



BE HEARD

Commission De la Jeunesse
D'Ottawa Youth Commission
Final Report 2008-2009

Bringing Youth In



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is intended to be used as:

1. As an annual report to Community Protective Services Committee regarding outcomes associated with Ottawa Youth Commission
2. To highlight important youth issues and seek CPSC support for recommendations
3. As a continued connection to young people in order to support the youth voice at a municipal level.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TARGETED TO CITY COUNCIL

CJOYC requests CPS Committee endorse and support the following recommendations:

- That the City of Ottawa use the information contained in the report when creating city priorities and undertaking strategic planning;
- That the CPSC endorse CJOYC as youth consultation specialists and appeal to them to seek youth input when creating city priorities;
- Encourage City Councillors to meet with members of CJOYC to hear about youth issues in their wards and explore potential partnerships to seek solutions; and
- That the CPSC recognize the value of youth participation in city building by actively seeking to engage youth in public policy dialogue. (For example referring to the expertise of CJOYC in seeking youth input into directives such as the Transportation Master Plan and the Recreation Master Plan.)
- CJOYC requests CPSC support and consider the recommendations made in this report in the three following areas: Transportation, Recreation, and Environment, when making decisions.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE OTTAWA YOUTH COMMISSION

The Ottawa Youth Commission will:

1. Circulate this report to key agencies, relevant community organizations focused on youth issues and schools;
2. Maintain continued representation of youth voice into city and community priorities and represent the youth voice on various agendas regarding CJOYC's key issue priorities.
3. Form issue based task forces on key issues to collaborate with relevant city staff and community partners to better research and develop implementation strategies for moving forward on critical youth issues;
4. Develop tools to encourage civic engagement among youth by engaging them in the process of evaluating Ottawa's youth friendliness

ABOUT CJOYC

CJOYC serves as a connector between young people of the capital, and decisions made at Ottawa City Council. Acting as a link, CJOYC makes sure that the opinions, concerns and suggestions of youth are heard on a variety of issues that affect their daily lives.

The Commission solicits the opinions and suggestions of young people with regards to making Ottawa a better place for youth through surveys, focus groups, workshops, a conference and online tools. We engage youth to better understand their role in the community and to ensure they are aware that they have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

The Commission is a group of young people from different schools, communities and neighbourhoods trying to make a difference in the lives of young people across the city.

Our Supporters: Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa

Child & Youth Friendly Ottawa is an Ottawa based charity dedicated to the promotion and advancement of children and youth in our community. CAYFO promotes the voice of youth and their visibility in the community, encourages their engagement and celebrates their achievements.

CAYFO believes youth can make a difference and support of young people's participation will help build a positive community. CAYFO supports CJOYC and helps to encourage youth to speak up and voice their opinions on how to make Ottawa a better place for youth.

Adult Mentors

The Ottawa Youth Commission is also supported by a group of adult mentors who guide CJOYC in making connections, developing partnerships and raising awareness. Mentors are committed to advancing the cause of youth and building the capacity of young people.

The City of Ottawa

With funds from the City of Ottawa Community Protective Services Department, the Ottawa Youth Commission has been in existence since June 2006. This money enables us to be the means for youth to exercise leadership and meaningfully contribute to the community by participating in activities that help them become active citizens and increase their awareness about how their participation can help build a positive community.

City Councillors regularly make decisions and take action on issues that directly affect young people; issues like public transportation, parks and recreation, public health, and housing. Engaging youth will help the city make decisions that are more appropriate to youth needs and interests. We thank the Community Protective Services Committee for their important contribution to Ottawa's young people.

CJOYC AT WORK: 2008-09

In previous years, CJOYC collected information from hundreds of young people regarding the important issues they face. Last year, in 2007-08, CJOYC began the dialogue to act upon the information provided in order to solicit ideas on how to realistically address these issues. This year, the Commission wants to act upon our past discussions to take action to achieve a greater impact.

The identified key issues facing youth from our surveys, focus groups, workshops and our online community remain the same from year to year: transportation, recreation, substance abuse, awareness and communication, crime and safety, and environmentalism. CJOYC's 2008-09 activities began the dialogue to act upon the recommendations made regarding these issues from last year's report.

