



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council

File No.: 5335-20

From: Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Engineering

Date: Jan 15, 2025

Subject: Youth Climate Corps Pilot Program

PURPOSE: To seek council support for staff to collaborate with the Youth Climate Corps (YCC) BC to establish a pilot program in 2025 to support climate action in the community and empower local youth.

BACKGROUND:

At the February 28, 2024 council meeting Council passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS youth are particularly impacted by the climate crisis and Youth Climate Corps BC is an organization that has worked successfully with local governments in BC to empower youth, providing paid work and training to young people in climate action projects that foster hope by helping to reduce emissions, build resiliency and adapt communities to the changing climate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to explore and report back on the possibility of the City working with the Youth Climate Corps, including potential funding sources and projects related to climate action, to engage the public in promoting climate change mitigation and resilience.

The Youth Climate Corps BC (YCC) is an organization that aims to empower youth to take actions that address the climate crisis. It provides paid work and training to young people aged 17-30 to complete climate action projects in their communities. Climate action projects are those that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build resilience, and help the community adapt to the changing climate. The Youth Climate Corp assembles a cohort of 4-8 young people who work together for 4 to 6 months to develop skills, and gain work experience that may inspire future career choices.

YCC is a relatively new program that was established in 2021. To date, YCC has partnered with local governments, BC Hydro, and First Nations to offer the program in communities across BC. In 2023, the Youth Climate Corp operated in West Kootenay, East Kootenay, Golden, Kamloops, Vancouver, Squamish, and Northern Vancouver Island. In 2024, the province provided funding to expand program operations. To date, YCCBC has completed 10,000 days of climate action with close to 100 alumni. An overview of some of the programs and projects completed in communities across BC in the last year is provided in the table below.

Community	Projects Completed	Project description
City of Vancouver 4 youth, for 6 months	Climate Friendly Homes	Operating in the Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood, residents register for a home visit to identify options for energy saving rebates, solutions for extreme heat, connection to community networks, and healthy landscapes.
	HUB Cycling	YCC helped facilitate the Learn2Ride program and the Ride the Road program, in elementary schools across metro Vancouver.
	Ducks Unlimited	YCC helped harvest willow stakes, and planted them in at a riverbank restoration project.
	Eon Electric	YCC shadowed experienced apprentices during the installation of energy efficient systems and building retrofit projects.
City of Kamloops 5 youth, for 5 months	Climate Friendly Homes	Residents sign up for free home energy tour to identify options to reduce heat loss, increase efficiency, improve home comfort, and take advantage of current rebates.
	Bike Valet	Operate bike valets at events to promote sustainable transportation
	Butler Urban Farm	Weeding, preparing garden beds, planting and harvesting crops at the Butler Urban Farm, an initiative of the Kamloops Food Policy Council
District of Squamish 5 youth, for 6 months	Climate Plan Update	YCC worked with District staff on research and community outreach.
	Energy Efficiency	Residents sign up for additional air sealing support. YCCBC installed weather stripping to improve air sealing.
	Environmental Education	YCCBC supported District run youth programs by running climate education.
	Zero Waste Events	YCCBC supported zero waste events such as repair fairs.
North Vancouver Island- Kwakwaka'wakw Revitalization Project 6 youth, for 6 weeks	Building Cultural Structures	Completed Awak'was structures to ensure access to land and cultural activities during extreme heat.
	Food Security	Harvested and maintained community food garden. Supplied harvest to elders.
	Campground Clean-up	Revitalized community campground to create access to land and waters.

To date, the Youth Climate Corp has seen benefits for the youth involved in the program and the host community. In host communities, the program has facilitated collaboration between local government agencies, non-profits and businesses to advance local climate action work. These local actions reduce GHG emissions within the community and build resilience. It increases the number of jobs for young people in their home community, builds public support for climate action projects, and demonstrates practical climate leadership.

The youth employed by the program are paid a living wage, receive training, and earn certifications. They have an opportunity to build a variety of skills and gain perspective on different career paths. The projects

build a sense of community, foster a sense of belonging, improve mental health and reduced climate anxiety. After their employment, program alumni receive ongoing support as they develop their careers.

DISCUSSION:

Program Administration

The number of youth employed by the program, and the duration of the program are flexible. This flexibility allows the YCC to support a wide variety of climate action projects. It is proposed that the City support a pilot program starting in summer 2025, to employ a group of four youth, for four months.

The City's role in facilitating the program would be to fund a portion of the program budget and guide the scope of work for the projects. To establish the program, YCC admin staff hire a Regional Coordinator to be a primary local contact. The Regional Coordinator will proceed to work with city staff and potential partner organizations, to develop the scope of work for the local program. A YCC crew are then hired, trained, and begin working on the selected projects. This program design minimizes the effort and capacity needed from city staff. This feature distinguishes this program from summer students and seasonal employees hired by the City.

