



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Bridging High-Risk Gang Involved Youth to Labour
Market Participation**

Date:	April 13, 2012
To:	Budget Committee
From:	Executive Director, Social Development, Finance & Administration
Wards:	2, 11, 37, 40
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from City Council to receive a federal project contribution from the Government of Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund for an amount of up to \$1,343,215 to implement a one year youth gang intervention program in the communities of Dorset Park, Rockcliffe-Smythe and Weston-Mt Dennis.

In addition, this report advises the Budget Committee of the need to amend the 2012 Approved Operating Budget for Social Development and Finance Administration (SDFA) to reflect an increase of \$928,810 gross (\$0 net) in subsidy from the Government of Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund. Concurrently, this report advises that \$414,405 in subsidy from Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund will be included in the program's 2013 Operating Budget Submission, reflecting the twelve month term of this grant.

Due to a unique opportunity to secure program funding from Public Safety Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund, the City of Toronto can accelerate plans to undertake a one year project to identify and enhance the City's engagement models, program models and service coordination models supporting Toronto's youth at high-risk of gang attachment. This project will actively engage youth at high-risk of gang attachment and work with City service providers to identify and integrate effective supports for such youth, their families and City program staff working with higher-risk youth. This project builds upon the learnings out of the City's recently concluded Prevention-Intervention Toronto youth gang diversion pilot project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to receive and expend funds from the Government of Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund in the amount of \$1,343,215 to implement a co-ordinated city youth gang intervention project in three Toronto neighbourhoods.
2. City Council increase the 2012 Approved Operating Budget for Social Development, Finance and Administration by \$928,810 gross, and \$0 net to reflect the Government of Canada's project funding contribution.
3. City Council increase the Operating Budget of Social Development, Finance and Administration by 11.0 FTE temporary positions (2.0 management/non-union positions, 9.0 collective bargaining unit positions) for the duration of the project.
4. City Council delegate authority to the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to negotiate and execute the agreement on behalf of the City with Public Safety Canada including full responsibility and accountability of funds for the project's duration.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of the contribution agreement from the Government of Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund will increase the 2012 Approved Operating Budget for SDFA by \$928,810 gross with \$0 net impact. The additional funding will increase the 2012 Approved Operating Budget for SDFA to \$40,716,088 gross, \$29,233,200 net. As well, approval of this agreement will provide for the inclusion of \$414,405 gross and \$0 net in the 2013 Operating Budget Submission, reflecting the twelve month term of the grant.

The project contribution agreement will also result in the addition of 11.0 FTE temporary positions (2.0 management/non-union, 9.0 collective bargaining unit) to SDFA's 2012 and 2013 approved staffing complement for the duration of the project, with zero net impact to the City. Temporary staff functions include a project manager, community development staff and financial and administrative support.

Public Safety Canada have indicated the project must conclude by March 31, 2013, consistent with the Government of Canada's fiscal year.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of September 24 and 25, 2008, City Council delegated authority to Social Development, Finance & Administration's (SDFA) Executive Director to negotiate and execute an agreement on behalf of the City with Public Safety Canada for the purposes of funding a new youth gang prevention pilot project.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2008.CD18.4>

Subsequently, at the February 6, 2009 meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee, City staff provided an outline of the proposed project model and implementation plan for the youth gang prevention pilot project prior to the pilot project's start. The Committee reviewed the project model and implementation plan and referred them to the Acting Executive Director, SDFA for implementation.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.CD22.2>

On November 15, 2011, the Executive Director, SDFA made a presentation to the Economic Development Committee summarizing the efforts of the Prevention-Intervention Toronto Pilot Project's first two program cycles and best practices identified by Project evaluators to date.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.ED9.10>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Youth gang activity remains a persistent social, safety, economic and health concern for many Canadian municipalities. Although the number of full-time participants active in a municipality is relatively small, the presence of youth gangs in communities can negatively influence and impact other neighbourhood youth and the community as a whole. In 2007, Public Safety Canada estimated approximately 7,000 Canadian youth were involved in 434 gangs nationally. This would represent 0.1% of the Canadian youth and young adult population 10 – 24 years of age identified in the 2006 Canadian Census.

