

CITY OF VAUGHAN CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY

Recommendation

Regional Councillor Mario Ferri recommends that this preliminary report prepared for the Mayor and Members of Council on the development of a Youth Strategy for the City of Vaughan be received for information.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of the Youth Strategy for the City of Vaughan.

Background - Analysis and Options

The lack of investment and cutbacks in arts and recreation resources, downloading of services to municipalities, and the introduction of user fees have forced schools and communities to reduce many healthy, positive youth activities. After-school sport and interest leagues, arts activities and youth programs have been reduced in schools. Less than 5% of Canada's schools have physical education programs that meet the minimum standards. Music, drama, and other arts programs – hugely important to shaping youth have also been affected.

The City of Vaughan continues to offer a number of worthwhile youth drop-in and organized youth programs throughout the City but more services in the community are needed to further support this segment of the population. Many community youth leaders express their frustration in the lack of affordable community space (church basements, schools) available to deliver programs and services in the community. Beyond leisure, youth have identified other barriers such as transportation, safety, and the lack of opportunity for community involvement.

As part of the strategic planning review process in January 2004, Members of Council agreed to look into the development of a Youth Strategy that would provide direction and a plan to support the delivery of services for this growing segment of the City's population.

Regional Councillor Mario Ferri volunteered to lead this initiative and work with staff and community partners to develop a Youth Strategy and plan to Council for their review and approval.

Creating a Civic Youth Strategy

As a first step, a Youth Forum was held on Wednesday April 21, 2004 at the City of Vaughan. Over 40 participants attended including youth from various high schools across the city along with the following agencies: York Regional Police, York Region Community Services, Youth Assisting Youth, York Catholic School Board and Toronto Youth Cabinet. The purpose of the meeting was to share information and identify opportunities and barriers that youth experience. The session was facilitated by Councillors Sandra Yeung Racco and Regional Councillor Mario Ferri.

A guest speaker, Ike Oka from the Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC) provided an overview of the Youth Cabinet model that exists in the City of Toronto. The TYC is the official youth voice for the City of Toronto and provides input on many issues important to youth in Toronto. Over 150 active members are involved in various subcommittees, special events and community youth initiatives.

To undertake the development of a Youth Strategy, a Youth Task Force for Vaughan is being developed and will include youth and agency representatives from Vaughan. The core committee will be responsible for overseeing the future planning of the Civic Youth Strategy.

The aim of the Civic Youth Strategy is to work in partnership with agencies and with youth to develop a youth strategy that will enhance the lives of young people in the City of Vaughan.

The goals of the Youth Strategy include:

1. To identify the needs of youth;
2. To identify and develop a model to collaborate with Vaughan youth and agencies on the delivery of youth services;
3. To develop an overall framework and plan of action in the delivery of services that will assist the City of Vaughan in addressing the issues of preteens and youth;
4. To identify funding opportunities and other resources to support the youth strategy;
5. To develop a framework that gives youth a voice on City Council and civic matters;
6. To recognize youth and their contributions to the quality of life in the City of Vaughan.

Conclusion

As part of the strategic planning review process in January 2004, Members of Council agreed to look into the development of a Youth Strategy that would provide direction and a plan to support the delivery of services for youth. A Youth Forum on April 21, 2004 was held to discuss issues, opportunities and future directions. Next steps include the establishment of a Youth Task Force to implement the goals outlined in this report. A progress report will be presented to Council in the fall of 2004.

Attachments

None

Report prepared by

Regional Councillor Mario Ferri

Respectfully submitted,

Regional Councillor Mario Ferri