



2019 Report

YOUTH OTTAWA

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Executive Summary

In 2015, Youth Ottawa and the *City of Ottawa* began a partnership to meaningfully involve youth in the municipal government. We wanted to bring youth voice to *City Hall* while simultaneously educating them on how the City operates — both approaches allowing young people to have a significant impact on Ottawa’s development.

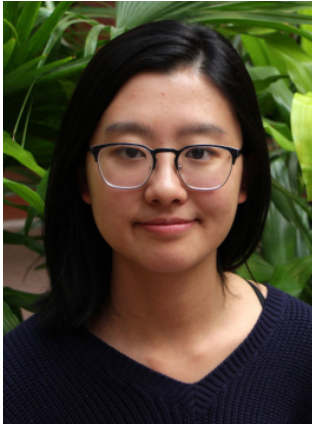
As I look back on the past year of operations with the *Ottawa Youth Engagement Committee* (OYEC), I am thrilled by what has been achieved, grateful to the *City of Ottawa* for its support, and humbled by the outstanding young people who have volunteered their time, energy, perspectives and, mostly importantly, talents towards OYEC’s activities. I feel that we have struck an ideal balance between advisement and action. We have dramatically increased OYEC consultations with City departments and given City staff plenty of advice. From Mayor for a Day competitions to the development of Councillors in Civics Classes toolkits & lesson plans, OYEC has been exponentially increasing touch points between the municipal government and youth. At the same time, the committee is beginning to roll out projects aimed to respond to what they are hearing from youth in their public consultations, beginning with a *Sexual Health Education* Summit planned

for the spring of 2019 in partnership with Ottawa Public Health. Through conscious effort, OYEC is as diverse and representative of Ottawa as it has ever been, and increases in the quantity and experience of applicants to the committee demonstrates clearly how this focus on diversity has become a source of strength.

Youth Ottawa is also extremely gratified to see that nearly every OYEC member describes their experience in highly positive terms — “an oasis of support” in the words of one participant. From this basis of strong support from membership, I feel that the future is bright, and look forward to continuing the important work of connecting youth and the municipal government in Ottawa.

Ian Bingeman
Executive Director

OYEC Members







Engagement between OYEC Youth and City Staff

2018 and 2019 have seen a dramatic increase in engagement between OYEC members and City departments and staff, both in monthly meetings and through working directly with subcommittees.

City staff and community partners visited OYEC meetings throughout 2018 to inform members of their work or to seek advisement from a body of young people.

Visits included:

- › Crime Prevention Ottawa & the Sexual Assault Network.
- › Councillor Tobi Nussbaum regarding his ward's youth strategy.
- › Ottawa Next: Beyond 2036.
- › Clara Freire from Community and Social Services to discuss the City's planning cycle.
- › OC Transpo regarding LRT Phase 2.
- › Ottawa Public Health.
- › The Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre.

For the first time, OYEC subcommittees are working with City departments to accomplish their goals:

- › The Access to Services—Sexual Education Subcommittee is working with Ottawa Public Health to organize a city-wide youth sexual education & resource summit.
- › The Indigenous Working Group is working with Councillor Fleury to secure accessible recreational activities and spaces for cultural practices for Indigenous youth.
- › The Mayor for a Day Subcommittee worked with Mayor Watson and Corporate Communications to design the contest and all promotional materials in both 2018 & 2019.

The new term in September 2018 saw the first annual OYEC weekend training:

- › Included a 3 hour crash-course on the City of Ottawa from Diana Knight, City staff liaison, a KAIROS Blanket Exercise and Anti-Oppression workshops.
- › This item was greatly enjoyed by members - understanding and knowledge of the City's structure has increased tenfold in the 2018-2019 term.

