
DATE: September 24, 2009

REPORT TITLE: **PROVINCIAL FUNDING CUTS FOR TOBACCO PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS**

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OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on recent Ministry of Health Promotion Smoke-Free Ontario funding cuts and subsequent impact on Public Health tobacco programming and staffing.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Region of Peel has received 100 per cent provincial funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion since 2005 to enhance tobacco prevention programming in order to meet new provincial standards of service.
- Provincial funding was initially used to hire 4.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.
- The provincial funding provided to the Region of Peel since 2005 has strengthened the capacity of local tobacco prevention and enforcement programming.
- It was reported to Regional Council that annual scope of service requirements attached to the provincial funding could not fully be met due to inadequate funding.
- Advocacy for additional provincial funding to meet these programming requirements was communicated in writing from the Regional Chair and the Medical Officer of Health on two separate occasions.
- The Ministry made abrupt budget cuts to the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy during the spring of 2009. Consequently, provincial funding provided to the Region of Peel has been significantly decreased, resulting in staff reductions and redeployment.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

The Region of Peel has received 100 per cent provincial funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) since 2005 to enhance tobacco prevention and enforcement programming in order to meet new provincial standards of service.

The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA)* came into effect on May 31, 2006. The *SFOA* provides uniform protection from exposure to second-hand smoke within enclosed workplaces and public places throughout Ontario. Provincial funding supported implementation of the *SFOA* and tobacco prevention and protection initiatives in Peel.

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Specifically, provincial funding supported:

- i. implementation of the *Smoke Free Ontario Act*,
- ii. tobacco prevention initiatives (preventing youth from starting to smoke), and
- iii. tobacco protection initiatives (providing protection from exposure to second-hand smoke).

Provincial funding for cessation (providing support to smokers who want to quit) was not provided specifically to public health units; although the Ministry of Health Promotion continued to fund Smokers' Helpline, the Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients (STOP) study and the Driven to Quit Challenge - an annual provincial quit smoking contest.

Provincial funding was initially used to hire staff (4.5 FTE) in order to set-up and develop a new youth prevention program and provide enforcement visits to tobacco retailers, schools, workplaces and public places by public health staff. In subsequent years, funding was allocated to support the coordination of the enhanced programming overall and to fulfill scope of service guidelines provided by the Ministry.

The provincial funding allocated to the Region of Peel is illustrated in the below table.

Program	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Protection (Enforcement)	\$375,000	\$564,857	\$561,610	\$561,610	\$561,610
Prevention (Youth Action Alliance and High School Grants)	\$236,000	\$239,750	\$242,750	\$255,000	\$153,333 Jan 1–Aug 31
Coordination	N/A	\$75,000 April -Dec	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Subtotal (Base Funding)	\$611,000	\$879,607	\$904,360	\$916,610	\$814,943
One-Time Grants	Nil	\$3,000	\$56,170	\$10,000	\$59,354
Annual Total	\$611,000	\$882,607	\$960,530	\$926,610	\$874,297

a) Strengths of Enhanced Provincial Funding to Date

The provincial funding provided to the Region of Peel since 2005 has strengthened the capacity of local tobacco prevention and enforcement programming.

The development of a Tobacco Control Area Network facilitated significant growth in partnerships among regional health units. Collaboration among these partners has enhanced the caliber and reach of communication campaigns, advocacy efforts as well as program development and service delivery.

Peel was funded for two Youth Action Alliances (YAAs) which employed two Youth Advisors and 14 Peer Leaders. The YAAs focused on youth tobacco prevention initiatives and generated significant momentum locally, regionally and provincially through their events, campaigns and messaging. The youth-engagement aspect of this program was critical to fostering many transferrable life-skills among youth throughout Ontario.

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The Tobacco Control Coordination role facilitated valuable cross-linkages and partnerships between other departments and programs within the Region of Peel.

b) Constraints of Provincial Funding

It was reported to Regional Council that the provincial funding was insufficient to adequately meet the annual scope of service requirements attached to the funding. Specifically, enforcement protocols were noted as the most challenging to meet.

Further, the provincial funding was inadequate as it did not account for annual inflation costs. Although salaries, benefits and other costs to the Region of Peel increased annually, provincial funding levels only marginally increased.

The Regional Chair and the Medical Officer of Health communicated in writing to the Province on two separate occasions the need for additional funding to meet these programming requirements. In addition, email communication was forwarded to Ministry staff with quarterly financial reports emphasizing the challenges associated with maintaining required service levels with the level of funding provided.

2. Program Implications of Recent MHP Budget Cuts and Funding Not Keeping Pace with Inflation

The Ministry of Health Promotion made significant budget cuts to the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy abruptly during the spring of 2009. This has decreased the amount of provincial funding provided to the Region of Peel.

As a result, it has been necessary to reduce staff levels and dissolve two youth-focused tobacco use prevention programs.

a) Service Reduction to Protection Program (Enforcement)

One FTE (contract) Public Health Inspector (PHI) was lost in 2008 as a result of provincial funding being relatively flat since 2006.

b) Cuts to Prevention Programs (Youth Action Alliance and High School Grant)

The provincial funding for the Youth Action Alliance (YAA) and High School Grants programs ceased as of August 31, 2009. Consequently, these programs were dismantled after being in existence since 2005.

As a result of these funding cuts, 14 youth peer leader positions had to be eliminated in July 2009. The two Youth Advisors who oversaw the peer leaders were redeployed to another department within the Region of Peel where vacancies existed. With the recent announcement of increased funding for Ontario Public Health Standards, these two FTE will be replaced to supplement the service gaps that exist.

High School Grant funding to secondary schools for tobacco prevention initiatives has also been eliminated.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The discontinuation of the Youth Action Alliance and High School Grant programs and its associated funding of approximately \$0.25M annually has reduced tobacco prevention programming in Peel. The discontinuation of these programs has been reflected in the proposed 2010 Public Health Budget.

The Ministry of Health Promotion has engaged partners and stakeholders in a process to review the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy and develop a 5-year plan. Details of the plan and future funding for Peel's Protection (Enforcement) and Tobacco Control Coordination programs are currently not known.

However, if the current provincial funding trends continue for both the Protection (Enforcement) and Tobacco Control Coordination programs, it will result in further erosion of services as funding has not kept pace with inflationary cost pressures.

CONCLUSION

Recent cuts to 100 per cent provincial tobacco funding has resulted in lost staff positions and unfulfilled provincial programming requirements. Given the recent announcement of increased funding for the Ontario Public Health Standards, two of these positions will be replaced in order to continue the provision of tobacco prevention programming.

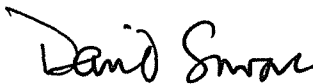


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