

MINUTES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON

THURSDAY 20 JANUARY 2000

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

1:30 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Munter

Members: W. Byrne, C. Doucet, D. Holmes, H. Kreling, A. Loney, M. McGoldrick-Larsen

Regrets: D. Beamish, L. Davis

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

That the Community Services Committee defer confirmation of the 16 December 1999 Minutes to the meeting of 3 February 2000.

DEFERRED

INQUIRIES

1. ACCESSIBILITY AT 161 GREENBANK AND LACK OF DISABLED PARKING SPOTS NEAR ENTRANCE

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen asked that staff look into accessibility at 161 Greenbank Road (District Office G) and also report back on why there are no disabled parking spaces near the entrance of the building.

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- Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee.
2. Items requiring Council approval will be presented on 09 February 2000 in Community Services Report No. 40.

PRESENTATION(S)

1. RESULTS OF BIG SHOT CHALLENGE/DÉFI-ÉCHEC À LA GRIPPE
- Medical Officer of Health report dated 29 Dec 99

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, began by thanking Health Department staff, specifically Dr. Ed Ellis, Associate Medical Officer of Health, Ms. Carol Sly, Public Health Nurse and Cassandra Crowder, Information and Public Affairs for the campaign. Chair Munter called the Big Short Challenge a successful and important campaign. He indicated that the flu vaccine was provided by the Province of Ontario, and he pointed out there is no reason why it cannot be more widely distributed, free of charge. Chair Munter said the cost of the vaccine is \$8.00 per unit and he compared this to the cost of one night's hospitalization, \$800 dollars. Chair Munter acknowledged Regional Chair Bob Chiarelli, thanking him for his leadership and support in putting funds back into public health.

Chair Chiarelli said he was proud of the leadership shown by the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. R. Cushman and the Health Department, noting their efforts have slowed down the incidence of influenza. He pointed out that the number of agencies participating in the Big Shot Challenge grew from 55 in 1998 to 72 in 1999 and he said the Health Department should be proud of its success. Chair Chiarelli also thanked all the agencies that participated in the program.

Dr. Ellis paid special tribute to all the staff involved in the program. He pointed out there are still people with concerns about flu vaccinations, but, notwithstanding this, 99% of residents and 77% of staff in long term care facilities were inoculated. Dr. Ellis expressed the hope the Health Department can continue with this program. Dr. Cushman added his congratulations to all participants, and he highlighted the contribution made by Dr. Ellis and by Ms. Sly.

At this point, Chair Munter invited several of his colleagues on Council to present awards to 39 participating agencies. He acknowledged the participation of several other agencies who received honourable mentions. A complete list of award recipients is kept on file with, and available from, the Committee Co-ordinator.

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

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2. FOOD SAFETY IN SCHOOLS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

- Community Services Committee Co-ordinator report dated 12 Jan 00

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, introduced Mrs. Eileen Mattson, a resident of Kanata, who became actively involved in the issue of food safety and who has a number of proposals to present to the Health Department.

Mrs. Mattson shared with the Committee the story of her daughter who became ill with E-coli 0157:H17 in October 1995. This resulted in the complication known as Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome and Mrs. Mattson's daughter suffered pain so horrible she has blocked the memory of the illness to this day. Her kidneys failed, then her lungs, then her heart, and she remained on heart bypass for three days. Her recovery has been called a miracle, and Mrs. Mattson attributed this miracle to the aggressive efforts of the cardiac and respiratory teams at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, whose staff refused to give up on a once healthy and bright eight-year old girl.

Mrs. Mattson said that, in November 1992, thirty residents of a seniors' residence in Ottawa became ill with E.coli 0157. She pointed out that the Region has not recently experienced an outbreak such as the one in London, Ontario, in September which affected 159 visitors to a Western Fair. A petting zoo was blamed and the bacteria left a nine-year old boy with kidney damage and also in need of a blood transfusion. In response to the London, Ontario outbreak, the Middlesex-London Health Unit has made 46 recommendations to the Province regarding petting zoos, animal exhibits, and publicly visited farms. Mrs. Mattson asked that the Health Department act before there is a similar, major outbreak in Ottawa-Carleton.

