



City of Edmonton Youth Council Annual Report

2015-2016



Edmonton



CEYC
CITY OF EDMONTON YOUTH COUNCIL

Introduction



City of Edmonton Youth Council Mission

Educate and empower youth to provide meaningful input and to take action on local issues and municipal politics in Edmonton.

Goals

1. Mobilize youth on local issues through community events and projects.
2. Empower youth through education, skill-building and experience to be active citizens.
3. Provide opportunities for meaningful participation in Edmonton's local government.

Mandate

The City of Edmonton Youth Council's mandate is to provide information and advice to Council in relation to issues involving or affecting youth.

The City of Edmonton Youth Council has two main objectives:

- Providing feedback and input to City Council and other various civic committees on issues affecting youth.
- Working on projects that deal with issues important to youth by establishing subcommittees.



Membership and Structure

The City of Edmonton Youth Council consisted of 19 volunteer members between the ages of 13-23 for the 2015-2016 term. Newly developed this term were Youth At Large members, who volunteered on subcommittees and project teams on an ongoing or project-based role. The Youth At Large members played an essential role, volunteering on many projects and providing dedicated time and support to meetings. The year jumped to a start with Chair Marina Banister and Vice-Chair Cameron Somerville being elected to serve as the spokespersons and form the executive. Many exciting ideas and discussions occurred around the work in the following 12 months. At the end of the year, City of Edmonton Youth Council had approximately 60 volunteers in their subcommittees. City of Edmonton Youth Council meets as a committee on a monthly basis on the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 PM in City Hall and all meetings are open to the public.

This term, City of Edmonton Youth Council created five subcommittees: City Planning and Infrastructure, Arts, Health and Wellness, Social Equity, and Engagement.



Subcommittees:

City Planning
and Infrastructure

Arts

Health and Wellness

Social Equity

Engagement



NEW APPOINTMENTS

Ravina Anand
Thomas Banks
Kelly Bennett
Amy Boyd
Saga Darnell
Genna DiPinto
Angelika Matson
Kabir Nadkarni
Armaan Somani
Jasmine Wang
Lauren White

REAPPOINTMENTS

Marina Banister
Liza Chatterjee
Tianna LeBlanc
Alex MacRae-Korobkov
Joanne Picard
Marlene Rong
Cameron Somerville
Quinten Starko
Non-member Councilor Andrew Knack (advisor)

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It has been a fast-paced year for the City of Edmonton Youth Council. With five outstanding subcommittees, a council of enthusiastic youth, and over 70 volunteers, Edmonton's Youth Council has been able to make a difference in countless different ways. This annual report will provide an overview of the work our motivated team was able to deliver. From city planning initiatives to social equity discussions, Edmonton youth continue to show how we are invested in making Edmonton the most vibrant community possible.



This year, our Council accomplished more than ever before. Our Arts Committee held a zine fair and helped select our new youth poet laureate. The Health and Wellness Committee hosted a mental health panel and did a sugar intake survey. Our Engagement Committee dedicated their time to highlighting youth stories and doing classroom talks. Our Social Equity Committee fearlessly advocated for the rights of LGBTQ youth and planned our second annual walk in the Edmonton Pride Parade. And our City Planning and Infrastructure Committee raised almost \$4,000 which was used to buy transit tickets for youth, and they are pushing for Edmonton City Hall to use more solar power.

Needless to say, this has been a big year for the City of Edmonton Youth Council. However, more than our committees individual accomplishments, this year we truly accomplished something as a team. Together, over 70 young Edmontonians came together to make a difference in their community. As Chair, I was constantly inspired by the motivation and altruistic attitude of the Youth Council volunteers, and I could not be more proud of the work this council has accomplished.

The City of Edmonton Youth Council is here to make a difference in the lives of young Edmontonians, and every year we will continue to dedicate ourselves to making our City a better place to grow.

I hope you enjoy learning more about the work our Youth Council has done by reading this annual report!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marina Banister".

