

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF BURNABY

February 14, 1966

HIS WORSHIP, THE REEVE AND  
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL:

Gentlemen:

REPORT OF THE POLICY/PLANNING COMMITTEE

As directed by Council, your Committee met with the Family and Children's Court Committee, representatives of the School Board, R. C. M. P., and others on February 8th, to give further consideration to the Brief submitted to Council entitled "A Role for Burnaby Schools in the Identification and Handling of Potential Delinquents".

Your Committee viewed the Brief from the following points of view:

1. The validity of its concept
2. Its priority
3. Financial responsibility

Within the elementary school system in Burnaby, the pupil/counsellor ratio is about 1:4000, and this is more or less in line with the standard throughout the Province. Members of Council will recall that the specific proposal of the Brief was to assign a special counsellor full time to an elementary school population of 1000 pupils, thus providing a marked intensification of the service at two schools in the same general geographic area. The objective of this intensification was fully set out in the Brief.

Your committee did not take long to come to the conclusion that a ratio of 1:1000 would be a very desirable objective in Burnaby. From the professional staff at the meeting they heard something about the methods employed to detect potential delinquency, and Mr. Findlay (who wrote the Brief) elaborated on the type of person who would be employed to fill the role and gave examples of the nature of the services which would be rendered. The Committee feel that probably the title of the report is a little misleading for the special counsellor's functions would extend beyond the spotting of potential offenders. Furthermore, the actual spotting is not an overwhelming problem; rather it is a question of ensuring that those children with difficulties are given in-school treatment or referred elsewhere for remedial assistance as soon as the difficulties are apparent. As things stand at the moment the Counsellor service is so over-stressed that the counsellors can only deal with crisis cases and do not have time to look into the incipient cases, even although they are known. It is to get at these incipient cases for referral and treatment that the intensification is needed, thus preventing, it is hoped, the crisis cases of the future.

Your Committee also believe that the implementation of the scheme and the rapid expansion of it throughout the elementary school system is of high priority. Unfortunately they have to recognize that even if it were put into effect straightaway its most obvious result would be to show up the very many deficiencies in the fields of treatment. It is in fact, an essential but very small portion of the problem.

The estimated total cost of employing one special counsellor is \$15,000. per annum, which sum covers the counsellor's salary, administration expenses, etc. On the face of it this does not appear to be a very large sum to pay for such a worthwhile project, but it is necessary to view it in two lights. Firstly, \$15,000. per annum represents only the visible tip of the iceberg. The annual cost of extending the service throughout the whole of Burnaby's elementary school system would be about \$250,000. It is already certain that there are a great number of incipient cases which are known and the employment of these special counsellors would undoubtedly reveal many more cases where treatment of one kind or another is needed. The result would be that the sources of treatment, already deficient in many respects, would be swamped and there would be an urgent need to expand them, at a very considerable cost, to deal with all the newly revealed cases.

The Family and Children's Court Committee suggested that as this is a community and not a school board matter, the Municipal Council should be financially responsible. Whilst agreeing that the problem is not entirely a school matter, your Committee are also of the view that it is not a municipal duty either; they feel strongly that this is a social and mental health problem and that it rightly lies in the realm of Provincial government. This, of course, is an important principle and one which must be borne in mind throughout any consideration of the financing of the project. Council is fully aware of the many rightful municipal responsibilities which they have to bear and the difficulties of financing many of these duties. Doubtless the ambulance service will also come to mind and the struggles, still unresolved, to get the Provincial government to accept their responsibility in this regard.

Your Committee, although wholeheartedly believing in the concept of the project and its priority, feel unable to recommend to Council that the municipality should initiate the scheme. They feel that if the Council were to sponsor the project, even on this limited basis, they would be tacitly accepting a responsibility which is the Provincial government's. They cannot see the possibility in the foreseeable future of the municipality being in the financial position to expand the programme to its proper goal and believe, that should the Council initiate the programme, the Provincial government would consider itself absolved of its duties in this field and Burnaby would be left with a burden it could not carry.

It must be repeated, however, that the Committee support the project and its proper development. From a practical point of view they consider that the Council should exert all its influence upon the Provincial government to accept its rightful responsibility in this field. They recommend that the Council should inform the Provincial government of its great concern, and that pressure through the U.B.C.M., School Board, and all other sources should be applied.

Although the School Board cannot obtain direct grants for the employment of special counsellors in elementary schools, it is just possible that assistance could be obtained from Federal Welfare Grants or through the Canada Assistance Plans and applications will be made. There may be other sources of financial aid for the pilot scheme and they will be investigated. As pointed out, however, this is only a small part of the problem and the only ultimate solution is for the Provincial Government to play its proper role so that the matter can be dealt with on the true scale.

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