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Region of Peel
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REPORT
Regional Council

DATE: March 14, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **SUMMER JOB CHALLENGE: 2010 AND 2011**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That seventy-five youth be hired in the summer of 2011 in support of the Summer Job Challenge;

And further, that associated costs of $300,000 to support this initiative be funded from the Human Service Budget or Ontario Works Reserve (R1260), if required.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The recent economic recession has resulted in high unemployment for all, but it has been particularly significant for youth.
- Youth unemployment in Peel for 2010 was 18.8 per cent, 19.6 per cent in 2009 and 13.2 per cent in 2008.
- On June 4, 2010, Council approved the Region's participation in the Summer Job Challenge by hiring 60 youth who would likely miss out on summer employment.
- The 2010 Summer Job Challenge was a great success with 61 youth hired by the Corporation and 60 youth completing the full eight-week work experience.
- Administrative, labour and service jobs were created in Corporate Services, Employee and Business Services, Health Services, Human Services and Public Works Departments.
- Feedback from youth and staff show that the Summer Job Challenge had a great impact on the youth by giving them real-life experiences that they would otherwise not have received.
- Council has supported Peel residents and mitigated the impacts of the recession through a number of initiatives.
- Staff is recommending 75 youth, who would otherwise likely miss out on a job on summer employment, be hired by the Region through participation in the 2011 Summer Job Challenge initiative.
- To build on Regional Council priorities, the program will be expanded by up to 40 per cent of youth to work with community agencies. This program also supports 2011-2014 Strategic Plan objective to "Build a community that is stable, responsive and adaptable".
- The costs will be covered through the Human Services budget and, if necessary, the Ontario Works reserve.

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DISCUSSION

1. Background

Youth unemployment rates have been high. Peel registered the highest in 2009 at 19.6 per cent, compared to 18.5 per cent in Toronto CMA, 17.6 per cent in Ontario and 15.3 per cent in Canada. In 2010, youth employment rates registered at 18.8 per cent in Peel and 14.8 per cent for Ontario. A report commissioned by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) entitled, "Rising Youth Unemployment during the Crisis: How To Prevent Negative Long-Term Consequences on a Generation" warns that the unemployment situation for youth "is expected to stay at a high level over the next two years and unemployed youth are likely to experience prolonged period of joblessness". The negative long-term consequences, referred to as "scarring" from long periods of unemployment among youth include: lower lifetime income, lack of contentment, job satisfaction and reduced health in the future. The OECD recommends investment in apprenticeships, enhanced income supports, training programs and strategies, to encourage youth to remain enrolled in post secondary education. They also support temporary contracts, which for many youth are stepping stones to permanent employment.

One of the actions arising from the February 2010 Mississauga Job Summit was the Summer Job Challenge, a call to employers to hire more youth during the summer months. On June 4, 2010, Regional Council endorsed the recommendation and associated costs of $230,000 to participate in the Summer Job Challenge, which was led and funded by the Human Services Department.

Over the past two years, Regional Council has supported a number of initiatives to mitigate the impact of the recession on vulnerable residents of Peel. This has included investment in Peel's home ownership program, eviction prevention, housing allowances, neighbourhood community development, healthy snacks at Learn.Play.Care Centres and Ontario Works staffing. The Summer Job Challenge further complemented these initiatives and demonstrated Regional Council's commitment to supporting Peel residents and willingness to provide leadership during the recession.

2. 2010 Summer Job Challenge

The Region of Peel 2010 Summer Job Challenge was targeted at, but not limited to, youth in social housing, high-need neighbourhoods, single parent and low and mid income families who would otherwise likely miss out on summer employment. The recruitment process used was less formal in order to eliminate barriers that may exist with youth intended to be supported by this initiative.

