

# Terms of Reference



## Profile

The Guelph Youth Council (GYC) is a group of local youth volunteers (ages 13 - 18), committed to the preservation and enhancement of youth culture within our city. The GYC plays an active role in ensuring that the collective 'voice' of the local youth population is heard and represented throughout the community. This is achieved by:

- Regularly planning and implementing special events and activities.
- Liaising with City Council and other key decision-makers within the community.
- Networking with various youth-based organizations and agencies.
- Raising awareness of the positive contributions that youth are making to our community.
- Engaging in positive and constructive social activism.
- Volunteering at various community-based events and activities.

## Description

GYC members generally meet every Wednesday (4:30 - 5:30 pm) at City Hall in downtown Guelph. The meetings begin in mid September and operate until the end of June. The group does not meet on holidays. Depending on project workload, additional meetings may need to be called throughout the course of the year. The GYC works under the direction of the Youth Services Coordinator in order to fulfill their mandate, values, and goals.

## Mandate

The GYC will be responsive to all youth within the community and will be committed to serving city-wide youth needs and interests. Through the actions of the group, the GYC will empower the youth population in Guelph by providing youth with an opportunity to lead, achieve, and play within our community.

## Values

- We believe that youth are an integral part of Guelph, and have inherent rights and responsibilities.
- We believe that youth are able to make positive contributions to the community.
- We believe that an investment in young people is an investment in the future.
- We believe that there is strength in diversity.
- We believe that all youth bring with them a unique and important viewpoint.
- We believe that youth should be encouraged and given the opportunity to take a leading role in issues that affect their lives; and that youth should be consulted whenever decisions that affect them are being made.

## Goals

- To facilitate and forge strong connections between youth in the community and the City of Guelph.
- To advocate to City Council and other key decision-makers, on behalf of the youth of Guelph.
- To enhance the lives and opportunities of all youth living in Guelph.
- To positively enhance the profile of youth in our city.
- To influence change, through positive action.
- To respect and celebrate the diversity of the youth community in Guelph.
- To provide youth with leadership opportunities that will encourage personal growth.
- To think 'globally' and take action on social issues that have a global impact. (social activism)

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## Composition of the Council

- Membership is limited to youth between the ages of 13 - 18.
- Membership is limited to youth that are currently residing within the city of Guelph.
- The council shall strive to create a representative and diverse group of young people.
- All new members are required to submit a completed Standard Application form, meet with the Youth Services Coordinator, and complete a waiver form, prior to becoming part of the Guelph Youth Council.
- An Executive Committee will help provide core leadership to the group. The Executive Committee will be determined by a voting process. Those not on the Executive Committee, will be part of the General Membership of the GYC.

## Governing Structure

The Guelph Youth Council Executive Committee is responsible for the daily operation of the Guelph Youth Council, under the direction and supervision of the Youth Services Coordinator. The Guelph Youth Council is sponsored by the City of Guelph. Therefore, the Youth Services Coordinator reserves the right to review and veto any decisions and actions that do not match the philosophy of the corporation.

## Youth Services Coordinator

The Youth Services Coordinator is a full-time employee of the City of Guelph, and will work to maintain the values of the corporation, while also assisting the Guelph Youth Council in fulfilling their mandate, upholding their values, and achieving their goals.

Specifically, the Youth Services Coordinator shall:

- Schedule meetings, supply all members with a calendar of meeting dates/times.
- Work with the GYC Chair to create an agenda for each meeting.
- Assist with the development of 'timeline's, 'task lists', and other aspects of project management.
- Track and support council member's involvement.
- Monitor all financial matters for the council.
- Review and approve **all** decisions made by the GYC.
- Perform operational day-to-day tasks, on behalf of the GYC.
- Recruit new members, and provide appropriate training and orientation.
- Facilitate the development of partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders.
- Provide regular GYC updates to City of Guelph staff.
- Function as GYC chaperone at all council-related events, activities, and training opportunities.
- Resolve any internal conflict between members, by employing effective conflict resolution techniques.
- Preserve the integrity of the GYC 'brand' within the community.
- Oversee the online 'presence' of the GYC (Facebook Group, Website, Blog, etc).
- Maintain an up-to-date listing of all GYC members, including relevant contact info.

