 estimated balance of the 2006 annual savings resulting from the restructuring of the delivery of dental services in North York.

Background:

At its October 18, 2004 meeting, the Board of Health resolved to consider the feasibility of establishing a dental clinic in the North York Civic Centre. In addition, on April 4, 2005 the Board of Health requested the Medical Officer of Health to investigate the reallocation of resources within the existing Toronto Public Health 2005 operating budget to proceed with the implementation of the mobile dental program for seniors living in institutions, and report back to the Board of Health as soon as possible.

This report responds to both motions.

Comments:

The school based, mobile dental treatment program in North York has been in existence since 1937. At the time of amalgamation, there were 90 fixed and 28 portable part-time dental clinics located in elementary schools in North York serving school-age children up to grade five. These clinics are open for the duration of the school year and are staffed with part-time employees. There is no access to dental service during the summer months in the north region of the City.

After amalgamation, Toronto Public Health harmonized eligibility for the City's dental program city-wide, to include children living in low-income families up to grade eight, adolescents living in low-income families, low-income seniors who live independently, and high-risk mothers enrolled in public health programs. However, eligible non-school aged children and seniors living in the North have to travel to other regions of the City to obtain care. This is because the school clinics in the North are not equipped to treat, and are not accessible to other age groups. In addition, there are safety concerns about having members of the general public visit schools during school hours. Having to travel long distances to obtain care can be difficult for some seniors and hence a barrier for accessing necessary dental care.

Space availability has been a major issue for most schools in the last five years. It has become increasingly difficult for principals to accommodate the mobile dental treatment program in the schools in the north. Relocation of the mobile dental treatment program in schools would reduce Toronto Public Health reliance on schools to provide this service.

In 2003, Toronto Public Health established dental clinics in the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre and York Community Services. Service was transferred from 18 school clinics in the north region with minimal community impact. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some families whose children could still have been seen in the remaining mobile school dental clinics, chose to use the clinics in the community health centres because they felt more comfortable in these sites. Establishing a dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre would complete the conversion of the school mobile dental program and would allow seniors and children in low income families to access dental services in the same manner as their peers in other parts of the city.

In addition, the mobile equipment used to provide dental services in the schools is outdated and in need of replacement. Since the 1980's none of the equipment in the North York mobile dental program has been replaced or upgraded. In order to maintain service in the schools, Toronto Public Health has used parts from non-functioning equipment to repair equipment that is still in use. Replacement costs of this mobile equipment is estimated to be approximately \$250,000. In addition, the maintenance and repair costs of mobile equipment are higher than for fixed equipment presently in use in the other regions of the city. For these reasons, it is recommended that this equipment not be replaced.

Toronto Public Health is recommending that a suitably equipped dental clinic, which reflects current professional standards and can accommodate eligible residents of all age groups, be established in the North York Civic Centre. The cost of the equipment required is estimated to be \$130,000.

Toronto Public Health has consulted with and received support from Facilities and Real Estate for the space required to locate the dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre. The cost of renovating the space is estimated by Facilities and Real Estate to be \$300,000. The total one-time cost of restructuring the North York dental clinic program is therefore estimated to be \$450,000.

Locating a dental clinic in the North York Civic Centre is desirable for the following reasons:

- (a) it is accessible by public transit;
- (b) it is accessible on a year round basis;
- (c) it is accessible to persons with disabilities;
- (d) it is in a building that is known to the public and where the public comes for other services;
- (e) it is in a City-owned building;
- (f) the space is currently available, there will be no or very little impact on other existing services or staff; and
- (g) the space is large enough to accommodate a clinic that can replace the existing mobile dental school clinics

It is recommended that the hours of operation be the same as other clinics in the rest of the City. This would mean that there would be changes in the hours of work of staff since the school dental clinics operate only during school hours. Toronto Public Health is committed to working with Local 79 and the Human Resources Division to minimize the impact on current staff. The proposed restructuring of dental services would result in savings estimated to be \$ 270,000.

There are no additional resources required to operate this facility since resources from the closure of the mobile school dental clinics will be reallocated to operate the new clinic at the North York Civic Centre.

In 2003 Toronto Public Health requested \$470,450 (gross and net) to harmonise the mobile dental program for institutionalised seniors. Toronto Public Health received \$100,000 to partially harmonise the program. At the request of the Board of Health, Toronto Public Health is recommending that once the restructuring of the dental program in North York is complete, any savings realised from this restructuring be used to employ 1 dental hygienist, 2 dental assistants and 0.5 FTE dentist (total \$245,841.00+ materials and supplies) and one time equipment cost of \$14,000 to further harmonise this important service to institutionalised seniors. It is recommended that the annual savings from restructuring the North Region dental program, which is estimated to be \$270,000, be used to fund the harmonization of the mobile dental program for institutionalized seniors in future years.

Conclusions:

The North York mobile dental school program has been in existence since 1937. Over the years it has served the dental care needs of children in elementary schools well. However, with amalgamation and harmonization of dental services across the city, the school mobile dental clinics are limited in their capacity to meet the dental care needs of all eligible residents in the north of the city. Locating a dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre provides an opportunity for Toronto Public Health to address the inequitable access to dental care for non school aged residents in the north. Therefore, Toronto Public Health is recommending that the Board of Health approve the establishment of a dental clinic at the North York Civic Centre to replace the remaining school mobile dental clinics.

Contact:

Dr. Hazel Stewart
Director
Dental and Oral Health Services
Telephone: (416) 392-0442
Facsimile: (416) 392-0713
E-mail: hstewart@toronto.ca

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health