Mrs. Mattson provided the following information:

- ⇒ E.coli 0157 infections are on the rise and more than 1400 infections were recorded last year in Canada;
- ⇒ Health Canada estimates there are 2.2 million cases of food-borne illness in Canada every year. This costs Canadian health services, industry and society close to \$2 million dollars per year;
- ⇒ the World Health Organization estimates that the number of reported cases of food-borne illness should be multiplied by 350. This is because most cases go un-reported as they are not diagnosed;
- ⇒ patients with gastrointestinal symptoms need to be routinely tested for E.coli 0157 and for other dangerous pathogens, such as Salmonella, Campylobacter and Listeria. The latter is showing up in hot dogs and deli meats and kills approximately one-quarter of its victims.

Mrs. Mattson presented the following recommendations for consideration by the Health Department:

1. better reporting of cases of food-borne illness to the media;
2. better food safety education to students in schools and to residents in long-term care facilities;
3. inform parents that children experiencing diarrhea and vomiting should be tested by their doctors for food-borne pathogens: inform doctors these tests should be routinely administered;
4. enforce a hand washing policy in schools;
5. impose or recommend a quarantine period for children experiencing food-borne illness;
6. inspect all food establishments and grocery stores more than once a year;
7. provide information to consumers about the need to wash their fruits and vegetables and about proper cooking of food;
8. provide information on the health hazard that is un-pasteurized apple cider;
9. educate managers of grocery stores and cashiers about cleanliness on cash conveyor belts;
10. require that shields be placed on all meat display cases in stores;
11. inform people that rural environments pose a real threat to health through E.coli and other bacteria.

Mrs. Mattson indicated she and her husband have a Web Page that provides information to the public and support to victims of food-borne disease. They have heard many disturbing stories from across Canada, the U. S. and as far as Sri Lanka, all expressing frustration at the lack of medical knowledge in their areas and astonishment that the disease can be contracted from the sources named. Nearly all the respondents have said that better public health information is needed, along with stronger laws, research and routine testing. Mrs. Mattson expressed the view the Health Department could better fulfill its leadership mandate by implementing measures before there is a major outbreak in this area, show innovation by doing what other regions have not done, form partnerships with the people in the Region and provide protection to the public.

Chair Munter thanked Mrs. Mattson for the effort and research she put into her presentation. He moved that the Health Department review the recommendations and report back to Committee. He also requested that the department resume regular reporting of restaurants and grocery stores fined and found in contravention of food handling regulations, as this is both a good deterrent for those convicted and useful information for the public to have.

Councillor W. Byrne expressed her appreciation to Mrs. Mattson for bringing out very interesting information about non-food illness vehicles and packaging. She asked whether any kind of action was being taken on packaging, noting that, in some grocery stores, the way meat is packaged invites leakage. Mrs. Mattson said she was not aware of any initiatives, adding that many store managers are unaware of the danger and that they risk infecting the entire meat section of their stores. Councillor Byrne asked what the symptoms are and how long does an infected person have to get treatment. The Medical

Officer of Health, Dr. R. Cushman, said this is problematic because it is essentially gastroenteritis. He put forward the view the strengths have to lie in the public health system, not in the medical care system. Because of the pressures on the medical care system, it is hard to treat every case of diarrhea as if it were a potential disaster. Dr. Cushman conveyed his thanks to Mrs. Mattson for coming forward. He said it is clear she has had a difficult experience, and many people who have learned the hard way want to share their experience with the community. He called her recommendations very impressive and he indicated the department will take a close look at what has been submitted.

Councillor D. Holmes asked about the status of the Food Handlers' course. A. Roche, Environmental Health Directorate, Health Department, replied that the course has been enhanced. The department is "piloting" a course for the Province that is likely to be the recognized certificate level course for food safety training for the Region and for other agencies. Mr. Roche added that approximately 2300 food handlers or other workers were trained in 1999 and information about E.coli was part of the training. Responding to a further question from Councillor Holmes, Mr. Roche indicated this is not a mandatory program but Health Department staff believe it should be and are working towards that end. The majority of those trained were from the food service industry, but there have been focus campaigns on food security, home food safety, awareness campaigns, inserts in shopping bags and other similar activities.

Dr. Cushman said one of the elements worth considering is licensing, a responsibility the Region will have as a result of municipal restructuring. The Department should explore its legal options to impose measures as part of the licensing of grocery stores and restaurants. Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen suggested that, as part of the analysis, staff explore the health curriculum in elementary schools, specifically, at what age or grade level some of these matters could be considered. Dr. Cushman indicated that, as part of its review of mandatory programs, the Department is carefully evaluating the Comprehensive School Program and, as part of this, the importance of hand washing to prevent the spread of both food-borne and other infectious diseases. Mrs. Mattson re-emphasized the importance of routine testing of children with stomach flu. She pointed out that roughly 10% of gastrointestinal infections are bacterial and she posited it would not be out of line to treat every gastrointestinal illness as a potential real health danger.

