SUBJECT: City of Hamilton’s Participation in Katimavik Project (ECS08028) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That Report ECS08028 respecting Katimavik's request for participation be received.

(b) That the participation of the City of Hamilton in a Katimavik Project be endorsed.

Joe-Anne Priel,
General Manager
Community Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Office of the Mayor received a letter dated March 17, 2008, from Katimavik, a National Youth Volunteer-Service Program, requesting the City of Hamilton's participation in their 2008-2009 program year and the establishment of a project site in the City of Hamilton. City staff from the Community Services Department and the Mayor's office met with a representative of Katimavik on April 15, 2008, to investigate opportunities for Hamilton's involvement in the upcoming project, scheduled to commence in September 2008. Participation in a Katimavik project would provide the City of Hamilton, community groups and non-profit agencies with an opportunity to assist the participants, young Canadians from throughout the country, to grow and learn through volunteerism, group living and skills development. As a community partner, the City will assist Katimavik in identifying non-profit organizations that will provide beneficial work experience to young people aged 17 to 21. In return, the organizations
will benefit from the participants' enthusiastic involvement and volunteer work, which will help them achieve their objectives and provide an opportunity to increase the quality and quantity of their services offered to our community.

BACKGROUND:

Katimavik is a federally funded program founded in 1977 by Senator Jacques Hebert and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and is based on the concept of "service learning". It offers young Canadians between the ages of 17-21 an opportunity to acquire valuable personal and professional skills through an alternative educational program. The program incorporates five strategic learning programs:
- cultural diversity;
- official languages;
- environment;
- healthy lifestyles; and,
- leadership.

The program travels to communities in three regions of Canada (one French speaking) and in each community a participant will share a home with ten other young people, both French and English, and an adult project leader.

The program operates in each community for nine months each year on a three-month rotation (trimester system), with participants moving to a new community at the end of each three-month placement. The participants volunteer full-time (30-40 hrs) in placements with non-profit organizations in order to help the community and develop new skills. In the evenings and on weekends, they will have the opportunity to be involved in activities and workshops to improve their leadership and language skills, discover what the host community has to offer, develop healthy lifestyle habits, explore other Canadian cultures and improve their knowledge about the environment. It is a requirement that participants can only volunteer at non-profit organizations and that they do not take paid labour away from the local workforce. The placement must be a learning experience for the participants and opportunities for them to acquire a variety of professional skills. The following are some of the projects that Katimavik is currently participating in with other local communities:

- Social and humanitarian work with the elderly, disabled and underprivileged
- Museums, tourism offices, historical sites
- Educational activities, teacher assistance, day care programs
- Shelters and support centres, youth centres, senior citizens' homes
- Meals on Wheels, Relief Assistance organizations, Food Banks
- Leisure, culture and environmental organizations

Participants in the Katimavik program hail from all regions of Canada and come from diverse educational, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. All participants must have a basic criminal record check in order to participate in the program. They are also required to have a medical check-up to ensure they are physically able to participate in
the program. Katimavik pays for all program related activities and expenses, such as room and board. The participants receive a $3 per day stipend for pocket money and an honorarium of $1,000 at the completion of their nine-month program.

Katimavik rents a home in the host community in which the eleven participants reside with their project leader, who supervises their activities. During their three-month placement in each community participants will stay with a local billeting family for fourteen days to orient themselves to the local community.

Transportation costs for the participants are the responsibility of the Community Partner organization and as such, the volunteer placement is recommended to be located on or by local bus routes or within a 20-minute walk from the group home.

Once the City of Hamilton has confirmed its participation in the Katimavik proposal, City staff will collaborate with Katimavik's Regional Co-ordinator to identify the non-profit placements required for the participants.

Katimavik will commence a communication strategy with the assistance of local community partners and endeavor to enlist the support of local families for billeting participants.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

Participation in a Katimavik project would provide the City of Hamilton, community groups and non-profit agencies with an opportunity to assist the participants, young Canadians from throughout the country, to grow and learn through volunteerism, group living and skills development. Non-Profit organizations will benefit from the participants' enthusiastic involvement and volunteer work, which will help them achieve their objectives and provide an opportunity to increase the quality and quantity of their services offered to our community.

The Katimavik program indicates that participation in Katimavik results in a significantly greater ability (90% for participants vs. 66% for non-participants) to positively relate to other regions of the country. Results suggest that through their involvement with Katimavik, participants gained a better understanding of and appreciation for culture, linguistic and regional differences within Canada. They also developed a deeper appreciation of volunteerism’s value in building strong communities. Two-thirds of participants claimed that Katimavik influenced their career plans.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Although it is not recommended, the City could choose not to partake in this initiative. Coming from regions across Canada, the young participants will see the opportunities in and vibrancy of our city and build connections with local residents, helping reinforce our image of being a progressive and welcoming community.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial:

There will be no cost to the City of Hamilton aside from minimal staff time. The participants’ transportation costs for the duration of the program will be covered off by the Non-Profit organizations where the participants will be placed.

Staff:

No increased staffing levels are included in this request. The Community Liaison designate(s) will be responsible for organizing initial meetings, contacting community organizations that may be eligible to apply for a participant, participating in finding a residence for the group and be able to represent and function on behalf of the community at large.

Legal:

Katimavik provides insurance coverage for the participants; however, all Community Partners are required to submit proof of a third-party liability insurance policy valued at $1 million.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

None.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Community Services Departmental Management Team
Office of the Mayor
Finance and Administration

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

Katimavik participants will volunteer in not-for-profit organizations that currently exist in Hamilton; assisting these organizations to achieve their goals within Hamilton. Traditionally, many of the types of placements are with organizations who provide a
range of programs and services that support the human service infrastructure in communities.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Not-for-profit organizations from all sectors can offer to host a Katimavik participant in their workplace. Katimavik will work to ensure a range of organizations are represented, including environmental organizations, if possible.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Katimavik participants will volunteer in Hamilton's not-for-profit organizations, many of which focus on improving the economic well-being of Hamilton residents.

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