

Review of City Service Levels Supporting Toronto's At Risk Youth

Date:	September 4, 2013
To:	Community Development & Recreation Committee
From:	Executive Director, Social Development, Finance & Administration
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	AFS #18119

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to City Council's request for a review of current City service levels supporting youth at risk of marginalization and to identify priorities for increasing service supports to address their needs.

This report also provides an update on the development of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy. Efforts to date have focused on engaging with community stakeholders and identifying characteristics of youth who are at the greatest risk of marginalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council receives this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of the recommendations included in this report. The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Equity Impact

The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy will emphasize engaging and supporting the complex needs of youth furthest from social and economic opportunities and at highest risk of marginalization. The Strategy will seek to improve City services and supports in order to positively impact the quality of life of Toronto's most vulnerable youth. The Strategy will seek to address the interaction of risk and resilience with aspects of youth identity which often characterize equity seeking groups, such as: gender, sexual orientation, disability, mental health, housing status, and other axes of vulnerability.

The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy will define the City's priority outcomes for youth and facilitate an integrated youth service system based on a holistic approach in areas of priority setting, funding, and service planning and delivery.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of February 20 and 21, 2013, City Council adopted Member Motion MM30.13 *Taking Action on the Roots of Youth Violence*. The Member Motion directed City staff to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee on the status of Provincial-Municipal actions recommended in *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence* and *Ontario's Youth Action Plan* and identify additional measures to address youth violence in Toronto.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.MM30.13>

At its meeting of July 16, 17, 18 and 19, 2013, City Council approved the Framework for the development of a Toronto Youth Equity Strategy and directed inclusion of a gender-based analysis in the Strategy. Council also directed Social Development, Finance and Administration to consult with relevant program areas to review current service levels supporting youth at risk of marginalization and report to the September 18, 2013 meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee as to options and priorities for increasing service supports for youth at risk in Toronto.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD22.8>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In the late spring 2013, City staff undertook a review of Provincial and Municipal actions related to the *Review of The Roots of Youth Violence* (2008) and the *Ontario Youth Action Plan* (2012). Staff analysis indicated that while governments and community partners have implemented a number of youth programs and services following the 2008 Review, few Provincial actions have addressed the causes and effects of youth most vulnerable to violence and victimization – those hardest to serve by traditional services. At the City level, a number of efforts have been advanced, however, there still remains a significant need for a comprehensive, holistic approach to support youth at the highest risk of

marginalization. In response, City staff are working with partners to develop a Toronto Youth Equity Strategy to support the most marginalized and high risk youth.

COMMENTS

Update on The Development of a Toronto Youth Equity Strategy

Since City Council's adoption of the Toronto Youth Equity Framework report on July 16, 2013 to guide the development of the Strategy, Social Development, Finance and Administration has started working with a number of City Divisions and community partners to advance three important steps toward development of a full Strategy:

1. Established an External Panel:

In addition to ongoing discussions with key community partners and stakeholders working with youth, an External Panel has been established to advise the City on the development of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy. This panel includes representatives from youth civic engagement organizations, youth-led grassroots groups, youth-serving non-profit organizations, and youth employment agencies.

2. Conducted a Preliminary Service Review:

City Divisions and Agencies that identify themselves as delivering programs and services for at risk youth have conducted a review of their current service levels for this youth population. Findings from the review will further guide the development of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy.

3. Advanced City Understanding of At Risk:

Progress has been made in refining the City's understanding of youth risk – moving beyond the single category of “at risk” youth, which obscures important details helpful to meeting the needs of the most marginalized and under-served youth, to differentiate between populations of at risk youth so that programs and services can be customized for greater effectiveness.

Current Service Levels for 'At Risk' Youth

In August 2013, staff in Parks, Forestry and Recreation; Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; Social Development, Finance and Administration; Toronto Community Housing Corporation; Toronto Employment and Social Services; Toronto Police Services; Toronto Public Health; and the Toronto Public Library reviewed their respective program and service offerings in order to identify those which serve the city's most marginalized youth. A list of current programs and services identified by each program area is provided in Appendix I.

