



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 8, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) (CES15056) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	John Ariyo 905-546-2424 ext.1564
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

That the Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division (NCI) report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee in Fall 2015, following an internal review of the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee to determine how to improve youth engagement and the work of Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (Report CM15007).

Information:

On October 24, 2006, City Council approved a staff recommendation to establish the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (Report SSC06017(a)). HYAC was formally established in 2007 with an approved Terms of Reference and reported to City Council through the Social Services Committee. Members were comprised of a diverse group of young leaders between the age of 14 and 24 years from across Hamilton, including students in the workforce, secondary and post-secondary schools.

The core mandate of HYAC was to create opportunities for youth to participate in municipal government and decision making. Over the years, the mandate of HYAC was expanded to provide a channel to discuss broader issues facing youth in Hamilton. Furthermore, HYAC also supported youth-oriented events and programs, such as the annual Hamilton Youth Week.

During the first five years of its existence, HYAC consistently maintained high attendance at meetings, as well as youth enthusiasm. However, in the past three years, HYAC has struggled to maintain youth commitment and interest. At the end of its term in 2014, HYAC had only three members. Although these three youth have passion as the founding members of HYAC, lack of meeting quorum, maintaining engagement at

meetings and the inability to attract and retain new members continued to pose challenges.

In carrying out the Council direction which called for the review of Advisory Committees of Council (Report CM15007), the Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division conducted an internal review of HYAC. The review comprised of meetings with the last HYAC members to discuss the group's achievements, strengths, challenges, opportunities and what the future could look like. In addition, an environmental scan of City of Hamilton divisions and community organizations that undertake youth engagement was conducted. This environmental scan provided insight into youth engagement duplications that exist and understanding potential opportunities for cross-collaboration. Best practices from other municipalities were also reviewed to understand how municipally-supported youth committees function in these communities (environmental scan is attached as Appendix A to Report CES15056).

The summary of key findings from the internal review of HYAC is as follows:

- Youth engagement in Hamilton and across many jurisdictions has changed significantly since the establishment of HYAC in 2007. Youth now increasingly engage in various creative, social media and informal activities that are beyond the traditional Committees of Council structure;
- While some Canadian municipalities have some type of “Youth Advisory Committee”, a large majority of municipalities do not. In general, municipalities continue to review and readapt their youth committees to make them more relevant to changing needs;
- HYAC members expressed frustration with regard to attracting and retaining youth to serve on the HYAC committee. Some of the barriers identified include the formal structure of HYAC as an Advisory Committee of Council, busyness of youth with school and life, various creative opportunities for youth and overall lack of strategic direction for the committee;
- Within the City of Hamilton, there are many departments and divisions that have platforms for various youth engagement activities (e.g. Recreation Division, Community and Emergency Services; Healthy Living Division, Public Health Services; Culture & Tourism, Planning and Economic Development; Public Works and others). In essence, these City divisions engage youth on different activities and initiatives, making HYAC's role somewhat unclear;
- Lastly, within the Hamilton community, there are many organizations with various youth engagement initiatives (e.g. YMCA Newcomer Youth Centre Advisory Group, NGen: New Generation Youth Centre, Empowered Squared, Youth Anti-Racism Network, 980 Youths4Yutz, Hamilton HIVE and many others). Some of these initiatives may overlap with the strategic purpose and mandate of HYAC, increasing the ambiguity of HYAC's role.

At the time when the NCI internal review concluded, three additional youth opportunities had surfaced that may impact youth engagement in Hamilton. They include:

- The Mayor is currently spearheading a City-Wide Youth Roundtable. The Roundtable has already identified the absence of a city-wide youth strategy as a significant gap to the provision of youth services in the City of Hamilton. Community and youth groups are central to the engagement process.
- A motion related to HYAC was endorsed by Council on October 28, 2015. The motion is to ensure HYAC members can connect and participate in Advisory committee meetings using video technology. The motion specifically directed staff to “*investigate the ability of being one of the first municipalities in Canada to broadcast Advisory Committee meetings using video chat technology and enable members of the committee to join in those meetings for quorum and participation accordingly*”.
- The government of Ontario also recently announced a grant of \$572,900 over three years to the Neighbourhood Action Strategy’s Learning Annex, to engage, mentor and connect youth to education, training and employment opportunities. The program will be run through the Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division, which is also the division responsible for HYAC.

Based on the internal review of the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) as highlighted in this report, the conclusion reached by staff is that the intent of constituting HYAC in 2007 is no longer being met. The Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division will therefore put HYAC in abeyance until Q4 of 2016. During this hiatus period, staff will complete a full review of HYAC and determine an approach or model for municipally-supported youth engagement. In addition, staff will use this timeframe to work collaboratively with the Learning Annex partners and the Mayor’s office on the City-Wide Youth Roundtable. Staff will also investigate the motion on how video technology could be better leveraged to connect youth with a youth advisory committee of Council.

These separate but related initiatives require a strategic connection and coordination by staff to ensure a successful engagement outcome for youth in Hamilton is realized.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED:

Appendix A to Report CES15056: Youth Advisory Committee: Environmental Scan