To further increase engagement between city staff and counselors, OYEC is working on the following initiatives:

- › With the election of seven new City Councillors in late 2018, members decided to collectively write a letter to all Councillors.
 - » This letter introduces OYEC and its goals for the upcoming year, and encourages Counselors to visit an OYEC meeting in 2019 so the committee can work with elected officials to make Ottawa and all of its wards a better city for youth.
 - » The letter will be sent to Council in March 2019 by Councillor Fleury.
- › Improving the Councillor Meet & Greet format, a yearly event held between City Councillors and OYEC members, to include a presentation on current priorities by OYEC members and guided conversations.
- › Inviting City Departments into OYEC meetings based on current Term of Council priorities, including: Community and Social Services re: Housing & Homelessness Strategy, Ottawa Next: Beyond 2036, and the new downtown library project.



Youth Outreach

OYEC is reaching out to youth and schools through the application-process, consultations, the Mayor for a Day Contest, and soon, a social media presence, and community organizations via subcommittee project partnerships.

- › The 2018-2019 call for submissions saw our highest application numbers to date.
 - › Forty youth applied for 10 open spots, with the applications being spread via Youth Ottawa's extensive community partner network and through Youth Ottawa and the City of Ottawa's social media channel.
 - › During 2018 consultations, the Youth Consultations Subcommittee spoke with approximately 100 youth in Ottawa to determine their 2018-2019 priorities.
 - › At the 2019 Mayor for a Day launch event at Immaculata High School, an OYEC member and the OYEC Co-ordinator spoke to a group of 100 students about the contest and committee itself.
 - › Posters for the contest were mailed to every high school in Ottawa in both 2018 and 2019 and the contest details were emailed to all teachers in Youth Ottawa's network, many of whom use Mayor for a Day as a civics assignment.
 - › The promotional video was watched over 5,000 times and 170 submissions were received in 2019 -double the submissions of the 2018 contest.
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A Diverse Committee



The current OYEC committee consists of 20 members, appropriately and robustly reflecting Ottawa's diversity, with:

- › 1/3 of members in high school and 2/3 employed or in post-secondary education.
- › 4 Indigenous youth (highest number to date).
- › 18 racialized youth.
- › 3 LGBTQ+ youth.
- › Over half of the committee coming from newcomer and immigrant families.
- › At least 5 youth self-identified as coming from a low-income background.
- › Over half of Ottawa's municipal wards represented.
- › Members that are engaged with other advocacy groups and organizations in their schools or the city at large.

Connecting Youth and Municipal Decision Makers

Three OYEC initiatives were developed and launched in 2018 to encourage broader youth engagement with the municipal government: youth consultations, Mayor for a Day, and Councillors in Civics Classes.

Youth Consultations

- › OYEC organized and held four youth consultations to build their 2018-2019 Youth Action Plan: one each for racialized, Franco-phone, and Indigenous youth, and a final consultation open to all youth (that was well-attended by LGBTQ+ and rural youth).
- › The consultations included an activity that asked participants to identify the City services they use from an inclusive list, leading to an in-depth discussion, thus increasing participants' knowledge of the City of Ottawa.



**MAYOR
FOR A DAY**

Mayor for a Day

- › Launched in February 2018 in partnership with *Mayor Jim Watson's* Office to build excitement around the municipal government.

- › The contest asks Grade 9-12 students to suggest improvements to the City of Ottawa in either essay or video format, encouraging them to research and better understand the City's responsibilities.
- › Two winners are selected to shadow the Mayor for a day and discuss their ideas.

Councillors in Civics

- › This initiative was developed by two high school OYEC members in partnership with Council Liaison Councillor Mathieu Fleury and his staff.
- › The members wrote two toolkits: one for teachers and one for City Councillors.
- › The toolkit for teachers includes a lesson plan that prepares students for a Councillor visit, while the toolkit for Councillors outlines an engaging classroom visit for Councillors to follow.
- › The program is currently in its pilot phase, with the first visit from Councillor Catherine McKenney happening at Lisgar Collegiate Institute in January 2019.
- › Throughout 2019, the program will be edited based on teacher, student, and Councillor feedback, and a finalized version will be presented as an open-source document by September 2019, with visits continuing to be organized by OYEC members.
- › Members identified through conversations with their peers and mining their own experience that youth engagement with the municipal government is low because understanding, the first step of engagement, is very low.
- › Members hope to increase young people's knowledge of the municipal government, its services, and the role of Councillors by encouraging more Councillors to visit civics classes in a guided, youth-friendly format.

