

For Information

DATE: November 22, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **REFRESH PROGRAM IN PEEL**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To inform about Refresh, a community based program that will be launched in the Region of Peel in 2012 as part of a Greater Toronto initiative.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In October 2011, Regional staff participated in a successful Refresh pilot, to mobilize local volunteers and community members to test the implementation of Refresh - a home painting and community building program.
- The program brings residents and volunteers together to promote relationship building, partnerships and resident engagement through the painting of residents' homes.
- The success of the pilot has resulted in a recommendation for participation of the Region of Peel in the upcoming Refresh program during the summer of 2012.
- The objectives of Refresh 2012 are in-line with the Region's social development and Term of Council Priority to build community capacity.

DISCUSSION**1. Introduction: Refresh Pilot in Peel**

Refresh will be introduced in 2012 across the Greater Toronto Area and Human Services staff recommend that Peel participate. To ensure the Region of Peel is prepared to handle a full launch of Refresh in 2012 and that results are successful, a pilot was held in late 2011. In the spirit of Refresh, the community was engaged and the following partnerships within Peel Region and the community were created with:

- Boys and Girls Club of Peel
- Numerous faith groups
- GE Capital
- Local Volunteers
- Pathways Housing
- Peel Regional Police
- Trios College
- Residents

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The painting phase of Peel's Refresh Pilot took place on October 21, 2011. Approximately 50 participants from Peel Regional Police, Boys and Girls Club of Peel, Trios College and the Region of Peel were assigned to paint at one of three Mississauga housing projects: Springfield, Colonial Terrace (Peel Living) and Forestridge (Pathways Housing). In total, six units were painted. By the end of day, painting was completed and the impacted communities were abuzz with enthusiasm for a fuller Refresh experience. This pilot also demonstrated the capacity of staff to mobilize local groups, businesses, housing providers and supporting agencies to implement a more extensive Refresh initiative in the summer of 2012.

2. Overview of Refresh

Refresh's key objectives are to:

- refresh the internal living conditions for Housing residents such as Peel Living; and
- restore local pride, and ultimately create a strong sense of community.

The Refresh program involves a series of phases, explained as follows:

1. Recruitment phase: Participating buildings and communities are selected. Residents are informed about the program and have the opportunity to sign up and participate. Participation in the planning and painting process is a key requirement in getting admission to the program.
2. Preparation phase: Units are prepared for painting, which may include minor repairs.
3. Painting phase: Volunteers and residents selected to participate in the Refresh program come to paint the interiors of residents' homes. Each day includes a lunch (prepared by the residents) and concludes with a debrief session. The sessions allow Refresh participants to reflect on the day, the neighbourhood and the greater community. Participants are asked questions to help generate ideas and discussion including:
 - What do you like about your neighbourhood?
 - What can you do to make the community better?
 - What motivates you to help your neighbour?
4. Celebration and Follow-Up phase: The final day of Refresh ends with a community celebration event. A final debrief session is also held offering a final opportunity to reflect on the past five days, the community's needs moving forward and possible solutions to meet these needs. Information from all the debrief sessions is provided to local partners who can use the information to assist with future program development and planning. Also, information is used to assess and improve future Refresh program.

3. Benefits of the Refresh Program

Benefits and successes that can be attributed to the Refresh program include:

- renovations to residents' home (ie. a new coat of paint);
- new friendships;
- celebration of diversity;
- increased pride and ownership in residents' homes and their larger community;

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- opportunity to promote accomplishments of neighbourhoods that, at times, receive negative media attention which can create societal assumptions or misconceptions that neighbourhoods may start to internalize and believe to be true;
- enhanced tenant experience and quality of life;
- decreased barriers and judgments between residents, public servants and volunteers enabling greater understanding, respect and relationship building;
- significant insight into the needs of the communities served, which are identified by members of the communities (an essential factor that leads to "hand's-on" community involvement in the solutions);
- increased stakeholder investment in Refresh and in the creation and delivery of additional programs intended to meet the needs of the community as identified through the Refresh debrief sessions;
- greater opportunities for establishing partnerships including improving relationships with the local police;
- fiscal responsibility and tax dollar savings due to the shared development, delivery, and funding of programs with participating local partners. The initiative typically leverages a 5-1 ratio of volunteer contribution and donations to actual dollars invested in materials and supplies.

4. Refresh Supports Term of Council Priorities

Council has recognized the importance of building community capacity as a Term of Council Priority. Refresh creates opportunities for this as local residents (including youth) can be engaged and encouraged to take an active role in developing and shaping their own community. The involvement of public (and private) sector partners also enhances their role in communities as individuals and/or neighbourhoods will seek out their supports and services as initiatives develop.

5. Proposed Direction

Refresh Pilot was successful and staff recommend partaking in Refresh 2012; July 9 to 13, 2012. All the partners involved in Peel's pilot have also committed to Refresh 2012. The Human Services Department is currently assessing where Refresh 2012 will take place and will begin the recruitment phase once finalized. Once locations are finalized an official invitation will be extended to Council to help celebrate the launch of Refresh 2012 in Peel.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

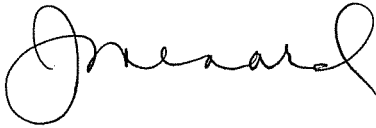
The Human Services Department anticipates Refresh 2012 to cost a maximum of \$20,000: \$95 for supplies per unit (100 units estimated) and \$10,000 for miscellaneous expenses. These expenses will be covered within existing budgets for capital maintenance and repair.

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CONCLUSION

The Human Services Department looks forward to launching the Refresh program for multiple reasons including the benefits it offers community members and its inherent fit with both the Department's integration efforts and Council's priority to build community capacity.



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Approved for Submission:



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