

CITY OF HAMILTON

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Social Development and Early Childhood Services Division

Report to: Chair and Members Social Services Committee	Submitted by: Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community Services
Date: October 17, 2006	Prepared by: Mark Weingartner ext.6095 Barbara Powell ext.3538 Jane Soldera ext.2399

SUBJECT: Youth Advisory Committee (SSC06017(a)) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

- a) That Report SSC06017(a) respecting the development and implementation of a Youth Advisory Committee of Council be received and forwarded to the Emergency and Community Services Committee for consideration in 2007.
- b) That staff be directed to forward the program enhancement identified in Report SSC06017(a) and the budget submission as detailed in Appendix B attached to Report SSC06017(a), to the 2007 Budget process.

Joe-Anne Priel,
General Manager
Community Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Hamilton has a number of Volunteer Advisory Committees (VACs) that provide advice and recommendations to Council and City staff. The VACs create formal channels for information, debate and the provision of feedback between the City of Hamilton and its citizens.

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One important group that is currently not represented through the VAC system is Hamilton's youth. The Community Services Department submitted Report SSC06017 on June 27, 2006, which proposed the creation of a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of Council. The purpose of this YAC is to create opportunities for youth to participate in municipal government and decision making, and, perhaps more importantly, for Council and municipal staff to listen to youth. Report SSC06017(a) provides an overview of the benefits of creating a YAC, best practices in engaging youth, as well as a plan for developing and implementing a YAC during the next term of Council.

BACKGROUND:

Volunteer Advisory Committees in Hamilton

VACs in Hamilton were created in order to provide a forum for citizen participation and consultation, and an opportunity for the City to benefit from its citizens' different points of view, creative thinking, and direct questioning.

There are currently 17 VACs in the City of Hamilton. The objectives of these advisory committees include the:

- consideration of important common issues and concerns;
- exchange of information on current and future programs; and,
- presentation and discussion of reports on achievements, initiatives, municipal expenditures, and policy/program advice.

VACs often make recommendations which are forwarded to the appropriate departments and their corresponding standing committees. These recommendations and concerns are also taken into consideration when formulating policies, procedures and key directions and decisions that are aimed at improving the quality of life for all members in our community.

The Ancaster Youth Activity Committee was struck in Ancaster prior to amalgamation and is still active in that community. High school age youth meet monthly and plan a number of social, fundraising and outreach activities. The Stoney Creek Youth Council operated from 1999 to 2003 and was supported by a Youth Coordinator.

Youth Advisory Committees in Other Community Organizations & Municipalities

A number of municipalities and community organizations in Ontario have youth advisory committees or youth councils including the Mayor's YACs in Burlington and Windsor, the Toronto Youth Cabinet, the Halton Region YAC, the Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) YAC and the Hamilton Police Services Chief's Student Advisory Committee.

The structure of these committees varies. The Toronto Youth Cabinet has a very large general membership open to any youth in the city, aged 13 to 24, as well as an executive consisting of 12 elected members. The Mayor's YAC in Burlington consists of 14 members, aged 14 to 19, selected by the mayor. Two youth are selected to

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represent each Burlington high school. The HCF's YAC consists of youth, aged 13 to 21, who work together with HCF's board and staff raising funds and making grants.

While their structures may vary, the purpose of these committees is very similar. They aim to engage youth in local government, allow them to inform and influence municipal policy and decisions, contribute to solutions, and undertake projects and initiatives that are of interest to youth and benefit their communities.

These committees have participated in and undertaken a variety of initiatives including the:

- development of policy statements on housing and homelessness, transportation, and youth and police relations;
- organization of youth conferences and symposia;
- recommendation of budget priorities;
- promotion and initiation of arts, culture and recreation activities; and,
- promotion of volunteering.

Hamilton Police Services has a Chief's Student Advisory Committee that meets three or four times per school year. Committee members provide advice on what concerns them the most in the school system and where they would like the police services to focus their attention. The police also have the opportunity to solicit feedback from the students on initiatives they are planning or implementing. This group is supported by the Hamilton Police Services Youth Services Coordinator.