The Summer Job Challenge sought youth between 16-24 years of age with limited or no work experience. Sixty-one (61) youths were hired for an eight-week period between July-August 2010. The youth received over 17,000 hours of work experience. A Summer Job Challenge Coordinator provided on-going job coaching and support to youth throughout the summer and facilitated employment workshops to help prepare them for their future job search.

Jobs were created in three categories: Service, Administrative and Labour. Service type positions included supporting residents and staff at Long-Term Care centres and implementing a literacy and craft corner - a child minding support for children of Human Services clients who were attending appointments. Administrative duties included data entry, filing, mail distribution, booking meetings, document printing, office supply ordering,

document editing, photocopying, stapling and printing. The Labour positions had youth performing waste water sampling, data input, packing, inventory and general labour.

Participating Regional Departments included: Corporate Services, Employee and Business Services, Health Services, Human Services and Public Works. As the job placements were spread throughout the Region of Peel Departments, no additional supervision was required.

Two youth were placed in the community with the Brampton Safe City Association and joined a team of five other post secondary students to enforce the key message of community safety by delivering four different presentations to educate children participating with City of Brampton's Parks and Recreation Programs. Topics included Bike Safety, Fire Safety, Stranger Danger, and Chemical Safety. This unique opportunity not only strengthened Peel's partnership with the community, it also provided two youth with a unique experience at the grass roots level.

The 2010 Summer Job Challenge was a true demonstration of collaboration and team work as seen through the availability of placements at various sites across the Region of Peel. In addition, Human Resources staff assisted supervisors with the creation of the job descriptions, provided advice on hiring practices as well as coordinated the collection of documentation received. Human Resources staff also delivered Health and Safety training sessions to both the host supervisors and youth participants to ensure safe work experiences.

Sixty of the 61 youths successfully completed their job placement and participated in the employment preparation workshops which were facilitated by Employment Service Workers from the Human Services Department at the conclusion of the program. The two-day workshop provided them with job search tools and information to increase their employability in the current job market.

3. Findings/Outcomes

For many of the youth, the summer Job Challenge work experience was their first job and first opportunity to build professionalism, community contacts, and learn the positive impact they can have in their community. In addition to developing job-related skills and knowledge, participants were also learning the importance of work ethic, punctuality, and teamwork.

The outcomes of the Summer Job Challenge are expected to have long term effects in reducing the social problems arising from lack of job skills and job opportunities, as stated in the report commissioned by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development referenced previously.

Lack of economic opportunity is identified as one of the key underlying factors for youth violence by the Ontario Province Report – *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*. In particular, youth from disadvantaged communities who are seeking opportunities may face barriers to securing jobs such as lack of transportation, access, or role models to help them prepare for employment.

Initiatives like the Summer Job Challenge supports the issue of youth violence prevention in Peel by playing an active role in providing Peel youth, some of which are from high-needs neighbourhoods, with valuable employment, mentorship and work experience that they can build on to enhance their future employment prospects.

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a) Highlights of the 2010 Summer Job Challenge Successes

- The application process was open for four days during which time, 504 applications were received, 445 online and 59 dropped off (resumes were not required);
- 95 candidates were interviewed at three different sites located in Mississauga and Brampton;
- 61 youths accepted employment, 36 positions were administrative, 3 labour, and 22 service related;
- 60 youths completed the eight-week summer employment fully and one youth ended employment after 7 weeks;
- 29 of the youths were attending or had just completed high school;
- 22 youths were from high-need neighbourhoods;
- 12 youths, who were in transition and not returning to school, were connected to existing employment services provided by Human Services and are receiving ongoing job search supports.

b) Feedback from Participants

Upon conclusion of the eight-week employment period, youth and supervisory staff were invited to participate in program evaluations.

