

Good afternoon Council members.

My name is Rebecca Redden and I would like to draw your attention to the removal of the Katimavik program from more than 60 Canadian communities, including Hamilton. For those of you who are unaware of Katimavik, it is Canada's leading youth volunteer program, commencing in 1977 by Pierre Trudeau and Jacques Herbert. The program itself hosts 600-900 youth annually, an approximate 30000 since its inception. The youth in question, from all parts of Canada are put into groups of eleven and placed in 2 different Canadian communities for 3 months each. They perform full time volunteer work as well as after-work volunteering, group living, language learning and acceptance of others.

In March, the Federal government cut this 14 million dollar program from its budget, backing out of their 3 year budget a year early. Not only does this take away thousands of volunteers country-wide, but it has taken away the chance that 600 youth were promised, as they were scheduled to leave this July.

Why I am bringing this national issue to your attention is what Katimavik can do for the community and our future.

As we speak, there are Katimavik volunteers working full hour work days within our community. One of Katimavik's pros is the free labour. The youth who sign up for Katimavik work extremely hard and are paid only 2 dollars a day. They are not volunteering for 'hours', they are volunteering because of what they signed up for and do so full time. Once Katimavik is gone, 11 work placements will lose full time volunteer work. Think of how impactful this is. Imagine you were a not for profit relying on volunteers to do business running jobs. Neighbour to Neighbour is one of the work placements and they are quoted in a testimony for Katimavik as saying this:

Katimavik National Youth service programs are essential to youth, communities and Canada because they not only give an amazing opportunity to shape our youth and perceptions but also to support small organizations meet the needs of their clients.

All these (Neighbour to neighbour) tasks come with real life price tags that we, as a small organization with a budget under 900,000 a year, need desperately. At the very least it is equivalent to a full time, year round job. This program is key capacity building for many charitable organizations that will feel another blow, to add to the increasing blows we are feeling during this economic situation we find ourselves in.

Sara Collyer, Hamilton Ontario

As well, Katimavik can help our youth in Hamilton. So many youth, myself included, were not ready to go to school. Now, with the governments removal of grade thirteen, kids will be forced to make a decision with no second chance to improve marks. Katimavik does not require a high school diploma. It extends your resume, with diverse work placements, team work, and bilingualism, and it is accessible to people from all levels of finances. I strongly believe that

Katimavik, if marketed properly, can be available to the children of high society as well as help keep kids off the street, from making poor choices, prepare them for university, and a numerous amount of other efforts.

The federal government is very quick to put tax dollars into causes for right now. What I believe they fail to realize is that caring about the future will provide more of an immediate effect. In a few years the tax dollars used to beat unemployment may not be as successful as hoped. In a few years, the youth volunteers could be on the front lines of beating poverty, could have jobs instead of needing welfare, and could be contributing to beating the problem instead of being the problem. Katimavik helps to teach civility and create model citizens. The betterment of Canada starts today with their volunteering, and begins again tomorrow when they finish Katimavik, leaving a lasting impression on their host communities and themselves.

Katimavik is not a summer camp. It is a learning program. It is a service program. For Hamilton, it provides unpaid work for our numerous not for profits and events who otherwise could have trouble finding volunteers. Our community is bettered, as they come together as a group and pick up litter and tend to community gardens and provide services for others. We would be hard pressed to find a group of youth who would free up their time to come together and just volunteer. For the youth of Hamilton, it gives them an opportunity to get out there and explore the world prior to post-secondary, get them out of a bad place, help them get a solid resume of 2-3 full time jobs, and discover what to do.

This is a program that people really care about. It's not only about the kids, it's about communities across the country, it's about national identity, it's about bilingualism, it's about helping people, it's about volunteerism, it's about all those things,

What I am asking today is a chance for Katimavik. I would like to propose that the council discuss the option. Since this is a federal choice this will be dealt with Federally, but we will not stand by without our voices being heard. If it is believed that this could be a worthy cause, I urge the council to write a formal resolution to the government in support of Katimavik.

Thank-you for your consideration