Moved by A. Munter

That the Health Department review the proposals submitted by E. Mattson for action at the local level and prepare a report by April 2000 on the education, prevention, inspection, regulatory and enforcement measures the Health Department can take to expand its efforts to protect food safety in Ottawa-Carleton.

CARRIED, as amended

REGULAR ITEMS

HEALTH

3. TOBACCO ADVERTISING

- Medical Officer of Health report dated 7 Jan 2000
- Response to CSC Inquiry No. 15 (98)

The Committee heard from Mr. Rob Cunningham, representing the Canadian Cancer Society. He began by thanking the Committee for allowing intervenants to express their support for the staff recommendation. Mr. Cunningham pointed out that the issue of tobacco advertising has been on the agenda since 1969. The World Health Organization recommends there be a total ban on tobacco advertising and several municipalities in Ontario have taken action, as well as OC Transpo in Ottawa-Carleton. Mr. Cunningham said many American municipalities have strong ordinances against tobacco advertising. He provided some examples of event advertising which, it has been proven, increases the consumption of cigarettes by their target audience, youth, and he express the belief the case against tobacco advertising is compelling.

Ms. Carolyn Hill, Ottawa-Carleton Council on Smoking and Health, pointed out that measures against tobacco advertising should include bus shelters and buses and compliance needs to be continually monitored. Ms. Hill said that, with the recommendation, the Region has demonstrated its commitment to youth. Tobacco companies use advertising to increase sales and launch new products, and attempt to shift the image of cigarette smoking from illness to fun. She indicated there is a need to send a clear and consistent message against smoking and youth during National Non-Smoking Week.

Mahreen Nabi, from Metcalfe School, and Alexanne Poirier, from Ecole Charlotte-Lemieux expressed their support for the Health Department's recommendation. Ms. Nabi circulated a letter sent to tobacco company executives by a group of 100 grade 7 and 8 students from 25 schools in Ottawa-Carleton. In their communication, the students exhort tobacco companies to stop lying to youth, misleading them and covering up the truth about the effects of smoking. Ms. Poirier described a project organized by students from Ecole Charlotte-Lemieux for a Smoke-Free Millennium/Un millénaire sans fumée. This consists of a year 2000 calendar and the profits from the sale of these calendars will go to the Canadian Cancer Society.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, asked why the proposed policy doesn't go as far as the one adopted in Sudbury regarding billboard advertising. Ms. Debbie McCulloch, from the Health Department Tobacco Branch, indicated that the department cannot impose regulations on private property. Responding to a further question from Chair Munter, Ms. McCulloch said the majority of billboard advertising signs in Ottawa-Carleton are located on private property.

Councillor A. Loney, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the OC Transpo Commission, informed the Committee that advertising for tobacco products which Ms. Hill indicated was located in a bus shelter has been removed. He inquired about progress related to using free space on buses for public service announcements and he expressed the view the Department needs to give some urgency to these measures. The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. R. Cushman, indicated that the Department is looking into this and the pace of activity is increasing. He added that the second hand smoke campaign has been mostly in the bus shelters and has been very successful.

Councillor H. Kreling pointed out that, in light of the staff recommendation and the proposed amendment, it may be necessary to seek clarification about honouring any sponsorship commitments or arrangements already in place for Lansdowne Park, since this facility is now owned by the Region of Ottawa-Carleton.

Chair Munter vacated the chair in order to move the following Motion:

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council implement a policy to prohibit tobacco advertising as well as tobacco sponsorship advertising by tobacco companies and/or their "shell" companies on Regional property, and that the Health Department report back in early 2001 about extending this policy to cover all municipal properties in the new City of Ottawa.

CARRIED, as amended

4. RE-DIRECTION OF EMERGENCY HOSTEL FUNDING

- Special Advisor on Social Housing and Social Services Commissioner joint report dated 10 Jan 00

Ms. Joyce Potter, Special Advisor on Social Housing, began by saying the report describes an innovative approach to deal with the continued expansion in the use of emergency hostel space. She pointed out that hostels are one of the most expensive ways to house people, and an investment at this time will help the Region avoid more serious costs in the future. Ms. Potter drew Committee's attention to a revised Table 1, which includes the costs of family shelters; these were omitted from the original Table 1 and explain the discrepancy.