Best Practices & Advice on Engaging Youth

Increasingly, governments, education, community organizations and communities themselves are recognizing that youth are willing and able to make significant contributions in decisions that affect them and the communities in which they live. However, successful youth participation is as much the responsibility of adults as it is youth.

The following are best practices and advice on engaging youth:

- A genuine interest in, and commitment to, involving youth is crucial. Councils and Boards must be willing to take suggestions and advice from youth seriously.
- There must be a willingness to change from doing things for and to youth, to doing things with youth (e.g. youth-adult partnerships).
- Municipal leaders need to ensure they follow through on commitments.
- Facilitate youth input and participation in meaningful ways in projects and initiatives with measurable results that clearly demonstrate the concrete contributions of youth; youth need to see movement and progress.
- Youth participation is stronger and more sustainable when it is incorporated into the organization and the community.
- Look beyond the government to the community. Link with other youth committees and initiatives in the community and beyond.
- Provide appropriate resources (staff and funding) to support youth participation. This is important in overcoming barriers to youth participation including engaged and unengaged youth.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

Youth have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines the rights of children (and youth) under the age of 18.

Article 12 states, that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely and for those views to be taken seriously in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. It also states that a child shall be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 13 states, that children have the right to freedom of expression including the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds.¹

Youth are frequently marginalized in the community decision making processes. It is important for young people to be involved, particularly when decisions made in their community affect their lives and the lives of their families and friends.

The Search Institute, a well-known, non-profit social research agency in the United States, found that 40 developmental assets contributed significantly to a young person's success in life. According to this research, these 40 developmental assets help young people make wise decisions, choose positive paths, and grow up competent, caring and responsible. Twenty of these assets are internal to the individual. Among these are self-esteem, interpersonal competencies, sense of purpose, and planning and decision making. The additional 20 assets are external (or come from outside the individual) and include communities that value youth, youth as resources (young people are given useful roles in the community), service to others and adult role models. These external assets focus on positive experiences youth receive from the people and institutions in their lives.²

The Community Services Department submitted a report to the Social Services Committee entitled Hamilton's Youth (SSC06017) on June 27, 2006. This report included a preliminary youth scan which incorporated 23 indicators, 57 key informants and a review of best practices. One observation shared by the majority of those consulted was that "while the vast number of youth are well adjusted, doing well in school and are successfully meeting the challenges and opportunities in their lives, youth are unfairly portrayed and negatively perceived by the cultural mainstream."³

YACs enable young people to voice their concerns, participate in local government, inform and influence decisions and have a "say" in the types of programs and services being offered, and improve their local community. Youth also gain valuable leadership experience and build communication, social and team work skills. Participation can also break down inaccurate adult stereotypes of youth.

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>

² <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>

³ <http://www.myhamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/EA87C207-FC4E-48CE-BE1A-8A66D5638477/0/Jun27SSC06017REPORTHamiltonsYouth1.pdf>

Not only would youth benefit from a YAC, but so would the City of Hamilton and the community as a whole. A YAC would enable the City of Hamilton to represent the whole community; foster participation in local government and the political process, and encourage young people to vote. The community as a whole can become more vibrant, progressive, safe and sustainable.

By involving youth at the beginning of the planning process, participation improves in youth programs, services and supports. Studies also indicate that involving people of all ages in a program's design and implementation creates a greater commitment to that program and increases the likelihood that the program will be successful.

The YAC would also have natural linkages to the City of Hamilton's Social Development Strategy and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, whose initial focus is "making Hamilton the best place to raise a child."

Committee Process

It is anticipated that preparation for the YAC will take place during November 2006 through January 2007 and that committee members will be recruited as part of the overall recruitment process for the City's VACs. This will likely take place in January through April 2007. The proposed committee process is described below.

Mandate

The mandate of the YAC is to ensure that youth are involved in the decisions made within the City of Hamilton and in the community that affect them, their families and friends. The YAC will provide a youth perspective on municipal issues to be considered by the Mayor, Council and City staff. The YAC will inform and involve other youth in the City of Hamilton.

The YAC may further develop this mandate as the committee moves forward.

