SUBJECT: Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) Update BOH09005 (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the Board of Health approve the expansion of the CINOT (Children in Need of Treatment) Program effective January 1, 2009, as announced by the Ministry of Health Promotion and providing coverage as follows:

   (i) Covering children and teens aged 14-17 years funded 100% by the Province of Ontario up to December 31, 2009 and cost shared between the City of Hamilton and the Province on Ontario (25%/75%) effective January 1, 2010;

   (ii) Covering general anaesthesia for children aged 5-13 years, cost shared between the City of Hamilton and the Province on Ontario (25%/75%) effective January 1, 2009

(b) That Council petition the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Health Promotion for continued 100% provincial funding of the expanded CINOT program and the extended general anaesthesia coverage.

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Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Services
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of the CINOT (Children in Need of Treatment) program is to ensure that no child goes without essential/emergency dental care as a result of an inability to pay for dental services.

Failure to treat dental problems among children can lead to many negative consequences. In communities such as Hamilton, with many people living in poverty, access to dental care is a significant issue. CINOT helps to address the dental needs of families living with financial hardship.

Increased utilization of this program in 2008 led to over expenditures which were managed through offsets by other areas in Public Health Services. A pressure is expected again in 2009, given ongoing high utilization. Management will monitor utilization and keep the Board of Health apprised of trends through variance reports over the year.

Further budget pressures are anticipated given a recent provincial announcement. CINOT has, to date, covered children up the age of 13 years or the last day of Grade 8, and has been cost shared between the City and the Province. The Ministry of Health Promotion has now announced that CINOT will also be provided to children and youth 17 years and under, and that general anaesthesia services will be expanded. $857,409 is being provided to the City of Hamilton for the expansion to the age of 17 years in 2009, paid 100% by the provincial government. In 2010 the full program including the expansion will again be cost shared by the City and Province. It is possible that some funds from the poverty reduction strategy will be allocated to public health departments to offset this increased cost in 2010. If not, this will create a budget pressure in 2010, with 25% of the total to be covered by the City. The increased general anaesthesia coverage will create a budget pressure in 2009, since it is to be cost shared effective immediately.

This additional service will help to address unmet dental needs in adolescents. However, since it is not anticipated that overall provincial funding for Hamilton will increase, the new costs will not only increase the net levy contributions, but could erode funding for other public health services.

BACKGROUND:

CINOT was initiated in 1987. Children in need of dental treatment are identified through school screening by PHS (Public Health Services) dental staff, or by assessment upon presentation at the 1447 Upper Ottawa Dental Clinic or the Community Health Bus. All children found to have an urgent dental need, with a parent/guardian claiming financial hardship, are eligible for CINOT. Following provincial guidelines, no formal financial assessment is completed.
Treatment is provided by private dentists, who then submit claims to PHS for payment. The fee schedule, which is set by the Ministry of Health Promotion, will increase by 2% in April 2009, as it has in recent years. CINOT fees are below the average fees billed by area Dentists. Current fees are approximately 60-65% of usual dental fees. Despite this, residents of Hamilton appear able to find private Dentists willing to provide services within the CINOT fee schedule.

Clients eligible for CINOT are not provided service through the Upper Ottawa Dental Clinic or Community Health Bus; instead they are referred to private dentists. The PHS clinic services are restricted to clients that are not eligible for dental programs such as CINOT and Ontario Works, and whose incomes fall below LICO (low income cut off) (PH06003).

CINOT, which is included as a requirement in the Ontario Public Health Standards, has historically been cost-shared: 25% paid by the City of Hamilton and 75% paid by the Province of Ontario.

A key driver for the number of CINOT claims is the state of the economy. When more people are in financial need, more CINOT claims are submitted. Utilization of CINOT increased substantially in 2008. The $340,800 gross 2008 CINOT budget was overspent by approximately $88,000 ($22,000 net) because of increased claims. This overexpenditure has been offset by underspent areas across Public Health Services, primary gapping due to staff turnover.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

There is a strong need for the CINOT Program, particularly in Hamilton. Failure to treat dental problems among children can lead to many negative consequences: poor nutrition because of an impaired ability to chew, speech issues related to missing teeth, and reduced ability to concentrate and lost school days because of dental pain. Problems with primary teeth can lead to problems with permanent teeth. Screening by PHS staff in Hamilton schools shows that five year olds have on average 0.98 cavities and that nine year olds have on average 1.45 cavities. These averages include all students. When only Hamilton students with dental decay are considered, five year olds have on average 3.76 cavities and nine year olds have on average 3.21 cavities. Comparative provincial data is not available. In the absence of a universal dental care system, families in financial hardship face great challenges in accessing appropriate dental care. In communities such as Hamilton, with many people living in poverty, access to dental care is a significant issue. CINOT helps to address the dental needs of families living with financial hardship.