Achievements

We were able to hold one in person meeting during the strike in December 2008 but only four members were able to attend due to their proximity to City Hall, our monthly meeting location. At this meeting, we received a presentation from Diane Huffman, the Project Coordinator for the Recreation Master Plan. She presented introduced the Master Plan, and asked for our help in reaching out to youth. CJOYC took on the responsibility to inform young people about the Master Plan and to lead the outreach to youth for this initiative. CJOYC encouraged youth to go online and fill out the public consultation survey, posted white paper questions regarding recreation on our website and invited Parks and Recreation staff to run one of the workshops for the youth forum to deal with the recreation issue.

In January, CJOYC received an invitation from the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) to join the Equity and Inclusion Lens. The Lens aims to create services and a workforce that respects and values the diverse population the city serves and considers all voices when developing policies, programs and communications. The Youth Commission sat on the reference group to help develop this tool and to ensure the voice of youth was not ignored. CJOYC also contributed, with other youth agencies, to the youth focus document for the Lens.

CJOYC's 2009 Conference, "Youth In Power: Actions Today, Results Tomorrow" was a youth forum that took place at City Hall in May 2009 and was CJOYC's Annual Conference. Eighty young people from across the city ranging in ages from grades 7-12 took part. The forum allowed young people to be able to talk to other youth as well as City Councilors and city staff about the important issues that affect young people in Ottawa. Through the YIP forum, CJOYC hoped to encourage awareness and among youth to further understand and take action on the issues that involve them and their communities.

At the forum, the focus was on four of the priority issues; issues young people ranked as main areas of concern. Participants had the opportunity to attend each of the following workshops to discuss these four priorities: transportation, recreation and culture, environmental issues, and alcohol and substance abuse. Through the guidance of workshop facilitators, youth dug deep into the issues in order for them to provide feedback, solutions and ideas for youth to work towards facing the issues. City staff joined workshops to stimulate discussion on improvements and solutions for challenges in these areas. Staff was a valuable resource to contribute what is possible, what solutions are valid, and provide the city's perspective on how young people can be part of the solution and work with the city to meaningfully contribute to have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.

Efforts were made to ensure that a wide range of youth from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds were included as well as youth from the various geographic regions of the city in CJOYC's

activities. We used several mechanisms to ensure good representation; rural youth, school and community groups as well as various cultural groups were contacted to fill out surveys etc. The 'youth survey' network, the collaborative partnerships that were formed last year, helped CJOYC further broaden our reach when advertising our conference and online forums.

As always, all of the facilitators at our conference were youth from our network, giving them the opportunity to develop and practice skills. CJOYC youth co-facilitated our conference workshops collaborating with City staff, thus offering CJOYC members and the youth network event coordination, leadership development, public speaking, and facilitation skills.

Limitations to Success

Our work was significantly stalled this year due to the OC Transpo transit strike. There was only three weeks between our presentation to CPSC on our 2007-08 outcomes and the start of the transit strike so CJOYC did not get a good start our 2008-09 activities. The strike lasted from mid-December to February and it is important to note, considerably affected the Commission's ability to execute.

CJOYC's young people rely on public transit for all their transportation needs between their home and other activities such as school, jobs, and extracurricular activities which included CJOYC meetings, events, workshops and focus groups. At that time, CJOYC members had to prioritize their activities; home, school, work and family obligations took precedence. University shuttles transported students to and from school and made it difficult for CJOYC members in university to attend our meetings and events. If a parent or friend were able to drive them, our members' activities were restricted to their priorities while understandably, CJOYC initiatives were pushed further down the list.

Also, because buses were not running again until mid-February and full service levels did not return until several weeks after service began, CJOYC members still faced transportation constraints in getting to all activities which further prevented complete levels of participation and accomplishments.

CJOYC tried to hold meeting alternatives such as online meetings via Facebook and Skype to talk amongst the group and form online discussion forums. This proved to be difficult as not all members nor the young people the Commission was trying to reach had computers at home, access to the internet or the software or devices support these programs (webcams, quick and reliable internet) and some of the tools we were using such as Facebook were not accessible in schools. This notably limited our communication to e-mail and letter writing. CJOYC often relies on face to face meetings as we believe they increase accountability and responsibility among members.

