(a) That the proposed health promotion campaign (Appendix “A”) related to health effects of air pollution and the use of the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) as a tool to communicate health messaging related to air pollution levels to the public, be endorsed;

(b) That the Medical Officer of Health send a letter to the Ontario Minister of the Environment requesting the reporting of the AQHI in Hamilton (Appendix “B”);

(c) That the Item E “Report re: Community Smog plan to increase communication” be identified as completed and removed from the Outstanding Business List.
At the City of Hamilton Council meeting of July 9, 2009, staff was directed to report back to the Board of Health regarding a recommendation from Clean Air Hamilton to consider increasing communication to vulnerable members of the community and their physicians about the adverse health impacts of exposure to smog. Public Health Services staff have been working to develop a communications plan and promotion campaign to be implemented in late May, 2010 (see Appendix “B”). In addition to efforts to provide increased health messaging to vulnerable members of the community and their physicians, the communications campaign will begin to introduce a tool developed by Health Canada called the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) to the community at large. The AQHI has been developed to provide a simple measure of air quality on a scale of 1 to 10+ and provides health messages associated with the numbers on the index scale. The AQHI has been piloted and is currently being reported in a number of communities across Canada, including 8 municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area. The AQHI is not currently being reported in Hamilton, however, representatives from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment have informed staff that reporting of the AQHI in Hamilton is likely to begin in the Spring of 2011.

**Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable**

**FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (for Recommendation(s) only)**

**Financial:** Funding for this education and promotion campaign will come from within the PHS budget for environmental health promotion.

**Staffing:** No additional staffing resources are required if the recommendations are approved.

**Legal:** No legal implications are expected if the recommendations are approved.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Chronology of events)**

At the July 9, 2009 City Council meeting, Council provided the following direction:

“That the following item from the Clean Air Hamilton Report, be forwarded to Public Health staff, for a report to the Board of Health: That the City consider undertaking a community smog plan to increase communication on smog days to vulnerable members of the community such as encourage physicians to caution patients with respiratory or cardiac difficulties to take special precautions on smog days and smog advisory days.”

This report will address the issue identified above.
**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Recommendation (a) proposes a communication plan to provide health messaging to vulnerable members of the community and their physicians about the effects of air pollution, and to introduce the concept of the AQHI to members of the community at large. This initiative works toward satisfying objective A5.3 of the Public Health Services Strategic Goal "A" Action Plan. The objective, as stated, is to “Ensure appropriate and timely public messaging about air quality and its impact on health in Hamilton, e.g. by developing and implementing an Air Quality Health Index reporting system for Hamilton, in conjunction with Environment Canada.”

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

The following stakeholders have been consulted on the issue of a community awareness campaign about the health effects of air pollution and the future use of the AQHI in Hamilton:

**Seniors Advisory Committee (SAC)** was provided a presentation about the AQHI in Feb./2010. Members were surveyed in an effort to receive stakeholder input about how they would like to receive information about health and air quality. All of the SAC members indicated that they wanted to more about the AQHI and a majority indicated that they would like to see the Index forecast reported in daily newspapers.

**Best Start** is provincially funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services planned at the local level and is a collaboration of parents, Boards of Education, post-secondary educational facilities, child care providers, health and social service agencies and specialized children’s services who are committed to “making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.” A presentation about the AQHI was provided in Feb/2010. Members were surveyed in an effort to receive stakeholder input about how they would like to receive information about health and air quality. A majority of members were interested in the idea of receiving a daily AQHI forecast and 83% of respondents felt that PHS is the best agency to provide information on the AQHI.

**Hamilton Community Heat Response Committee** acts on behalf of vulnerable populations affected by extreme heat and membership consists of representatives from the following organizations:

- Campaign for Adequate Welfare
- Canadian Red Cross
- City of Hamilton Community Services Department
- City of Hamilton Public Health Services
- Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)
- Disability Networking Group
Members were surveyed in an effort to receive stakeholder input about how they would
like to receive information about health and air quality. Members responded that they
would prefer to access AQHI information in the following ways listed from most
preferred to least preferred: Website, radio, T.V., newspapers, brochures, and visits to
public places.

Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) is a non-profit multi-service
organization that provides education, resources and support to early years practitioners
from the education, finance and Children’s Services sectors who focus on healthy
development of children within the City of Hamilton. Members were surveyed in an effort
to receive stakeholder input about how they would like to receive information about
health and air quality. Feedback indicates that ASCY members support the use and
implementation of the AQHI in Hamilton with similar results from surveys of the
aforementioned groups.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) was consulted regarding the development and
implementation of their AQHI education and promotion campaign, as the AQHI is
currently reported for the City of Toronto. A suite of AQHI promotional materials is being
prepared by TPH that will be provided to HPHS for use in promoting the Index.

Health Canada was consulted regarding the development of the AQHI and how it is
planned for implementation on a national scale in Canada. Health Canada provided
recommended components for the education and promotion of the AQHI to the
community in Hamilton.

Environment Canada (EC) was consulted regarding the expected timeline for reporting
of AQHI in Hamilton, as well as funding opportunities that may be available from the
Federal Government to help promote public use of the AQHI in Hamilton. City of
Hamilton staff will be in discussion with EC staff prior to the beginning of Phase 2 of the
promotion campaign regarding funding of community groups that will help promote the
use of the AQHI in Hamilton.
Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) was consulted regarding the expected timeline for reporting the AQHI in Hamilton. A commitment has not been provided by the MOE for when the AQHI will be reported in Hamilton.

**ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

**Communication Plan**

The campaign seeks to achieve two objectives: 1) to raise awareness among the public about the health effects of air pollution (smog), with particular emphasis on messaging health information to high risk members of the community; i.e., seniors, children, persons with respiratory and/or cardiovascular health issues; and 2) to begin promoting the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) to the public as a tool that will be able to be used to assist individuals in making informed decisions about their health as it relates to the quality of the outdoor air.

The AQHI is a valuable tool developed by Health Canada that is used to understand air quality in terms of health risk and for planning daily activities accordingly. The long-term goal of the campaign is to encourage people to check the AQHI on a daily basis by encouraging local media to report daily AQHI forecasts and key messages specific to the Index readings. Reporting of the AQHI in Hamilton is also aligned with Public Health Services’ Strategic Plan Goal “A” to implement public health initiatives to improve local air quality in Hamilton.

The campaign will be divided into two phases over two years. Phase 1 of the campaign will take place between May and December 2010. It will primarily consist of communication and promotion of health information to high risk residents of the City of Hamilton about the health effects of air pollution. These messages will provide general information about smog, it’s health significance, and action that can be taken by individuals to help protect themselves. Phase 1 will include the development of partnerships with stakeholder organizations and media, print resources to be distributed to physician offices, a website to be located at [www.hamilton.ca/airqualityhealth](http://www.hamilton.ca/airqualityhealth), and a promotional advertising campaign (see Appendix “A”).

Phase 2 of the campaign will be rolled-out in April, 2011. It will highlight the significance and relevance of the AQHI by answering the related questions about who, what, where, when, why and how, while at the same time, promote the launch of the daily AQHI reading on Environment Canada’s website. This second phase will continue to leverage partnerships with local stakeholder organizations and media, while at the same time, an advertising campaign and resources such as print, website, etc. will continue to build an overall awareness and understanding of the AQHI.

**Reporting of AQHI:**
The actual daily AQHI value will not be reported during Phase 1 of the campaign, however, the concept of the Index and how it will help provide health-related information will be explained and promoted. The AQHI is not currently available for reporting in Hamilton, however, staff have been consulting with both Federal and Provincial stakeholders regarding this issue and have been informed that AQHI reporting in Hamilton is likely to begin in Spring of 2011. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) is responsible for deciding where in Ontario the AQHI is currently being reported, as the they own and operate the monitoring equipment used to sample air for which the Index is calculated. Currently, the Air Quality Index (AQI), which is used to determine when the MOE issues smog advisories to the public, is reported in Hamilton. However, the AQI does not use any health messaging associated with values in the Index, whereas the AQHI does offer health-related messaging.