Youth Action Showcase

Our job is to bring youth voice to City Hall, but OYEC can't do it all, so Youth Ottawa sets up two yearly touch points (in November and May) for Councillors and City staff to connect more broadly with youth in Ottawa.

Regular Meetings and Progress Assessment

OYEC meets monthly at City Hall with meetings split between visitor presentations and consultations, and subcommittee work to monitor the Youth Action Plan.

- › Two-hour meetings of the committee allow ample time for both a comprehensive visit from a City staff or community partner, aiming to build relationships and increase engagement, and subcommittee work periods for effective monitoring of the Youth Action Plan goals.
- › As the 2016-2019 Youth Action Plan's final items are now in the hands of City staff and departments, OYEC developed a focused 2018-2019 Youth Action Plan based on the aforementioned youth consultations:
- › Each subcommittee is made up of three to seven OYEC members with a lead who reports directly to the Youth Ottawa Coordinator.
- › Subcommittee meetings meet at least once a month outside of full committee meetings, with the lead sending meeting notes, next steps, and questions to the coordinator, who can direct City-related needs to the City staff liaison.
- › This has proven to be a very effective way to structure the committee and will lead to many successful initiatives in 2019 and beyond.

1
Improve youth's knowledge of and relationships with the City of Ottawa and City Councillors.

2
Increase young people's access to sexual education & sexual health resources.

3
Build better relationships between racialized youth and City of Ottawa staff.

4
Improve the City of Ottawa for Indigenous youth.

5
Devise a project to combat youth unemployment in Ottawa.

Effective Relationships with City Staff

Youth Ottawa and assigned City Staff maintained an outstanding relationship based on mutual respect and shared commitment to the OYEC project.

- › Quarterly in-person meetings and regular phone/email communications were held between Diana Knight, City staff liaison, and Emma Buchanan, OYEC Coordinator, to review OYEC priorities.
- › Effective division of labour, where the City staff liaison is responsible for room bookings, arranging food for meetings, and building connections with City Departments, and the Youth Ottawa Coordinator is responsible for writing agendas and minutes, managing members, and overseeing Youth Action Plan progress.
- › Councillor Mathieu Fleury, City Council liaison for OYEC, is regularly updated on committee activities by the Coordinator and visits meetings at least twice a year to update members on City Council priorities and to remind them of his supportive role.

Membership Satisfaction

When asked directly in a recent evaluation survey (January 2019), 88% of OYEC members (or 15 out of 17 respondents) said they are “highly satisfied” with OYEC as an opportunity to increase knowledge of municipal services, staff, and policies.

“I have truly learnt the importance of municipal government and the role it plays in our day to day lives.”

“We are given the opportunity to talk with and ask questions to different staff members, which allowed me to learn so much about municipal services. Additionally, during training, we received an in-depth presentation by Diana, and I learned things about the city I never even heard of!”

“Being made aware of different city sectors through presentations and seminars has made me much more knowledgeable on the runnings of Ottawa’s municipality.”

59%, or 10 out of 17 respondents, said they know “far more than before” in regards to navigating municipal issues through the City of Ottawa.

“Being able to meet with counselor and other members of the City of Ottawa staff, including people involved with the LRT system, has been extremely helpful and eye opening.”

Youth Testimonials

“Being around like-minded individuals concerning social issues and applications has strengthened my morale and has given me an increased knowledge of where to apply my knowledge on a city scale.”

“I like the open conversations we have with different departments from the City or Councillors and being able to share the youth opinion and be taken into consideration.”

“I have learned so much about City of Ottawa services that I never knew before. I am able to have a direct impact on youth through our initiatives that are supported and are in partnership with the City of Ottawa and Youth Ottawa. I have gained a lot of professional experience and the people on this committee have diverse experiences which has allowed me to grow as a person from inter-acting and working with them.”

“Emma has been an excellent facilitator and advocate for us. OYEC would not be as effective without her efforts (backed by Youth Ottawa). She is realistic but also helps us to accomplish great things.”

