

2021 Recreation Worker Outreach Plan to Support Black Youth Hiring

Date: April 13, 2021

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to Member Motion MM27.13, adopted by City Council on December 16, 2020, requesting City staff to report back on how the 2021 recreation hiring season will meet the stated goals of the 2019-2022 Poverty Reduction Strategy Term Action Plan, particularly as they apply to Black youth.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy identifies several employment-related actions, including creating employment opportunities for low-income groups as well as developing new pathways, training opportunities and flexibility for low-income residents to enter into City jobs and support advancement once employed. Statistics Canada data in January 2021 indicates job losses among youth aged 15 to 19 during the pandemic. In the three month period ending in August 2020, Indigenous youth aged 12 to 24 living off reserve had an unemployment rate of 26.3 percent (Statistics Canada, 2020). For Black youth aged 15 to 24, the pre-pandemic unemployment rate was 24.3 percent relative to 15.5 percent for the total population of racialized groups in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). These numbers are further magnified by the fact that in Toronto, Black Torontonians made up the highest percentage of the working poor (10.5 percent), with second and third generation Black Torontonians being more vulnerable (Metcalf Foundation, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to intensify pre-existing systemic barriers that prevent Black and Indigenous youth living in Toronto from accessing sustainable employment and training initiatives.

Through its hiring power of youth, Parks, Forestry and Recreation is uniquely positioned to help advance Poverty Reduction Strategy actions and be part of a response to Toronto employment for Black youth through the employment it offers and effective recruitment efforts.

This report outlines Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Recruitment and Outreach Plan for the 2021 hiring season that engages and provides employment supports to Black youth. This work builds on annual recruitment, engagement and employment support

programs and continued work to advance the stated goals of the Poverty Reduction Strategy through these part-time employment opportunities and creating new pathways and training opportunities for youth experiencing systemic barriers.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation services are delivered by a team of skilled leaders who supervise and instruct seasonal recreational programs and services for residents across the City. They are lifeguards, camp leaders, fitness instructors and customer service staff. Parks, Forestry and Recreation has a high return rate with 82 percent of staff returning to seasonal positions each year. New staff are hired to fill any vacancies following extensive outreach, recruitment and employment support programs designed to connect local youth to available recreation jobs. Recreation recruitment and employment support programs have and continue to focus on reaching youth in local communities who require information, tools, resources and supports to help connect them to available employment, understand what qualifications are needed and access job readiness programs that can help them be successful through the hiring process.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation's part-time staff have and continue to reflect the diversity of the communities served who, over time, grow within the organization gaining experience and leadership and other transferable skills. Recruitment strategies in 2021 build on the outreach and employment readiness work the division advances annually to be more intentional in reaching Black and marginalized youth, particularly in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and other communities most impacted by the pandemic. To date, that effort has reached over 1,000 youth through 34 employment information and readiness virtual workshops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendation within this report. All actions outlined in this report are included within the 2021 Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On December 16 2020, City Council approved Member Motion MM27.13 requesting the City Manager, in consultation with the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, the General Manager, Social Development, Finance and Administration and the Chief People Officer to report to the Executive Committee meeting on March 30, 2021, on how the 2021 recreation hiring season will meet the stated goals of the 2019-2022 Poverty Reduction Strategy Term Action Plan, particularly as they apply to Black youth.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-159292.pdf>

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation Recruitment and Hiring Plan:

Parks, Forestry and Recreation employs up to 9,000 part-time Recreation Workers each year and is a major youth employer in the City of Toronto. Positions available include lifeguards, camp leaders, wading pool attendants, customer service staff and are available year-round. The majority of staff choose to retain their positions and are offered priority selection of work locations and shifts in accordance with the CUPE Local 79 Recreation Workers Collective Agreement. Annually, the division hires approximately 1,700 new Recreation Workers as a result of an attrition rate average of 18 percent. New vacancies are filled through a community based recruitment and outreach plan with particular focus on equity deserving youth populations. Recreation Workers join our workforce from local communities, are reflective of the diverse communities we serve and over time, develop leadership skills and employment competencies.

