

# DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

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**Title:** Youth Engagement Strategy

**Date Prepared:** June 12, 2019

**Report To:** Committee of the Whole

**Councillor and Role:** Mayor Danny Breen, Governance and Strategic Priorities and Maggie Burton, Council Champion Youth Advisory Committee

**Ward:** N/A

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**Decision/Direction Required:** Support for the proposed direction to develop a youth engagement strategy

## **Discussion – Background and Current Status:**

In 2014, the City of St. John's adopted a public engagement framework and policy that set out a set of guiding principles for public engagement. One of these focuses on inclusion and specifically states: "The City of St. John's recognizes that stakeholders are varied. Therefore, the City will employ a variety of methods and tools to connect with those who will be directly and indirectly impacted thereby eliminating barriers to participation wherever possible."

In the 2017 [evaluation report](#) of the City's public engagement efforts, it was noted that youth engagement is still a challenge. With the city's shifting demographics (aging population and reduction in 15-35 year-old age group) and the imperative to attract and retain younger people to live and work in St. John's, it is essential to get this younger demographic more actively engaged in municipal matters and decision making through effective public engagement efforts. The City's current economic development strategy, RoadMap 2021, which is also undergoing an update this year, also outlines a goal to create a magnetic and desirable city for newcomers and young professionals.

2018 was a significant year for the City with public engagement carried out on several policy-shaping initiatives including a ten-year strategic plan, a three-year budget, a public transit review, a cycling strategy, new development regulations to support Envision and new recreation facilities being planned and programmed. While engagement efforts for all projects were robust and multiple methods and tools were used, there was clearly a gap in participation from the younger population. Where there was participation from all demographics, the areas of importance for younger demographics was different. This was also seen in the city's first citizen satisfaction survey carried out in 2018 where there were some clear differences for the younger demographic:

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# ST. JOHN'S

- Perceptions of the quality of life in St. John's as well as overall satisfaction with the programs and services provided by the City were directly linked to age with those 55 plus having the most positive views and those 18 to 34 being the most pessimistic.
- The youngest age group (18 to 34) are the least satisfied with public transportation in the City.

The City's new Strategic Plan, [Our City, Our Future](#), sets out a strategic direction to create a Connected City. Within this direction, a goal to increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the city is outlined. This goal and direction help drive the city's vision to be progressive and a place where people want to live and feel they belong. Improving youth engagement is one way the City can do this.

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) can play a key role in supporting the development of a youth engagement strategy.

Working with the YAC and lead staff in Recreation responsible for youth programming, the Division of Organizational Performance and Strategy (OPS) proposes to establish a youth lead action group (of between 15-20 public members) to look at the issue of why youth do not actively engage in civic matters and make recommendations on how the city can improve its youth engagement efforts. The group would consider such matters as the approach to engagement, City communications to youth, issues/topics of interest to youth, how to best maximize the role of YAC as a voice for youth, barriers to youth participation.

Terms of reference will be created for the group, outlining timelines and key deliverables as well as roles and responsibilities for city staff, Council Champion and external members of the team. Planning and promotion will begin in early fall once school restarts with the team's hands-on work happening throughout October-November with a goal to have a final report with recommendations in early December 2019. At least two members of YAC would be asked to serve on the team and all members would be encouraged to promote the opportunity to serve on the team and then promote and encourage their peers to provide feedback throughout the duration of the group's work.

The action youth group will consist of a cross section of youth from all demographics to be truly inclusive and representative of youth within the City.

### **Key Considerations/Implications:**

#### **1. Budget/Financial Implications:**

Operating budget from Organizational Performance and Strategy will be used to cover any costs associated with meetings. Should recommendations yield budget implications, these will be considered as part of Budget 2020.

#### **2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:**

A full stakeholder analysis will be completed to identify all stakeholders who may be able to support or advance this work.

3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:

Strategic Direction: Connected City, GOAL: C1 - Increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the City

Initiative C1.6 Undertake a Youth Engagement Strategy to improve youth participation in City engagement efforts

4. Legal or Policy Implications:

None expected at this time.

5. Privacy Implications:

None expected at this time.

6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:

A robust engagement strategy and communications plan will be developed to recruit members for the youth action group and to engage youth in the development of the strategy.

7. Human Resource Implications:

None anticipated.

8. Procurement Implications:

None anticipated.

9. Information Technology Implications:

None anticipated.

10. Other Implications:

Once formed, it is expected the youth action group will meet and consult with various city staff to better understand how the city works and to plan for their engagement efforts. OPS staff will coordinate those opportunities and support the group in achieving their mandate.

**Recommendation:** Support the proposed direction for the development of a youth engagement strategy.

**Prepared by/Date:** Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance and Strategy, June 5, 2019

**Approved by/Date:** Derek Coffey, Deputy City Manager, Finance and Administration, June 5, 2019