

Section I – Items for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of Regional Watershed Alliance
Meeting #2/19, Wednesday, May 22, 2019

FROM: Victoria Kramkowski, Government and Community Relations Specialist,
Community Engagement and Outreach

RE: Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council Workplan Priorities

KEY ISSUE

To update and seek Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) approval of Youth Council workplan priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the presentation by Youth Council regarding workplan priorities be received for Regional Watershed Alliance input and approval;

AND FURTHER THAT Shannon S. Holness, Community Benefits Organizer and youth representative of Toronto Community Benefits Network, be welcomed to join the Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council Working Group as a collaborator.

BACKGROUND

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 TRCA's jurisdiction depends on the support of the region's youth, both now and into the future. TRCA's 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 the Youth Council will build on existing engagement programs while deploying new tools and strategies to develop a strong network of youth driven to take active ownership of their local environment.

The Youth Council is comprised of community youth champions, existing youth group representatives and new recruits. The Youth Council reports directly to the Regional Watershed Alliance. The mission, mandate and goals, along with the Terms of Reference for the Youth Council, have been developed by TRCA staff 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;

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THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the following members of the Alliance 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.

At RWA meeting #2/17 held on February 21st 2018, the framework for the Youth Council was approved (RES. #010/17). The framework described four objectives for the Youth Council:

- a) Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities;
- 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) 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
- d) Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

Two tiers of Youth Council membership are described: general and executive membership. The general membership is open to all youth in TRCA's jurisdiction. General members are invited to participate in Youth Council meetings and events, but their participation is voluntary. Executive members are an application-based position; youth are invited to submit their resumes along with a completed application. The RWA Youth Council Working Group then selects 10 members who will serve a one-year term. Executive members are responsible for the development of priorities, communication with the general membership, organizing meetings, and the development of a work plan.

Members of the executive were selected by the Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council Steering Committee in October 2018. The executive members were provided the approved framework and agreed on a Terms of Reference. Both the framework and Terms of Reference have been adapted to create workplans to meet council objectives and goals.

RATIONALE

The Youth Council Executive has developed a workplan that addresses all four Youth Council objectives set forth in the framework.

To build capacity among youth and build/strengthen the youth network (objectives a and b), the Youth Council will network with other youth council, NGOs, and organizations. Opportunities for volunteering or for youth engagement have been shared with the wider general membership through quarterly newsletters (the April edition included links to external opportunities such as Youth Challenge International Climate Action Catalyst).

To investigate "Youth Perspectives" (objective c), the Executive Council has surveyed the general membership, as well as members of the public. Respondents were asked to indicate issues they feel are most important and have the greatest impact on their daily lives. Some preliminary results from this survey are summarized in the attached presentation. The Executive Council will use this information to inform engagement opportunities (objective d) throughout the year. Climate change was consistently the most reported topic. Some geographical differences in priorities identified by respondents were noted: "wildlife and habitat conservation" was more

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frequently reported by respondents outside of the City of Toronto, and respondents from Toronto indicated “Access to Greenspace” as an important issue more frequently than those from outside of the city. This data will help to better inform the development of engagement opportunities, which will include newsletters, online engagement tools, small localized events, and a large culmination event at the end of their one-year term.

In addition to the April Newsletter and the survey to both members and the broader public, the Youth Council held an Earth Day Clean-up event in The Meadoway on April 28th, 2019, submitted an abstract to the Latonnell Conservation Symposium, and initiated discussion with Swim Drink Fish and Ryerson Urban Water regarding co-hosting movie nights over the summer of 2019.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategy set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Staff is engaged in community engagement, consultation, outreach and education work as part of their ongoing roles. No additional funding is proposed to support this engagement work.

Youth Council Executive members are encouraged to raise funding for specific activities.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

1. Build capacity among youth and build/strengthen youth network by continued establishment and maintenance of relationships with other NGO's/Youth Councils.
2. Continue analysis of youth perspectives to inform workplan priorities.
3. Create fun opportunities and experiences for youth, specifically the creation of a larger-scale culminative event in Fall 2019 aligned, if possible, with TRCA activities such as world River Day activities and /or Humber Heritage 20th Anniversary Event.

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