



## **El Centro Para Gente de Habla Hispana The Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples**

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Tuesday, September 17, 2013

Community Development and Recreation Committee  
City of Toronto

### **Re: Recreation Services for Youth**

Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, a multi-service agency that has been serving the Spanish-Speaking and newcomer community since 1974, I am writing to respond to the Recreation Services for Youth and the proposed Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy.

While it is encouraging to see significant consultation with youth and youth serving agencies around assessing the needs of youth in our City, the proposed recommendations fall short of addressing the increasing needs and expectations of our young people.

Certainly, it is important to outline and continue the important and good work currently being undertaken the Parks and Recreation workers throughout the City in programs, drop-ins, outreach, partnerships and the other initiatives outlined. It should go without saying that these are needed services that need to continue in order to address the needs of youth. Nonetheless, despite acknowledging the needs of youth as well as demonstrating their engagement through 1600 surveys completed, there is little specificity to a strategy that will actually meet the needs identified. It is disappointing that there are no recommendations to increase services and resources, despite their relatively little cost associated with building up social and recreational services for youth in this City.

Moreover, at a time when many community agencies are dealing with a fluid funding environment, the implications that increased partnerships (as PFR already has partnerships with many agencies) will put a significant dent in demand seems a stretch, as many agencies do not have additional funds for additional services.

The committee should consider directing staff to undertake a more comprehensive scan and review of services with the objective of identifying where, not if, to increase dedicated youth space in the City to respond to the needs identified in the PFR survey. If City Community Centres are contemplated as options, costs could be kept to a minimal and can be included within modified capital plans. Moreover, the City should consider how to leverage investments from Pan American games towards youth infrastructure and resources to accommodate increased youth spaces, particularly in City owned or operated facilities.



As Frederick Douglass said, "it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men". This is an important opportunity for the City to get out front and be proactive in addressing the considerable needs of our youth before we are dealing with the consequences of not acting and investing in our future generations.

Saludos

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pablo Vivanco', located below the word 'Saludos'.

Pablo Vivanco  
Programs and Services Director