## Meetings

- Meetings will be held every Wednesday (holidays excluded) from 4:30 - 5:30 pm @ City Hall in downtown Guelph, from mid September until the end of June. Other meetings may be necessary throughout the year (depending on project development/workload). These meetings will be held at the discretion of the Youth Services Coordinator, the Executive Committee, and the Project Leaders.
- Members must be present, unless previously arranged with the Youth Services Coordinator, at all council functions, events, and weekly meetings. Failure to attend these meetings may result in the removal of the individual from the council.

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## Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is responsible for providing youth-based leadership and direction to the Guelph Youth Council. The Executive Committee members assume all of the duties of the General Membership, while also assuming additional leadership responsibilities. The Executive Committee works very closely with the Youth Services Coordinator. Executive Committee members should be responsible, organized, and enthusiastic. Due to the nature of the Executive positions, any individual interested in becoming part of the GYC Executive Committee must be prepared to invest a lot of time and energy into the group, as these positions require an elevated sense of commitment.

The committee is comprised of the following members:

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Director - Communications & Public Relations
- Director - Social Activism
- Director - Group Dynamics

## Selection of the Executive Committee

- Elections for the Executive positions will be held in October, on an annual basis.
- Applications for Executive positions will be accepted annually, between July - October. The deadline for Executive Applications will be posted on the [guelph.ca/youth](http://guelph.ca/youth) website.
- Executive Committee positions are open to anyone (13 - 18 years of age), even if you are a new member of the GYC. To apply, individuals are responsible for completing an Executive Application Form (in addition to a standard GYC Volunteer Application Form). Individuals may apply for more than one position by indicating the desired position(s) on their Executive Application Form.
- If a large number of applicants seek a position on the GYC Executive Committee, the candidates may be asked to address the group at one of the weekly meetings, explaining their rationale for seeking an Executive position.
- Once all applications have been received, the Youth Services Coordinator will put together a ballot. The ballot will be circulated and all GYC members will vote (confidentially) on the applicants that are listed. Once the voting is complete, the Youth Services Coordinator will send around an e-mail to the group, with the names of the new Executive Committee members. If there is a tie, another vote will be held to break the tie between the individuals that received the same number of votes.
- If any positions remain vacant, the Youth Services Coordinator will assume the responsibilities of that position until it is filled.
- Once elected, the Executive Committee will oversee the actions of the group for the current session (October - June). In June of each year, the Executive Committee will dissolve and a new Executive Committee will be elected for the following session.
- A new Executive Committee will be selected each year in October. The election process will follow the steps listed above. Members on the previous Executive Committee do have the option of seeking another term, but they will once again have to participate in the election process (with all of the other potential applicants), to see if they are re-elected.

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## Position Descriptions

### Chair

The *Chair* works to ensure that the GYC is upholding its mandate, values, and goals. The Chair is responsible for facilitating the weekly meetings and managing the decision making process. The Chair is responsible for upholding the values of the GYC and is responsible for providing support to the entire group. The Chair will ensure that all decisions made by the group, have been reviewed and approved by the Youth Services Coordinator. The Chair is expected to assume their role with enthusiasm and commitment.

Specifically, the Chair shall:

- Facilitate the weekly GYC meeting and create meeting agendas (with the Youth Services Coordinator).
- Set the 'tone' of the meetings, lead by example, and encourage team-building.
- Ensure that the democratic process is upheld (decisions are brought to a vote by the membership).
- Encourage consensus-decision making, wherever possible.
- Keep the Youth Services Coordinator apprised of the actions of the council at all times.
- Work collaboratively with the Youth Services Coordinator on all GYC matters.
- Ensure that everyone has a chance to be heard, and remains positive, friendly, and fair at all times.
- Continually monitor the group to ensure that it is functioning as a cooperative and cohesive team.
- Function as a catalyst in group discussions, encouraging all members to share their ideas.
- Remain approachable, friendly, and compassionate to all members of the group.
- Organize, develop, and participate in all GYC community presentations (City Council updates, etc).
- Actively contribute to the GYC online 'blog'.
- Represent the GYC at any social function, meeting, or event that is deemed relevant to the group.

