

Expand the First Jobs 4 Youth Program across Manitoba

Moved by: Spence Neighbourhood Association

This is a new policy resolution.

Whereas: Spence Neighbourhood Association's Youth Employment Hub and First Jobs 4 Youth programs provide youth opportunities to gain skills and earn needed income. Youth ages 9-15 are engaged in odd jobs through the Youth Engagement Hub program (catering meetings, yard maintenance) as a way to earn money while contributing to their community. From there, youth transition into First Jobs for Youth, a more intensive training program that prepares youth to enter the workforce in higher paying jobs that enhance their self-esteem, support workforce development, and reinforce the lasting benefit of meaningful employment.

Whereas: Investing in Manitoba's future prosperity through support to children and youth is essential for helping to reduce poverty and build stronger communities and is at the heart of the work of Community Economic Development.

Whereas: There are significant opportunities for youth employment opportunities and providing meaningful support to youth living in poverty to enter the labour market and earn an income. Expanding the Youth Employment Hub and First Jobs 4 Youth program across the province would contribute to reducing poverty, creating pathways to meaningful employment for youth, and to work opportunities for community members in their own communities. For example, participants and graduates of the First Jobs 4 Youth program have been employed in recreation facilities in the communities they live in.

Outcomes of the program include:

- Youth without opportunity to earn cash, have access to income
- Reduced involvement in harmful activities (steering youth away from gangs or sexual exploitation)
- Improved self-esteem, sense of self worth
- Positive community engagement and connections established (including inter-generationally)
- Graduating youth have strong resumes and are highly valued as skilled, work-ready employees
- Over 90% graduate into high quality, long-term employment positions
- Increased likelihood for post-secondary enrollment
- Reduced risk of criminal involvement
- Increased creativity

- Increased communication skills
- Improved self-confidence

Whereas: The primary target of Manitoba's poverty reduction strategy is reducing child poverty by 50 percent by 2030, according to 2015 data. While Manitoba saw a reduction in percentage of persons under 18 with income below the Market Basket Measure from 2015-17, that number has been steadily increasing since that time, arriving back at roughly 15% of persons under 18 living in poverty in 2019. While there was a slight blip in data in 2020 due to the impact of the CERB benefit, it is likely that poverty rates among youth will get worse for 2021 data.

Whereas: Through this program, SNA leverages ~\$10,000 of Municipal Relations funding into \$250,000 of community investment into increased youth employment, \$2.70 in value for every \$1 invested. While the program is currently funded through Municipal Relations, given its strong return on investment, support through the Department of Families to scale it would be beneficial to the goals of Pathways to a Better Future.

Whereas: Expanding community-led and community-owned youth employment programs is an example of Community Economic Development in action. Youth have access to wraparound, community supports through a community-led program, a trusting and safe work environment, and access to employment opportunities within their own communities.

Whereas: This resolution fits within the theme of Ending Poverty and Local & Fair Economies, as it will support addressing and ending the cycle of poverty for youth, and building up community wealth through meaningful youth employment.

Be It Resolved That: The Province of Manitoba expand the core funding for the Youth Employment Hub and First Jobs 4 Youth programs to Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations and other community-based organizations across Manitoba through the Department of Families, learning from the successful model at Spence Neighbourhood Association.

How the Resolution will be Advanced: This resolution will be advanced through direct lobbying and advocacy by Network staff on behalf of the membership to the Department of Families, including through budget submissions, meetings with Ministers, and conversations with civil servants.