CJOYC also faced limitations when the Children and Youth Agenda (CYA) ended in December of 2008, moving into regular operations within the City of Ottawa. CJOYC reported to one of the CYA Team Leads and established an excellent working relationship, partnering our activities with those of the CYA. With the transition of the CYA from the City to a community-led initiative, and the re-organization in the City structure, City resources were temporarily re-designated to focus on immediate priorities. The Commission consequently fell under the radar. However, in May of 2009, resources were identified and the partnership has strengthened.

MEASURING CJOYC SUCCESS: MEETING 2008-09 GOALS

CJOYC focused its efforts on the following outcomes:

- Increased youth civic engagement in the affairs of the City of Ottawa,
- Increased youth capacity and increased partnership, and
- Increased networking.

The following chart illustrates CJOYC's outcomes and indicators of success for 2007-08.

OUTCOME

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS & IMPACT

<p>Increased youth civic engagement in the affairs of the City of Ottawa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained Input, direct influence and continued representation of youth voice into city and community priorities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active members of City of Ottawa Equity and Inclusion Lens Reference Group-monthly meetings from January 2009-September 2009, intermittent meetings Oct 2009-April 2010 - Active member of City of Ottawa Equity and Inclusion Lens Youth Community Snapshot Reference Group- monthly meetings from January 2009-September 2009 - Parks and Recreation Master Plan- prepared youth submission in response to Master Plan White papers, August 2009 - Active member/partner for City of Ottawa Youth Friendly City Initiative-monthly meetings from May 2009-present; CJOYC acts as Youth Advisory Committee for the project leading to increased level of responsibility and engagement in a city-wide partnership initiative - Continued representation on the City's Health and Social Services Advisory Committee-monthly meetings • Annual Forum at City Hall-May 22, 2009: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80 youth between the ages of 13 and 21 demonstrating CJOYC's appeal to a range of young people and 80 youth to gain inspiration, confidence and a deeper understanding of issues. Also increased database of youth interested in CJOYC. - Maintained relationship and support from Mayor's office (Introduction from Interim Mayor Michel Bellemare) - Increased presence and participation of Council members through debate between Councillors Jan Harder, Jacques Legendre and youth - Increased participation of City staff leading to greater understanding of how youth can work with the City to move forward. Staff co-facilitated workshops with CJOYC members; staff from Dept of Parks and Recreation, Dept Infrastructure Services & Community Sustainability, and OC Transpo Superintendent Transit Law Enforcement - Increased skill development and culture of civic engagement and increased number of young people collectively moving to implementation through Ideas to Action Workshops where action-planning guides were provided with resources and ideas to implement plans and projects for youth to take what they learned and realize after they leave (where to start, tips for fundraising,
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raising awareness, raising money, bring people together, making voices heard, etc.)

- Enhance promotion and increased connection to the community regarding CJOYC activities through post forum report distributed through CJOYC's e-letter network that went out to 300 subscribers including members of Council, youth and partner agencies
- **CJOYC profile raised as Forum was televised on CTV Ottawa.**
- **Increased participation by City staff and members of council at the Youth Forum by 100%. At CJOYC's two previous conferences, there was no participation from City staff or Councillors. This gave CJOYC greater access to people working on the issues so youth could understand how the issue is dealt with, what is being done at the municipal level and what kind of solutions are valid in order to achieve a greater impact.**
- **In-person meeting with Mayor O'Brien at the beginning of the program timeline resulting in increased profile for CJOYC; continued support from Mayor's office**

Increased youth capacity.

- **Increased overall participation by francophone and new immigrant youth**
 - CJOYC created different levels of participation to make it easier for a number of youth engaged from a multiplicity of backgrounds – geographical, cultural, socio-economic, ethnic (ambassador/partners, such as lead online forums, run focus groups/discuss issues among peers) and to get message out to unengaged youth in more innovative ways
 - Targeted outreach for conference, focus groups and online participation to specific agencies : OCISO, CHRCs, and francophone based agencies
- **Maintenance of CJOYC Executive between 15 and 18 years of age**
 - 15 members: 8 high school, 7 university
 - Youth planned and executed the various CJOYC events resulting in skill development in leadership roles, facilitation, and public speaking. CJOYC Executive took time and resources to collect feedback and evaluate activities
 - Space was created for youth to keep them involved meaningfully and sustainably
- Increased community partners to 12 resulting in CJOYC being more representative of the youth population in Ottawa-partnerships with Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa, Nepean Rideau Osgoode Community Resource Centre, both OCDSB and OCCDSB
 - Establishing connections to Community and/or Youth developers of 4