Marina Banister

MESSAGE FROM HIS WORSHIP MAYOR DON IVESON

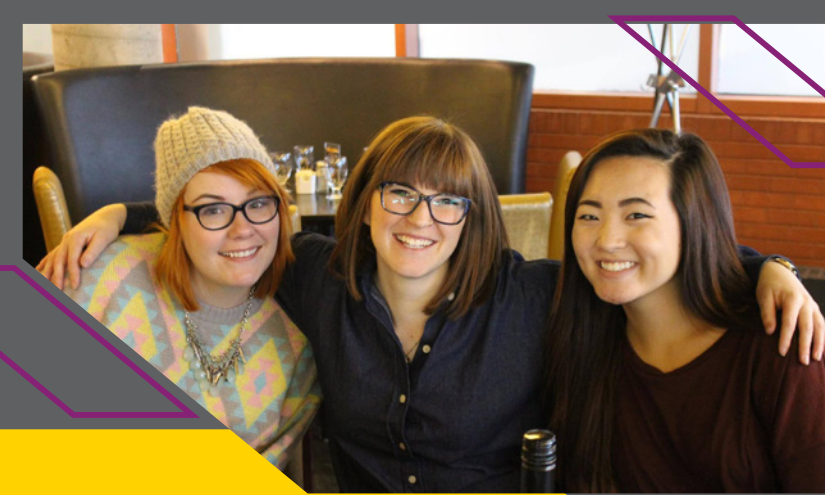
This year, Edmonton's Youth Council proved once again that they are a force to be reckoned with, and are not afraid to take on any challenge. From advocating for the lowering of the voting age to igniting conversations about sustainable eating to environmental responsibility, the Youth Council engaged people of all ages in important conversations about the future of our city. Through exceptional teamwork and smart advocacy, this team is living proof of the value of empowering our youth to lead us into the future.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Don Iveson".

Don Iveson, Mayor

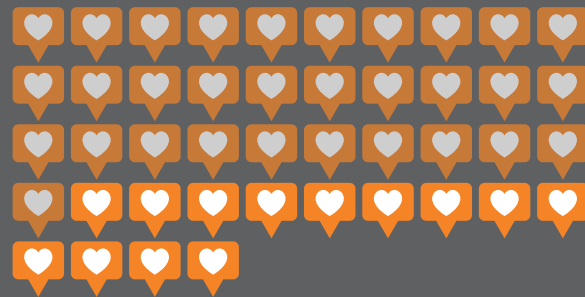




Social Media



INSTAGRAM:
instagram.com/edmyouthcouncil currently has 442 followers, an increase of 42.58% from 310 at start of term.



The CEYC Instagram account averaged 294 interactions each month this term.



This term's reach on Facebook totalled 199,599!

FACEBOOK:
facebook.com/edmyouthcouncil/ currently has 1191 likes, an increase of 42.82% from 681 at start of term.

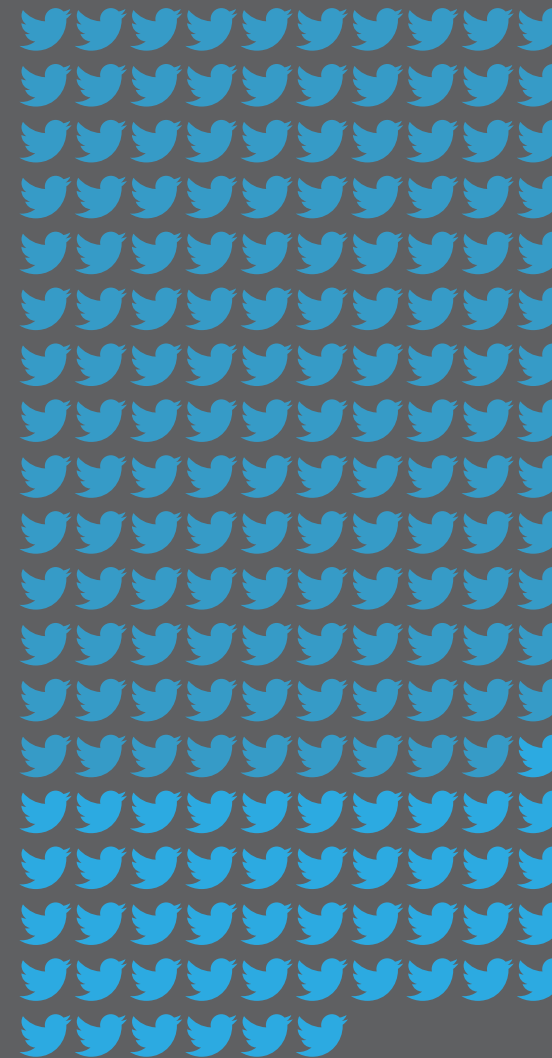


Engagement on posts (shares, comments, likes) averaged 2959 per month.