In an effort to advocate for the reporting of the AQHI in Hamilton, Recommendation (b) proposes that the BOH support the action that the Medical Officer of Health send a letter requesting that the Ontario Minister of the Environment expedite the reporting of the AQHI and to provide a timeline for implementation immediately (see Appendix “A”). PHS staff propose to provide the BOH with an information update about the status of AQHI implementation in Hamilton in April, 2011.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**
(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

The alternative to the recommendations above is that no action be taken.

**CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)**

The recommendations put forward in this report upholds the following objectives contained in the Corporate Strategic Plan:

**Healthy Community**
- Provides information to the public about reducing the risk of health effects from exposure to air pollution.

**Intergovernmental Relationships**
- Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies.

**Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization**
- Through the development of a communications plan based upon feedback from the target audience for whom the messaging is intended.
APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

Appendix “A” to Report BOH10008 – Letter from Medical Officer of Health to the Ontario Minister of the Environment.

Appendix “B” to Report BOH10008 – Promotional Campaign Media for Health Effects of Air Pollution and AQHI Awareness (June – December, 2010).
Promotional Campaign Media for Health Effects of Air Pollution and AQHI Awareness (June – December, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising Medium</th>
<th>Cost Breakdown</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Billboards and Transit Shelters (includes production cost)</td>
<td>$10,275</td>
<td>*1 Billboard and 6 Transit Shelters based on a rotation schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSR Advertising</td>
<td>$2,562.50</td>
<td>• Bus Interiors (200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bus Backs (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 18x24 Posters for Community Partners (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio - Astral Media (K-Lite FM, Oldies 1150, Talk 820)</td>
<td>$5,150</td>
<td>• 150 X 10-sec traffic tags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 405 X 30-sec Public service announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio - Corus Entertainment (AM 900 CHML)</td>
<td>$4,950</td>
<td>• 165 X 30-sec commercials daily for a period of 11 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service Announcements</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>On Air Interviews</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PHS External Website</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Website</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Design - New Concept Creative (smog/general health)</td>
<td>$700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Design - Formatting/Logo Placement</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>*Depends on item complexity - postcard layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Postcard Printing (15,000 quantity)</td>
<td>$780</td>
<td>Posters and postcards to be distributed to 116 specialist physician offices in city of Hamilton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Honourable John Gerretsen,  
Minister of the Environment  
135 St. Clair Avenue East, 12th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4V 1P5

Dear Minister Gerretsen,

Re: Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) Reporting in Hamilton, Ontario

Like many municipalities in Ontario, the City of Hamilton is working to provide useful, timely information to community members that will allow them to make informed decisions about their health as it relates to the quality of air they breathe. As a result, I am writing to request that the Ministry of the Environment help facilitate the reporting of the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) in Hamilton immediately.

As you are likely aware, the AQHI has been developed by Health Canada to provide communities with a tool that will report on the health risk posed by a specific level of air quality. The AQHI has been piloted in different cities across Ontario and Canada with success and evaluated materials for public education and promotion have been developed as a result.

I am aware that MOE staff are working with representatives from Environment Canada to coordinate reporting of the AQHI in all Ontario municipalities where the Air Quality Index (AQI) is currently reported. My staff have been informed by MOE representatives that reporting of the AQHI is likely to occur in Hamilton in Spring, 2011.

Minister Gerretsen, I am requesting that you immediately expedite the transfer of reporting the AQI and begin reporting the AQHI in the City of Hamilton. I also ask that you inform me of the planned implementation date for reporting the AQHI in Hamilton so that Hamilton Public Health Services will be better able to plan and implement health education and promotion initiatives that aim to improve the health status of the members of our community as they relate to air quality.

Sincerely,

Original to be signed by

Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC  
Public Health Services Department