

## **Celebrating Toronto Youth Cabinet: Youth Advocacy and Voices**

**Date:** November 1, 2023

**To:** City Council

**From:** Mayor Olivia Chow

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Mayor recommends that:

1. Toronto City Council formally congratulate the Toronto Youth Cabinet on the occasion of its 25th anniversary and thank current and past Toronto Youth Cabinet members for their contributions to advocating for youth at City Hall.
2. Toronto City Council reaffirm the Toronto Youth Cabinet as Toronto's official youth advocacy body.
3. Direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, and the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, to create a Youth Poet Laureate program in consultation with the Toronto Youth Cabinet and, if required, refer any budget impact to the Mayor for consideration in the 2024 budget process.

### **SUMMARY AND COMMENTS**

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The Toronto Youth Cabinet was established in 1998 as the formal youth advocacy body at City Hall, providing young Torontonians with a forum for working together to build an equitable, accessible and youth-friendly Toronto.

As Children and Youth Advocate on City Council, I had the opportunity to work with inspiring young leaders to champion youth-led solutions to the challenges facing young people in Toronto. Over 25 years, the members of the youth cabinet have won many significant policy achievements, including:

- Successfully advocating for the City of Toronto in 2006 to create an investment fund (Identify 'N Impact Grant Program) to support grassroots youth-led projects and organizations that enhance opportunities for youth and promote broader community safety.

- Successfully advocating for the Chief of Police in 2005 to create the Chief's Youth Advisory Committee.
- Successfully advocating to Toronto City Council in 2017 for the creation of "Youth Week Toronto". A week to celebrate youth engagement and showcase the abilities and talents of youth in the areas of civic engagement, arts and sports in diverse communities across Toronto. Youth Week is celebrated every first week of May.
- Leading the City of Toronto's Youth Vaccine Engagement Strategy to ensure all young people & their families across Toronto had available the support and resources they needed to access the vaccine. This work ensured Toronto remained a global leader among other world class cities in COVID-19 vaccination coverage.
- Successfully advocating for free menstrual products in all Ontario elementary and secondary schools. As well as successfully advocated for the incorporation of financial literacy into the Ontario education curriculum. TYC also successfully advocated for mandatory mental health literacy in the curriculum and mandatory mental health training for all school staff amongst many other successful provincial advocacy on various issues.
- Holding over a dozen consultations with hundreds of youth across the City to inform the creation of SafeTO: Toronto's Ten-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan to ensure the inclusion of youth perspectives.
- In 2001, after the provincial government cut funding to high school swimming pools, leading an advocacy campaign to urge the City of Toronto to take over funding the pools. This campaign involved community consultations, press releases, a "polar bear swim" demonstration, and press conferences. The cabinet was successful in persuading the city to keep the pools open.
- In the early 2000s TYC was critical in getting the youth outreach worker program expanded. When outreach workers were facing cuts, the Toronto Youth Cabinet successfully led advocacy to draw attention to the fact that many students from low-income households will be some of the hardest hit by a reduction in hours.

These achievements, along with many others, demonstrate the power of young people to bring change to our city. As we recognize the history and achievements of the Toronto Youth Cabinet, we are also committed to continuing to bring youth voices to City Hall.

The Toronto Youth Cabinet has recommended that as we celebrate this anniversary and look forward, City Council take action to create a Youth Poet Laureate program. Since the inauguration of the Toronto Poet Laureate position in 2001, seven poets have written beautiful works that celebrate and highlight themes relevant to Torontonians. Creating a position for a Youth Poet Laureate, in consultation with the Toronto Youth Cabinet, will elevate emerging artists whose perspectives and voices resonate with people young and old across Toronto.

In reaffirming the Toronto Youth Cabinet as Toronto's official advisory body, Council is committing to listening to the advice and priorities advanced by the Toronto Youth Cabinet as partners in building a safer, more affordable, and more caring city.

**SIGNATURE**

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Oliva Chow  
Mayor