



Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Regional Watershed Alliance Revised Agenda

February 28, 2024
6:30 P.M.

The meeting will be conducted via video conference

Pages

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS TERRITORY
3. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
4. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND THE GENERAL NATURE THEREOF
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING #4/23, HELD ON NOVEMBER 15, 2023
[Minutes Link](#)
6. PRESENTATIONS
 - 6.1 YOUTH COUNCIL 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATES
Jessica MacDonald, Coordinator, Government & Community Relations,
Dhara Parsania, Youth Council Executive Member and Vamika Sharma,
Youth Council Executive Member in regard to Item 9.1 - Youth Council
2023-2024 Annual Report and Membership Updates

6.2 SPILL RESPONSE WITHIN TRCA JURISDICTION

Don Ford, Senior Manager, Hydrogeology and Manirul Islam, Planner, Infrastructure Planning and Permits in regard to Item 9.2 - Spill Response within TRCA Jurisdiction

6.3 TRCA SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES UPDATE

Jennifer Taves, Senior Manager, Sustainable Communities and Adriana Gomez, Supervisor, Community Outreach & Education in regard to Item 9.3 - TRCA Sustainable Communities Update

7. CORRESPONDENCE

8. ITEMS FOR ALLIANCE ACTION

9. ITEMS FOR ALLIANCE INFORMATION

9.1 YOUTH COUNCIL 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

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To receive Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) approval of the composition of the 2024-2025 TRCA Youth Council Executive and the appointment of two Youth Council Executives to fill the RWA Youth representative vacancies, as well as to present the 2023-2024 Youth Council Annual Report which provides highlights of the Youth Council's term

9.2 SPILL RESPONSE WITHIN TRCA JURISIDITION

35

To provide an overview of TRCA and agency roles and responsibilities with respect to pollutant spills in Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) jurisdiction, including the August 11, 2023 fire at 35 Vulcan Street, Etobicoke, March 2017, Highway 9 Fuel Spill at Glen Haffy Conservation Area and February 2022, Bluffers Park Oil Leak

9.3 TRCA SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES UPDATE

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To provide an update on the work of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Sustainable Communities' Business Unit and to request input from RWA members on the best practices, issues, and opportunities around the maintenance of green infrastructure

10. NEW BUSINESS AND GOOD NEWS STORIES

NEXT MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WATERSHED ALLIANCE #2/24, TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2024 AT 6:30 P.M. VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

11. ADJOURNMENT

Item for the Information of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, February 28, 2024 Meeting

FROM: John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer

On behalf of Government & Community Relations

**RE: YOUTH COUNCIL 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND MEMBERSHIP
UPDATES**

KEY ISSUE

To receive Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) approval of the composition of the 2024-2025 TRCA Youth Council Executive and the appointment of two Youth Council Executives to fill the RWA Youth representative vacancies, as well as to present the 2023-2024 Youth Council Annual Report which provides highlights of the Youth Council's term.

RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS TRCA's Youth Council has been active for five years with the 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive having completed their most recent one-year term;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the Youth Council Executive's term be extended for an additional year in 2024-2025 for those members who are eligible and wish to continue;

THAT RWA endorses the recruitment of additional Youth Council Executives to fill vacant seats for the 2024-2025 term;

THAT RWA appoints two Youth Council Executives to fill Youth representative roles on RWA for 2024;

AND FURTHER THAT RWA accepts the Youth Council Annual Report, attached as Attachment 1, which summarizes the work completed and evaluates the Youth Council's 2023-2024 term.

BACKGROUND

Youth Councils are deployed around the world as a means to engage and inspire youth and to gain perspectives from youth as an advisory body. TRCA's 2017 Community Engagement Strategy recommended the development of a Youth Council. The program framework of the Youth Council was developed by TRCA staff and Regional Watershed Alliance members, with the goal of the Youth Council being to build healthy communities.

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This is achieved through four program objectives:

- Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities;
- Build a youth network/strengthen existing networks through creation of a broad network of youth in the region that is interested in environmental and sustainability issues;
- Identify youth perspectives by developing an understanding of youth opinion around current environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners; and
- Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

The framework for the Youth Council was approved by RWA at its meeting held on February 21, 2018 (RES.#R11/17).

Youth Council members may either join as General members or Executive members. General members can take part in Youth Council events and initiatives and there is no significant vetting process to join, nor any limit on the number of General members. The Executive membership consists of ten members and serves as the guiding body for the Youth Council. Executive members are responsible for the development of program activities and initiatives that fit within the objects defined in the program framework, in collaboration with TRCA staff. Executive members have a one-year term with the possibility of extension for an additional year and are appointed through an annual application and selection process, in accordance with TRCA's Public Appointments Policy and the RWA Terms of Reference. The most recent 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive term ends in March 2024.

RATIONALE

Appointment of the 2024-2025 Youth Council Executive

The ten members of the 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive were selected in February 2023 by the Youth Council Executive Selection Committee and include three returning members from the previous year. For the 2024-2025 Youth Council Executive term, it is recommended that the following existing members who were eligible to have their terms extended by an additional year and chose to continue on the Executive, be appointed for one final term, ending in March 2025:

- Fatima Abidi
- Dhara Parsania
- Malhar Patel
- Lauren Smith
- Shatabdy Zahid

Recruitment to fill the Youth Council Executive vacancies for the 2024-2025 term was held from December 22, 2023 to January 31, 2024 and 46 applications were received. Of these applications, it was deemed that 44 applicants met the minimum criteria for

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Youth Council Executive membership based on age and residential or school attendance location within TRCA's jurisdiction. Youth Council Executive applications were reviewed by two relevant TRCA program staff and by one exiting member of the Youth Council Executive. As a result, it is recommended that the following applicants be approved as members of the 2024-2025 Youth Council Executive:

- Lamin Darboe
- Juliana Duguid
- Adam Mawani
- Sarvesh Sekar
- Evelyn Widner

Appointment of Youth Council Executive Members as Youth Representatives for RWA

The RWA has two Youth representative roles, to be filled by Youth Council Executive members. For the next 2024-2025 Youth Council Executive term, it is recommended that the following Youth Council Executive members be appointed as the Youth representatives for the RWA:

- Dhara Parsania
- Malhar Patel

2023-2024 Youth Council Achievements

The 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive continued with virtual monthly meetings throughout the term but was able to increase in-person events again between Spring and Fall 2023. New and returning Executive members first met in March 2023 and brainstormed new events and initiatives, assigned meeting roles, and agreed upon a communication framework for the year, including meetings on the last Wednesday of each month, use of Slack for regular touchpoints, a monthly newsletter for General members, and additional meetings to be booked as necessary.

Throughout the 2023-2024 term, the Youth Council Executive held monthly virtual meetings, which continue to be the preferred format for time and cost savings. Each meeting is managed by one youth, including agenda preparation, and chairing the meeting. Additional roles at each meeting include delivery of the land acknowledgement, minute taking, and commitment to produce the monthly newsletter, making each meeting a group effort of at least three separate Executive Members. The Youth Council newsletter is produced and circulated consistently each month and continues to provide an excellent learning opportunity for the youth to work with TRCA staff in its compilation, as well as serving as a venue to promote the achievements and opportunities of the Youth Council.

The nine Youth Council Executive members actively participated throughout the 2023-2024 term and continue to show passion and dedication as volunteers and representatives of TRCA. The Youth Council Executive was further able to hold in-depth discussions of the program's structure and goals at an in-person retreat in July 2023,

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which resulted in a fulsome schedule of events and initiatives planned for the remainder of 2023, and into 2024, outlined below.

Participation in single Youth Council events and initiatives by General Youth Council members and members of the public fluctuated depending on the location and nature of the event, with the guided mushroom foray and fall planting bringing in the highest numbers for participation, followed by Indigenous themed learning events and virtual town hall meetings. Social media, word of mouth, internal and external cross-promotion, and the monthly newsletter were the primary methods of promoting Youth Council events. The frequency of Youth Council newsletters increased this past year to monthly and the number of Youth Council members (Executive and General) increased by 150 to a total of 504.

Similar to the 2022-2023 term, the two themes that continue to gain traction and momentum through 2023-2024 include a rising interest in career options within the conservation sector, and the desire for increased engagement between the TRCA Youth Council and TRCA staff. Collaborations occurred between the Youth Council and the following TRCA divisions and teams: Restoration and Infrastructure, Ecosystem and Climate Science, Watershed Planning and Reporting, Government and Community Relations, Conservation Parks and Lands, and Community Learning. Marketing and Events staff also continued providing essential support for the program's communications. In addition, several Youth Council Executives also represented the Youth Council at TRCA signature events, including Bike the Creek and Adventures of Salmon.

Youth Council Highlights from 2023-2024 Term

The following events or outreach initiatives were created, delivered, or attended/volunteered at by the Youth Council Executive members, under the guidance and/or with the support of TRCA staff.