Average post reach increased by 27% from previous year.

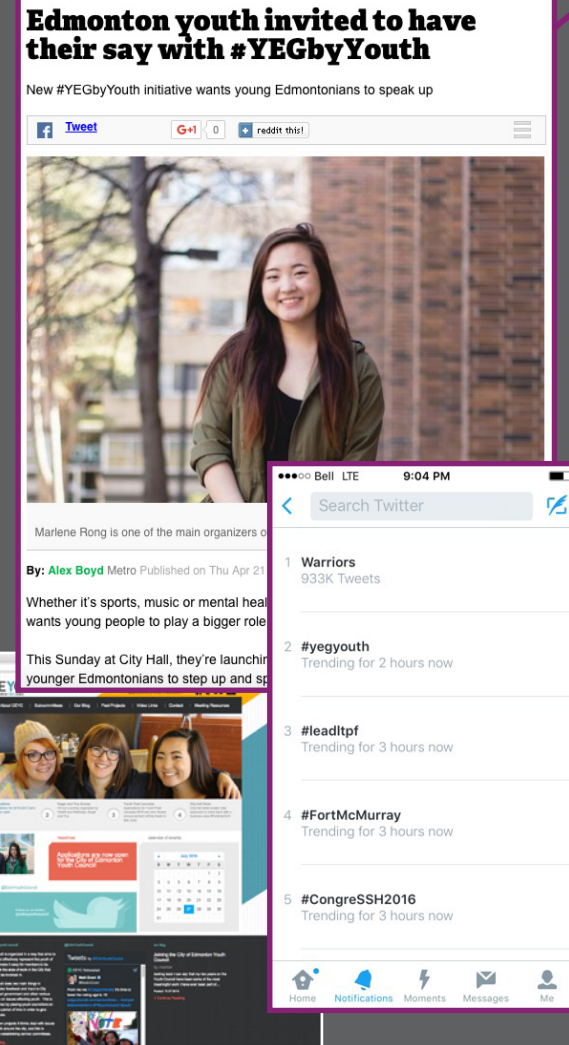


TWITTER:
@EdmYouthCouncil currently has 1863 followers, up 33.84% from 1392 at start of term.



Impressions on CEYC tweets averaged 20,300 per month this term.

The CEYC Twitter profile page was visited 13,450 times this term.



CEYC was mentioned in people's tweets 533 times this term (an increase of 70.83%).

Council Initiatives

Special Events

MUSTARD SEED VOLUNTEERING SESSION

In May, five members of the City of Edmonton Youth Council, along with three members of the Mustard Seed staff, prepared and served a meal for 325 people. The Mustard Seed is a non-for-profit humanitarian organization that serves the needs of some of Edmonton's less fortunate. This volunteer session gave the City of Edmonton Youth Council members an opportunity to interact with Edmonton's citizens and give back to their community in a meaningful way.



WARD 12 BY-ELECTION

The City of Edmonton Youth Council held an informal mixer at City Hall with 15 of the candidates for Ward 12, as an opportunity for youth to speak and have a voice with candidates. It was a successful opportunity for members of City of Edmonton Youth Council, volunteers and citizens to ask questions and interact with the candidates.

PRIDE PARADE

The City of Edmonton Youth Council was thrilled to Dive Into Pride at the Pride Parade. They were one of four youth organizations chosen to walk in the parade in support of Edmonton's LGBTQ youth. In conjunction, City of Edmonton Youth Council held a Rainbow Art event during the Pride Parade Family Picnic. They invited youth attending the event to take part in our rainbow-themed chalk art to participate in public art. It was a lot of fun for everybody involved!





