

DATE	20 June 2000
TO/DEST.	The Chair and Members of Council
FROM/EXP.	Medical Officer of Health
SUBJECT/OBJET	RESPONSE TO CSC INQUIRY NO. 34(00) TEEN PREGNANCY IN OTTAWA-CARLETON

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

INTRODUCTION

This information item is in response to an inquiry relative to the above-noted matter in the context of discussion on Item 4 of the agenda-analysis of the Social Housing Waiting List raised by Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen at the Community Services Committee meeting of 1 June 2000.

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen requested information on the rates of teen pregnancy in Ottawa-Carleton as well as programs that are in place in the schools and the community to address the issue.

BACKGROUND

Teen Pregnancy Rates

Teen pregnancy rates (15 to 19 year old) in Ottawa-Carleton rose in the late eighties and early nineties but leveled off in the mid-nineties (Appendix A). In 1995, in this age group there were 974 pregnancies (365 births and 609 abortions) and a pregnancy rate of 43.6 pregnancies per 1000 population per year. Pregnancy rates of over 40/1000 per year mean that young women have more than one in five chance of becoming pregnant during their adolescence.

Appendix B shows comparative data for Ontario. Ottawa-Carleton rates tend to be lower than provincial rates but in both instances, there is an upward trend. It must be emphasized that the most recent data we have is five years old.

Most recent data available is 1995. Therapeutic abortion data is not available after that date. This abortion data is essential in assessing the pregnancy rate, as it is almost double the live birth rate in this age group.

School Programs

The main objective of the Health department School Based Sexual Health Program is to offer support to teachers, youth workers as well as parents in the matter of sexuality education for youth. We are involved with the Boards of Education in teacher training and coaching on various aspects relating to reproductive and sexual health choices. We assist teachers in delivering the Ministry of Education Health and Physical Education curriculum.

A variety of strategies are used including training and coaching of teachers, youth workers and peer leaders. Resources are developed and disseminated to teachers in all Boards of Education, private schools, youth workers and community agencies. We are networking and community agencies on issues such as Healthy Relationships, Sexuality, violence, AIDS, birth Control and Sexual Orientation. We are involved in training at the University of Ottawa in their regular teachers training program as well as their summer courses. We are actively involved with the Conseil des écoles catholiques de l'est de l'Ontario in developing a curriculum for special needs students. We will be jointly hosting teacher training sessions in August 2000 for their grade 7 to 9 teachers.

We are supporting parents in their role and responsibility as primary sexuality educators of their children. We have conducted discussion groups for parents to identify the most important aspects of growth and development for ages 10-14 in the domains of physical, social, emotional and cognitive/spiritual growth and development. We have also identified what information parents would find helpful in parenting this age group and how resources should be delivered. We are actively involved with community partners to develop age and stage appropriate resources for parents to use with their children.

We also respond to requests from parenting groups, schools, workplaces and community agencies for parenting classes. At present, we are conducting a series "How to Talk so Your Kids will Listen" at the Nepean Resources Community Centre in Bells Corners. We will also be offering lunch time sessions at Finance Canada in the next few weeks on adolescence and sexuality.

School Services was recognized by Deloitte and Touche as a major area where the Region is not in compliance with Mandatory Programs. Three positions were added in this area in the 2000 budget to provide an intensive intervention in schools with high student pregnancy rates. This program is currently under development and will be launched in the fall.

Community Outreach

Community Outreach staff work with coalition/networks of community groups, health and social services partners to coordinate and address gaps in sexual health programs for youth in the community. The overall objective is to establish a network of knowledgeable, reliable and legitimate sexual health partners in the community to better serve youth.

Sexual Health “Street” Outreach or “back pack” service, is the newest component of community outreach. A new position was added in this area in the 2000 budget giving us a complement of two workers. This outreach is mostly geared to street involved youth. Staff are literally offering a menu of sexual health services from a backpack on the street and from community drop-ins. Services also include a “fast track” system to the main Sexual Health Centre when disease is suspected.

An anonymous telephone line staffed by Public Health Nurses offers counselling on AIDS and various sexual health topics.

Sexual Health Centres

The clinical services aim to provide information, assessment, counseling and referral, and to increase consistent use of contraception among individuals wishing to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. The intent of the program has been to improve access for those who find difficulty in utilizing other services.