- YC Executive Volunteer at Loafer's Lake Earth Day Cleanup (April 2023)
- YC Executive Guest Interview on the Toronto Nature NOW Radio Show (May 2023)
- YC Executive Volunteer at TRCA Bike the Creek (June 2023)
- *Youth Council Town Hall Webinar: Pathways into Green Employment (June 2023)
- Four Colours Drum Circle hosted the Youth Council Summer Retreat Stewardship Activity and Indigenous Drumming Ceremony (July 2023)
- YC Executive Workplan Finalization for 2023 and Nature-based Art Activity (July 2023)
- Vaughan-Woodbridge Youth Council Environmental Stewardship Event - Buckthorn Removal (August 2023)
- TRCA Peel Education Youth Climate Retreat YC Executive Panel Participation (September 2023)
- YC Executive Volunteer at Adventures of Salmon (September 2023)

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- YC Executive Volunteers at the Four Colours Drum Circle hosted Truth and Reconciliation Event at Heart Lake Conservation Park (September 2023)
- TRCA Regional Watershed Alliance Flood Infrastructure Tour (October 2023)
- TRCA York Education Team Fall Friends Planting Event (October 2023)
- Sacred Medicines and Smudge Bundling Workshop at Heart Lake Conservation Park (October 2023)
- *Youth Council Town Hall Webinar: TRCA Controlled Burns at Alto Meadows (October 2023)
- Guided Fall Fungi Foray in partnership with Mycological Society of Toronto (October 2023)
- Co-facilitation by YC Executive Members at an Urban Nature Biodiversity Workshop with University of Toronto (November 2023)
- *Youth Council Town Hall Webinar: Peel Region Transition (November 2023)
- *Youth Council Town Hall Webinar: Developing Your Environmental Career Webinar and Introduction to Seasonal Opportunities at TRCA (Planned for January 2024)
- *Profile piece on Youth Council Executive Member in the Toronto Star (January 2024)
- *Joint YC/Canadian Conservation Corps Virtual Tour of the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (February 2024)
- 10 newsletters sent to the Youth Council General membership list in 2023
- 2024-25 Executive Recruitment - Social media promotion including 2 video testimonials from Youth Council Executive members (December 2023 through January 2024)

* denotes a virtual event or initiative

Full descriptions of the events can be found in the TRCA Youth Council Annual Report (Attachment 1)

Program Evaluation and Recommendations

The 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive was consistently and highly engaged throughout their term. They delivered a wide variety of events that ranged from planting stewardship events to in-person workshops, to outdoor forays, to virtual town halls, to various learning opportunities about Indigenous culture, history, and reconciliation. This continued engagement could be attributed to several factors including:

- A shift back towards in-person events with place-based and hands-on activities;
- Strong leadership and involvement from returning Youth Council Executives who helped to establish expectations and norms from the outset;
- Various opportunities for individual Executive members to gain leadership and public speaking experience in both virtual platforms such as monthly meetings, as well as at in-person events by providing volunteer, promotional and educational support;

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- Continued increased programming related to education and careers in the conservation sector; and
- A positive working relationship with, and involvement from, Four Colours Drum Circle providing Indigenous learning opportunities.

The positive impact of the Youth Council program for Executive members can be seen in their continued interest in leading activities, connecting with TRCA staff in various divisions, and the application of their experience in furthering their own careers and aspirations. This includes several Executive members citing Youth Council experience as being a positive factor in finding work in the environmental field.

While the program has seen much success in meeting goals and objectives, after undertaking a program evaluation process, the following is a summary of the recommendations for program improvement:

- Continue hybrid program delivery with online offerings for presentations and discussion forums, and in-person offerings for place-based or hands-on activities;
- Continue network building and marketing the TRCA Youth Council, tapping into other TRCA education and public-facing programs and TRCA connections with municipal partners;
- Continue strengthening the connections between the Executive and General members of the Youth Council through individual outreach to new General members and increased open Executive meetings or town halls;
- Building a communication platform to re-engage former Youth Council Executives to champion initiatives and attend events;
- Continue efforts to broaden the recruitment of the Youth Council to include more members from diverse communities through more deliberate recruitment strategies with different groups/agencies who work in target communities;
- Continue to find synergies between TRCA's work and strategic goals/priorities, and the work of the Youth Council;
- Reassessing membership structure/management and ensuring "Express Consent" is collected going forward to ensure ongoing communication and accurate membership numbers; and
- Increase opportunities for RWA members to be involved, either directly or through promotion of events, through quarterly updates at RWA meetings by RWA Youth Reps, or through other means.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.1 Connect communities to nature and greenspace

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.3 Informed citizens are conservation champions

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.4 Inspired communities take environmental action

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Funds are available in TRCA Government and Community Relations program accounts for watershed engagement and community projects to support the recruitment, convening and ongoing activities of the Youth Council. Staff will work with the Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council working group and with the Youth Council itself to ensure that the scope of work reflects the available budget and staff support. In 2023, in addition to TRCA staff supports, approximately \$3000 of funding was required to support Youth Council events and initiatives.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Program recruitment and delivery will be continuously improved to further align with recommendations in Attachment 1.

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Date: December 22, 2023

Attachments: 1

Attachment 1: TRCA Youth Council Annual Report 2023-2024 Term



TRCA Youth Council Annual Report 2023-2024 Term

Prepared by Jessica MacDonald
Coordinator, Government and Community Relations

February 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, youth councils have been created by governments, community groups, and non-profit organizations as a means of providing local youth with an opportunity to gain important skills, build capacity, and network, while providing the sponsoring agencies with important input and perspectives from youth stakeholders. The long-term success of efforts to advance environmental protection and sustainability in the Toronto region depends on the support of the region's youth, both now and into the future. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Community Engagement Strategy (2017) recommends more focused engagement of youth to enhance the reach of TRCA programs and activities and prepare the next generation of conservation leaders (Actions 6.1 and 6.2). Activities of TRCA's Youth Council build on existing engagement programs while deploying tools and strategies to develop a strong network of youth driven to take active ownership of their local environment.

The Youth Council reports directly to the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA). The mission, mandate and goals of the Youth Council were developed by TRCA and the RWA, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. At Regional Watershed Alliance Meeting #1/2017, held on November 15th, 2017, Resolution #R002/17 was approved, in part, as follows:

WHEREAS THE Terms of Reference of the Regional Watershed Alliance proposes the establishment of Watershed/Working Groups, Youth Council, and Indigenous Liaison Committee;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the following members of the Alliance [the RWA Working Group] work with staff to lead the establishment of Youth Council including development of Terms of Reference:

- a. Lisette Mallet; b) Amory Ngan; c) Rui Felix; d) Mick Malowany; and e) Karen Lockridge.

This report provides an overview of the 2023-2024 Youth Council program, recruitment of new Executives, workplan, and finally a program evaluation and recommendations for program improvement.

PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

There are two methods to participate in the Youth Council program; youth can register as General or Executive member. General member participation is entirely voluntary and General members can take part in activities if they wish. They are notified of events and initiatives and can elect to participate. Members of the Executive are an application-based volunteer position. Youth Council Executives are expected to volunteer approximately 4- 5 hours per month and maintain correspondence with relevant TRCA staff and the rest of the Executive. With TRCA staff guidance, the Executive develop a workplan for the year and choose what topics and initiatives to pursue. The intake for General members is open year-round, while the applications for the Executive only open for approximately one month annually.

The program framework for the Youth Council was created through a collaborative process between TRCA staff and Regional Watershed Alliance working group members. The program framework remains the same as it did in 2017 when it was developed.

The framework is intentionally open-ended so that Youth Council Executive members can develop their own project ideas to meet program goals. The overarching goal of the Youth Council is to build healthy communities. This is achieved through four program objectives:

- a) Identify youth perspectives by developing an understanding of youth opinion around current environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners;
- b) Build a youth network/strengthen existing networks through creation of a broad network of youth in the region that is interested in environmental and sustainability issues;
- c) Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities; and
- d) Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

For a more fulsome discussion of program development and rationale please see the 2018-2019 Youth Council Annual Report.

A term for the Youth Council Executive begins and ends in March, with the current term being reported on running from March 2023 to March 2024. There is an intentional one month overlap between new and departing Executive members to allow for knowledge transfer.

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

The term “youth” has no consistent definition. Depending on program goals the target audience of “youth” may consider only high school students or may consider older groups all the way up to university graduates and young professionals. The original program framework for TRCA’s Youth Council set the age threshold as 16 to 24 years old. It was noted, however, that the demographics of youth recruited in those first few months skewed heavily towards a majority of female identifying (“female”) members. After consulting with TRCA’s Education and Training Division, as well as with the Regional Watershed Alliance, the decision was made in 2019 to expand the age cut-off to 30 years old, as statistics provided by Education and Training staff has found that male identifying youth (“males”) are more likely to volunteer when they are older. Ongoing data collection in the years since increasing the age allowance shows the gender distribution gap lessening, although a disparity remains between the number of males and females that register (Figure 1). The age distribution of registrants shows a bimodal distribution for females, with a peak in high school ages and another at the ages common for recent graduates of university. For males, there is a steady number of registrants spread throughout the target age range (Figure 2). The expanded TRCA Youth Council target age range also allows for valuable peer mentorship between Executive members and for event programming to target audiences in various life stages.