### Vice-Chair

The *Vice-Chair* acts as Chair (and assumes all of their associated responsibilities), whenever the Chair is unable to fulfill his/her duties. They are also responsible for providing direct assistance to the Chair, in order to ensure that the GYC operates in an effective and efficient manner.

In addition to these duties, they shall:

- Assist the GYC Directors and Project Leaders with their assigned tasks and responsibilities.
- Ensuring that GYC stays within budget parameters, as determined by the Youth Services Coordinator.
- Ensure that the GYC is represented on community groups or committees where youth input is needed.
- Actively contribute to the GYC online 'blog'.
- Represent the GYC at any social function, meeting, or event that is deemed relevant to the group.

### Director - Social Activism

The *Director - Social Activism* is responsible for exploring and coordinating social advocacy/awareness opportunities that may be of interest to the Guelph Youth Council (Amnesty International campaigns, youth shelters/homeless youth, Speed River Clean-up, etc). These opportunities must reflect the mandate, values, and goals of the group. As opportunities become available, the Director - Social Activism will bring them in front of the group for their consideration.

In addition to these duties, they shall:

- Actively contribute to the GYC online 'blog'.
- Representing the GYC at any social function, meeting, or event that is deemed relevant to the group.

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## Director - Communications & Public Relations

The *Director - Communications & Public Relations* is responsible for all internal and external communications that pertain to the GYC.

These duties include:

- Taking 'minutes' at the weekly meetings and sending them to the rest of the group (within three days of a meeting).
- Overseeing the creation of all media pieces relating to the GYC. (Note - This does not mean that they are necessarily responsible for actually creating all of the documents (flyers, posters, etc). It simply means that they are responsible for ensuring that all posters are created in a timely fashion).
- Assembling all potential online 'blog' contributions from GYC members and forwarding them to the Youth Services Coordinator for review and posting.
- Assisting the Youth Services Coordinator with the function of the GYC 'Facebook' Group.
- Exploring potential GYC promotional opportunities within the community.
- Coordinating the development of all GYC media/press releases, in collaboration with the GYC Chair and the Youth Services Coordinator.
- Establishing (and maintaining) contact with the various High School Student Councils, in order to expand our communication network.
- Assisting the Chair with the development of all GYC community presentations (City Council, etc).
- Forwarding **all** media pieces (posters, flyers, press release, etc) to the Youth Services Coordinator for 'branding' and 'approval' **before** the documents 'go public'.
- Actively contributing to the GYC online 'blog'.
- Representing the GYC at any social function, meeting, or event that is deemed relevant to the group.

## Director - Group Dynamics

The *Director - Group Dynamics* is responsible for monitoring and enhancing the overall team dynamics of the group. They are responsible for researching potential training/team-building opportunities for the group, as well as planning various social activities to promote overall team 'bonding' and development.

This is accomplished by:

- Searching for potential 'team-building' and leadership initiatives that could benefit the group. For example, leadership retreats, group seminars, and other youth-based training opportunities. It is their responsibility to find these types of initiatives and bring them to the group for their consideration.
- Organizing social activities for the GYC. These activities could include - holiday parties, pot-luck dinners, going to the movies, mini-golf, etc. These activities will provide an opportunity for team-building, group 'bonding', and will help create positive relationships between all GYC members.
- Representing the GYC at any social function, meeting, or event that is deemed relevant to the group.
- Actively contributing to the GYC online 'blog'.

