

# Town hopes to engage local business leaders through Youth Voice Project

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The Town of Caledon is reaching out to local businesses in an attempt to partner up on a new initiative designed to assist some of the community's younger residents transition into the workforce.

Given the appropriate title Caledon Youth Voice Project, the initiative is centred around an online virtual workshop where local businesses and municipal leaders can gather to discuss how best to support local youth who will soon be looking for a job.

The youth employment-focused project is funded by the Laidlaw Foundation, an organization with a long history of supporting youth who are impacted through education, justice and child welfare systems and creating a voice for them.

"The goal of the Caledon Youth Voice Project is to increase youth employment by 10 percent in the next six years," said Supa D. A. Meikle, Coordinator, Youth Voice Project, Strategic Initiatives. "A key benefit of the project is that, by increasing employment, youth will stay within or return to Caledon as long-term residents. Retaining and attracting people to grow the economy in the local area is what businesses and leaders depend on."

Local businesses and leaders along with youth members of the community have been asked to partake in a survey, which provides them with an opportunity to attend the free online workshop.

Included in the workshop is a presentation from film professional and communications trainer Kunle Bristow, who has been brought on board to facilitate the workshop. With over two decades of experience, Bristow has been teaching and empowering individuals through online videos and virtual classrooms for much of his adult life.

The project is a key factor in bringing a variety of stakeholders together who all have the same vision of increasing youth employment in their communities.

These stakeholders include the lead applicant, Town of Caledon, as well as Caledon Public Library, Peel District School Board, Volunteer MBC, The Josh Project, and Dufferin-Peel District School Board.

"A key element of the project is giving youth a voice so they can articulate their desires in terms of training and skills," said Meikle. "By working together, this will enhance our ability to continue supporting youth in the community."

The project is a part of the Youth Voice Collective, which looks to bridge the gap between youth and potential employers.

Last year Caledon surveyed individuals between the ages of 19 and 29 years of age. Results showed that 83 percent of respondents would like to find work in Caledon in the future, 69 per cent felt there was lack of jobs in their desired industries in Caledon, while 44 per cent believe it is hard to find jobs here in Caledon. In total, 78 percent stated they were forced to leave Caledon for employment or education purposes.

"Over the next short while we will be reaching out to key stakeholders for further engagement and discussion on opportunities to align efforts to address the future of youth employment," stated Meikle.

For more information, please visit [Caledon.ca](http://Caledon.ca).