To: Mayor and Members
   Board of Health

From: Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCP
      Medical Officer of Health
      Public Health Services

Date: January 8, 2007

Re: Manager of Environmental Health: Planning, Promotion and Response for Health Hazards and Emergencies BOH07002 (City Wide)

Information:

The Health Protection Division (HPD) of Public Health Services (PHS) provides many mandatory programs in the area of Environmental Health/ Healthy Environments. These include Food Safety, Safe Water, West Nile Virus Control, Health Hazard Investigations, Rabies Control, and Infection Control. The goal under the Health Hazard Investigation Mandatory program is “to prevent or reduce the adverse health outcomes resulting from exposure to health hazards as defined in the Health Protection and Promotion Act and including biological, physical and chemical agents, natural or manmade.” In a City such as Hamilton, issues of environmental health abound. Air quality, contaminated soils, active and decommissioned landfills, and the proximity of residents to industrial areas contribute to public concerns, regarding potential adverse health outcomes.

As new programs such as West Nile Virus Control evolve, Public Health Services has been able to monitor and evaluate the different activities under such an emerging program. The WNV program in the City of Hamilton has evolved into one of the most comprehensive and effective mosquito control programs within the Province. Constant evaluation of these activities has allowed PHS to consistently reduce costs while improving control activities such as larviciding of catch basins and standing water sites, enforcement of the Standing Water bylaw, mosquito trapping and identification and dead bird surveillance. Besides these activities, improvements in risk management and surveillance of WNV has resulted in timely and well thought out messages to the public on personal protection methods, resulting in a decreased risk of West Nile Virus...
infections. It is time for PHS to turn our attention to other areas of Environmental Health programs that are not being serviced effectively.

It is clear that coordinated and effective planning, promotion and response for Environmental Health issues, both mandated by the Province and directed by Council is needed. In order for PHS to be more proactive in the surveillance and abatement of such issues, the Health Protection Division has shifted resources within the existing WNV budget to fully fund the existing Manager of West Nile Virus Control program position which was previously funded under other Environmental Health program lines, creating a vacancy for a Manager of Environmental Health. This position will allow for improved and effective responses to planning issues such as large and small scale industrial site applications, MOE Certificate of Approval Applications and EBR postings, redevelopment of lands and contaminated sites or Brownfield redevelopment. Promotional activities geared towards improving air quality, both indoor and outdoor, on a City wide scale need to be initiated and coordinated. Developing strategic directions and policies for the Board of Health to consider in the area of Environmental Health issues will be facilitated. Also development of plans and effective response to urgent environmental health issues or emergencies will be achieved.

The position will deal specifically with these types of issues and to be able to identify and assign resources needed for a coordinated PHS response to potential environmental health issues, identified by the public, stakeholder groups or the Board members.

Since there is no direct negative impact on the gross budget or the net levy, this report is not formally part of the budget process. This position will not add any cost pressure to the net levy as all costs for this position have been reallocated within the existing divisional budget. There is no overall impact to the City complement with this 1.0 FTE, as Public Works will be decreasing 1.0 fte complement (non union supervisory position) from the cost allocation it receives from PHS for West Nile Virus Control. As show in the 2007 budget book, PHS will still be showing a 5.2% reduction in the West Nile Virus Control program with a net levy reduction of $28,493, while enhancing the areas of Environmental Health management in the City.

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