Mission and Terms of Reference

The YAC will develop their own mission statement and terms of reference. A sample Terms of Reference has been included as Appendix A attached to Report SSC06017(a).

Structure

It is recommended that the YAC be comprised of 15 members who are 14 to 24 years of age. The structure of the YAC should mirror the structure of Council and other municipal committees with either a chairperson and vice-chairperson or co-chairs elected from the general membership of the committee. The term of the chair and vice-chair will be one year.

The committee will also include at least one and no more than three councillors, appointed at each term of office. Due to their many commitments, most of the City's VACs include only one councillor.

Meeting minutes and reports will be prepared and distributed with the assistance of City staff.

Representation and Membership

The membership of the YAC should, where possible, represent the range of diverse individuals that live in and make up the community of Hamilton. The committee should also try to ensure that members come from different schools, youth organizations, and geographic areas of the city and reflect the city's diversity.

Term of Membership

The term of membership on VACs extends for the term of Council. In 2006, the Province of Ontario introduced new legislation extending the term of municipal councils from three to four years. This is a significant period of time for youth when one considers the various transitions and commitments; therefore, it is recommended that members serve two-year terms, or that two and four year terms be available. It is also recommended that the YAC review these proposed terms as part of developing their terms of reference.

Recruiting YAC Members

Recruitment of YAC members is handled through the Office of the City Clerk at the beginning of each new term of Council. Public Notices will be placed in local newspapers and on the City of Hamilton website. Interested parties will submit an application and will be interviewed by three councillors.

In order to engage and recruit youth effectively this process should be modified and expanded. Information on the YAC and the recruitment process could be sent out to youth serving agencies, sports and recreation organizations, and schools. The City could also partner with service provider networks such as the Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN). Youth should be selected based on their ability to contribute to the work of the YAC, as well as their ability to represent a major ethnic, cultural or other segment of the population, and/or their ability to represent a major youth-serving organization (e.g. scouts, sports, service clubs as well as organizations that work with marginalized or at-risk youth). The intent is to recruit youth who have various experiences to draw on and to be able to build on existing linkages.

A more detailed recruitment and engagement strategy will be developed and implemented in conjunction with the existing strategy utilized by the Office of the City Clerk.

Orientation

YAC members would participate in an orientation or training session that would include information on the structure of the City of Hamilton, the role of VACs, the scope of municipal responsibilities, services, and departmental functions, the political process, Robert's Rules of Order, and local reports and work undertaken regarding youth issues in Hamilton (i.e. the Youth Scan, Homelessness/Street-involved Youth, Listen-up Youth Summit).

Linkages

The Hamilton YAC should also develop linkages with other youth centred bodies and initiatives in Hamilton, fostering community-wide discussions on not only issues and concerns but also creative solutions. Youth should be encouraged to advocate for what they need but should also be supported in their efforts to create real and meaningful change. Some examples include the Hamilton Community Foundation YAC, the YMCA YAC, the Ancaster Youth Activity Council as well as the previously mentioned Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

Staff Support

Engaging youth in this kind of initiative presents a unique opportunity as well as a unique challenge. This is due in part to the many day-to-day challenges youth face at home, at school and in their community. Other considerations include the age and level of maturity of participants, their ability and level of confidence, a lack of familiarity with formal committees and/or decision making processes.

Best practices on successfully engaging youth tell us that adult mentorship and support is crucial in any endeavour. Resources to support the proposed YAC do not currently exist in the Community Services Department. Staff recommend that a new 0.5 FTE Senior Policy Analyst position located in the Community Services Department provide support to the YAC including recruitment, arranging orientation and training, assistance with the preparation of agendas, minutes, communication, and YAC initiatives. Other staff support from various City of Hamilton departments and divisions may also be available and will be explored as plans for the YAC move forward.

Legislative support would be provided by the City of Hamilton's Clerk's Division for the recruitment of volunteers and the positioning of reports to the appropriate Standing Committee and Council.

Meetings

Meetings would take place monthly, outside of normal business and school hours to facilitate maximum participation and attendance. An agenda would be prepared and distributed by the chairperson or his or her designate. YAC meetings, as with any other council or committee meeting, must be open to the public.