If Council wishes to proceed with a pilot program, the City will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Youth Climate Corp of BC. Once an agreement is in place, YCC will hire a regional coordinator to establish the program. Following completion of the first-year pilot program, a report will be prepared and the impact of the program will be evaluated. The lessons learned during the first year will inform future decisions about the program operation.

In the event that other local governments in the region wish to support the YCC, there is an opportunity to use additional funding to extend the duration of the program or the number of youth employed by the program.

Proposed Local Projects

In many communities, the work of YCC has been guided by a local government Climate Action Plan. The City of Courtenay Corporate Climate Action Plan was first drafted in 2009 and is planned for an update in 2025. For this reason, it will not be available to guide the work of the YCC pilot program in 2025.

The City of Courtenay Official Community Plan defines Climate Action as a cardinal direction, and commits to achieving greenhouse gas emission reductions within the community, while also preparing for the impacts of climate change. These local objectives are aligned with provincial guidance outlined in the CleanBC: Roadmap to 2030, and the Provincial Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy. In the absence of an updated City of Courtenay Climate Action Plan, these documents can offer guidance for local climate projects.

Specific projects undertaken by the YCC will be identified by the Regional Coordinator, in collaboration with City staff, and community organizations. It is proposed that a portion of YCC's time be spent advancing climate action on behalf of the City of Courtenay, and a portion of their time be spent advancing climate action in the wider community. In this way, the YCC presents an opportunity to collaborate on climate solutions beyond the municipal boundary. Program project scoping will begin by engaging City staff, and local organizations. Examples of City projects that may be considered for support by the YCC include:

- Climate Friendly Homes program, and Home Energy Navigator Program
- Public outreach related to flood risk, air quality and rainwater management
- FireSmart wildfire mitigation
- Ecological restoration and community garden development (private lands)

A process will be established to identify community projects that are interested in support from the YCC and are aligned with the objectives of the program. This will offer youth employed in the program diverse experience while supporting organizations that are already advancing climate action locally.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The work completed by the Youth Climate Corp will be informed by the following policies:

- CleanBC: Provincial Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, actions for 2022-2025
- CleanBC: Roadmap to 2030
- The City of Courtenay Official Community Plan

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The cost to administer the proposed 2025 pilot program is estimated to be \$136,500. This covers the cost to set-up and administer the program, including salaries for a Regional Coordinator and a crew of four youth. A breakdown of these costs is provided in Attachment 2.

It is proposed that this cost be shared between the City of Courtenay, and YCC. The portion covered by the City of Courtenay, is eligible to be paid for by the funds received from the provincial Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP). In the 2025 municipal budget, an amount of \$65,000 of LGCAP funds have been proposed to support the YCC program, for Council's consideration through the financial planning process.

The remainder of the program costs, equivalent to \$71,500, will be covered by YCC from funding allocated by the province, and the Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidy.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Research and consultation to support the development of a Youth Climate Corp pilot program has been led by Infrastructure and Environmental Engineering. It is expected that the development of the program may require support from other departments who may have projects that could be advanced by the YCC.

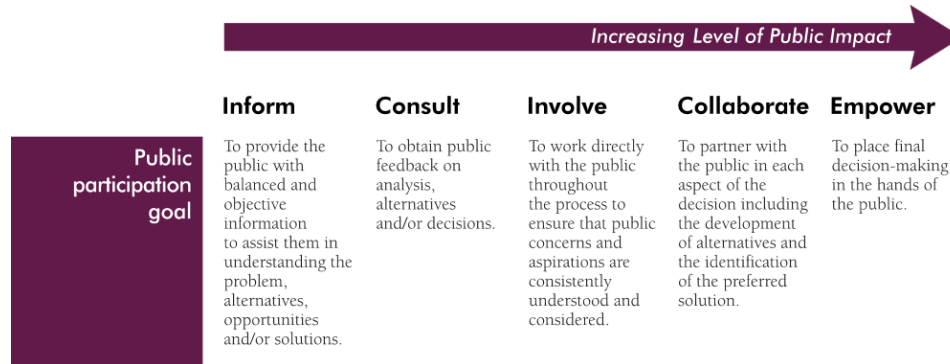
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Streets and Transportation - Plan and implement bike parking and secure storage
- Good Governance - Increase community engagement for all segments of the community: complete communication strategy, community survey, and community engagement strategy
- Natural Environment - Promote and communicate the Urban Forest Strategy & Tree Protection Bylaw and review Bylaw
- Natural Environment - Integrate climate change commitment into our governance work: Include climate change lens in staff reports

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public of the Youth Climate Corp pilot program, and collaborate with local organizations who may work alongside the YCC based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council direct staff to collaborate with Youth Climate Corps BC to establish a pilot program in 2025 to support climate action in the community and empower local youth.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Presentation – Youth Climate Corp BC
2. YCC Pilot Program Budget

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