
2006 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE – Earthkeepers Program

Issue/Background:

- In 2005, Tumivut, the homeless youth shelter associated with the Aboriginal-run Native Men's Residence, teamed with Parks, Forestry and Recreation to develop the Earthkeepers Program.
- 14 at-risk youth were provided jobs as Labourer 2s within the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division.
- The purpose of the program is to enable youth-at-risk to acquire life and employment skills through a trade skills training in landscape and horticulture, in combination with broad life skills training.
- Ideally, Parks, Forestry and Recreation would have taken on the trades training, in keeping with the mandate in Our Common Grounds. Due to a lack of resources, Parks, Forestry and Recreation's involvement was limited to providing greenhouse and garden space, some tools and materials, a small amount of horticulture training and a summer work experience program.
- The 2005 summer work experience program involved 14 youth working for 8 weeks as Labourer 2s with Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The youths worked every second week, continuing their life skills training on alternate weeks.
- The August 25, 2005 Report to Economic Development and Parks Committee on the Earthkeepers Program indicated program costs of \$121,229 gross and \$83,861 net based on information available at that time. Tumivut anticipated being able to help fund this program with a federal grant from HRSDC, in the amount of \$37,548. However, the grant did not materialize.
- Expenditures in the program were then scaled back. On completion of the program in September, the final 2005 program expenditures were \$75,224, gross and net (\$63,673 for salaries and benefits of the 14 Labourer 2s and the remaining \$11,551 for uniforms, tools, plant products, gardening supplies and the waiving of fees (lost revenues) for the use of Riverlea Greenhouse).
- The program expenditures were funded in the 2005 Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget by not replacing two retired permanent staff temporarily in the greenhouse operations and by reducing water and utility usage at Allan Gardens. This impacted our ability to provide proper maintenance and care of plant materials.
- Staff in Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Tumivut were pleased with the results and the quality of work and level of personal growth and pride demonstrated in the youth who completed the program.

Key Points:

- At its meeting on January 25, 2006, Budget Advisory Committee recommended that the Earthkeepers Program be left at the 2005 level of funding and the program report back to Wrap-up, including possible sources of non-City funding.
- The funding for this program does not exist within the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget.

- The 2006 Operating Budget request of \$254,265 gross and \$216,765 net was based upon the City establishing a horticulture and landscape training program; taking ownership of the trades skills training and apprenticeship aspects of the program.
- In order to provide this program, this request included funding for a permanent trainer/instructor who would support the program year round and provide the type of practical training that the participants require. Funding for retaining additional professional instructors, materials and tools and equipment were also requested (without the proper funding, Parks, Forestry and Recreation would not hire this position).

2006 New Operating Request

Salary	\$ 134,238	(1 Permanent Instructor and 14 seasonal Labourer 2s for 9 weeks)
Benefits	\$ 32,827	
Material & Supplies	\$ 23,200	(uniforms, gardening supplies, plant materials)
Equipment	\$ 6,000	(tools)
Services & Rents	\$ 58,000	(training, equipment rentals, contracted services)
Total Gross	\$ 254,265	
Revenues	\$ 37,500	(Service Canada federal grant provided to Tumivut)
Total Net	\$ 216,765	2007 Annualization \$15,279 Gross and Net

- To complement the City's program, Tumivut provides life skills training to the at-risk youth. Service Canada (formerly HRSDC) has confirmed funding, in the amount of \$285,794 to Tumivut for 2006 for the Earthkeepers Program for life skills training (their portion of the program in alternate weeks). It is anticipated, but not confirmed that \$37,500 of this funding will be allocated to the City to cover a portion of its program costs.
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation will work with Tumivut to continue this program in 2006 at least at the 2005 service level.
- Based on the lessons learned from the 2005 pilot program, it is clear that providing the participants with an improved, more comprehensive trades skill training program along with a formalized apprenticeship during their work experience is essential to ensure the successful outcome of employability into the future for the youth participants.
- CUPE Local 416 endorses this unique hiring process, permitting the youth to work as Labourer 2s, while continuing life skills development in alternate weeks.
- As a result of the new collective agreement, Parks, Forestry and Recreation cannot continue to use permanent staff vacancies to offset expenditures of this program in 2006.

Conclusion:

- The Earthkeepers Program supports Our Common Grounds, Recommendation 28: "Implement the Youth Recreation Strategy – Invest in Our Youth" and Recommendation 19: "Initiate a professional gardener certification program through our community gardens and greenhouses, aimed at disadvantaged youth."

- The joint effort of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Tumivut and CUPE Local 416 working together to develop and implement the work experience program serves as a good foundation upon which to base other simliar programs currently under consideration to address youth at-risk in the City.
- The value of the program warranted Parks, Forestry and Recreation's contribution in 2005 and the year end evaluation exceeds the anticipated success of the program.
- In the long term, this program creates a pool of employable persons for parks operations.
- The Earthkeepers Program has had many successes. However, to establish it as an on-going, sustainable program, funding is required.
- Maintaining the 2005 funding level will limit the program to providing greenhouse and garden space, some tools and materials, a small amount of horticulture training and a summer work experience program. The intent of the Earthkeepers Program is to provide at-risk youth with training in various horticultural trades to develop employable skills.
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation's expenditures may be partially offset by a Service Canada federal grant to Tumivut (non-City funding).
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation will collaborate with Tumivut to continue offering this program to at-risk youth in 2006.

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