



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Toronto Regional Centre for Education on Sustainable Development: Progress Report

Date:	September 25, 2008
To:	Parks & Environment Committee
From:	Richard Butts, Deputy City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:/2008/ClusterB/TEO/PE08010

SUMMARY

This report responds to the request of the Parks and Environment Committee for a progress report on the Toronto Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (the “Toronto RCE”).

Over the course of the last year the Toronto Environment Office (“TEO”) has participated in the development of the Toronto RCE and provided secretarial support services. The secretarial support role has, however, been reduced as the Toronto RCE Co-Chair, Dr. Ingrid Leman Stefanovic of the University of Toronto and her support staff have taken on increasing role in the administration and co-ordination of the Toronto RCE.

This report therefore seeks Council direction to formally adjust the working relationship of the TEO in connection with the Toronto RCE to that of a participating member only and conclude TEO’s secretarial support function.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Deputy City Manager Richard Butts recommends that:

1. The Director of the Toronto Environment Office be requested to write to the Co-Chair of the Toronto Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development and advise that the Toronto Environmental Office will conclude its secretarial support role to that body effective October 30, 2008; and

2. The Director of the Toronto Environment Office also be requested to advise the Co-Chair of the Toronto Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development that the Toronto Environment Office will continue to participate as a member of that body.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The conclusion of the TEO's provision of secretarial support for the Toronto RCE will reduce the staff time currently provided to that body and re-direct it to Council's priorities under the Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees that there will be no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

In 2005 Mayor Miller requested the United Nations University to designate Toronto as a Regional Centre for Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development, which was subsequently forthcoming from the United Nations University. The Toronto RCE is part of an international network of centres of expertise affiliated with the United Nations to help promote the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

In April 2006 former Deputy City Manager Fareed Amin invited various stakeholders together to discuss the potential formation of the Toronto RCE. From that meeting the following bodies came together as the Toronto RCE, which was followed by a memorandum of understanding, which was approved by City Council in July 2007 (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-5195.pdf>):

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|---------------------------------|---|
| • City of Toronto | • Citizens' Environment Watch |
| • University of Toronto | • Environment Canada |
| • York University | • Education Alliance for a Sustainable Ontario (EASO) |
| • Seneca College | • Toronto Zoo |
| • Toronto District School Board | • Toronto & Region Conservation Authority |

At that time the City of Toronto took responsibility for housing the Toronto RCE Secretariat for a two-year period by providing office space and staff support.

In August 2007 Deputy City Manager Richard Butts submitted a report to Parks & Environment Committee that responded to several information requests from that Committee concerning the Toronto RCE. The report was subsequently adopted by City Council with a request to Mr. Butts to report in one year's time on the progress of the

Toronto RCE (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-6402.pdf>). This report responds to that request.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2004, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution marking 2005-2014 as the International Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. As a result, the United Nations University proposed establishing Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) throughout the globe. The RCEs are intended to be a forum for strengthening local and international collaboration on education for sustainable development

COMMENTS

Some important steps have been achieved by the Toronto RCE. An ongoing activity has been the building of a database of all current formal and informal sustainable development education activities within the Toronto region. The purpose has been to provide baseline data for gap analysis, with a view to identifying appropriate directions for future investments in research and program development.

In addition to the database, case studies have been identified that provide significant examples of sustainable development education within the Toronto area. Examples of case studies are:

- “EcoSchools” – an environmental education program that seeks to align curriculum development with how primary and secondary school facilities are actually run;
- the Sustainable Enterprise Academy - an executive education program founded through the Schulich School of Business at York University; and
- “ReWire” – a project of University of Toronto’s Sustainability Office that employs community based social marketing techniques to encourage positive behaviour changes to reduce electricity consumption in student residences;

The intention of the case study inventory is to continue to: (a) identify a range of examples that reflect successful ESD initiatives in formal and informal sectors of the Toronto community; and (b) analyze how these success stories might lead to replication in other sectors and/or geographical areas.

As a result of the case study inventory, the Steering Committee has recently developed several project ideas as detailed below:

- developing a Toronto RCE website;

- creating an interactive, internet-based sustainability map to provide educators, students and residents with examples of on the ground initiatives that are improving the local environment and curriculum resources that are available locally and, at the same time, to inspire new initiatives to advance sustainability in the region;
- developing a train the trainer program for social service providers in Toronto to help communities learn and teach each other about sustainability;
- utilizing the City's Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan as an example of sustainable development to develop distance education programs at the University of Toronto;
- replicating the ReWire program at the neighbourhood level; and
- working with the Toronto Zoo to help implement their proposed plans for a Centre for Sustainable Life and Learning.

CONCLUSIONS

As the Toronto RCE has developed, a Co-Chair has taken on more of the administrative and secretarial functions, which has effectively reduced the need for support from the TEO. Accordingly, staff recommend that the secretarial role provided by the TEO be concluded as of October 30, 2008.

The Toronto RCE continues to pursue its mandate by developing a database of sustainable development education activities and identifying case studies. To support this work, staff recommend that the City Council support the continued participation of the TEO as a members of the Toronto RCE.

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