Environmental Sustainability

Carrying over from the City of Edmonton Youth Council's previous term was a debate over vegetarian meals in City Hall. A formal motion from City of Edmonton Youth Council recommended City Council make all their catered meals vegan or vegetarian. The Youth Council highlighted the impact reducing meat consumption typically has on water use, land use and carbon emissions. In practice, the change would be small — eliminating an occasional meat and cheese platter served on full council days several times a year. But the Youth Council viewed it as a significant public statement. The motion brought forward was received for information and subsequently not voted on. It was a step in the direction towards thinking about what we eat, and how we support our environment and local business.

This recommendation for vegan catering and environmental sustainability also propelled the Youth Council into the centre of a national social media storm. Some of the interactions and social media conversations were eye-opening and others extreme examples of negativity. On social media channels and comment boards, City of Edmonton Youth Council members were derided by people across the country. The issue started with environmental sustainability but blew into a larger context of online bullying. Council members saw this harassment online as a realistic situation for many citizens, both youth and adults.



Voting Age

City of Edmonton Youth Council started a dialogue surrounding lowering the municipal election voting age to 16. City of Edmonton Youth Council argued that since 16- and 17-year-olds use city roads, facilities and transportation, they should have a greater say in shaping their city by being able to cast a ballot. Youth can be emancipated, living on their own, paying property taxes; they can be in the army reserves; they can be a parent; yet they're not old enough to vote. City of Edmonton Youth Council views that 16- and 17-year-olds are ready for this change and that youth want to vote.

Changing the municipal voting age in the Local Authorities Elections Act would also automatically change the school trustee voting age. It would give a great opportunity to school trustee candidates to have in their platforms issues catered to students. It could also greatly benefit students who would be given a voice in deciding who directs the system they are currently in. This will ultimately allow school boards to do their jobs more effectively.

The next steps in this process will be to gather letters from other levels of government, and work with community groups to ask the provincial government to lower the municipal voting age. The motion will go forward to City Council when the research and consultation has been completed.





Subcommittees

City Planning and Infrastructure

TICKET TO RIDE

Ticket to Ride was a collaborative fundraiser event formed by Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS) and EndPoverty Edmonton and hosted by the City of Edmonton Youth Council. The objective of the event was to bring accessible transportation to impoverished youth in Edmonton. The evening included presentations by City Councillor Mohinder Banga, MLA Jon Carson, an expert from a local university, representatives from EndPoverty Edmonton, YESS and City of Edmonton Youth Council. The event raised \$3,907 — equal to 1628 bus tickets for vulnerable young Edmontonians.

All proceeds were used directly towards the purchase of transportation passes to be distributed through YESS. This funding will enable youth at risk to reliably get to work and access housing and community services, which empowers them to achieve their goals early in life. The City of Edmonton Youth Council had approximately 100 people attend the event and it concluded with a heightened awareness of youth poverty.

CITY HALL SOLAR

Through deliberations City of Edmonton Youth Council determined there is a need to showcase solar energy projects in Edmonton. They concluded that the uniqueness and symbolic value of City Hall makes it an important location to investigate solar energy. They additionally wanted to include an interactive Citizens Energy Dashboard display that would show all active solar energy in the City of Edmonton. This would be an opportunity for citizens to interact with solar energy and would demonstrate visible leadership in solar energy.

This project has progressed to include City of Edmonton Youth Council in collaboration with City of Edmonton and Office of Energy Management (OEM) to continue exploring technical aspects, site feasibility, partnerships and financial models to install solar energy at City Hall. Work is underway on developing a prototype design, configuration and display requirements to complete set up and communication of the Citizens Energy Dashboard. Further development and data verification is being conducted to determine a technical assessment and business case, which will be presented to City Council in early fall 2016. This has been an opportunity for City of Edmonton Youth Council to work alongside the City, gain insight on civic governance and provide a impactful youth perspective to the conversations.



Arts

This term saw the Arts Subcommittee promote and impassion youth participation across the realms of arts and culture. They connected young Edmontonians to local arts organizations, represented youth perspective at a municipal order and built on the legacy of success of the City of Edmonton Youth Council.

PARKA PATIO PARTY

The Arts Subcommittee and Latitude 53 co-programmed a free, all-ages event held during the daytime portion of Parka Patio. The event included a WinterCity Instagram photography campaign presenting young aspiring creatives, short youth-created films courtesy of the Alberta Media Arts Alliance Society, and featured performance arts from iHuman Youth Society, The Mac Dance Team, and Savage Stepz. Together they raised \$17,000, and in doing so brought together Edmontonians to reclaim and reaffirm their juvenescence whilst promoting vibrancy, inclusion and the continued robustness of the arts community.