The Ministry of Health Promotion recently announced that CINOT will now cover children and teens aged 17 and under, received as correspondence at the January 26, 2009 Board of Health meeting. This expanded program is part of the $35,000,000
funding the provincial government announced as part of the poverty reduction strategy. The extension through age 17 will create increased consistency with the dental program for dependant children of adults that receive Ontario Works. Dental problems among teenagers are typically more significant than dental problems among younger children, with less parental supervision of dental hygiene practices, higher participation in contact sports and related injuries, and changing nutrition habits.

For the first year (2009), this expanded program (ages 14-17) will be covered 100% by the Ministry of Health Promotion. $857,409 in 100% provincial funding is being provided for staff to pay claims for the ages of 14 through 17 years. No additional funding is being provided for staff to process the higher number of claims. Effective 2010, the expanded CINOT program will be cost-shared (25%/75%) as is the current CINOT program. It is possible that some funds from the poverty reduction strategy will be allocated to public health departments to offset this increased cost in 2010. If not, this enhanced program will create a budget increase of $214,352 to the net levy assuming that $857,409 is an accurate projection of demand.

In addition, general anaesthesia coverage is being expanded. In the early 2000s, the Province eliminated coverage of general anaesthesia for children over the age of four years, citing budgetary constraints. The Province has announced that general anaesthesia is to be reinstated back to the 14th birthday. General anaesthesia is a service with high demand and cost. It can be very difficult to successfully perform some dental procedures on children without general anaesthesia. It is to be cost shared effective January 2009, similar to the rest of the program.

An increase of $58,520 gross has been requested for CINOT as part of the 2009 budget process, reflecting the increased uptake seen in 2008 and the annual 2% fee increase. However, given the general anaesthesia changes effective January 2009 and the economic situation, an additional expenditure of $50,000 beyond budget in 2009 is anticipated.

The budget requirements for 2010 are difficult to predict until more information is provided by the provincial government about additional funding, and there is experience with the uptake of the program here in Hamilton.

The expanded program started January 1, 2009. Posters and post-card size information sheets have been developed by the Ministry in eighteen languages and are being distributed to schools, community centres, sport facilities, and dental/medical offices to make the public aware of the original program and the new expanded program.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

The Board of Health could choose not to implement the CINOT expansion, but this is not recommended for the following reasons:
1. An opportunity to address the unmet dental needs of Hamilton youth in financial hardship would be lost.

2. Available provincial funds would not be utilized.

3. The City of Hamilton is required to implement CINOT through the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). As in any case of failure to comply with the OPHS, provincial action could be taken.

Another alternative would be to implement the CINOT expansion, and to offset increased costs by making reductions elsewhere in Public Health Services. This alternative would also create challenges with OPHS compliance.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

**Financial**

Assuming approval of the requested 2009 operating budget, a budget pressure of approximately $50,000 is anticipated. Public Health Services will attempt to mitigate this pressure through staff gapping as vacancies arise. The budget pressure for 2010 will depend on the provincial funding provided.

**Staffing**

No additional staffing is provided to address increased demands for screening for CINOT eligibility, and administration of additional claims. This will mean an increased workload for existing staff. Staff will undertake to absorb the additional workload within their existing complement.

**Legal**

The Board of Health is required to implement CINOT as part of the Ontario Public Health Standards.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

2008 Ontario Public Health Standards
RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Finance and Administration

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes □ No

Increased dental services will be made available to those in financial hardship, particularly teens.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. □ Yes ☑ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes □ No

Additional funds will be made available to the community for dental treatment, provided by private dentists.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?

□ Yes ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?

□ Yes ☑ No