In the service review process, staff identified different understandings of who and what makes youth most at risk or “high risk”. As staff worked across divisions and with community stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of what makes high risk youth “high risk”, it became clear that for youth, their experience of risk interacts with their own resilience and identity in unique ways. Acknowledging the connections between risk, resiliency, and identity revealed that high risk youth might face different service barriers depending on how they are perceived by each service provider or program area.

This perspective on youth risk holds important implications for the development of a Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, particularly for setting the priorities for services supporting youth at risk of marginalization. It also ensures that a gender-analysis is included in the approaches to serving the most marginalized youth.

The following key observations emerged from this preliminary review of service levels:

1. The understanding of what constitutes a situation of “at risk” or “high risk” for youth is significantly influenced by each program area’s service mandate. As a result, programs tend to address specific issues and needs rather than the complex and intersecting issues facing high risk youth;
2. Information about programs and services needs to be better maintained and better available to the public and other service providers;
3. Some programs and services offer significant potential for cross-program learning, such as youth employment programs;
4. Many programs focus exclusively on the individual level, supporting youth and their families to work within the context of the current system, rather than addressing systemic barriers; and
5. Some programs rely heavily on community-based partners who are working with minimal and time-limited resources.

Service Priorities for the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy

This initial review of City services has helped confirm the following service priorities to guide the development of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy:

1. Improved **service coordination** is vital to serve youth facing the greatest risk of marginalization;
2. More **comprehensive** programs operating across City program areas that work with youth in the context of their families and communities are needed;

3. Increased **case management** and **case coordination resources** are needed. A higher level of support is needed to enable program access for youth who face significant systemic barriers and who have not acquired sufficient resilience to overcome these barriers. Without the higher level of support, participation in general youth programs is difficult for high-risk youth;
4. More **integrated services** are necessary to support youth being referred to multiple programs to address multiple needs, given the importance of relationships and trust in serving high-risk youth;
5. Additional programs enhancing **youth resiliency** and supporting **positive youth development** are needed;
6. Programs and training that address **systemic barriers** faced by youth are needed;
7. Programs must better leverage the skills and connections of **trusted community resident leaders**; and,
8. City program areas should be supported with a **youth equity toolkit** to investigate existing policies that may create additional barriers to high risk youth.

Many of these priorities are already reflected in the Council-approved Framework for the Strategy.

CONCLUSION

All youth in Toronto deserve the opportunity to pursue their goals, dreams and ambitions with access to the tools and supports to overcome the specific social, economic, academic, health, geographic and/or criminal justice system challenges they may face. While many Toronto youth have the supports that allow them to live, learn, work and play in safe and nurturing environments, some youth face significant challenges that leave them at high risk of marginalization.

The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy aims to ensure that these high risk youth are not left behind, and in so doing, improve the City's youth services and programs for all. The Strategy is planned to be presented to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in December, 2013.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix I – Current City Programs and Services for At Risk Youth