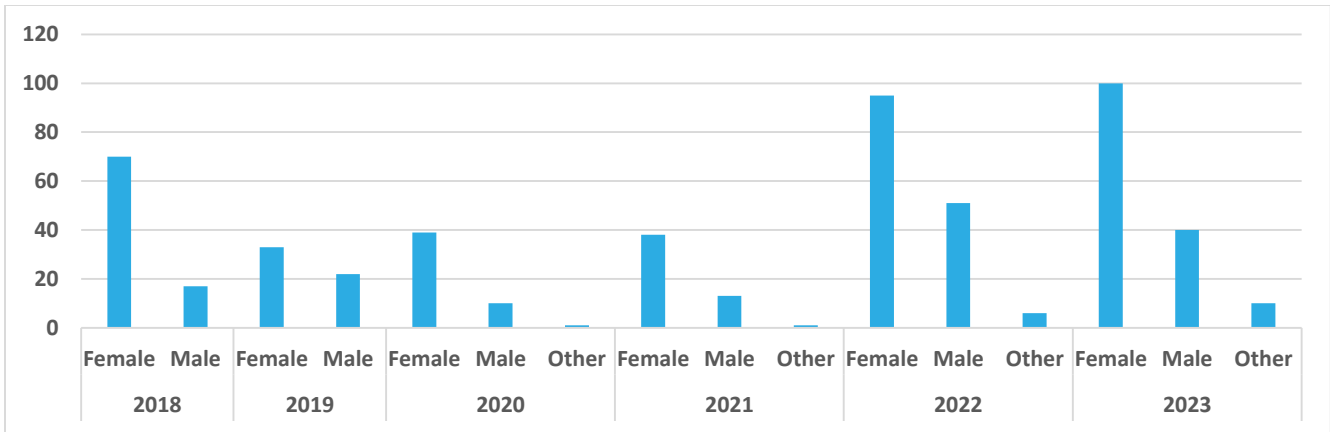


FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS BY GENDER AND YEAR

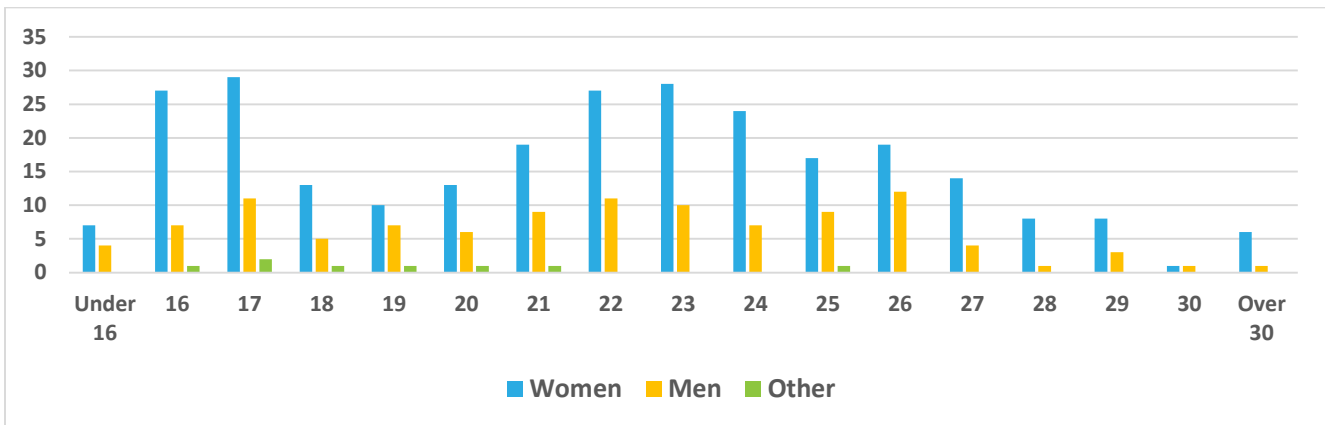


FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS BY GENDER AND AGE

Recruitment General membership recruitment is open year-round on the TRCA Youth Council webpage. In the calendar year of 2023, the number of registrants increased by 150 members, from 396 to a total of 505 (this accounts for members that are now over the age of 30 and no longer eligible to be members).

Recruitment for the Youth Council Executive was open from December 19, 2022, through to January 31, 2023. Three members of the 2022-2023 Youth Council Executive elected to continue for a second term, resulting in seven vacancies. 28 applications were received this round (compared to 16 for 2022, 24 for 2021, 31 for 2019, and 19 for 2018). Of these 28 applications, it was deemed that 26 applicants met the minimum criteria for Youth Council Executive membership based on age and residential or school attendance location within TRCA’s jurisdiction.

Youth Council Executive applications were reviewed by relevant program staff and by exiting members of the Youth Council Executive ineligible to continue due to the two-year term limit. Considerations for the selection of Executive members included: merit based on the quality of application, representation from across the jurisdiction, and demographic factors. Responses to short answer questions were weighted more heavily than other factors. Age was also factored into the assessment of their experience and writing level, as applicants

ranged from high school to post-graduate level students and young professionals. Furthermore, since there is a large age distribution, and since there has historically been less representation from the younger cohorts, two spaces were once again intentionally reserved for high school-aged applicants. It was decided not to hold interviews, as the role is volunteer based, and it would be difficult and time-consuming to schedule. The new Executive was selected in February 2023, with the final list of Executives brought to the RWA for approval at the RWA meeting held March 22, 2023 (RES.#5/23). Two members resigned from the Executive in June and August, due to illness and time constraints due to employment respectively. The decision was made to recruit for the position that became vacant in June, but ultimately the August vacancy remained vacant due to timing. The Executive operated with 9 members for most of this term.

Geographic representation on the Youth Council (both General and Executive) varies across TRCA’s jurisdiction, with the majority of registrants in Toronto, Brampton, Vaughan, and then Markham (Figure 4). This representation is a result of population and post-secondary institution distribution across the jurisdiction. In an effort to maintain diversity (geographically and demographically), specific outreach to communities that are less represented continues to be made through the assistance of members of the Regional Watershed Alliance, municipal partners, other youth groups and councils, and agencies that work specifically with different communities with some success. For example, due to targeted outreach by Regional Watershed Alliance member and City of Pickering Councillor David Pickles (Ward 3 of Pickering), we did see an increase in membership from Pickering, which demonstrates the benefits of targeted outreach for specific membership needs.

As many initiatives led by the Youth Council in 2023 continued to be held online, the application form for Youth Council General membership, which includes access to the monthly Youth Council newsletter, did not restrict individuals from applying if they resided outside of TRCA’s jurisdiction. Hosting virtual events and increasing outreach efforts through social media, monthly newsletters, and personal communications were a focus of the 2023-2024 term and contributed positively to the increased number of Youth Council General members. Interestingly, recruitment efforts and virtual events resulted in an increase in interest from youth outside of TRCA’s jurisdiction, including across Canada. It is also possible for youth to reside outside of TRCA jurisdiction but attend school within the Toronto Region.

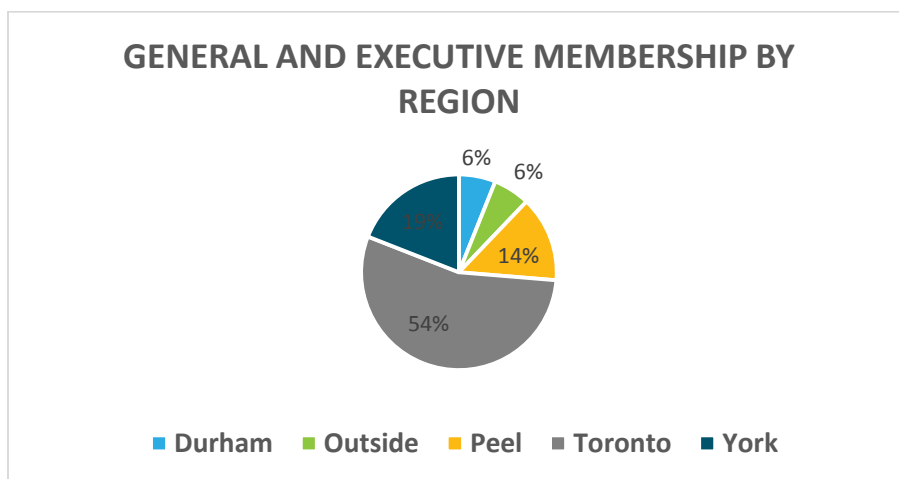


FIGURE 3: REGIONAL LOCATIONS OF YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS (BOTH GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE)

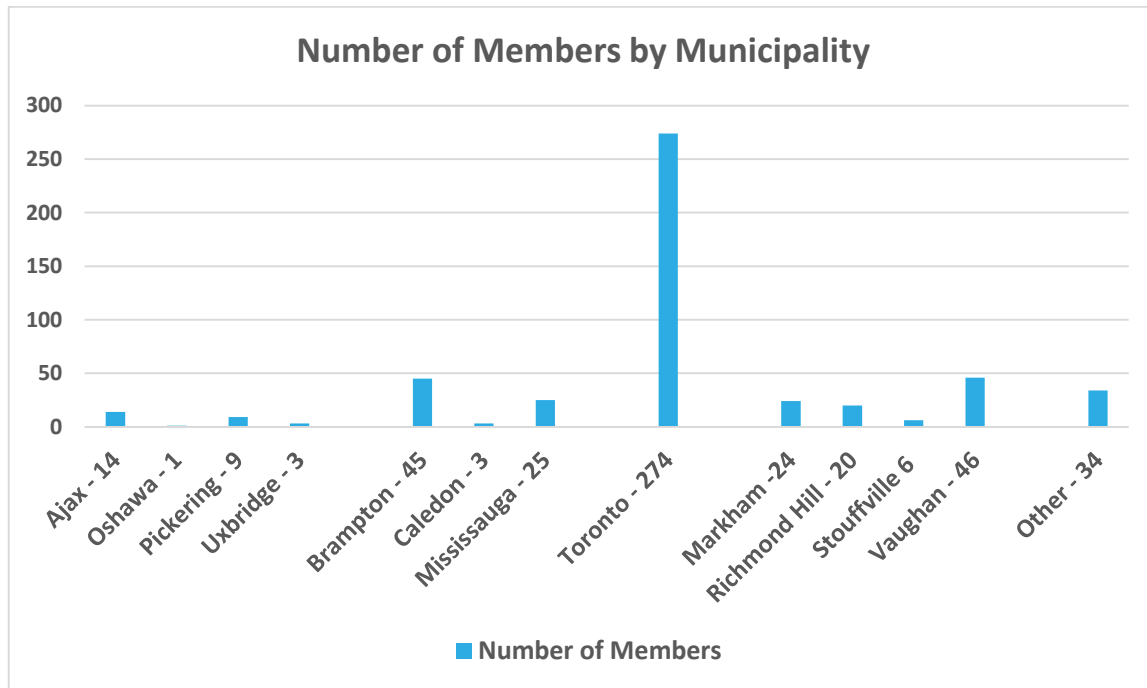


FIGURE 4: MUNICIPAL LOCATIONS OF YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS (BOTH GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE)

IMPACT OF COVID-19

As health and safety restrictions were further reduced in 2023, the Youth Council was able to return to in-person programming for hands-on events but continued operating in a hybrid capacity to allow for a larger audience for virtual town hall and monthly meetings. Virtual formats for meetings and webinars continued to be preferred by the Executive for time and cost savings, while place-based and hands-on activities seemed to be the preferred format for events that the Executive planned. Familiarity with online meeting platforms and etiquette is now commonplace and the various Executive members who chaired the monthly meetings used a variety of information sharing platforms at meetings including Jamboard and Mentimeter.

YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE RETREAT

Youth Council Executive members met monthly through online meetings, as well as organized and attended various events and initiatives. In July 2023, five of the nine Youth Council Executive members and 3 additional General members attended a day-long retreat at the Medicine Wheel Garden at Heart Lake Conservation Park (HLCP). Despite a very rainy day, the retreat was an overall success and provided a great space for the Executive members to meet in-person, as well as an opportunity for General members to get involved. The day began with an ice breaker game, followed by drumming and stewardship activities at the garden (Photo 1), including planting, mulching, and weeding. Woven through the retreat was Indigenous teachings by Four Colours Drum Circle – stewards of the HLCP Medicine Wheel Garden. Two Executive members led an afternoon art activity (Photo 2), transferring plant materials onto canvas surfaces, accompanied by a roundtable discussion about the goals and objectives of the TRCA Youth Council.



PHOTOS 1 AND 2: LEFT, YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AT KORTRIGHT CENTRE FOR CONSERVATION. RIGHT, YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN AN NATURE BASED ART ACTIVITY AND 2023-2024 WORK PLANNING

The discussion was centered around the results of an online survey question circulated to the group in advance of the retreat. The question was: **From the following event ideas, which ones would you have the most interest in?** The survey results are seen below. (Table 1)

TABLE 1: INTEREST IN SHORT LIST OF YOUTH COUNCIL 2023-24 EVENT IDEAS FROM KICK OFF MEETING

Short List of Event Ideas from Kick Off Meeting	Total % of Respondents Interested
Fungi education/foraging/guided walks	64%
Guided tours of recycling plants/sustainable buildings	64%
Education on permaculture implementation practices	55%
Guided education hikes of green spaces/urban parks	36%
Nature inspired/litter art project	18%
Urban farm site visit	18%
Join/promote community science projects	9%
Pollinator education initiatives	9%
Zero-waste cooking/scrap food alternative use tutorials	9%

The discussion centered on work planning for initiatives and events which the Executive wanted to plan or be a part of for 2023. Major themes that emerged included the following:

- The Youth Council Executive remain passionate and driven about raising awareness of environmental issues and participating in action on climate change, education, and inclusivity in the conservation sector;
- Interest in hosting increased Town Hall Meetings, thus engaging more with the General membership on a consistent basis; and
- Hosting fun and educational events, with a focus on in-person events should continue to be focus

Major themes for improvement, which were also mentioned in the recommendations from the 2022-2023 Youth Council annual report, included:

- Increasing engagement with the General members of the Youth Council;
- Spreading marketing and outreach efforts to a larger demographic (such as through schools); and
- Increasing opportunities for youth to participate in, or provide input on, TRCA work.

WORKPLAN: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The broad goals and objectives outlined in the program framework remained the same from previous years. The following section outlines the initiatives created and delivered by the 2023-2024 Executive, and how they addressed program goals and objectives.

Objective: Learn About What is Important to Youth

Youth Council Intake Survey

All members, whether they are applying for the Executive or as a General member, complete a survey as they register. The same survey has been used for the duration of the Youth Council program for consistency. Registrants are asked demographic questions and to select their top five interests from a list of 25 different topics. Topics include a range of sustainability, environmental, and social issues. For a more detailed description of the rationale for the selection of those topics and survey questions, see the TRCA Youth Council 2018-19 Annual Report.

Results

Demographics

Youth Council members are mostly from Toronto (54%,

FIGURE 3: REGIONAL LOCATIONS OF YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS (BOTH GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE)

3) and are mostly in their high school years and early to mid-twenties (Figure 5). This is reflective of the strong connection between engaged youth and key academic phases of their lives. An increase was also seen again this term in high school-aged students aged 18 and under, possibly a result of having two current Executive members in high school themselves. There also was an increase seen in the 27-30 age group. As has been the ongoing trend, the Youth Council membership is comprised of more females (69%) than males (28%). An increase in members who identify as genders other than male or female has increased from 1% in 2022 to 3% in 2023.

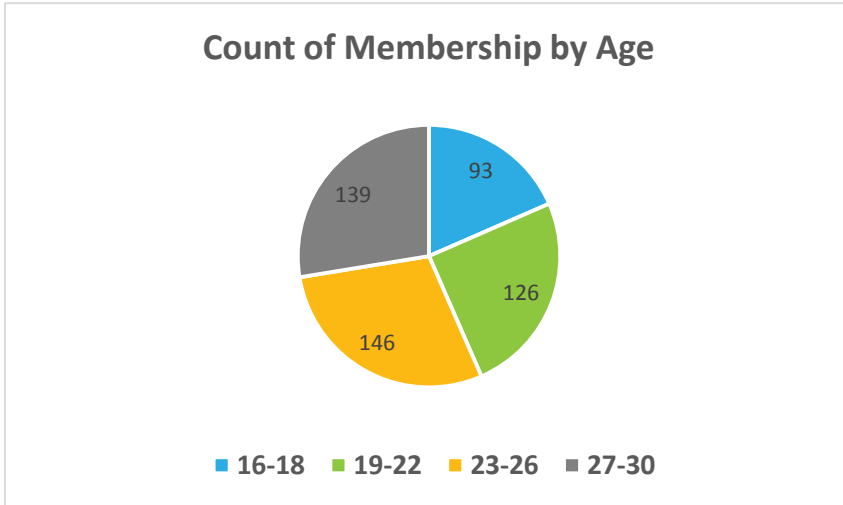


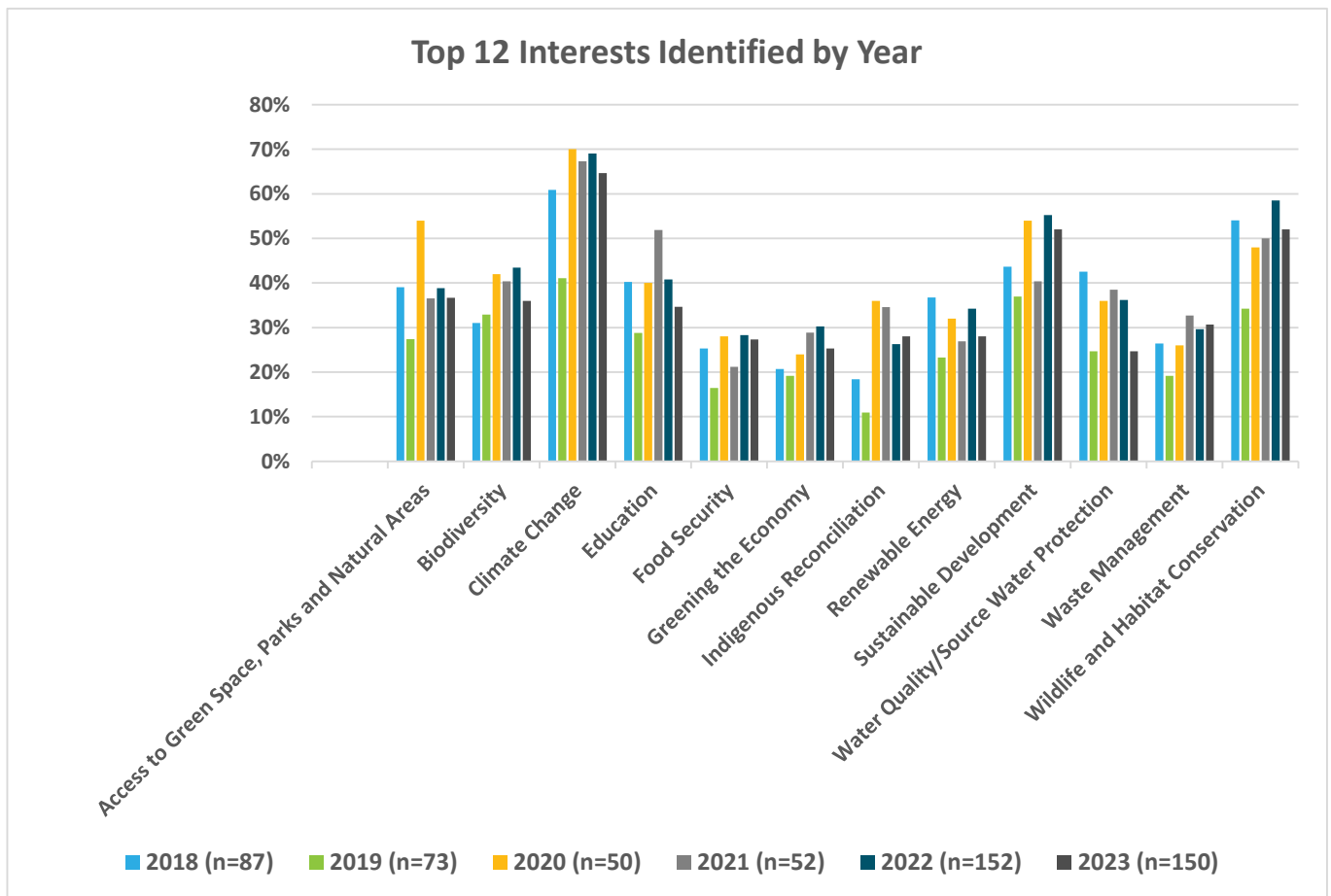
FIGURE 5: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERSHIP

Most Important Issues

Registrants were instructed to select the top five most important issues to them from a list. Some respondents elected to choose more than five, and those additional answers were recorded. Respondents do not rank their selections; therefore the number of times an item was selected is used to indicate its overall importance to the entire group.

Aggregated responses were similar to last year (Figures 6 and 7), where climate change was once again the most frequently selected topic throughout TRCA’s jurisdiction. Indigenous reconciliation and waste management are topics that both saw increases in interest in 2023. We see a continued interest in wildlife and habitat conservation, biodiversity, access to green space, and sustainable development.