In addition to the main clinic at 179 Clarence Street, clinic services for youth are provided in other areas of the Region. Eighteen (18) hours per week of clinical services are offered in four (4) satellite clinics situated in the following high schools: South Carleton, Rideau High School, Sir Robert Borden and l’Alternative and in three (3) satellite clinics within the following community agencies: Goulbourn, Kanata, West Carleton Community Resource Centre in Kanata; the Youth Services Bureau in Orléans and in Metcalfe with the generous support of Osgoode township.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

No public consultation was done.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

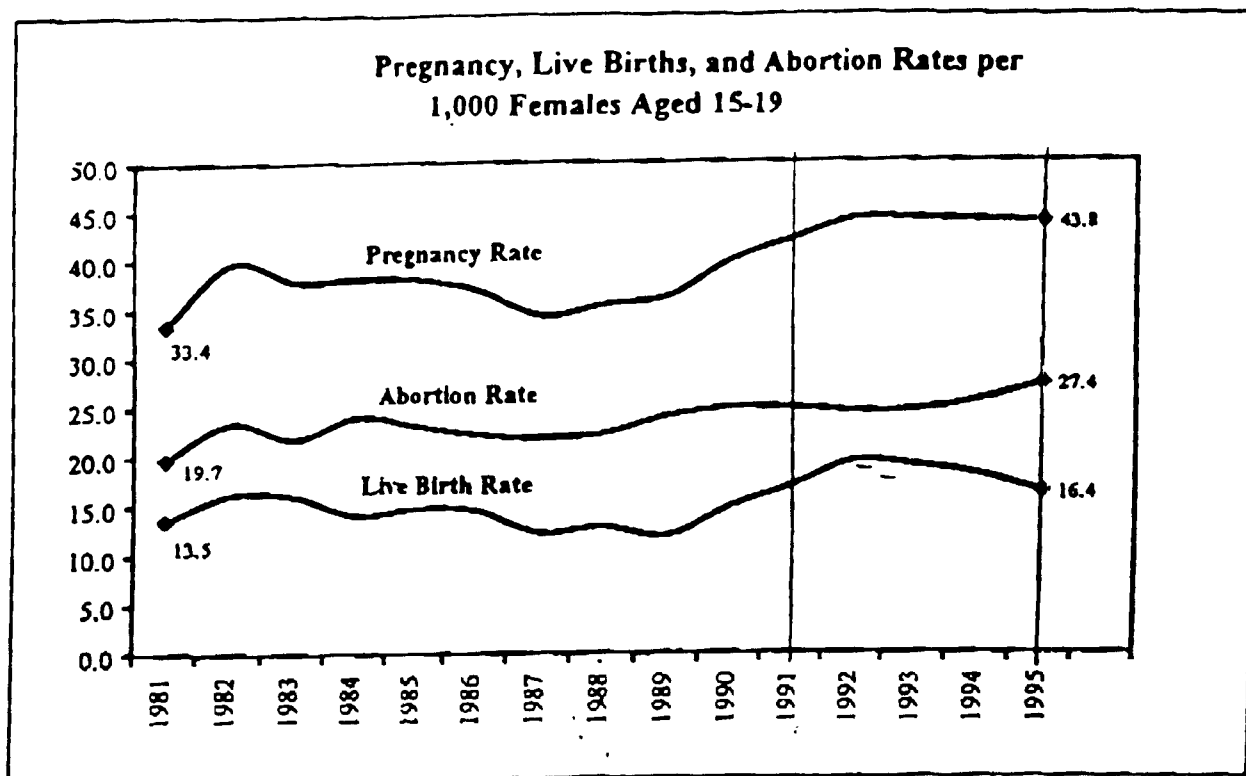
There are no new financial implications to this report. Council has already received the Deloitte and Touche report whose recommendations are alluded to in this report and which do have financial implications to achieve compliance with Mandatory Programs.

CONCLUSION

Pregnancy rates among teenagers in Ottawa-Carleton remain unacceptably high. Programs which educate and inform teenagers about sexuality, and promote healthy and informed sexual choices are essential and have been shown to be cost-effective. The importance of this area was recognized by Council in the 2000 budget with the addition of four new positions. A further two positions are required to meet the Deloitte and Touche recommendations to meet the minimum requirements of Mandatory Programs.

*Approved by
Robert Cushman, MD, FRCPC*

Appendix A



Appendix B

