



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

34 St. Patrick Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1V1
Tel: (416) 977-1629
Fax: (416) 977-9546
www.cupelocal79.org

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Tim Maguire

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Nancy Murphy

*Vice-President - Chief
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Jason Desjardins

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*Toronto Community
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November 28, 2016

Councillor Michael Thompson, Chair
And Members of the Economic Development Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Thompson and Committee Members,

**ED16.2 Advancing Work-Based Learning in Toronto: Report of the Youth
Employment Action Plan Advisory Committee**

A year ago I wrote to the Economic Development Committee regarding the Youth Employment Action Plan Update and offered Local 79's willingness to participate in the Advisory Committee's efforts. Local 79 has been on record urging the City to do more for unemployed and underemployed youth; however, it is also our responsibility to ensure that our members' rights are not put aside. That is why it is disappointing that while Local 79 represents the largest set of workers affected by work-based learning opportunities we have not been consulted or invited to the table on this initiative.

Local 79 concurs with many of the Advisory Committee's recommendations, such as engaging City Staff in fostering a positive work-based learning culture; preparing an annual workforce development report; fostering cooperation among sector strategies, stakeholders and initiatives; and aligning City investments to support sector-based models for youth. There are also recommendations in this report that warrant further action/discussion. It is good to provide work opportunities for youth, but the City also needs to consider the quality of that work and the career potential these positions foster.

Firstly, the report identifies opportunities to further advance commitments in the Youth Employment Action Plan with other City directions such as the City's Social Procurement Policy, Poverty Reduction Strategy and the "need to embed explicit youth training and hiring requirements in City contracts and land development deals".

As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the City needs to move forward on its development of a Job Quality Assessment Tool. This tool would position the City to better understand and apply good job standards through its involvement in the labour market. For example, under the City's Work-Based Learning Pilot, had there been collaboration with Local 79, there could have been a better program with more stable employment opportunities than currently offered through these five month placements. To be a good jobs leader, the City needs to protect and foster the highest employment standards for youth.

Secondly, as the largest employer of youth in Toronto, the City needs to do a better job providing career pathways for its own young workers already employed by the City. Local 79 has over 8,000 members in the Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division (PFR) – many of whom are youth who work in part-time and seasonal positions. These young workers use to be able to shift into full-time positions in PFR once they finished school, or move on to other opportunities within the City. Now workers who have been in these part-time arrangements for upwards of 10 years are unlikely to be able to obtain a full-time position.

Moreover, the report recommends the City advance opportunities for youth within the PFR Division by expanding youth leadership programming and integrating career navigation and awareness building into recreational activities for youth. Before PFR staff are expected to expand youth career programs the City needs to, as the report recommends, increase access to meaningful job opportunities with career path potential for its own youth employees.

Finally, at a time when staff vacancy rates and workloads are at an all-time high, the City can leverage its position as an employer by hiring more youth, and filling staff vacancies to provide the necessary supports for youth employment services. Last year when I wrote to Committee on this item staff vacancies totaled 2,578 unfilled positions. They have since increased to 3,239.

With vacancy rates so high we need to promote youth employment, but also ensure that youth employment strategies such as the City's Work-Based Learning Pilot do not replace full-time opportunities, or cut apart existing City jobs to create multiple un-paid or low paying jobs for youth.

Local 79 is willing to explore options and participate in consultations to see if we can achieve better youth employment strategies. Specifically, Local 79 would ask to be consulted on any ongoing divisional work plans and included as a stakeholder in the 2017 Work-Based Learning Symposium.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Maguire', written in a cursive style.

Tim Maguire
President