CDF neighbourhoods to increase youth participation in CJOYC activities and increased presence in the 4 priority CDF neighbourhoods

- **CJOYC Recruitment posters in high schools and community agencies serving youth within the City**
 - Posters in all OCDSB, OCCDSB schools as well as other youth agencies including Osgoode Youth Association, The Door Youth Centre, several CHC/CRC drop-in centres
- **Increased tools for youth engagement: social networking such as blog, website, Facebook; focus groups; annual conference; attendance at events and workshops to enhance mechanisms for youth engagement and to empower youth**

Increased partnership and networking

- **Maintenance of established partnerships, eg., Parks and Recreation, Ottawa Public Health, Organizational Development and Performance**
- **New partnerships created with City of Ottawa Department of Community Sustainability and OCTranspo**
- **CJOYC e-newsletter sent to 300 subscribers, City Councillors, community partners, schools in all 4 school boards**
 - 4 newsletters –winter, spring, summer and fall
 - 3 event newsletters: Annual Conference, Youth Friendly workshop, CJOYC presentation to CPSC
- **Increased recognition of CJOYC BE HEARD logo and increased awareness of the goals of CJOYC through:**
 - Developed social networking tools-CJOYC blog, Facebook page spread the word and the logo significantly
 - 4 newsletters sent to 300 subscribers each, all with CJOYC website helped to promote the site, the blog and the Facebook page
- **CJOYC held a workshop for organizations on how to engage youth in their workplace resulting in increased capacity by organizations in Ottawa to engage youth**
 - Event gained local television recognition on CTV Ottawa
 - Various partner agencies attended including City of Ottawa, Elections Canada, OCDSB, Media Awareness Network, Nepean Housing Corp, Ottawa Public Health, Western Ottawa CRC, Southeast Ottawa CHC, Vanier Institute
- **Increased attendance and participation in city-wide youth events**
 - Participated in International Youth Day, Every Child Is Sacred Intergenerational Conversation, University of Ottawa, Day of Information for a Lifetime of Action Conference

- **Towards 2020: Canada's Commitment to Children and Youth National Conference**

- Ran Youth Engagement workshop for national delegates
- Posters in all OCDSB, OCCDSB schools as well as other partner youth agencies including Osgoode Youth Association, The Door Youth Centre, several CHC/CRC drop-in centres

CJOYC 2008 CONFERENCE RESULTS: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Several of the issues are connected to one another, for example access to recreational activities is directly impacted by inaccessible and unreliable transportation. Youth still feel that these eight key issues are important. The issues were prioritized as follows:

CJOYC is making the following recommendations to relevant branches within the City:

1. Transportation

- No idling policy/bylaw; anti-idling campaigns are not enough
- Improve level of comfort with OC Transpo drivers:
 - * Train and educate drivers as to how to better treat young people; CJOYC could run a Youth Friendly Training Workshop with Supervisors/Trainers
- Local routes do not run late which impacts young people's ability to move between work, school and other activities
- Educate the public as to what security exists so people feel safer; have information on the website
- What measures are in place to talk to young people about the future of transportation in Ottawa?
 - * Seek specific youth input through CJOYC into future consultations regarding transportation- Youth would benefit from LRT but would like to learn more
 - * Provide regular forums for CJOYC to meet with OC Transpo managers and / or the Transit Committee.
- Extend the time that transfers are valid
- Increase bus services beyond the transit way
- Provide more locations for photo ID
- Pursue environment-friendly initiatives such as more Park'n Rides, bus lanes, LRT.