FIGURE 6: MEMBER SELECTION OF TOP 12 TOPICS BY YEAR



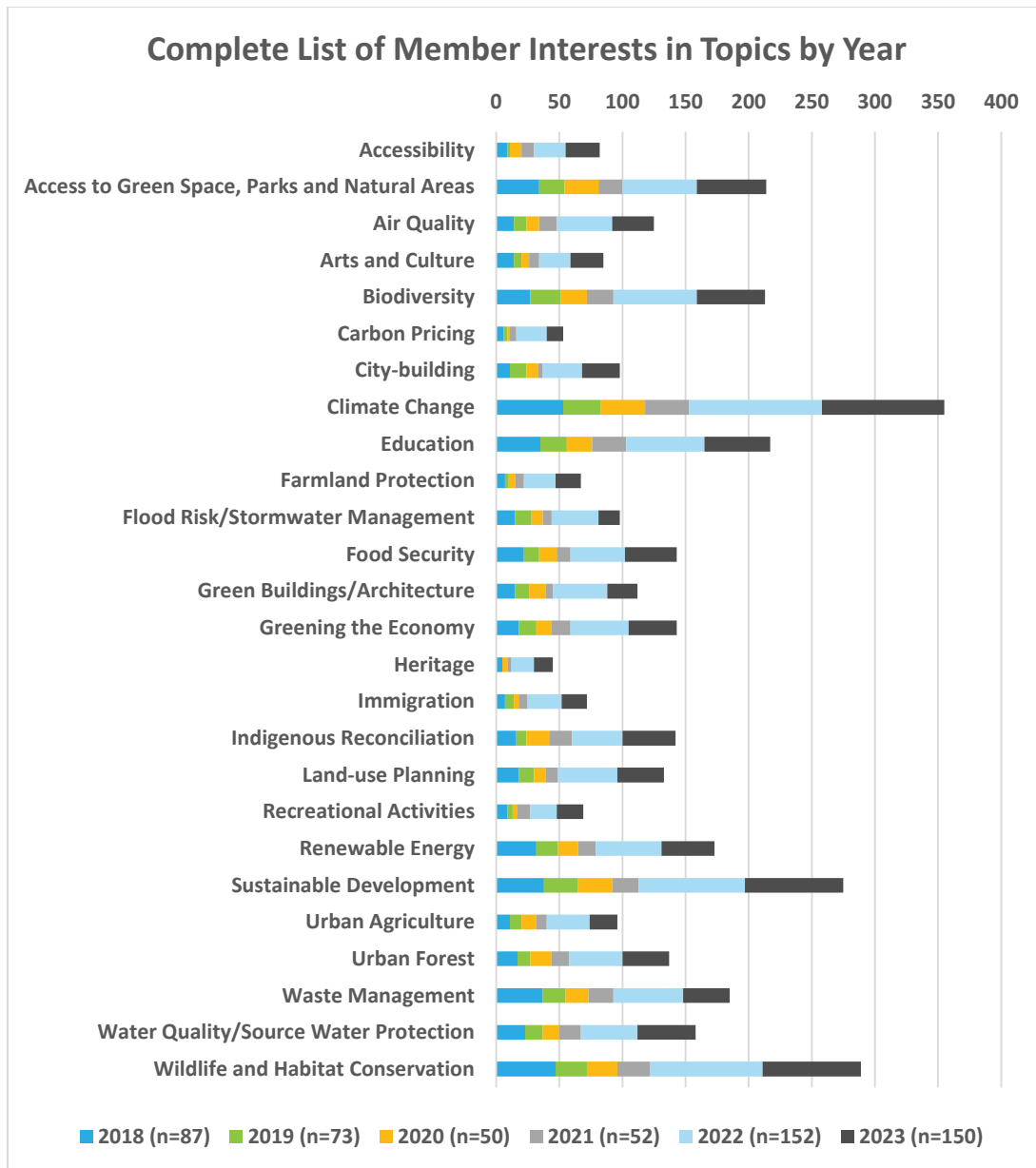


FIGURE 7: MEMBER SELECTION OF COMPLETE LIST OF TOPICS BY YEAR

Objective: Build a Youth Network

As a new Government and Community Relations Coordinator was brought on in March 2023, the support for outreach increased once again. The Executive supported creation of monthly newsletters (10 in 2023) by providing content and feedback. Each month, the newsletter was drafted and submitted for edits by an individual Executive member, allowing for invaluable experience and an opportunity to express/share issues of interest with the larger network and to work with TRCA staff on messaging. The newsletter items were often

forwarded to other TRCA program staff in education and public engagement, as well as to external youth groups, which increased the reach of Youth Council events and initiatives. Marketing efforts also included posts on all TRCA platforms, including TRCA Events and Youth Council Events calendars, multiple social media platforms, as well as targeted distribution of events to specific internal and external groups. Two Youth Council Executives also contributed testimonials that were featured on social media (Photos 3 and 4).

The reach of the TRCA Youth Council broadened greatly with opportunities to engage with groups internally at TRCA and externally. Internally, one Youth Council Executive member was represented at both TRCA's Bike the Creek signature event in June 2023 and at TRCA's Adventures of Salmon signature event in September 2023. Externally, we had one Youth Council Executive member represent the Council at an Earth Day Cleanup Event held by MPP McGregor (Brampton North). The Youth Council collaborated with MP Sorbara's Vaughan-Woodbridge Youth Council in August 2023 to host a buckthorn removal stewardship event in Vaughan, as well as hosted them at a Fall Friends Planting Event in October 2023 at an active TRCA restoration site (Teston/400). As in years past, Executive members were invited to attend and speak on a panel at the Peel Climate Action Leadership Retreat at Albion Hills Conservation Park for an audience of 24 high school students. Executive members were also invited to attend and co-facilitate an Urban Nature Biodiversity Workshop with the University of Toronto. Groups that the TRCA Youth Council partnered with for events or initiatives for the 2023/2024 term included: Toronto Nature Now Radio Show, Four Colours Drum Circle, Mycological Society of Toronto, University of Toronto, Skills for Change, Brampton Environmental Alliance, Toronto Zoo Climate Action Learning and Leadership Program, MP Francesco Sorbara Youth Council (Vaughan-Woodbridge riding), MPP McGregor's Office (Brampton North riding), Canadian Wildlife Federation (Canadian Conservation Corps) and Toronto Environmental Youth Council.



PHOTOS 3 AND 4: SOCIAL MEDIA TESTIMONIALS FEATURING YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS SHATABDY ZAHID AND MALHAR PATEL

Objective: Build Capacity and Engage Youth with Learning Opportunities

The Youth Council Executive was able to organize and host a number of both virtual and in-person events and learning opportunities throughout 2023. The following two sections provide brief overviews of each activity hosted by the 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive, categorized as either “Building Youth Capacity and Learning Opportunities” or “Fun Opportunities”.

TRCA Youth Council Virtual Town Hall – Pathways into Green Employment (June 2023)

Building upon the recommendations to further integrate the Executive members with the General members, as well as with the work of TRCA staff, the Executive planned several virtual town halls during their term, beginning with “Pathways into Green Employment”. Several unique pathway opportunities into the field of green employment were showcased by guest speakers, including the following: Toronto Zoo Climate Action Learning and Leadership Program, Canadian Conservation Corps Program (CCC), and several TRCA Youth Programs (Newcomer Youth Greening Economy Project, Girls Can Too, Conservation Youth Corps). This town hall was attended by 17 people (8 Executive members/9 general members). One of our Executives presented their experience with the CCC in years past, and another current Executive has since applied and was accepted into the program for 2023.

Participation in the Etobicoke Creek Watershed Plan Highlight Video (September 2023)

Youth Council Executive members were invited by TRCA’s Watershed Planning and Reporting team to participate in the filming of the Etobicoke Creek Watershed Plan Highlight Video. One Executive member participated, meeting with the production team at a location within the watershed, and gained experience in front of the camera, while advocating and educating on the health of the Etobicoke Creek Watershed.

Peel Climate Action Leadership Retreat (September 2023)

TRCA’s Peel Education Team hosted an overnight Climate Action Leadership Retreat for 24 high school students and invited the Youth Council to provide a workshop. Along with TRCA staff, one Executive member presented on the Youth Council, various events the Youth Council has hosted, and how they got involved in climate action in order to inspire students. Students were invited to participate in a dotmocracy activity (Photo 5) to identify their environmental interests and assist students in coming up with ideas to implement climate action in their community.

PHOTO 5: STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN A DOTMOCRACY ACTIVITY



Heart Lake Conservation Park Truth and Reconciliation Event (September 2023)

Guided by the Four Colours Drum Circle, approximately 200 community members (Photo 6) participated in Indigenous learning, reflection, and a Round Dance at the Heart Lake Conservation Park Medicine Wheel Garden on September 30, 2023. Participants, including two Youth Council Executive volunteers, drummed and sang while attaching orange ribbons to a tree, in memory of the Indigenous children who lost so much through the residential school system.



PHOTO 6: COMMUNITY MEMBERS GATHERED TOGETHER TO OBSERVE THE NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Regional Watershed Alliance Flood Infrastructure Tour (October 2023)

Youth Council Executive members were invited by TRCA's Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) to attend a tour of TRCA's flood infrastructure on October 11, 2023. The tour included stops at Claireville Dam and G. Ross Lord Reservoir and Dam. While only one Executive member attended, it proved a great opportunity for the member to learn more about TRCA work and flood infrastructure, as well as to learn more about the RWA and meet some of its members.

TRCA Youth Council Virtual Town Hall – Controlled Burns at TRCA Alto Meadows (October 2023)

The Youth Council hosted Thiyah Siva, Environmental Technologist with TRCA's Restoration and Resource Management Team for a presentation on TRCA's 2023 Alto Meadow Controlled Burn. Topics covered included learning what a controlled burn is, its purpose and benefits, the planning process for controlled burns, as well as long term management strategies and future planned activity. There may also be the opportunity for members of the group to attend a potential 2024 controlled burn. There was a total of 9 attendees (4 Executive members/2 General members/3 guests) and the recording will be posted to TRCA's YouTube channel and the Youth Council webpage.

Sacred Medicines Workshop with Four Colours Drum Circle (October 2023)

Four Colours Drum Circle hosted the Youth Council Executive and a limited number of General members who had previously attended the Summer Retreat (July 15) for an outdoor educational workshop at the Heart Lake Conservation Park Medicine Wheel Garden. The workshop focused on Indigenous teachings around preparing and using sacred medicines and the tradition of smudging. Participants were able to take home a smudging kit which they created themselves, in order to use the smudge sticks and apply their learnings to their own lives. A total of 6 people attended (1 Executive member/2 General members/3 guests).



