

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

His Worship, The Mayor
and Aldermen

REPORT OF THE FAMILY COURT AND YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Madam/Gentlemen:

Re: Annual Report - 1989

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Senior Project Officer, Policy and Program Services, Ministry of Attorney General, 4th Floor, 609 Broughton Street, Victoria, B.C., V8W 1C8.

R E P O R T

The Revised Statutes of British Columbia 1979, Chapter 341, "Provincial Court Act" - Section 4(4)(c) provides as follows:

4. The Family Court Committee shall
 - (c) report annually to the municipalities involved and to the Attorney General respecting its activities during the past year.

In compliance with this statutory requirement, contained hereunder is a summary of activities of the Family Court and Youth Justice Committee from 1989 January to 1989 December inclusive.

Life Line Society - Marguerite Dixon Transition House

The Executive Director of Life Line Society was invited to a Committee meeting to provide details of the services provided to battered women and their children at the Marguerite Dixon Transition House in Burnaby.

The Life Line Society is a community based non-profit agency funded by the Ministry of Social Services and Housing, Ministry of Health, United Way and other charitable donations. The Society was created 18 years ago to meet some of the social service needs of individuals and families living in the Burnaby area. The services available through Life Line are marital and relationship counseling, family counseling sessions, weekly therapy groups for adults, parenting skills instruction and other like services.

The Marguerite Dixon Transition House is an emergency shelter for women and children who are victims of violence and in a time of crisis. The House provides 10 beds, food and laundry facilities, used clothing, minimal toilet supplies and is a twenty-four hour operation. The staff of Dixon House provide emotional support, act as an advocate for women who may not have an understanding of complex social and legal services and provide referral information.

Over 1,000 women and children were turned away from Dixon House in 1988 due to lack of facilities. The majority of clients are Burnaby residents and 90 percent are victims of violence. The twenty-four hour service provides only one staff member per shift.

The District of Burnaby holds a twenty-five (25) year lease agreement with Life Line Society for the Marguerite Dixon Transition House for a token \$1.00 per year fee.

Privatization of Family Court Counselor Services in B.C.

The Family Court and Youth Justice Committee made inquiries regarding the status of a Provincial Government proposal to implement a pilot project of privatizing family court counseling services.

In response to the Committee's inquiries, the Project Director from Corrections Branch, Ministry of Solicitor General advised that a contract has been drawn for family court counseling services in Corrections Branch Vancouver Island Region as part of a pilot project for a period of up to two years. The services were to continue to be provided directly by government employees in the remainder of the province for that period of time.

The Committee agreed to communicate with the Victoria Family Court Committee for the purpose of monitoring the pilot project in that region. It was also agreed to forward a copy of any information received to the M.L.A. Esquimalt-Port Renfrew and the Vancouver Family Court Committee who were also monitoring family court counseling services, and send a letter to the B.C. Government Employees Union seeking their position with respect to the privatization initiative.

In 1989 October, the Committee learned that the pilot project of privatizing family court counseling services on Vancouver Island had been cancelled and that the entire program for the Province had been disbanded.

Burnaby Youth Diversion Court Proposal

The Committee, in compliance with its mandate as set out in Section 69 of the Young Offenders Act, continued to pursue the development of a proposal for a youth diversion court in Burnaby. This type of diversionary activity has been effective in curtailing the number of young repeat offenders in various other jurisdictions. The Committee pursued this initiative with the firm belief that peer group pressure is a powerful tool in encouraging offenders to lead constructive and responsible lives within the community.

A copy of an outline of a youth diversion program from Brandon, Manitoba better known as "Juvenile Jury" or "Student Court Committee" was reviewed by the Committee.

Constable Don Campbell, R.C.M.P. Burnaby, Mr. Dave Keillor, Local Director of Burnaby Probation and Mr. Alan Markwart, Program Analyst, Youth Services Division of Ministry of Attorney General advised that although they were academically interested in the initiative, there were a few reservations. There was a concern of non-compliance to the diversion program, objection to the program on the part of the parent of the offender and lack of referrals, to name a few.

Alan Markwart advised that a pilot project was being pursued in Burnaby/New Westminster called Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (V.O.R.P.). This program would include both youth and adults who have either been charged and/or convicted. Mr. Markwart did wish to see the Committee maintain its interest in the area of youth diversion but felt the Burnaby Youth Diversion Court proposal was untimely in that V.O.R.P. was well underway to the implementation stage.

A Committee report was forwarded to Council at the regular Council Meeting held on 1989 May 08 advising of the Burnaby Family Court and Youth Justice Committee's intention to suspend any further progress on the Burnaby Youth Diversion Court proposal. Staff were directed to send a copy of the report, with a covering letter, to all those parties the Committee had communicated with regarding the Burnaby Youth Diversion Court project.

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

Members of the Family Court and Youth Justice Committee attended a luncheon on 1989 April 13 hosted by the Burnaby Steering Committee and the Fraser Region Community Justice Initiative Association to celebrate the launching of the Victim-Offenders Reconciliation Program (V.O.R.P.) in the Burnaby/New Westminster area.

The Committee expressed a desire to obtain more in depth material relating to V.O.R.P. and the clarity of some statistics. Mr. D. Gustafson, Program Development Director V.O.R.P., accompanied by the coordinator of Burnaby/New Westminster V.O.R.P. addressed the Committee providing history dating back to 1974 when the V.O.R.P. concept was implemented in Kitchener, Ontario. The purpose, scope and goals of the V.O.R.P. were expanded upon.

The Committee appointed two members of the Family Court and Youth Justice Committee to investigate and report on the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program.

1989 Family Court Committee Conference

In 1989 March, Council adopted a recommendation contained in a Family Court and Youth Justice Committee report authorizing the Committee to host the 1989 Family Court Committee Conference.

In 1989 July the Committee's offer to host the 1989 Family Court Committee Conference was withdrawn.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Baker
Chair