Despite their small numbers of full-time members, youth gangs' involvement in street-level illicit drug distribution and violence associated with the drug trade has a disproportionate impact on the quality of life of community residents and the social cohesion and economic viability of neighbourhoods. In neighbourhoods where gang activity is persistent, youth gangs can be perceived as both a viable employment alternative, often perceived to provide superior income earning potential compared to other local employment opportunities, and a mechanism to address individual youth's social needs.

However, evidence suggests that if youth at high-risk of gang attachment receive effective interventions that address their individual needs in a range of areas (i.e. social, financial, emotional and physical health, educational, family, safety, substance abuse), it is possible to divert high-risk youth towards becoming a productive, positively contributing member of the community. At this time no single project model exists that

definitively diverts high-risk youth participants from youth gang involvement, but evidence-based approaches to youth gang diversion continue to build upon previously identified best practices to develop improved project models and outcomes.

COMMENTS

The Prevention-Intervention Toronto (PIT) Youth Gang Diversion Pilot Project was launched in 2009, with the goal of engaging and diverting youth at high-risk of gang attachment from engaging in youth gang-related anti-social behaviour. Through an integrated, targeted and evidence-based community program emphasizing wrap-around supports, the PIT Pilot Project worked to provide youth at high-risk of gang attachment with family supports, pro-social skills and pre-employment skills training. By addressing barriers that caused Project participants to be located farthest from labour market entry, the Pilot Project was able to provide youth at high risk of gang attachment a credible alternative path to meaningful employment in contrast to the violent lifestyle offered by Toronto youth gangs.

Building upon the preliminary learnings identified by City staff, a one year project has been developed to strengthen City-provided supports and engagement mechanisms addressing the needs of youth at high-risk of gang attachment. This project will seek to improve how the City engages high-risk youth through frontline staff and enhance coordination between neighbourhood-level family, employment and education supports programs and youth engagement programs. It is expected that the project will strengthen the City's capacity to address the unique needs of high-risk youth and their families by maximizing existing resources and supports, and will better position the City to engage with its community-based service providers to ensure effective targeted employment, social and family supports for high-risk youth at a neighbourhood level.

The selection of the Dorset Park, Rockcliffe-Smythe and Weston-Mt Dennis neighbourhoods for the focus of the project is based on City staff's review of neighbourhoods exhibiting higher levels of youth at-risk of gang participation and identified opportunities for enhanced City service coordination. The selection of these communities is also consistent with the findings of the City's Youth Crime Index model, originally developed for the PIT Pilot Project, ongoing input of the Toronto Police Service and the observations of the City's community safety, youth engagement and neighbourhood-level service provider staff provided over the duration of the PIT Pilot Project. Although the project will focus on supporting high-risk youth in Dorset Park, Rockcliffe-Smythe and Weston-Mt Dennis, it should be noted that this will not preclude the provision of other City or community-based initiatives to engage youth at high-risk of gang attachment in other Toronto neighbourhoods during the project period.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the City of Toronto's Prevention-Intervention Toronto Pilot Project indicates that its holistic, individualized case management approach to youth gang prevention/diversion is resonating with youth at high-risk of gang attachment. However,

over the course of the PIT Pilot Project's duration program staff have identified a need to review and enhance how the City engages and supports high-risk youth at a neighbourhood level. Due to a unique funding opportunity provided by Public Safety Canada, the City of Toronto can undertake a one year project to improve the effectiveness of City engagement and support efforts to dissuade youth at high-risk of gang attachment from pursuing violent youth gang activity in three Toronto neighbourhoods. City program areas to be involved include Toronto Employment and Social Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto Public Health, Human Resources and the Toronto Police Service.

While no single program is the solution to prevalent youth gang activity, research and the experience of City staff suggest providing potential access to meaningful employment opportunities can move youth at high-risk of gang involvement to a different, positive path. Building upon the efforts of the Prevention-Intervention Toronto Pilot Project, the City will use the one year funding opportunity afforded by Public Safety Canada to identify and enhance the City's engagement models, program models and service coordination models supporting Toronto's youth at high-risk of gang attachment. This effort, in conjunction with the best practices identified in from the PIT Pilot Project and other community-based programs for higher-risk youth will contribute to the development of the City's next generation of evidence-based youth gang intervention and diversion programs.

CONTACT

Lydia Fitchko
Director, Social Policy, Analysis and Research
Social Development, Finance & Administration
Tel: (416) 392-8614
Fax: (416) 392-4976
email: lfitchko@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Chris Brillinger
Executive Director, Social Development, Finance & Administration