



Etobicoke Youth Network

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Statement on Recreation Services for Youth Report

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The Etobicoke Youth Network (EYN) is a collaborative group of youth-serving agencies, youth-allied organizations, and others, working cohesively to provide youth and young adults with opportunities, resources, and supports in central Etobicoke that they identify are needed.

EYN is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment for youth and their families in central Etobicoke through providing community-based services and programs in a multi-purpose facility [a youth and family, community hub] directed by agency partners and local community partners (both youths and adults, service users and others).

The Etobicoke Youth Network arose in response to the ongoing and growing challenges of marginalization and poverty within central Etobicoke. It was sparked by the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence consultations and the subsequent report. Service providers, city staff, provincial political staff, and concerned individuals make up the members of the Etobicoke Youth Network.

Youth we consulted – and we work closely with those in the Rathburn Area Youth, a program of LAMP CHC located at Burnhamthorpe Collegiate Institute – tell us that they want and need a variety of programs to help them become more engaged and productive citizens. We attempt to provide training, volunteer and paid opportunities, learning experiences, and community spaces through partnerships of member organizations.

What we cannot provide them are community centres (sadly lacking in this part of the city) and youth drop-in lounges that are open and staffed into the late evening. While the RAY space is well used for programs in the after-school period on week days and in the evenings, that is totally insufficient for the needs of youth in the five challenged neighbourhoods of central Etobicoke that we are focused on.

Safe spaces where youth feel welcomed and included are few and far between, despite years of well-publicized difficulties in communities that have high proportions of low-income and racialized families, and years of consultations with youth that asked much and gave little.

The presentation of this report, and the discussion it has engendered, may be a real beginning of greater accessibility of our city's recreational services and an opportunity to expand programs to meet the needs of all youth in Toronto. If the Council has the will to do what is required and requested by youth and youth-serving organizations, we may see some significant changes in the social environment that have been long awaited.

Thank you.

Richard M. De Gaetano
Etobicoke Youth Network