Communication

The City of Hamilton will assist the committee and the chairperson with various forms of communication including the distribution of agendas and minutes.

The committee, in consultation with staff will assess communication needs and develop a youth targeted and youth friendly communication plan.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

The CS Department tabled Report SSC06017 on June 27, 2006. Council directed staff to proceed with implementing a YAC. The CS Department committed to return to

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Council with a final report in fall 2006. The alternative is not to proceed with the YAC if the City of Hamilton is not able to commit the appropriate resources at this time.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial

Budgets for the City of Hamilton's VACs were centralized in 2005 (Report FCS05048). The funding allocation resides within the Legislative area and is approved during the City Budget process. Funds in the amount of \$3,890 were approved in 2006; however, have not been utilized. For 2007, the YAC has requested a budget of \$3,890. Please refer to the completed 2007 Budget Submission template attached as Appendix B to Report SSC06017(a).

The financial impact of the proposed 0.5 FTE Senior Policy Analyst position is \$45,800. This program enhancement will be referred to the 2007 Budget process.

Staff

Adult support and mentoring is critical to youth driven programs. A considerable amount of time is necessary to effectively engage and facilitate youth involvement, especially among those youth who are not connected or engaged in traditional or mainstream education, recreation or other extracurricular activities.

Therefore, staff are recommending that a 0.5 FTE senior policy analyst position be created to develop the YAC and provide ongoing support, and that this position reside within the CS Department. As mentioned in the Financial Implications section above, the financial impact of this position would be \$45,800 in 2007. Other in-kind support for the YAC will also be solicited from relevant departments on a project or as needed basis.

Legal

There are no legal implications associated with Report SSC06017(a).

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

While each VAC develops and adopts its own mandate and Terms of Reference (TOR), Council adopted a TOR as a guideline for VAC in September 2002 attached as Appendix A to Report SSC06017(a). Each committee then creates their own TOR.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

The Employment and Income Support, Health and Social Support Branches, and the Culture and Recreation Division of the Community Services Department were consulted in the preparation of Report SSC06017(a).

The Healthy Living Branch of the Public Health Services Department was consulted in the preparation of Report SSC06017(a).

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The Customer Services, Clerks and Finance and Administration branches of the Corporate Services Department were consulted in the preparation of Report SSC06017(a).

Various community partners and stakeholders were consulted in the preparation of Report SSC06017(a).

The Youth Ancaster Youth Activity Council was consulted in the preparation of Report SSC06017(a).

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**

Engaging youth and developing services and programs that support youth in reaching their potential benefits the entire community, now and in the future.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. **Yes** **No**

Youth engagement could have an impact on environmental well-being if youth continue and expand their efforts on environmental issues.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. **Yes** **No**

Economic well-being is enhanced as youth remain in school and develop skills that ready them for participation in the changing local economy. By involving youth in the planning process, those responsible for programs and services can direct available resources to the most successful approaches.

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**

Youth mentoring and support could be one way of public servants supporting their community and the corporation that could lead to increasing engagement and job satisfaction for employees.

HAMILTON YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sample Terms of Reference

Mandate

The mandate of the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is to ensure that youth are involved in the decisions made within the City of Hamilton and in the community that affect them, their families and friends. The YAC will provide a youth perspective on municipal issues to be considered by the Mayor, Council and City staff. The YAC will inform and involve other youth in the city of Hamilton.

Mission Statement

- To be developed

Values

We believe . . .

- that youth are integral parts of their communities and, as such, have inherent rights and responsibilities;
- that youth should be encouraged and given the opportunity to take a leading role in issues which affect their lives;
- that youth should be consulted whenever decisions that affect them are being made;
- youth are able to make positive contributions to their communities;
- that an investment in young people is an investment in the future; and,
- there is strength in diversity.

Goals

- To provide direct input into government decision making processes on issues affecting youth;
- To advocate within the government on behalf of youth;
- To develop and maintain effective communications with youth and youth-serving organizations;
- To promote and recognize the abilities and contributions of youth in their communities;
- To foster initiatives for and by youth; and,
- To ensure diversity in the Council's membership, the selection process considers a number of factors including, but not limited to, geography, gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability.

