

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 21, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: PROJECT SEARCH – EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH
DIFFERENT ABILITIES

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To obtain Council authority to enter into a collaboration agreement with the York Catholic District School Board and Community Living York South to implement Project SEARCH pilot. The agreement would be for eleven (11) months (September 1, 2022 - July 31, 2023).

Report Highlights

- Project SEARCH is a transition-to-work employment program for young people with developmental or intellectual disabilities
- The City of Vaughan will provide in-kind space and onsite skills training opportunities for high school students with mild intellectual disabilities.
- York Catholic District School Board has secured funding through the Ministry of Education to implement Project SEARCH with a business partner and community partnership to launch in York Region in September 2022.
- The City of Vaughan has a unique opportunity to play a leadership role as a host site for Project SEARCH in York Region.

Recommendations

1. THAT the City Manager be authorized to execute a collaboration agreement with the York Catholic School Board and Community Living York South for the Project SEARCH pilot on behalf of the City, in a form satisfactory to Legal Services.

Background

The City of Vaughan fosters an inclusive, accessible and accommodating community that recognizes inclusion is a intentional and continuous process to build a respectful and diverse community that addresses barriers and offers welcoming spaces with opportunities for people with disabilities.

Vaughan Inclusion Charter was approved by Council in June 2019 in support of the Inclusion Charter for York Region which is a community initiative to create a fair and equal environment for all. Along with the objectives of the 2019-2022 Multi Year Accessibility Plan, the Charter reaffirms Council's goal of Active, Safe and Diverse Communities as outlined in the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

It is recognized that employment is a social determinate of health impacting a person's well-being, health and social inclusion. A key indicator of one's quality of life and sense of personal fulfilment is one's ability to be gainfully employed and to find meaningful work.

Persons with disabilities continue to face barriers and stigma when looking for work, when seeking workplace accommodations and when trying to thrive or advance in their careers.

National Data on Disability

According to Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability in 2017, nearly one out of five (or 17.5%) York Region residents who were 15 years of age and over lived with at least one disability. That represents 162,600 York Region residents whose daily activities were restricted because of a long-term or health-related condition (Table 1). In comparison, the disability rate was 24.1% (or 2,616,170) for Ontario and 22.3% (or 6,246,640) for Canada.

Table 1. Prevalence of disabilities among York Region residents 15 years of age and over, 2017

	Total Population	Persons with Disabilities	Percent of persons with disabilities
Total population 15 years of age and over	931,400	162,600	17.5%
15 to 24 years	160,450	14,850*	9.3%*
25 to 64 years	614,150	83,400	13.6%
65 years of age and over	156,850	64,350	41.0%
65 to 74	98,150	32,600*	33.2%*
75 to 84	41,000	17,650*	43.0%
85 years of age and over	17,650	14,100*	79.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, custom tabulations

Among York Region residents 25 to 64 years of age, employment rates were different for people with disabilities and for those without disabilities (Table 2).

Table 2. Employment status of working-age York Region residents (25 to 64 years), 2017

	Total population 25 to 64 years of age	Percent of total population 25 to 64 years of age	Persons with disabilities	Percent of persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities	Percent of persons without disabilities
Total population 25 to 64 years of age	614,150	100.0%	83,400	100.0%	530,750	100.0%
In labour force	494,100	80.5%	52,300*	62.7%*	441,850	83.3%
Employed	470,050	76.5%	47,150*	56.5%*	422,900	79.7%
Unemployed	24,050*	3.9%*	N/A	N/A	18,950*	3.6%*
Not in the labour force	120,050	19.5%	31,100*	37.3%	88,900	16.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, custom tabulations

Local Data on Disability Statistics

Disability population statistics were available for three local municipalities: Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill.

Among these municipalities, Vaughan had the highest disability rate of 21.4% (or 54,450).

In Vaughan, 22.8%* (or 29,750*) of women experienced at least one disability compared with 20.0%* (or 24,650*) of men and the working-age adults without disabilities were almost twice as likely to be employed as those with disabilities. While 84.9% (or 117,100) of Vaughan residents without disabilities were employed, only 45.7%* (or 13,400*) of people with disabilities were employed.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is an internationally successful transition-to-work model for young people with developmental or intellectual disabilities. During their final year in high school, students are fully immersed in the workplace with a host business. The students prepare for employment with job skills training through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on career training.