PHOTOS 7 AND 8: LEFT, CIDALIA, EARTH MEDICINE WOMAN, DEMONSTRATES SMUDGE STICK BUNDLING TECHNIQUES. RIGHT, PARTICIPANTS MAKE THEIR OWN SMUDGE STICKS

Urban Nature Biodiversity Workshop with University of Toronto (November 2023)

Youth Council Executive members were invited by the University of Toronto's Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Department to present and co-facilitate an in-person workshop on November 25, 2023. Three Executive members attended, and presented on the Youth Council, as well as participated in and facilitated guided discussions around urban biodiversity.

TRCA Youth Council Virtual Town Hall – Peel Transition (November 2023)

The Youth Council hosted Dr. Victoria Kramkowski, Senior Manager for TRCA's Government and Community Relations Team for a presentation on the expected Peel Transition of 2025 (Photo 9). Topics covered included learning about different types of municipalities and the services they provide, Bill 112 (*The Hazel McCallion Act*) and the dissolution of Peel, as well as issues that municipalities and conservation authorities may need to consider. There was a total of 11 attendees (5 Executive members/4 general members/2 guests) and the recording will be posted to TRCA's YouTube channel and Youth Council webpage.



PHOTO 9: DR VICTORIA KRAMKOWSKI PRESENTING ON PEEL TRANSITION

TRCA Youth Council Virtual Town Hall – Developing Your Environmental Career and Introduction to TRCA Seasonal Opportunities (January 2024)

The Youth Council hosted a career-focused town hall on January 31, 2024 with guest speakers from various TRCA divisions, including, Human Resources, Restoration & Infrastructure, Education & Training (STEP), and Conservation Parks and Lands. Topics covered included job search tips and tricks, insight into TRCA seasonal positions, STEP’s Source to Stream Conference, as well as personal stories of unique TRCA staff journeys and lessons learned along the way. There was a total of 25 attendees (8 Executive members/9 General members/8 staff) and the recording will be available on TRCA’s YouTube channel and the Youth Council webpage.

Virtual Tour of Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (February 2024)

A virtual tour of the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre will be hosted by the TRCA Youth Council, in collaboration with the Canadian Conservation Corps, led by an Executive Member who is also a CCC participant. The tour will highlight OTCC’s Peterborough facility, highlighting the importance of turtle conservation. This event is presented in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Canadian Conservation Corps, Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre, and TRCA’s Youth Council.

Objective: Create Fun Opportunities

TRCA Youth Council and Vaughan-Woodbridge Youth Council Stewardship Event (August 2023)

This event originated from a request from MP Sorbara’s Vaughan-Woodbridge Youth Council for a joint event with the TRCA Youth Council members. MP Sorbara and his staff, along with TRCA HR staff, came out for a morning of removing invasive buckthorn at William T. Foster Woods in Vaughan (Photo 10). TRCA Restoration staff provided safety guidelines, equipment, and educational support throughout the removal of approximately 100 buckthorn plants. This event was a great opportunity for the two youth councils to mingle and learn of shared concerns and goals. Plans were set in motion for the groups to meet again for a planting event during the fall planting season (see below). This event drew 9 participants (2 Executive members/5 General members/2 guests). It was a learning experience with respect to the timing of summer events; the future the Youth Council will attempt to schedule events away the last weeks of summer in order to increase attendance.



PHOTO 10: MP SORBARA AND GROUP FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL BUCKTHORN REMOVAL EVENT

Fall Friends Planting Event (October 2023)

A three-hour planting event was held at an active restoration site in Vaughan near Teston and Highway 400 in partnership with TRCA’s York Education Team and led by TRCA Restoration staff. Activities included a safety demonstration (Photo 11), followed by over 25 participants planting 300 trees in just under 1.5 hours (4 Executive members/21 General members and others) Following the planting, participants networked over fall-inspired refreshments and a guided art project painting rocks found on site. This event attracted several younger participants due to circulation of the event through one of our Executive member’s school Eco Club network. The event provided an opportunity for the younger participants to earn hours towards their mandatory high school volunteer hours quota, provided valuable planting experience to all, and was an opportunity for participants to learn about working together for a common goal. The sense of accomplishment from the group can be seen in the photo below (Photo 12).



PHOTO 11 AND 12: LEFT, PARTICIPANTS OBSERVING A SAFETY DEMONSTRATION PRIOR TO PLANTING. RIGHT, A GROUP OF ACCOMPLISHED PLANTERS FOLLOWING THE EVENT!

Fall Fungi Foray (October 2023)

Executive members had a keen interest in fungi this year. One Executive member organized the Fall Fungi Foray walk with the Mycological Society of Toronto (MST). MST provided an experienced guide for TRCA's group of 8 participants (2 Executive members/6 general members) for an hour long walk at Nashville Conservation Reserve. On the walk, participants were introduced to different types of fungi and their role in the environment (Photo 13). Fungi were also observed under a hand lens and MST provided a display of various fungi specimens.



PHOTO 13: PARTICIPANTS LEARNING ABOUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF FUNGI

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Structure

The structure of the Youth Council has seen some minor adjustment since the program's inception, namely the boomerang effect that Covid has played on the format for the delivery of events. Since 2019, we have gone from in-person, to fully virtual, and now back to a productive mix of the two formats. With our General membership numbers continuing to grow year after year, we now have a good age range on the Youth Council Executive, which enables better promotion of initiatives, from high school to young professional audiences. Allowing Executive members to stay on for a second term has helped to maintain institutional memory and facilitate more continuity for planned events during the transition time between terms. Logistically, the Youth Council Executive continues to meet monthly, but has seen increased informal communications between meetings. The 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive was structured such that assigned administrative roles throughout the year were set at the beginning of the term, allowing for everyone to have a chance to fill each role (Chair, Minutes, Land Acknowledgement, and Newsletter) and made for smooth delivery of monthly meetings and newsletter circulation. The TRCA Youth Council will continue to hold two seats on the Regional Watershed Alliance, which will continue to allow the Executive to learn more about TRCA's programs and services and to provide more youth perspective on TRCA strategic goals.

Goals and Objectives

Learn about what is important to youth

The entrance survey continues to provide the most robust data indicating the most important issues to youth. As seen in Figure 6 earlier, the most frequently selected topics from 2023-2023 were once again selected as the most popular, which continues to be reflective of the current social movements that have arisen from the pandemic, such as diversity, inclusion and Indigenous reconciliation. In response to these topics of interest, the Executive delivered several events in 2023 focused on Indigenous learning. The Youth Council will continue to collect this data to inform their, and TRCA's, programming.

Build youth network

The youth network continues to grow as more groups reach out to learn about, and partner with, the Youth Council. Hosting events in partnership with other groups is a great opportunity for network development. By extending our audience through partner networks, other groups can be reached that may not have been previously aware of TRCA. Use of LinkedIn and cross promotion of TRCA's education newsletters has also benefitted network growth. Providing a combination of in-person and online initiatives on a variety of topics draws in different audiences through flexibility of choices and accessibility.

Build capacity and engage youth with learning opportunities

Capacity building amongst the Youth Council Executive has been significant. Allowing a second term for interested and engaged Executive members has resulted in strong peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and mentorship, which has increased the overall capacity of the Youth Council Executive. The returning Executive members set expectations and norms that helped to ensure that the 2023-2024 Executive remained consistently engaged throughout their term. Furthermore, the mentorship and expectations set by the group helped to provide an atmosphere where new members were comfortable sharing ideas and taking the lead on new activities and initiatives.

The activities held by the Youth Council Executive were empowering not only for the participants, but also for the youth organizing the events. Opportunities to present to small and large audiences lead to growth in leadership and public speaking skills for Executive members. The Youth Council Executive also gained valuable experience organizing events of varying formats including: chairing monthly meetings, participating in panel discussions, starring in TRCA Watershed Plan videos, guest appearances on a local radio show (Toronto Nature Now), and representing and promoting the TRCA Youth Council at various events. Events that included Indigenous speakers and presenters also fostered deeper understanding of Indigenous history and culture and provided experience and capacity for the Youth Council to address issues of reconciliation in their future work.

The Youth Council Executive continues to benefit greatly in their academic and employment pursuits through the skills and experiences they gain as part of the program. This year, they have had multiple opportunities to meet formally and informally with staff from various TRCA divisions, opening their perspectives to the diversity of career opportunities at conservation authorities and in the wider environmental sector. There continues to be great opportunity to demonstrate interesting and unique work done by TRCA staff to the Youth Council through Town Halls. The upcoming Town Hall in January 2024 will include former TRCA seasonal staff that are now employed on a longer-term basis at TRCA, in order to showcase the employment possibilities in the environmental sector and at TRCA.

Create fun opportunities for youth

The Youth Council Executive has continued to pursue diverse fun opportunities for youth. Event themes included climate change, habitat conservation and stewardship, sustainable communities, and learning about Indigenous history and culture, in line with the interests of the general and Executive members. Fun opportunities increase the draw for more members of the public to join a single event and/or to sign up for the General membership list with the Youth Council.