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## Action Groups / Project Leaders

Action Groups are an integral part of the Guelph Youth Council. Action groups are formed when the council decides to take on a specific project (Youth Week, Speed River Clean-up, etc). Once it is determined that an Action Group is necessary, a member of the General Membership will be selected as the 'Project Leader' for that particular group. The 'Project Leader' will then assume the responsibility of leading the Action Group, and will be responsible for the following:

- Keeping the Executive Committee and Youth Services Coordinator updated on the project status.
- Recruiting other members of the Guelph Youth Council to assist with project development.
- Creating a 'timeline' and 'task list' associated with the project.
- Establishing and meeting all deadlines associated with the successful implementation of the project.
- Scheduling additional Action Group meetings whenever they are needed, in conjunction with the Youth Services Coordinator.
- Conducting a thorough evaluation of the project, once it is complete.

**Note** - Executive Committee members cannot serve as Project Leaders, but are still responsible for joining and participating in Action Groups as they form. This approach provides other GYC members with an opportunity to develop their leadership skills and experience.

## General Membership

Individuals who do not hold a position on the Executive Committee, are considered to be part of the General Membership of the group. The General Membership is an integral part of the Guelph Youth Council and Requires enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication from everyone involved.

The General membership is responsible for:

- Voting on every decision that affects the Guelph Youth Council.
- Bringing new ideas/initiatives to the group.
- Assisting with the development and implementation of activities and events.
- Attending all activities, events, functions, presentations and meetings of the Guelph Youth Council.
- Acting as a role model to other youth within the community.
- Actively recruiting new members to the group.

**Note** - Any individual seeking to join the Guelph Youth Council as a General Member, is free to do so at any time. **Recruitment for new General Members is always open.** To apply, individuals can complete a Standard Application Form found on the [guelph.ca/youth](http://guelph.ca/youth) website and forward it to the Youth Services Coordinator.

## Removal of Members

If a member of the Executive Committee is failing to perform their duties, the Youth Services Coordinator and the individual will meet to discuss the problem and establish steps to resolve the issue. These steps could involve the individual resigning from the position, or the development of an action plan to correct the issues. If it is determined that an individual will be resigning from their position, an election will be held in order to fill the vacancy.

All members of the GYC are expected to be at every GYC meeting, event, and function. If a member misses **three meetings**, events, or functions (without notifying the Youth Services Coordinator **in advance** of their absence) during the course of a session, they will be automatically removed from the council.

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## Voting

The GYC will utilize a 'voting' system in order to arrive at group decisions. Before the group begins a new initiative, activity, or undertaking of any kind, the item must be brought in front of the group (at a weekly GYC meeting) where it will be subject to a group vote. For example, if somebody in the group decides that they would like the group to plan a festival in downtown Guelph, they must first bring this idea to the group where the feasibility of the event will be discussed. Once the discussion has taken place, the Chair will then ask the group to vote on whether or not the GYC should adopt the proposed idea. To be accepted, the item must receive a majority (greater than 50%) of the votes (Note - only individuals in attendance at the meeting are eligible to vote on meeting items). By adopting this democratic process, it ensures that every member of the group has a role in GYC decision making.

**Note** - the Youth Services Coordinator must be present during all group voting.

## Grievances

If a member of the GYC has a problem with any aspect of the group (members, team cooperation, peer conflict, etc), they are encouraged to approach the Youth Services Coordinator with their concern(s). From there, the Youth Services Coordinator will record the complaint and determine if further action needs to be taken in order to rectify the problem. The identity of any individual filing a complaint with the Youth Services Coordinator will always be kept strictly confidential.

## Collaboration Limitations

As the Guelph Youth Council actively seeks to build new relationships and partnerships within the community, the following statement will be used to guide all GYC collaborations.

*The Guelph Youth Council will not consider or enter into any partnership, sponsorship, or strategic alliance that:*

- *Requires 'endorsement' of a specific product or brand.*
- *Is based entirely on 'contingent' success.*
- *Requires the Guelph Youth Council members or partners to purchase product in order to participate.*
- *The partner's main business focus or activities appear (or could be taken to appear) in contradiction or conflict with the goals, mandate, or values of the Guelph Youth Council.*