



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

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& Services Part-Time
- Recreation Workers
Part-Time
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*Toronto Community
Housing Corporation*

**SERVING OUR
MEMBERS
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CD17.2.4

November 14, 2012

Giorgio Mammoliti (Chair), and
Members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Mammoliti, and Members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee:

RE: CD17.2 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about such an important issue.

Over the past few months, CUPE Local 79 has been involved in the Recreation Works! Campaign, to build support for expanding City recreation programming to meet the needs of Toronto's communities. The campaign has engaged over twenty community organizations, over a dozen youth groups, and thousands of residents.

The campaign has afforded me the opportunity to listen to these groups and individuals speak about the importance of recreation services our members deliver, and what we can do to make these services better. Here are some of the most important things I heard:

Recreation isn't just about getting exercise, it's about building healthy, safe, resilient communities.

And we win as a city and as taxpayers when more people participate in recreation. Cost is the biggest barrier to participation and free universal programming is the answer.

We must involve local communities in local program design, so that we are responding directly to their needs.

It's essential that we actively reach out and support our most vulnerable residents – youth, newcomers, low-income families and seniors.

Reaching out and engaging youth through recreation is of critical importance to CUPE Local 79. Toronto Parks and Recreation is the largest employer of youth in the City, and those youth teaching summer camps and swim classes, among other things, are my members – all 9000 of them at a seasonal peak. Many of them got involved in city recreation first as participants, and through the City's programs

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gained the skills and training to eventually get a job with recreation. For many of them it's their first job, and it helps set them on a path for success with employment at the City or elsewhere in the broader workforce.

The youth in our City are facing a 14% unemployment rate and as the largest employer of youth, the City can do more to help. The Youth Leadership Program being recommended in the service plan is a great start – especially as it seeks to engage youth early on, when they are 14, to help them learn important life skills.

The youth leadership program is only one piece of what is needed to help our youth. The City must ensure sufficient youth outreach services to meet community needs.

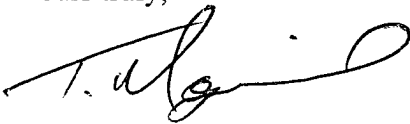
The leadership program should be housed in a concrete strategy to engage more youth through a wide array of outreach activities, programs, services and supports. And we should be using the City's growing need for recreation programs and services as a way to employ more of our youth.

I'm delighted to see that the Recreation Service Plan in many ways mirrors what we heard from participants in the Recreation Works Campaign and from our members. But people have been waiting too long for better recreation, and key improvements and enhancements should start in 2013, like:

- expanding priority centres;
- improving marketing and promotion – especially at a local level;
- making it easier to access registration;
- the implementation of a real Youth Strategy – starting with the Youth Leadership program, to develop life skills, including training and employment opportunities;
- And for clarity, the City needs to employ Community Partnerships only in a manner consistent with the City's responsibility to provide comprehensive recreation programs across the city.

Everyone has been waiting a long time to see these kinds of improvements to our recreation programs. I urge you today to show them that the wait is almost over.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Maguire', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Maguire
President