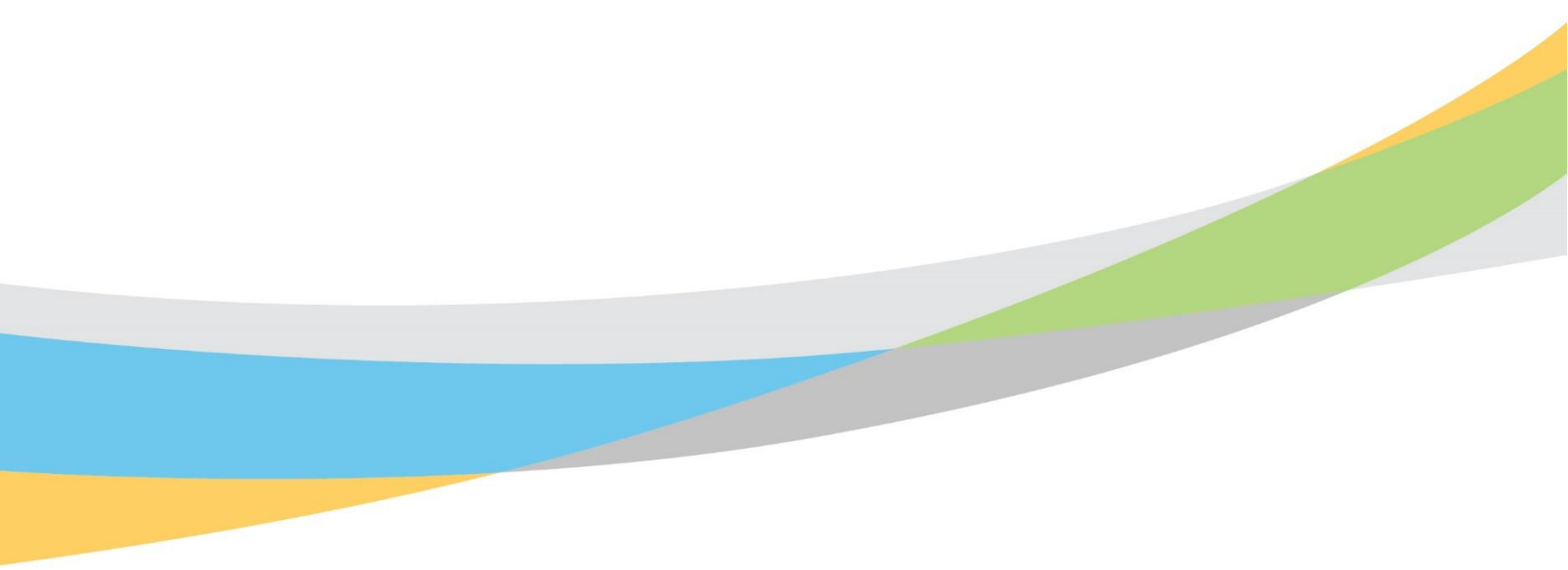
RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Youth Council continues to reach program goals of identifying youth perspectives, building a strong youth network, building capacity and engaging youth with learning opportunities, and creating fun opportunities for youth. The following is a summary of the recommendations for program improvement through the evaluation of meeting goals and objectives:

- Continue hybrid program delivery with online offerings for presentations and discussion forums, and in-person offerings for place-based or hands-on activities;
- Continue network building and marketing the TRCA Youth Council, tapping into other TRCA education and public-facing programs and TRCA connections with municipal partners;
- Continue strengthening the connections between the Executive and General members of the Youth Council through individual outreach to new General members and increased open Executive meetings or town halls;
- Building a communication platform to re-engage former Youth Council Executives to champion initiatives and attend events;
- Continue efforts to broaden the recruitment of the Youth Council to include more members from diverse communities through more deliberate recruitment strategies with different groups/agencies who work in target communities;
- Continue to find synergies between TRCA’s work and strategic goals/priorities, and the work of the Youth Council;
- Reassessing membership structure/management and ensuring “Express Consent” for use of member information is collected going forward to ensure ongoing communication and accurate membership numbers; and
- Increase opportunities for RWA members to be involved, either directly or through promotion of events, through quarterly updates at RWA meetings by RWA Youth Reps, or through other means.

CONCLUSION

The TRCA Youth Council seeks to engage youth aged 16-30 in TRCA’s jurisdiction. It is a program that is led by youth under the mentorship and guidance of TRCA staff. As evidenced above, the Youth Council hosted a combination of virtual and in-person events throughout the 2023/2024 term. Virtual events are preferred for information sharing and saving time and costs, while in-person events were intentional around place-based and hands-on activities. The events and initiatives of 2023 demonstrate the continued drive and passion of the 2023-2024 Youth Council Executive. While there are some recommendations for program improvement, the Executive has been able to progress towards the goals set out in the program framework. This term also saw a continued increase in the number of General membership sign-ups. Major strengths from the 2023-2024 term are the variety of Youth Council event programming offered and the increase in outreach efforts through marketing and presentations, which led to the increase in the number of General members. The program has also had a positive impact on the Executive members in developing their leadership and public speaking skills, as well as supporting their academic and professional pursuits. With these successes in mind there is always room to improve program delivery. Recommendations include the continuation of engagement of General members and former Executive members, broadening the network to include more recruitment with different groups and agencies who work with under-represented communities, and finding synergies between TRCA’s work and strategic goals that can better incorporate Youth Council perspectives.



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Item for the Information of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, February 28, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Sameer Dhalla, Director, Development and Engineering Services

RE: SPILL RESPONSE WITHIN TRCA JURISDICTION

KEY ISSUE

To provide the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) with an overview of TRCA and agency roles and responsibilities with respect to pollutant spills in Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) jurisdiction, including the August 11, 2023 fire at 35 Vulcan Street, Etobicoke, March 2017, Highway 9 Fuel Spill at Glen Haffy Conservation Area and February 2022, Bluffers Park Oil Leak.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the RWA receive the report on the Spill Response within TRCA's Jurisdiction, for information.

BACKGROUND

A spill is the discharge of one or more pollutants into the natural environment that may have a negative effect on land, water, wetlands, or wildlife. Under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), the owner or controller of a spilled pollutant has a duty to clean up a spill and must do everything practicable to prevent and eliminate the negative effects from a spill, including restoring the natural environment to its original state. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) is the lead agency for responding to spills and regulating cleanup efforts via its Spills Action Centre (SAC), although municipalities also have a responsibility to respond to spill incidents within their jurisdiction. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), under legislation that includes the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) and the Fisheries Act (FA), National Environmental Emergencies Centre, acts as the federal hub for pollution-related emergencies. They provide oversight and scientific advice to help protect the environment during an emergency. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), as one of the largest landowners in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and as a watershed-based resource manager, is often notified of spill-related matters and engaged as an advisor on spill remediation efforts on our lands. If TRCA is notified of a spill a detailed communications protocol is followed which involves notifying the MECP SAC in accordance with an internal protocol described below.

TRCA's response to a spill within its nine watersheds is guided by the TRCA Internal Spills Reporting and Response Guideline and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that were approved by TRCA's Senior Leadership Team. TRCA's internal spills response protocol is an action-oriented document developed to ensure proper assessment of each spill situation and facilitate coordination among TRCA staff from

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different departments and divisions, as well as various external agencies and stakeholders.

Although TRCA is not a first responder, our planning and technical staff responsibilities include the review and approval of permits associated with restoration or rehabilitation works, advice on the assessment of spill related impacts, as it relates to TRCA-owned lands, as well as assistance with remediation efforts.

The following three case studies outline the variety of actions by TRCA and other agencies for different spill events. These examples provide a glimpse into TRCA's responses to spills and environmental incidents.

Case Studies

Brenntag Fire and Fuel Spill, Etobicoke, August 2023

On August 11, 2023, a six-alarm fire (over 100 firefighters) occurred at a Brenntag Canada Inc. (Brenntag) warehouse distribution facility located at 35 Vulcan Street, Etobicoke. This site is located within the Mimico Creek Watershed and adjacent to the watershed divide with the Humber River Watershed. The building contained primarily automotive lubricants and soybean oil.

An unquantified volume of water and firefighting foam was used by the Toronto Fire Department in their efforts to bring the fire under control, which along with unburned petroleum lubricants were discharged into the Mimico Creek and Humber River via surface run off and the storm water system. The volume of product spilled is not known, but approximately 700,000 litres were lost to the fire and runoff.

Once the fire was extinguished, Brenntag initiated cleanup response operations under the direction of the MECP and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC), along with contractors engaged by Brenntag, coordinated the identification, capture, and cleanup of wildlife impacted by the oil released from this spill.

A remediation and restoration plan are currently under development by Brenntag and its consultants and contractors. TRCA continues to engage with MECP, ECCC, and the City of Toronto to ensure that this plan will satisfy our requirements both in terms of a landowner and a regulator. TRCA's assistance in the collection of surface water quality samples was provided at the request of the City of Toronto.

Highway 9 Fuel Spill, Caledon, March 2017

Another example of a spill incident that required expertise from across TRCA was a gasoline fuel spill on Highway 9, east of Airport Road in Caledon that impacted the TRCA-owned and operated Glen Haffy Conservation Area. Approximately 30,000 litres of fuel spilled after a fuel tanker rolled over on the highway during a rainstorm. This spill had the potential to not only impact TRCA property, but also a watercourse, groundwater, and a headwater wetland.

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TRCA technical staff provided on-site advice with respect to initial remedial efforts and monitoring. TRCA staff from both Development and Engineering Services (DES) and Restoration and Infrastructure (R&I) were engaged in the long-term restoration works, which took almost three years to complete. During that time TRCA attended interdisciplinary meetings and site visits, completed review of groundwater and surface water monitoring reports and restoration plans, and other property related matters.

Bluffer's Park Oil Leak, February 2022

A third example of effective TRCA staff collaboration was an abandoned boat that was leaking oil and fuel at Bluffer's Park in Scarborough. The oil and fuel from this vessel had the potential to affect ducks, geese, swans, and other waterbirds in the area as well as surface water quality.

While TRCA was not a first responder, the event occurred in early spring, and the TRCA research vessel, R.V. Ken Higgs, was already in the water and actively being used for lake-based monitoring work. Having no other available vessel, our assistance was requested by the MECP Spills Action Centre.

The abandoned vessel was partially sunk at the boat launch area of Bluffers Park in Scarborough. The hydrocarbon materials spread over the water surface areas, impacting waterfowl. TRCA staff from DES and R&I undertook immediate measures to prevent contaminants from spreading, protecting the local wildlife and environment, and assisted in the mitigation of any further environmental damage.

TRCA closely monitored the local wildlife and waterfowl populations and took mitigative actions necessary for their protection by working with our federal and provincial partners and the TWC. Monitoring staff took a central role in coordinating with other agencies and responded to media inquiries. The vessel was successfully removed and TRCA followed up by removing the previously installed wildlife deterrents.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:

1.2 Leadership in greenspace conservation

Pillar 2 Knowledge Economy:

2.4 Integrate environmental considerations and science into decision making

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The costs for TRCA's involvement in spill response are covered by fees and/or compensation paid by the companies involved. TRCA's spills program is not corporately funded, rather it is offset by planning and permit fees are required for the review of any required restoration permits. If TRCA is completing restoration works on behalf of the company responsible for the spill, the company is responsible for the cost. The use of TRCA monitoring services by government agencies is reimbursed on a cost recovery basis through fee for service arrangements with the requesting agency.