MAKE A ZINE FAIR

The Arts Subcommittee was delighted to invite young people ages 13-23 to delve into making zines. Youth learned to craft small, self-published magazines that have been an underground form of self-expression for decades. Additionally, participants were able to explore poetry, photography, collage and more with some of Edmonton's most prominent artists serving as workshop leaders. Participants had the opportunity to exhibit and sell their zines at Edmonton Zine Fair 5, which took place on June 11 at the Sewing Machine Factory. Principally, the event aimed to inspire young people to discover, explore, and express their own voices by way of self-expression through art.



BAY ENTERPRISE SQUARE DEVELOPMENT

The Arts Subcommittee represented the perspectives, vision and aspirations of youth on a municipal working group. The working group, formed around the practical creativity of Brad Bismonte, is operating to revive the Bay Enterprise Square LRT Station retail mall space. The Arts Subcommittee has supported and will continue to serve the group in redeveloping the space to accommodate artists and civil society groups to literally and figuratively create an "underground arts scene" in downtown Edmonton.

YOUTH POET LAUREATE

Charlotte Cranston became Edmonton's first Youth Poet Laureate on June 1, 2015. Chosen from among more than 20 applicants, Charlotte's one-year term as poet laureate will reflect the life of a city through poetry, writing and performing for various city events. Charlotte explained the role as connecting poetry to the rest of the community, and bringing poetry into the greater public sphere, as opposed to just inside its own little scene. As the Youth Poet Laureate she created more open opportunities for youth to be involved in poetry.





Health and Wellness

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PANEL

The City of Edmonton Youth Council hosted a diverse panel discussion at City Hall with stakeholders and experts on youth mental health in Edmonton. Through the discussion they identified key areas of focus and important influences on youth mental well-being, such as school-provided support, poverty, the relationship between social media and youth mental health, the two-tiered health-care system and wait lists for programs offered in Edmonton that are related to the issue.

Many thanks to the remarkable panellists: Thomas Holmes, Linh Lu, Rebeccah Marsh, Margot Jackson, Tracy Johnson, Gina Chan and moderator Dr. Glynnis Lieb.

Mayor Don Iveson provided opening remarks that highlighted the importance of youth mental health. The Honourable Drew Barnes, Shadow Minister of Health and MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, provided a provincial perspective. Thank you to City Councillors Andrew Knack and Scott McKeen for attending the discussion and for their continuous support in the ongoing discussion around youth mental health in Edmonton.

An important component of this youth mental health project was to use the discussion at the panel to create an informative presentation to City Council based on the main themes of the panel discussion. If appropriate in the future the presentation will include recommendations to ensure Edmonton youth are receiving adequate mental health support.

SUGAR INTAKE

The Health and Wellness subcommittee, in conjunction with the University of Alberta, conducted a study on the physical, mental and dietary habits of Edmonton youth. The concern stemmed from the idea that poor emotional health may be preventing youth from getting active. We collected responses and feedback to provide momentum on creating initiatives for improving youth health here in our city. The data will be disseminated in the following term to provide recommendations for action.

STEP IN AND CHAT



An innovative action participatory research project was initiated by Health and Wellness. The project "Step in and Chat" uses place-making and installation to encourage Edmontonians to engage with each other on the basis of mutual respect and curiosity. We don't often go to the bus stop to meet strangers, however, Step in and Chat is an experiment to make this a reality, challenging traditional notions of space and social interaction. Following the launch they will survey how people interact with the installation to compile a report.

Social Equity

GENDER IDENTITY

The Edmonton Catholic School District was in the process of creating a specific policy earlier in the year to ensure the inclusivity and safety of staff, students and families who identify as part of the LGBTQ community. As youth, it's important the Youth Council have a voice in our education, especially when it comes to matters of policy. Not only are youth expected to follow these policies, but also they determine how Edmonton schools are run and the ways in which our teachers are expected to teach. City of Edmonton Youth Council played a role and represented youth in writing a letter





to the superintendent proposing changes to this policy. They encouraged youth to provide insight or suggestions and led the efforts to ensure youth attended the trustee meetings.