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Program Area	Services Provided
Parks, Forestry and Recreation	<p>Free youth drop-ins at community centers, registered youth programs in sport, arts, skill and leadership development, youth lounges (Please Refer to Staff Report: <i>Recreation Services for Youth</i> for a full list)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth focused capital developments: The Don Montgomery, McGregor Park and Dennis R. Timbrell Community Centres (through Youth Challenge Fund); • Partnerships at Malvern called THE SPOT; future dedicated youth space at Centennial Community Centre. • Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) program: YOWs provide outreach and engage youth that face barriers, linking them to recreation programs and services. YOWs work with a range of social services and referral agencies and connect youth to services like housing, employment, health, harm reduction, and appropriate services based on age and culture. • Local Youth Advisory Councils: Council's help empower and give voice to youth in program development allowing them the opportunity to give back to the community; obtain community volunteer hours. • Partnerships with other youth serving organizations and provision of community centre space to other youth serving organizations. • STOMP and Youth Unite: Special events that bring together diverse youth, expose them to lead locally responsive activities and participate in citywide events • PFR provides exposure to new experiences for youth through trips, special events, winter sports, out-tripping program and Duke of Edinburgh. • Employment: PFR is the largest employer of youth in the City of Toronto, both directly and in partnership with organizations like Tropicana. • Partner for the Toronto Sport Leadership Program that helps youth into coaching, instructor and leadership positions. • Youth Leadership: Development of a youth leadership program model to serve 50 per cent of all grade nine students in Toronto.
Shelter, Support & Housing Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets to Homes (S2H) provide street outreach and support services to connect homeless youth with housing and essential stabilization supports working within a Housing First model. • Hostel Services provides shelters and assistance to homeless youth and families with children including youth up to 16 or older if they are still dependent on their parents. There are 11 emergency shelters and 4 transitional/residential shelters with 525 beds for homeless youth. • Specialized hostel services for youth include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A stay in school program ▪ Housing preparation program, ▪ Programming for pregnant at-risk young mothers • Specialized hostel services for youth who are in shelters with their parents include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homework clubs ▪ Individual counselling, and ▪ Recreation programming • Youth applicants (ages 16 or 17) to the social housing waiting list qualify for a priority placement. • Housing allowance programs give time-limited financial assistance to various vulnerable client groups, including at-risk youth, to assist with rent payments. • Administers funding to community agencies to deliver a range of programs including that provide services to youth including:

Program Area	Services Provided
Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Reconnect Program/Project Going Home ▪ Harm Reduction Programming ▪ Pre-Employment Programming ▪ Life Skills Programming ▪ Youth Drop-Ins ▪ Housing Help (within and outside of shelters) ▪ Supports to Daily Living ▪ Capacity Building/Research
Social Development, Finance & Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Crisis Response Program: The Community Crisis Response Program works across Toronto to provide support and resources to residents impacted by violent and traumatic incidents such as a shooting or stabbing to promote individual and community healing and stability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The mobilization of psycho-social supports including direct and tailored access to City, government and broader community services, e.g. emergency shelters, education and training opportunities ▪ Coordination of municipal services, the police, community organizations, faith communities and residents to respond to and recover from violent critical incidents ▪ Development of integrated strategies to promote safety and coordinated community crisis protocols ▪ Victim witness supports ▪ Access to emergency shelters ▪ Development of harm reduction strategies around gun violence and substance use disorders ▪ Conflict mediation/de-escalation and safety planning for individuals and communities ▪ Development of individual, community and systemic strategies to respond to emerging need • Neighbourhood Action: Neighbourhood Action is a comprehensive, innovative City of Toronto initiative to build stronger, safer, healthier neighbourhoods Council-designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). The service integration strategy gathers residents, governments, community agencies and businesses to create opportunities to improve communities' access to services, improve civic engagement and facilitate economic development opportunities. Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination of service providers to create safe and accessible space for youth ▪ Coordination of employment, education and training supports for youth ▪ In conjunction with families, coordination of service providers to respond to family needs ▪ Support of Community led initiatives that create economic development opportunities ▪ Multi-stakeholder place-based planning ▪ Development of individual, community and systemic strategies to respond to emerging need ▪ Creating a youth voice in problem solving community need and systemic change <p>Youth Employment and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Youth Job Corps - TYJC is an employment program designed to connect youth to the work place through employment, school and/or training. • Youth Employment Partnerships - Youth Employment Partnerships (YEP) is a neighbourhood-based youth employment network that offers job placement and staffing services to organizations throughout Toronto absolutely free. • Youth Employment Toronto - provides an outreach service to youth aged 16-29 in the