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Report prepared by: Don Ford, Senior Manager, Hydrogeology and Manirul Islam, Planner, Infrastructure Planning and Permits

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Emails: don.ford@trca.ca; manirul.islam@trca.ca

Date: September 28, 2023

Item for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, February 28, 2024

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

RE: TRCA'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES UPDATE

KEY ISSUE

To provide an update on the work of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Sustainable Communities' Business Unit and to request input from RWA members on the best practices, issues, and opportunities around the maintenance of green infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS TRCA delivers programs and services that foster and enable a climate resilient society;

AND WHEREAS TRCA's Sustainable Communities Business Unit offers services in this area that may be of interest to TRCA's Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA);

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the staff report on TRCA's Sustainable Communities' work be received;

AND THAT RWA members support Sustainable Communities work where feasible and appropriate;

AND FURTHER THAT RWA members be encouraged to provide input to TRCA staff on best practices, issues and opportunities around the maintenance of green infrastructure in urbanized settings.

BACKGROUND

TRCA's Sustainable Communities Business Unit seeks to foster and enable a climate resilient society by working with government, industry, and residential stakeholders. This is achieved by employing proven models designed to deepen engagement and empower local leaders to address climate action, while also tackling other sustainability challenges.

Collaboration, multi-objective delivery and a long-term perspective are three critical strategies that underlie the success of TRCA's Sustainable Communities programs and services. TRCA's role is that of a partnership-broker, who brings traditional and non-traditional stakeholders together, and a facilitator of integrated planning, project development and implementation.

Within the context of a broad agenda related to advancing sustainability within TRCA watersheds, TRCA delivers two flagship Sustainable Communities programs:

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Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP) and Partners in Project Green (PPG).

SNAP, launched in 2009, is a neighbourhood model for sustainable urban renewal and climate action. TRCA developed SNAP to help municipalities overcome the challenges of retrofitting older neighbourhoods and the success of the SNAP program is rooted in a collaborative approach that aligns municipal priorities with local interests. SNAP improves efficiencies, draws strong community support, and builds trusted implementation partnerships for initiatives in public and private realms. Today, there is a network of 16 SNAP neighbourhoods across eleven municipalities in Ontario. For more information, visit: <https://trca.ca/conservation/sustainable-neighbourhoods/>.

PPG represents the culmination of more than two decades of partnership between the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) and TRCA. PPG was launched in 2008 with a vision of building a community of leaders advancing environmental action and economic prosperity across the GTAA. PPG is a network of public, private and not-for-profit partners addressing global goals on carbon emissions reduction, water stewardship, waste reduction and environmental engagement, in the local context. For more information, visit: <https://partnersinprojectgreen.com>. Applied in a growing network of neighbourhoods and with hundreds of local companies across TRCA's jurisdiction, these efforts have resulted in significant quantifiable GHG reductions and many other co-benefits such as materials waste reduction, materials re-use, local food production and sequestration.

RATIONALE

About the PPG Program

Partners in Project Green is a member-based program, and is business led and business driven. PPG is governed by a sub-committee of the TRCA Board, the PPG Executive Management Committee. Target areas include Energy Performance and Low Carbon Transportation, Water Stewardship, and Waste Management. PPG also offers many different events throughout the year, which can be seen here: <https://partnersinprojectgreen.com/events/>

An overview of programs offered through PPG can be found below.

Energy Programs	Description
Energy Leaders Consortium	A group of 19 large and SME energy users working together to reduce costs and GHG emissions.
GreenBiz Caledon Climate Partnership	This includes capacity building workshops on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, saving energy, and installing eco-friendly landscaping to reduce your climate change risks, site walk-through assessments to identify energy and carbon reduction opportunities and customized support.
Mississauga Climate	The Mississauga Climate Leaders Program (MCLP) aims to support local private and public sector leaders committed to

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Leaders Program	measuring and reducing their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and leading Mississauga towards a net zero future. This program includes site walk-through assessments and capacity building workshops.
Futureproof Your Fleet	Funded through the NRCan, this program builds awareness of various low and no emission technologies available to reduce emissions from medium and heavy-duty vehicles. A series of 7 events will run from January 2024 – March 2025, and a resource hub and social media campaign will be launched.
Building a Climate Resilient Business Kit	A suite of resources intended to help businesses across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) understand their climate change risks, how to evaluate and prioritize them, and learn about potential strategies to address them.

Water Programs	Description
Sustainable Salt Resource Hub	An online resource hub generating salt use awareness and providing tools to help businesses follow best practices. PPG works with the Salt Responsibility Working Group (Peel Region) to support promotion and outreach.
Toronto Inner Harbour Floatables Strategy	A partnership between TRCA, the Toronto Remedial Action Plan, the University of Toronto Trash Team, PortsToronto, and several City of Toronto divisions, with support from Swim Drink Fish, the Harbourfront Centre and the Waterfront Business Improvement Area. The goal of the Floatables Strategy is to improve water quality and aesthetics of the Toronto Inner Harbour through the management of floatable debris.
Corporate Flood and Heat Risk	The Corporate Flood and Heat Risk area focuses on publicly available resources on Green Infrastructure (GI) and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques as sustainable solutions to reduce stormwater runoff, mitigate flood risk, enhance vegetative cover & biodiversity, and reduce impacts of flood and heat risks. Sustainable Landscaping Plans and Flood Risk Preparedness Assessments, along with financial incentives to implement projects, are identified in the plan and assessment.

Waste Programs	Description
Circular Economy Leaders Consortium	A group of industry professionals seeking to improve facility waste management and circular economy initiatives.

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Materials Exchange Program	Facilitating the exchange of material between businesses and non-profit organizations to divert waste from landfill, support local communities, and move towards a circular economy.
Recycling Collection Drive	An employee engagement campaign typically run during Waste Reduction Week in October that supports organizations to collect textile and electronic waste, helping to divert waste from landfill and engage employees about sustainability.

About the SNAP Program

Through the SNAP Program, TRCA partners with multiple municipal divisions and local communities to co-develop and co-implement Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plans and Climate Resilience Strategies for strategic urbanized geographical areas within our watersheds. These areas are selected through a rigorous technical process in which urban renewal and environmental priorities are mapped across entire municipalities, in conjunction with climate vulnerabilities.

The SNAP program applies both a top down and bottom-up approach to bring together both TRCA and municipal technical objectives, along with residents' day to day priorities for their community and their life. Robust public and multidisciplinary staff engagement is both foundational and fundamental to SNAP's work.

SNAP establishes targets and tracks progress across diverse sustainability themes, including:

- Sustainable stormwater management
- Flood risk reduction and heat stress management
- Water efficiency
- Waste management
- GHG reduction
- Urban forest and habitat enhancement
- Skills training and jobs
- Health and wellbeing
- Other customized to each neighbourhood

The SNAP program addresses all land uses within the selected neighbourhoods.

Typical SNAP action Areas include:

1. **Home Retrofit Programs:** SNAP helps homeowners make their homes more sustainable and resilient to climate risks (addressing multiple objectives from the list above).
2. **Public infrastructure renewal:** SNAP re-imagines traditional public infrastructure projects to maximize their sustainability and climate resilience impact. For example, road reconstruction projects are reimagined into green/ complete streets; park renewal projects are re-imagined adding raingardens, shade, nature-based

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education, and public art.

3. **Revitalization of Multi-unit Residential, Commercial and Institutional Properties:** SNAP helps property owners design and implement indoor and outdoor retrofits, while supporting their communities.
4. **Programing for Community Resilience:** SNAP develops and implements community programs such as resident and NGO capacity building (through our participant to leader model); skills training and paid internship opportunities in the green economy; community connections; urban agriculture and emergency preparedness.

To ensure implementation of SNAP Neighbourhood Action Plans and Resilience Strategies, TRCA's SNAP program develops and facilitates implementation partnerships with all sectors. On a typical year, SNAP works with around 100 implementation partners and collaborators towards the achievement of neighbourhood goals.

For Discussion: Green Infrastructure Maintenance within the SNAP Neighbourhoods

SNAP has been the recipient of multiple national and international awards. It has been recognized as a highly successful program across North America and Europe. However, there are a number of challenges that still need to be overcome to achieve our ambitious sustainability and climate resilience goals.

One of those challenges is maintenance of green infrastructure implemented within the SNAP (and other urban) neighbourhoods. Our municipal partners and many private property owners have come to understand the important benefits of green infrastructure (i.e. such as Low Impact Development (LID) for Stormwater Management, pollinator gardens, etc.). Significant progress has been made in getting the required approvals and funding towards the implementation of these projects within the SNAP neighbourhoods.

So far, SNAP has been able to find solutions to maintain most of these projects, on a one-by-one basis. However, as the network of green infrastructure projects across all land uses continues to grow, a streamlined program or solution for its maintenance will need to be developed, to guarantee the health and aesthetics of the system through efficient use of limited resources. Many members of the RWA have experience or exposure to these issues through their diverse roles that are reflected in RWA composition.

We are seeking advice from RWA on solutions for maintenance of green infrastructure (especially LIDs and pollinator gardens) across public and private land. This can include but is not limited to input and advice on guidance and best practices based on specific project, program or site examples and experiences.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

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Pillar 2 Knowledge Economy:

2.2 Collaboration to advance a green transition

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.4 Inspired communities take environmental action

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Key Areas of focus of Sustainable Communities in 2024 will be:

- In partnership with municipalities, industry, and NGOs, explore the development of a tower focused program with the aim to deeply decarbonize multi-unit residential and commercial towers and enhance climate resiliency of these buildings, lands, and communities.
- Design the new generation of home retrofit programs across all municipalities (with an emphasis on decarbonization) and exploration of District Energy opportunities.
- Develop streamlined solutions for maintenance of green infrastructure projects.
- Accelerate the transition of public and private fleets to low carbon technologies.

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