

REPORT
Regular Council Meeting
1989 MAY 01

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF BURNABY
FAMILY COURT AND YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND ALDERMEN

RE: WILLINGDON YOUTH DETENTION CENTRE

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council support the following:
 - a) construction of a new facility to replace the current Willingdon Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible.
 - b) that the new facility have enough beds to justify high quality recreation, educational and counseling facilities.
 - c) that the new facility have a separate remand facility to segregate the resident population from those who are awaiting trial.
 - d) that during construction of the new facility, the old facility be maintained at the highest possible level.
2. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Premier's Office, all Burnaby M.P.'s and M.L.A.'s, the Minister of State For Mainland Southwest, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Lower Mainland Municipal Association and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Executive.

R E P O R T

INTRODUCTION

The Burnaby Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, at its February meeting requested its representative on the Citizen Advisory Review Board of the Willingdon Youth Detention Centre provide a complete report on the current situation on the operations and conditions at Willingdon Youth Detention Centre. The report was requested after a series of events at the Detention Center that had a very high media impact.

In the interim, the Office of the Ombudsman has completed an investigation into the recent events and has suggested among other items that a new facility be built and Willingdon be torn down. The reaction to that suggestion has been slow thus delaying the report to the Family court and Youth Justice Committee.

THE EXISTING FACILITY

As mentioned in the introduction, the Ombudsman has suggested that the existing facility be torn down and a new facility be built. The reason for this is twofold. The first reason is age. The current building being used for detention at Willingdon is approximately 40 years old, the wear and tear of literally thousands of active young people over the years has taken its toll.

:--AGENDA 1989 MAY 01
:- COPY - ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER
- DIRECTOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
- O.I.C., R.C.M.P.

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THE EXISTING FACILITY (Continued)

The locks, for example are so old that new parts must be hand made, at great cost and effort. While there is nothing dangerous about the condition of the building, it is obvious that a decision must be made on when a new facility will be built.

The second reason for a new facility is the architecture. Willingdon Youth Detention Centre was not built to house 100 young offenders. There are far too many blind spots in the units where the residents sleep and spend most of their time. Even with supervision there is too much opportunity for victimization, solely because of the poor sightlines.

THE NEW FACILITY

The Ombudsman's January report on Willingdon Youth Detention Centre was well received by the Provincial Government. There were announcements that there will be a new facility within four to five years. For some reason, there is a delay in getting the funding for the purchase of land. At this point there is confusion as to what stage the plan is at.

The plan for the new facility would see it situated in Burnaby's Big Bend area. There are three proposals as to the number of beds, the largest being approximately 100. This would be the most desirable as it would justify proper recreation and school and treatment facilities as well as a separate remand facility. Fewer beds would mean less amenities.

STAFFING

The Ombudsman's report concludes that there are some problems in maintaining the appropriate staff/resident ratio. This is due mainly to the ups and downs of the resident population. The recommendations regarding staff training, weekend programming, counseling, recreational supervision and others have been addressed in some form by the Willingdon administration.

VICTIMIZATION - SELF HARM

The Willingdon Youth Detention Centre is leading the Country in research and controlling victimization. This is only because of the minuscule efforts of other facilities. Willingdon is currently the only facility keeping indepth records on victimization and self harm.

The victimization rate at Willingdon is approximately 4 to 5%; that is that 4 to 5% of the resident population is victimized. While this is nothing to be proud of, it compares favourably with the United States, where victimization can average at 40%.

Self harm is the most distressing problem that any detention centre, youth or adult, can face. Most self harm is not suicidal. Most self harm is a call for attention. To deal with this the staff at Willingdon are in constant interaction with the residents. Self harm still occurs, such as slashings or attempted hanging, but the incidents are lower than over previous years.

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The problem of victimization and self harm cannot be solved by a new facility and better staff training only, but controlling it will be easier.

Based on the information presented, your Committee offers the five (5) recommendations contained in this report for Council's consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Alderman L.A. Rankin
Chairman

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