Committee Structure

The YAC will be comprised of 15 members, 14 to 24 years of age. The structure of the YAC should mirror the structure of Council and other municipal committees with either a chairperson and vice-chairperson or co-chairs elected from the general membership. The term of the chair and vice-chair will be one year.

The YAC committee will also include at least one and no more than three councillors, appointed at each term of office. Due to their many commitments, most of the City's Volunteer Advisory Committees include only one councillor.

Meeting minutes and reports will be prepared and distributed with the assistance of City staff.

Code of Conduct

- Everyone has a right to her/his own opinion;
- Respect is expected from all those who attend YAC meetings;
- Everyone has the right to speak without interruption; and,
- Chairs/speakers/staff are to be respected.

Decision Making Process

Decisions should be made by consensus, but where consensus cannot be attained, a majority rules. A majority consists of 50% plus one. Only the group present at the meeting can make the decision.

Representation and Membership

The membership of the YAC should, where possible, represent the range of diverse individuals that live in and make up the community of Hamilton. The committee should also try to ensure that members come from different schools, youth organizations, and geographic areas of the city and reflect the city's diversity.

Term of Membership

That members on the YAC serve two (2) year terms, or that two (2) and four (4) year terms be available. It is also recommended that the YAC review these proposed terms as part of developing their terms of reference.

Meetings

Meetings will take place monthly, outside of normal business and school hours to facilitate maximum participation and attendance. An agenda will be prepared and distributed by the chairperson or his or her designate. YAC meetings, as with any other council or committee meeting, should be open to the public.

CITY OF HAMILTON

2007 BUDGET SUBMISSION

Youth Advisory Committee

PART A: General Information

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

To be determined	

MANDATE:

The draft mandate of the YAC is:
To ensure that youth are involved in the decisions made within the City of Hamilton and in the community that affect them, their families and friends. The YAC will provide a youth perspective on municipal issues to be considered by the Mayor, Council and city staff. The YAC will inform and involve other youth in the City Of Hamilton.

PART B: Strategic Planning

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

The Goals of the Youth Advisory Committee are:

- To provide direct input into government decision making processes on issues affecting youth;
- To advocate within the government on behalf of youth;
- To develop and maintain effective communications with youth and youth-serving organizations;
- To promote and recognize the abilities and contributions of youth in their communities;
- To foster initiatives for and by youth; and,
- To ensure diversity in the Council's membership, the selection process considers a number of factors including but not limited to geography, gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability.

The Youth Advisory Committee will achieve its goals through:

- The development of policy statements on housing and homelessness, transportation, and youth and police relations;
- The organization of youth conferences and symposia;
- The recommendation of budget priorities;
- The promotion and initiation of arts, culture and recreation activities; and,
- The promotion of volunteering.

The following groups/individuals will benefit from the activities of the Youth Advisory Committee:

- The youth of Hamilton
- The citizens of Hamilton
- Council and staff of the City Of Hamilton

ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE GOALS:

Please check off which Council approved Strategic Commitments your Volunteer Committee supports

1) A City of Growth and Opportunity	√	4) A City Where People Come First	√
2) A Great City in Which to Live	√	5) A City that Spends Wisely and Invests Strategically	√
3) A Healthy, Safe and Green City	√	6) A City of Choice for High Performance Public Servants	

PART C: Budget Request

INCIDENTAL COSTS:

Meeting expenses and refreshments	500
Communication and promotional material	500
TOTAL	\$1,000

SPECIAL EVENT/PROJECT COSTS:

Assessment of communication requirements/needs	1,890
Other projects/initiatives	1,000
TOTAL	\$2,890

TOTAL 2007 BUDGET REQUEST (SUM OF THE ABOVE)	\$3,890
PREVIOUS YEAR BUDGET REQUEST	\$0

CERTIFICATION:

Please note that this document is a request for a Budget from the City of Hamilton Operating budget. The submission of this document does not guarantee the requested budget amount. Please have a representative sign and date the document below.

Representative's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____