

Amherst Youth Town Council

Year-End Report

This year the Amherst Youth Town Council (AYTC) had 15 regular council meetings, including two meetings where elections occurred. The elected positions on council this year were: Jr. Mayor, Rohin Minocha-McKenney; Deputy Jr. Mayor, Mason Carter; Secretary, Olivia Pulsifer; Treasurer, Grace Doncaster; and Public Relations, Dan Osborn. The AYTC had several main goals including combating youth mental health, youth smoking, the environment, promoting the AYTC and active living.

For youth mental health, the AYTC hosted a mental health week in May to try and combat stigma and misinformation about mental health, mental illness and services in regard to mental health. This week included collaboration with Amherst Regional High School, Laura Ashley Farrow and was funded by the SOAR Community Health Board through a wellness fund. The events during this week were a Zumba Class, a Speaker, Information Sessions and group work activities. This week saw the overall participation of almost 600 youth in Amherst. A survey was also conducted during these events, the data for this survey has not yet been analyzed however it should be released by mid-July, 2019.

In regards to smoking, the AYTC has been more focused on giving our opinion, hence the youths opinions, on what changes were to be made to the Smoke-Free Recreational Places By-Law. We did this by raising concerns to council and by also meeting with the new Chief of Police, Dwayne Pike. Changes to this by-law included extended definitions, clarification on some aspects of the by-law and the inclusion of e-cigarettes and cannabis in the by-law. We were very happy with the changes that were made to the by-law and we thank Chief Pike for taking into consideration the youth.

The environment has been a recent issue that not just the youth in Amherst but youth around the world have been dedicated to changing. With years of static movement in greener initiatives the AYTC decided to give the town a “jump start” into thinking more green. This, in turn, did exactly what the AYTC wanted, which was to start a conversation on what our climate needs and what needs to be done. By raising our voices we are hoping to be able to promote more green projects in Amherst with a focus on mitigation and working towards net zero emissions in greenhouse gases. This year we had multiple conversations with council and are hoping that they will continue next year. We can't wait to see action taken by the town as a whole towards green projects and more sustainable movement because we do want to make sure many generations of Amherstonians can “see why we love it”.

The AYTC had the opportunity to meet with many groups this year including Councillor Blanch about the environment, a youth Baha'i group in Amherst about issues of importance to youth in Jr. High School including youth safety at the skatepark and solutions to littering downtown including having more garbage cans, as well we met with Chief Pike as mentioned before.

Finally, the AYTC had a focus on promoting the image and operations of the AYTC. We did this by moving away from a council that was just based on having activities to being a council that was able to give our opinions. As seen this year, the AYTC was able to bring major and minor issues forth to council along with pursuing our own initiatives outside of the regular operations of the AYTC. As well, the AYTC also participated in many events to promote the image of youth and to enjoy what our town has to offer including the Christmas Parade, Light-Up, Boston Tree, New Years, The Valentines Run and the Cumberland Pride Parade.

The AYTC would like to thank the Amherst Town Council for all their support this year. We greatly appreciate the council for valuing the voices of the youth. We would also like to thank a very important person who has mentored the AYTC ever since he came here 5 years ago, Bill Schurman. Bill has been integral to help guide the AYTC for the past 5 years and we would not be where we are and be so empowered without him. We will miss you and wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors. Again, we would like to thank everyone at the Town of Amherst for another amazing year and all the support. The AYTC will be taking a small break over the summer but will be resuming meetings come early August with a reduced council size until the empty positions on AYTC are filled, those meetings will resume with interim elected positions.