Program Area	Services Provided
Social Development, Finance & Administration (cont'd)	<p>City who are currently out of school and out of work and require support to develop and reach their vocational goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Youth Cabinet - The official youth advisory body to Toronto City Council.
Toronto Community Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouthWorx: employment program for youth 14- 29 for whom this may be their first job. The program provides a paycheque, support, coaching and mentoring to youth as they acquire the life and job skills to go on to more traditional employment. Youth work in teams and have a Shift Supervisor. They complete beautification and light grounds-keeping functions within TCH communities. • Partnership with Ontario Justice Education Network to offer a series of free hands-on workshops that help youth learn about Ontario's court system • Scholarships and Internships • Jobs and Recruiting Events • <i>Midnight Madness Basketball</i> (in partnership with University of Toronto-Scarborough)
Toronto Employment & Social Services	<p>Toronto Employment and Social Services plans, manages and delivers employment services, financial benefits and social supports to many of Toronto's most vulnerable residents. While all services are available to young people, the programs identified below are designed to meet specific needs of youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAP: TESS' Learning, Education and Parenting (LEAP) program helps young mothers to complete their high school education and to obtain parenting help and employment supports. The program is mandatory for 17 and 18 year olds in receipt of Ontario Works assistance and available to all single parents under the age of 25. LEAP parents are entitled to priority child care and additional education-related financial supports. • Investing in Families: Single parent families may participate in the Division's Investing in Families (IIF) initiative which provides an interdisciplinary approach to supporting all families with their health, recreation and employment needs. • Investing In Youth: The Investing in Youth initiative provides young people with multiple service needs one-on-one support to help them achieve their education and employment goals. An annual agency information fair is organized by TESS to introduce youth in conflict with the law with a range of community supports. • The Partnership to Advance Youth Employment: The Partnership to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE) is a joint initiative between private sector employers and the City of Toronto. This partnership seeks to increase access to economic opportunities for youth and to connect employers to a pool of talented young candidates.
Toronto Police Services	<p>Supportive Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media messaging • Youth Justice Diversion programs • Child Mental Health interventions • Youth In Policing Initiative <p>Relationship Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T.R.O.O.P: The Toronto Recreational Out tripping Outreach Program is designed to break down stereotypical barriers that occur between police and youth. • Project "O": 20 youths and 10 adults made up of police officers, social workers and Ryerson athletes train for the Spartan Race. • Survivor Girl: This program is designed to address several issues related to young

Program Area	Services Provided
<p>Toronto Police Services (cont'd)</p>	<p>females.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand in Hand: The program is open to children, youth and parents and focuses on various 'marginalized' communities in order to provide resources and education not readily available or accessible and to build positive relationships that did not exist. • Ski Hill Blues: The program provides kids that would not usually have the opportunity a chance to learn how to ski or snowboard, while spending time with police officers • PROS: (Providing Resources, Offering Support) is the first program in Ontario that combines holistic services with peer-led initiatives for women and girls who have experienced domestic human trafficking. • T.E.A.R: (Project Teens Ending Abusive Relationships) presentation into French. Project T.E.A.R. is an education and prevention outreach presentation directed to youth 12-18 years. • S.M.I.L.E Camp: Twice a year officers go up north to camp George with students from the TDSB and TCDSB to engage in leadership activities. • C.O.Y.O: The Committee of Youth Officers of Ontario is comprised of youth serving police officers from numerous Ontario Police Services and representatives from probation/parole, private sector youth organizations, instructional/training facilities and various school boards. • OJEN: The Ontario Judicial Education Network is focused primarily on youths. Visits in courts and in schools, providing opportunities for students to have question and answer sessions with judges, Justices of the Peace, lawyers, Crown counsel, managers of court operations, duty counsel, Police, and others. • Duke of Edinburgh Award: The award was founded by His Royal Highness the Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh, to encourage personal development and community involvement for young people. <p>SCHOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Resource Officer Program (SRO): Partnership between the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). • French School Board initiatives: Numerous anti-violence programs, initiatives and lectures presented in French by French speaking officers • Neighbourhood Resource Officer Program (NRO): Responsible for the communication and support of community mobilization activities, initiatives and programs within neighbourhoods/communities and to the members of the Service as required. <p>Rexdale FOCUS: is an innovative pilot project led by the City of Toronto, United Way Toronto, Toronto Police Service, Toronto Community Housing and local community organizations that aims to reduce crime and improve community resiliency in the Rexdale area.</p>
<p>Toronto Public Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual health clinics • Dental clinics • Needle exchange programs • Healthiest babies possible program, • Prenatal work through the Homeless At Risk Prenatal (HARP) program • The AIDS Prevention Community Investment Program (APCIP) was established by the former Toronto City Council in 1987 to support community initiatives in providing targeted HIV/AIDS prevention education programs and is a key component of Toronto Public Health's HIV Prevention Strategy. • The Drug Prevention Community Investment Program (DPCIP) was established by the former Toronto City Council in 1990 to build community capacity for local initiatives in drug prevention. Grants are now a policy-supported, integrated component