Project SEARCH started at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in 1996. There are now more than 650 Project SEARCH sites worldwide, including 6 in Canada. Project SEARCH started in Ontario in 2019 and is recognized as best practice for business and public sector collaborations.

The Project SEARCH program model was introduced in Ontario by the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN).

Currently sites in Canada:

- Winnipeg is hosted by Manitoba Hydro, Government of Manitoba and Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg
- Toronto is hosted by the Holland Bloorview and Toronto Rehab-UHN
- Hamilton is hosted by YMCA and Path Employment
- Halton is hosted by the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital

Previous Reports/Authority

2019-2022 Multi Year Accessibility Plan

[2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan](#)

Analysis and Options

The national and local data on disability presents an opportunity for evidence-based programs to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in York Region. City of Vaughan in collaboration with York Catholic School Board and Community Living York South can meet some of the gaps experienced by persons living with disabilities through Project SEARCH.

Project SEARCH aligns with the [2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan](#) under Diverse and Safe Communities and furthers the 2019-2022 Multi Year Accessibility Plan to remove barriers and promote employment for persons with disabilities.

Collaborations

Educational Lead: York Catholic District School Board

The school board provides a classroom teacher, curriculum and students are registered with the school board (typically in their final year of high school eligibility).

Responsibilities:

- Provides the teacher to deliver the program
- Employer informed learning – students are taught specific job skills
- Provides job coaches

Business Lead: City of Vaughan

The business provides work-based learning (co-op) experiences, a “classroom” onsite, a business liaison and mentors within the departments.

Responsibilities:

- Provides mentorship and business liaison
- Provides a classroom (in-kind) in the workplace
- Provides 8–10 internship positions to offer students a variety of jobs and learn different skills
- No requirement to hire participants

Community Agency Lead: Community Living York South

An employment support organization that supports students to transition to employment on completion of their training.

Responsibilities:

- Onsite job coach

Project SEARCH format:

- Students complete three internships (unpaid) rotations over a full school year, with employment meetings happening throughout the duration of the program.
- The students are covered under Work Education Agreements for Workplace Safety Insurance.

The project timeline is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Project SEARCH Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Determine business and community partners	November - December 2021
Sign legal agreement with the Parties	April-May 2022
Develop plan, and processes for implementation YCDSB determine student candidates and recruit the first cohort of students (2022-23)	February-August 2022
Project implementation	September 2022
In class orientation, training, interview internship and onsite internship 1	October – December 2022
In class training, interview internship and onsite internship 2	January-March 2023
In class training, interview internship and onsite internship 3	April-June 2023
Program graduation	June 2023

Financial Impact

Project SEARCH is a licensed program that the York Catholic School Board has paid. The school board will also be covering the cost of a teacher and a job coach.

Community Living York South has obtained funding to provide a job coach.

The City of Vaughan will be providing an in-kind space that will be utilized as the classroom space between August 29, 2022 to June 30, 2023, Monday to Friday from 8:00am–3:30pm. As per the User Fee Policy, the cost associated with permitting the classroom in a community centre for the above period is \$29,664.00 which represents the community service organization (CSO) fee \$17.50/ hr + HST for 7.5 hrs/day for 200 days.

The Pilot year will be utilized to understand and outline the costs for the program, locate sustainable funding and staff support. The City Council will be provided with a report that includes detailed finances by June 2023, outlining any changes to the existing budget, and future financial impact to implement Project SEARCH and expand scope to adults living with disabilities.

Conclusion

With Council approval to pilot Project SEARCH in collaboration with York Catholic School Board and Community Living York South, the City of Vaughan will take an important step to proactively address and remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. The City will have access to a new, diverse, talent stream with skills that match labor needs and will achieve increased regional and national recognition through marketing this unique program.

For more information, please contact:

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Attachments

1. [Project SEARCH Canada](#)

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