



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 12, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) (CES15056(a)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

On December 10, 2015, Council approved the following recommendations of Report CES15056:

- (a) That the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee be put in abeyance until the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2016 such that staff are able to complete a full review of the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee and determine an approach or model for municipally supported youth engagement; and
- (b) That staff be requested to provide quarterly updates to the Emergency and Community Services Committee throughout 2016 on this matter.

Information:

With the Youth Advisory Committee being on hiatus, staff and the Mayor's Office have been engaging youth and youth agencies to better understand what a municipally-supported youth engagement model could look like for Hamilton. The following are some of the key youth engagement activities recently completed:

Mayor's Citywide Youth Roundtable

The Mayor's Office called a Youth Roundtable meeting in the Fall of 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to understand key issues facing youth in Hamilton by engaging with youth and youth service agencies. Since that first meeting of agencies, the Mayor's Office has engaged with 35 youth service agencies, held 25 community conversations and listened to over 250 youth across Hamilton. Some of the key themes that emerged include:

- Housing;
- Mental health;
- Education;
- Violence;
- Racism;
- LGBTQ; and,
- Adult mentorship.

The Mayor's Office intends to reconvene the group of youth serving agencies in the fall of 2016 to share the results from the youth conversations.

The Xperience Annex (formerly the Learning Annex)

The Annex was formally launched in June 2016. Months before the launch, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) team conducted significant community engagement consultation with youth, service agencies, educational establishments, other community stakeholders and conducted a literature review. The objective of the engagement activities was to better understand youth engagement strategies, youth issues, community assets, service gaps and collaborative opportunities relevant to supporting the Annex. This process resulted in the following principles to engage youth:

- Build trust;
- Allow youth to have genuine ownership of projects;
- Use youth to attract youth;
- Use incentives and remove barriers;
- Make it fun – use recreation and the arts;
- Consider the brand – make it “cool”;
- Be transparent; and,
- Be flexible.

To date, the Annex has directly engaged with over 200 youth and over 100 representatives from more than 50 community organizations have also been engaged. Some of these key stakeholders include Mohawk College, Workforce Planning Hamilton, Hamilton Community Foundation, Hamilton Public Library, YMCA, Social Planning Research Council, Hamilton Health Sciences, the Good Shepherd, McMaster University, Hamilton boards of education and a host of other partners.

Through the engagement, some of the identified key challenges facing youth and requiring navigation/support systems include:

- Transportation;
- Finances;
- Mental health;
- Housing;

- Lack of work/life experience;
- Physical health; and,
- Dealing with a criminal record.

The Lieutenant Governor's Visit to Hamilton

In March 2016, The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, paid an official visit to the City of Hamilton. Central to her agenda was youth engagement and empowerment. With staff support, Her Honour chaired a roundtable discussion involving 22 youth. The discussion focussed on key gaps, challenges and opportunities facing youth in Hamilton. Some of the key themes that emerged from the discussion include:

- Employment/skills development;
- More youth-focused social activities and hubs;
- Better connection to community resources;
- Mentorship development;
- Housing needs;
- Financial literacy;
- Aboriginal youth engagement;
- Better access to City/community information;
- Improving sense of community belonging;
- Stronger City of Hamilton engagement with youth;
- Creating leadership and entrepreneurial opportunities; and,
- Addressing mental health.

There are varieties of topics and citizen engagement issues that are of particular interest to youth. They range from system supports, employment readiness, leadership skill building, talent showcasing and creating a sense of community belonging. However, technology and social media have a big influence on how youth want to be engaged in these issues. Engagement that excites youth appears to touch upon these five areas:

- *Place-based engagement:* Youth go to parks, sport arenas, recreation centres, shopping malls, skateboard parks and other similar places. Municipal engagement designed to meet them in these sorts of places tend to be effective and appreciated;
- *Online and social media:* Online engagement for youth broadly includes texting apps, micro-blogging, live streaming/videos and chatting/meet-ups. Social platforms such as *Kik, What'sApp, GroupMe, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, Tinder, Musical.ly, YouNow, Snapchat* and *Yik Yak* are very popular with youth. A few of these sites can be used appropriately to support municipal youth engagement. In addition, municipalities that have online community engagement portals (such as

City of Edmonton, AB and City of Surrey, BC), tend to attract more youth through online engagement;

- *Political / corporate leadership engagement:* When the prime minister, governor general, lieutenant governor, premier or the mayor is championing a youth engagement initiative, youth attendance is always substantial at these meetings;
- *Formality vs Informality:* Youth are less enthusiastic about any municipal engagement involving formal structures such as meetings, taking minutes, writing briefing notes, discussing budgets, etc. Youth engagement activities that are engaging, interactive and less-formal garner better success; and,
- *Youth engaging youth:* Directly retaining youth for the purpose of engaging other youth has proven very successful. In fact, no municipal youth engagement will be hugely successful without having a group of dedicated youth – youth engagers – on hand to meet, support and advance the municipal youth agenda..

Staff will continue to engage with youth through various City and community initiatives. Key gaps, challenges and opportunities will be discussed and documented. Cumulatively, the engagement findings will inform the strategies that should be undertaken to ensure youth participation in municipal program and service delivery.

The next staff report to the Emergency & Community Services Committee is expected in Q4 of 2016.