Program Area	Services Provided
	<p>of Public Health's Substance Misuse Prevention Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Parents No Fixed Address (YPNFA) is a network of about 30 Toronto agencies and organizations dedicated, for the past 15 years, to building strong community partnerships to address the challenges faced by young homeless/street involved, pregnant and parenting youth & their children. • Ambassador Program is a program where high school students in a school re-entry program for high-risk youth students relate their life experiences with substance use, violence, abuse, family difficulties, etc., to youth in a peer setting. The program is provided in partnership with several community agencies. • The One on One mentoring program provides a student in grades 1 - 8 with an adult mentor who volunteers one hour a week at a school. The program helps students overcome challenges, achieve their potential, and stay in school. • Condom Distribution Program distributes sexual health supplies to youth serving agencies (among others) • Capacity building with/for community groups and community leaders (grants, service design & implementation) • Work with Neighbourhood Action partnerships. • Partner in Community Crisis Response • Partner in Investing In Families
<p>Toronto Public Library</p>	<p>Education Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-Link and Your Road to Success programs • Redemption Reintegration Services • Homework help for teens • Transitional Intervention Program for Suspended Students (TIPSS) and Supervised Learning Alternative program (SAL) <p>Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storybook Dads: Outreach to Toronto East Detention Centre Inmates • TPL provides programs to support youth literacy and creative expression including the Young Voices writing programs, annual conference and publication of youth writing and art. <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer Jobs for Youth – in partnership with Tropicana Youth Services • Employment workshops – general delivery • Youth employed through Library construction contracts • Large number of local youth employed to work as pages in branches across the city <p>Independent skills development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The S.P.O.T. is a youth-led space initiative funded through the Youth Challenge Fund and the City of Toronto's Partnership Opportunity Legacy Fund, with leadership and support provided by the Library. • The ProTech Media Centre is a partnership project initiated in 2009 with Microsoft Canada, Toronto Public Library, Tropicana Community Services, Centennial College and Renewed Computer Technology. • The West-side Arts Hub: Housed in the Yorkwoods Branch of the Toronto Public Library; is a shared multi-use space supporting the artistic talent of Jane-Finch youth, local artists and community arts groups • Delisle Youth Services - The Studio – a Youth centre housed in the Northern District Branch of the Toronto Public Library, The Studio is a welcoming space for youth 13-21 to hang out, be creative and collaborate with other youth.

Program Area	Services Provided
<p>Toronto Public Library (cont'd)</p>	<p>Civic Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPL Youth Advisory Groups provide opportunities for local youth to volunteer and participate in youth program development in over 40 branches across the city <p>Public Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPL provides free, welcoming, neutral spaces across the city for youth to gather with other youth, access online resources and computers or study • TPL promotes and supports youth-focused capital developments, for example, The S.P.O.T. at Malvern Branch.