- 90 per cent of the youth achieved a positive outcome;
- 89 per cent of participants felt strongly that their summer job increased their understanding of what is expected in a work situation ;
- 98 per cent of the youth participants said the 2-day employment preparation workshop conducted at the end of the program was beneficial;
- 75 per cent of the youth participants felt their work experience at the Region of Peel impacted their future career plans;
- 97 per cent of the supervisors reported that the youth made a valuable contribution to their team.

c) Comments from the Youth

The following are some quotations from notes and emails received from the youth involved in the 2010 Summer Job Challenge:

"I just wanted to say that the interview with you the day we met and the decision that we made at that moment has changed the way that I see myself and what I can do. Sometimes people don't realize that the smallest suggestion that they make can make a big impact in someone's life. I have been working hard to get myself some where in life and all I needed was for someone to give me a chance." S.F.

"I would like to thank you for allowing me to be apart of the Summer Job Challenge. The past two months has been a great working experience, and I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge while working in the Planning, Policy and Research Division. Working with Region of Peel has been a privilege, and has given me a better understanding of what is expected of me within a professional working atmosphere." T.A.

"I just wanted to say thank you once again for the opportunity over the last two months. I truly appreciate you placing me within the Public Health department, it definitely helped me orient my career better and I have learnt a lot from my former colleagues. Thank you

also for the push in getting me more involved in the programs, I am forever grateful." L.M.

d) 2010 Summer Job Challenge Follow Up

All youth who were not returning to school were invited to connect with the Human Services' Community Employment Services Worker who would offer assistance with job searching and community referrals. Of the 17 youth who did work with the Community Employment Service Worker:

- 5 youths secured part-time employment
- 2 decided to return to school and secured part-time employment
- 1 youth was hired in a contract position as a Research and Metrics Analyst with the Health Department
- 9 youths decided that they no longer needed support or did not respond to phone calls

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In addition to the regular summer student employment programs at the Region of Peel, staff is recommending that the Summer Job Challenge be increased to 75 youth, who would otherwise not be employed. This increase would allow the program to be expanded to provide additional supports to the community and include up to 40 percent job placements with community agencies such as the Brampton Safe City Association.

The 2011 Summer Job Challenge will seek out youth between 16-24 years of age with limited or no work experience and will target, but not be limited to, youth in social housing, high-need neighbourhoods, single parent and low and mid income families who would likely not be employed over the summer. Youth who participated in the 2010 Summer Job Challenge would not be eligible for participation in the 2011 initiative. They were encouraged at the employment preparation workshop to apply for other summer employment opportunities at the Region of Peel and were invited to access the services of the Human Services' Employment Resource Centres for job search support. The 2011 Summer Job Challenge will recruit 75 youth who meet the criteria and are new to the initiative.

At minimum wage of $10.25 per hour plus benefits, the cost of hiring 75 youth is approximately $253,995. In addition, $31,720 is required for staff to provide coordination services and $14,285 for youth placement supports for the initiative. Because the 75 summer students will be hosted at community agencies and in various divisions throughout the corporation, additional supervisory resources in these departments are not required.

Staff recommends that funds to support this initiative come from within the Human Services budget or Ontario Works Reserve (R1260), if required.

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CONCLUSION

Youth in Peel and the Greater Toronto Area are at a high risk as a result of the recent economic recession. Evidence shows that the "scarring" from long periods of unemployment among youth include: lower lifetime income; lack of contentment; job satisfaction; and reduced health in the future. Staff recommends that the Region of Peel expand the 2011 Summer Job Challenge to 75 youth as a contribution to the community response to youth unemployment.

This investment will complement several of the initiatives that Regional Council has supported the past year to mitigate the impact of the recession and further demonstrate the leadership provided in Peel and across the Province in response to the recession. By building on Regional Council's priorities, the 2011 Summer Job Challenge will be expanded to include placements at community agencies. This program also contributes to Strategic Plan objective to "Build a community that is stable, responsive and adaptable". As the provider and service manager of numerous Human Services in Peel, the Region of Peel is in a unique position to model support for this initiative and advocate for wide spread investment in youth and out community's future.

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Approved for Submission:

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