Ms. Wendy Muckle, Co-ordinator, Homelessness Initiative Team, presented the report. She reminded Committee members that the Community Action Plan approved in July 99 calls for the re-direction of a percentage of hostel funds for innovative approaches to service delivery. In order to be eligible for 80/20 cost-sharing with the Province, a business case had to be submitted, and staff are hopeful they will have a positive decision within the next few weeks.

Ms. Muckle continued by saying that, in Ottawa-Carleton, hostel bed use increased by 11% in 1999. The current capacity is about 354 beds for singles and approximately 60 rooms for families, excluding overflow capacity. The current capacity of 600 people per night is insufficient, since every night, a significant number of people sleep on mats on the floor in the facilities. The current system can't continue to accommodate demand expected in year 2000. If nothing is done, the Region will have to add hostel capacity at an extremely high cost.

Ms. Muckle described the proposed strategies:

- preventing eviction and retaining permanent housing. This will be done by providing tenants with eviction information and information on how to maintain housing. Some projects will intervene when a housing crisis occurs and another will support rooming house residents, landlords and neighbours; another will provide long term support for families at risk of eviction.
- decreasing reliance on hostels. Some projects recommended will help people who need assistance move out of shelters more rapidly; limited resources will be used to assist those who cannot do this on their own.
- providing short or long term housing support, depending on clients' needs. Re-admission to shelters will be prevented by connecting people to resources in the community that will help them retain their housing, particularly youth.

With respect to the financial implications, Ms. Muckle pointed out that the regional share for the projects will be paid out of the emergency hostel budget; no additional funds are being requested. Some cost savings are expected through projects that will have a positive financial and human impact. Staff are projecting that in the year 2000, emergency hostel funding will be slightly over \$8 million: investing in the hostel re-direction project will reduce that amount to almost that adopted in the 2000 budget. She concluded her presentation by stressing that, even if all the proposed projects are successful in the first year, the Region will only maintain the hostel utilization levels extant in 1999. Another full year will be required before the amount of emergency beds is reduced.

In response to a question from Councillor A. Loney, Ms. Muckle indicated staff are fairly confident the projects are solid in the methodology proposed, very confident in the agencies delivering the projects and in the way chosen to evaluate and monitor their impact. She pointed out there staff have little control over the availability of rental housing, adding that the vacancy rate in Ottawa-Carleton is currently the lowest in Canada, i.e., .07%. Ms. Muckle said the 150 additional units to be developed through the Housing Initiatives Project will have a significant impact on the availability of housing for the homeless population, but considerably more than the 150 units are needed.

Councillor Loney wanted to know whether staff are fairly confident the Province will provide its share of the funding. Mr. Luc Legault, Director, Area Operations West, replied that the Ministry has indicated it is prepared to provide its share, the caveat being it wants to see it demonstrated that the projects will be effective.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, thanked staff for all the work that has gone into this initiative. He said one particularly good aspect deals with eviction prevention and it will be helpful to educate people about their options when facing this possibility.

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

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ADDITIONAL ITEM

5. POSSIBLE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN TAILINGS FROM KINGDON MINES, WEST CARLETON
- Associate Medical Officer of Health report dated 17 Jan 00

Councillor D. Holmes asked that the Health Department include in its report back to Committee on the results of testing, information about what triggered the site to become toxic.

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

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OTHER BUSINESS

1. PLACING OF HERITAGE PLAQUE IN CHAMPLAIN ROOM

Councillor D. Holmes asked that a Heritage Designation Certificate from the Mayor of Ottawa for the properties located at 494 and 504 Albert Street, currently being used by the Region for housing, be hung in a prominent location in the Champlain Room.

2. EXTREME WEATHER MEASURES

Ms. Joyce Potter, the Special Advisor on Social Housing, provided information on special arrangements made between the Region and the Shepherds of Good Hope to accommodate homeless persons during extreme cold weather conditions. The Committee received the report for information.

INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED

1. ENFORCEMENT OF TOBACCO CONTROL ACT
- Medical Officer of Health memorandum dated 21 Dec 99
2. HEALTH REVIEW OF MANDATORY PROGRAMS
- Chief Administrative Officer's memorandum dated 24 Nov 99

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 3 February, 2000.

CHAIR

CO-ORDINATOR