Throughout 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Parks, Forestry and Recreation provided recreational opportunities including summer camps and aquatic programs at a reduced capacity in accordance with provincial and municipal Public Health guidelines. As a result of the scaled back programing, and closure of many facilities, only 1,172 new Recreation Workers were hired. This represents a drop of approximately 31 percent in new Recreation Worker hires. While Parks, Forestry and Recreation has experienced similar reductions in programs to date in 2021, the division is prepared to expand programing and employment options as Public Health conditions allow.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy identifies several employment-related actions including; creating employment opportunities for low-income groups, as well as, developing new pathways, training opportunities and flexibility for low income residents to enter into City jobs and support advancement once employed. Through its hiring power of youth, Parks, Forestry and Recreation is uniquely positioned to help advance these actions items through its employment it offers and effective recruitment efforts.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation has developed a 2021 Recreation Worker hiring plan building on the divisions ongoing efforts to outreach and provide supports to local youth in pursuing part-time recreation employment with the City. The plan recognizes that not all youth, particularly Black and racialized youth, have access to the supports and tools needed to navigate the City's hiring process or the pre-requisite certifications for

employment in recreation.

The 2021 plan continues to deliver a suite of recruitment, information and outreach sessions which began in March 2021 and are conducted virtually. To date, there have been 34 employment information and employment readiness workshops delivered largely by the division's 31 Youth Outreach Workers and Youth Recreation Programmers to a combined 1,012 youth primarily between the ages 14-18.

These sessions have been directed to reach Black and marginalized youth and are designed to inform youth on the variety of jobs that are available, the qualifications required, how to apply, and to provide support with resume writing and interview preparation.

To ensure these sessions reach the intended demographic, Parks, Forestry and Recreation continues to partner with Toronto Employment and Social Services, Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit in this work. Parks, Forestry and Recreation has long established relationships with schools in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas who help to build awareness of the division's employment opportunities and the information sessions being scheduled. While these recruitment and outreach initiatives are similar to previous years, the 2021 efforts have a greater emphasis on reaching Black and marginalized communities, and will be provided in virtual setting as required.

Employment readiness programs also offer free access to workshops and courses that help youth improve their employability by providing those eligible with practical experience and free certifications in nationally recognized programs including First Aid, High Five Principals of Healthy Child Development, aquatics, coaching, and leadership. These certification programs are delivered to help ensure equity-deserving youth including youth with disabilities, newcomer youth, and youth from racialized communities are not impeded by these costly certifications which are pre-requisites to employment for many of the recreation programs the City delivers.

The City's Employment Equity Policy directs the City to conduct an employment equity survey (workforce census) – Count Yourself In. The Count Yourself In Survey invites employees to voluntarily disclose how they self-identify based on questions related to Indigenous identity, Black heritage, gender, racial/ethnicity, sexual orientation and if they identify as a person with a disability. This survey has been administered since 2002. As of July 2019, the overall response rate for both union and non-union employees was 52 percent (14,399) of 27,299 City employees. To date, the Recreation Worker workforce has not been a part of the target group of the corporate survey due to the attrition rate, however, a decision has been taken to commence including this workforce.

Anecdotally, the Recreation Worker workforce appears to be racially representative of the communities it serves, however objective data is required. Staff within the People and Equity Division and Parks, Forestry and Recreation are implementing strategies to increase the overall Count Yourself In Survey response rate for both full time staff and part-time recreation staff to 70 percent over the next four years, with a particular focus on engaging new hires to participate in the survey during their onboarding process.

In addition to the Count Yourself in Survey, the City recently installed Success Factors, a new Applicant Tracking System for recruitment. As applicants apply to a job posting with the City they are now invited to voluntarily answer five Diversity Demographic questions. During the past sixteen months 80 percent of applicants to City jobs have voluntarily provided answers to these questions to allow us to better understand the Diversity of our applicant pool.

Development is currently underway on tools to be used to analyze this data and inform the development and improvement of our recruitment outreach programs and hiring outcomes. Recent enhancements that were made to the system at the beginning of this year will also allow us to better identify the source of our applicants and measure the effectiveness of recruitment campaigns designed to improve the diversity representation of our applicant pool.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation's, Recreation Worker hiring and youth development programs support the stated goals of the Poverty Reduction Strategy by creating employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates and providing training opportunities and that support advancement once employed. Parks, Forestry and Recreation is a significant entry point for many staff who find permanent employment with the Toronto Public Service and is committed to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

Building career pathways within the Toronto Public Service for Black and Indigenous youth will continue to be work that advances collaboratively with PF, People & Equity, TESS and Social Development, Finance and Administration the outcomes of which will be reported in the Poverty Reduction Strategy update expected in June 2021.

CONTACT

Howie Dayton, Director, Community Recreation, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, 416-392-7252, Howie.Dayton@toronto.ca

Stefany Hanson, Manager, Youth Development, Social Development, Finance and Administration, 416-397-1750, Stefany.Hanson@toronto.ca

Hali Farah, Manager, Diversity and Inclusion, People and Equity, 416-397-4092, Hali.Farah@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Janie Romoff
General Manager
Parks, Forestry and Recreation