2. Recreation

- Advertise programs better to the general public
 - * The Recreation Program Guide seems to be the only resource
- Publicize recreation / leisure activities where youth are: in schools, on Facebook, websites, school newsletters, drop-in centers
 - * City programs need better communication to youth
 - * Invest in youth designers for flyers etc
- Recreation programs are too sports-oriented

- Youth want more programs for teens ages 13-17; there are many for children ages 12 and under and for adults 18 +
- Make community centres easier to access by bus
- City should create youth grants to encourage young people to develop their own programs and change with their needs
- Recreation Master Plan is a good idea to solicit feedback from residents however:
 - * White papers are long and time consuming-essay questions are not ideal, many youth will not fill out the survey if it takes too much time
 - * Encourage youth to fill the white papers out as a class or group
 - * Solicit CJOYC or youth to help edit the papers and make a more youth-friendly version

3. Environmentalism Recommendations

- Put a tax/price on extra garbage bags like other municipalities
- Accessibility to eco-friendly products needs to be rewarded, eg. tax reduction on certain products
- Institute the green bin program as soon as possible
- Develop award/fund (encouragement) for good 'green' practices for youth
- Promote City's new policy re: new buildings being certified LEED rating
- More promotion and encouragement of carpool registry
- Get City Hall to be more eco-friendly (as an example to others)
- Explore by-laws to reduce the use of plastic bags and disposable cups, promote reusable shopping bags and water bottles
- Get schools and workplaces to compost
- More recycling bins around the city, especially at transit stops
- Education regarding recycling – especially regarding electronics; get media involved in promoting e-waste days throughout the year
- Curtail development of the City's green space

4. Substance Abuse Recommendations

- Increase opportunities, accessibility and affordability for youth to be involved in leisure / recreation / arts / culture
 - Treatment/help is available for teens, but users are getting younger so education needs to start earlier
 - Educate people about recognizing that they/a friend has a problem

OTHER ISSUES FACING YOUTH IN OTTAWA:

1. Youth Unemployment-the summer of 2009 was one of the worst for students. The number of requests for student financial aid rose in Ontario due to a difficult economic year.

Many students have had trouble finding full-time jobs with a record student unemployment rate of 21 per cent in July.

2. Mental Health- Young people are not encouraged to discuss mental health issues or do not know where to access help. There is still a stigma surrounding mental health difficulties yet so

many young people are dealing with depression, eating disorders and other mental health issues.

CONCLUSION

CJOYC engaged young people in our work over the past year through a multitude of methods; on-line surveys, in-person focus groups, a conference, workshops, Facebook, and a blog. Every effort was made to ensure that a wide range of youth were included in our activities.

Young people would like to clear up the misconception that youth are apathetic; the majority are not and they would like to be involved in more open discussions as they do have an interest in their community. The Youth Commission will continue to make sure this happens.

Youth want to see City initiatives and Council more accessible to young people, by making information easily available to youth, using youth friendly methods. Having a youth section on a Councilor's website and social networking initiatives help.

CJOYC will continue to build a stronger youth voice in Ottawa by encouraging youth development activities, skills building, and leadership training. We believe that youth can make a difference in building stronger communities and that there should be places for young people to make decisions that have an impact on their lives.

We want youth to become active, vocal, and responsible members of the community and foster a culture of civic engagement. Youth should have influence, take responsibility and be heard.

CJOYC OUTREACH

CJOYC conducted in-person focus groups or workshops in the following settings:

1. OCDSB Leadership Camp
2. St Pius X Catholic High School
3. Every Child Is Sacred Conference, University of Ottawa
4. OCDSB Day of Information for a Lifetime of Action Conference
5. Algonquin College, Recreation and Leisure class
6. Algonquin College Roots and Shoots Youth for Action Conference
7. CJOYC Conference, City Hall
8. Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentors Group

CJOYC held an information booth at the following events:

- Ridgemont High School Volunteer information Fair
- International Youth Day, McNabb Skate Park
- Carleton University Volunteer Resource Fair

CJOYC took part in the following activities:

- Confederation High School OCDSB Principal Character Education Day
- Led Youth Engagement Session, Towards 2020 National Conference, Crowne Plaza Ottawa

- Co-host, Youth Friendly Workshop
- Ottawa Youth Friendly City Initiative Meetings

CJOYC link is on the following websites:

- Apathy Is Boring
- Media Awareness Network
- Volunteer Ottawa
- Equal Voice Experiences Program
- Taking It Global