Many Edmonton youth asked City of Edmonton Youth Council for its position on the sexual orientation gender identity policy. The members wrote an opinion piece that reflects the perspective of the City of Edmonton Youth Council. Specificity, enforceability and involvement were the three pillars that City of Edmonton Youth Council believes are key.

City of Edmonton Youth Council went to City Council to ask for support to send a letter on behalf of youth to the Edmonton Catholic School District Board of Trustees. Our presentation was delayed to catch up with and integrate the new provincial school guidelines for LGBTQ policies. It was a successful effort to ensure that youth continue to be at the forefront of conversations and decisions that affect their rights.

COLLABORATION TOWARDS SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

The Social Equity Committee has been working with youth who identify as LGBTQ to ensure a safe and inclusive community. They invited students, staff and key education officials to a free discussion session to participate in a unique opportunity to collaborate and share their experiences supporting LGBTQ youth. The event, held in a small room at the University of Alberta's Student Union Building, brought together people from all three school boards and youth who attend the schools. Instead of debate and argument, school trustees sat at this meeting and listened as youth offered their suggestions and shared their experiences. The goal in organizing this session was to give students an opportunity to have candid conversations with school board trustees and community members.



Engagement

YEGBYOUTH

The flagship event for the Engagement subcommittee was a free, inspiring networking event under the banner of YEGbyYouth. The concept was developed and created to provide a platform and place for youth to share the amazing things they do. Hosted by City of Edmonton Youth Council, it was a great opportunity to hear from a wide array of speakers and performers and to get involved in the community YEGbyYouth stands to show that all youth citizens can make a difference in their community.

It was a packed afternoon with performances by Charlotte Cranston and Nicholas D. Yee. Speakers includes Navneet Khinda, Dr. Ross Lockwood, Dr. Shawna Pandya, Councillor Mohinder Banga, Marina Banister and Thomas Holmes.

Alongside the kickoff event, the YEGbyYouth team collected youth stories from around Edmonton. These stories were profiled on social media to bring the raw truth of what youth have overcome, the future they envision and what they believe youth empowerment to be. They hope to spark conversation around the troubles youth face, but also the incredible things that youth continue to do in our society today, and the powerful voice they bring to the table.

SCHOOL AND ORGANIZATION PRESENTATION CAMPAIGN

Member diversity is a quality that the City of Edmonton Youth Council seeks to exemplify in both its committee and its subcommittees. The committee recognizes the importance of having members from a diverse set of backgrounds to offer a variety of perspectives on the issues facing Edmonton youth. This year, the Engagement Subcommittee organized a city-wide presentation campaign to inform local youth about the function, purpose and action of the City of Edmonton Youth Council as well as what opportunities exist for youth to become involved in the committee. Target audiences included all Edmonton senior and junior highs as well as non-for-profit organizations that work to support youth, such as iHuman and YESS. The Engagement Subcommittee believes that through this campaign, youth from all across the city had an opportunity to learn about how they could have a voice in Edmonton through the City of Edmonton Youth Council.

Throughout the year, City of Edmonton Youth Council took every opportunity to engage with youth in Edmonton. Our chairperson frequently spoke to Grade 6 students at City Hall School, while the vice-chairperson met with student union leaders and student representatives for over 16,000 Edmonton high school students.



Final Thoughts

This term was indeed an eventful year for City of Edmonton Youth Council. It brought together a diverse group of youth who care about their city and want to bring change to areas they are passionate about. The work that the City of Edmonton Youth Council completed brought numerous media stories to the headlines, showed that youth will not sit back, and proved that young citizens are capable of change. The deliberate effort to ensure that all meetings were open to the public showed a commitment to open and transparent governance. Working with multiple City departments put youth in the room with content expert professionals, and saw youth providing invaluable feedback. The City of Edmonton Youth Council were dedicated to ensuring that youth are consulted not just solely for their age, but for their ideas. The discussions and respectful debate that occurred during meetings mimicked what every board and Council strives for. After another year of youth engagement has passed, the City of Edmonton Youth Council is very sure that the next term will be even more exciting.



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