

FAMILY COURT AND YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS

RE: ANNUAL REPORT - 1993

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Hanna Bendtsen, Policy Analyst, Policy and Resource Analysis Branch, Ministry of Attorney General, 5th Floor, 910 Government Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4.

REPORT

January, February and March

The Burnaby Family Court and Youth Justice Committee (hereinafter known as the "Committee") at its meeting held in January discussed a letter the Committee had forwarded to the CRTC concerning the Firearms Amnesty program. It was requested that the CRTC submit a list of television licences for the Lower Mainland and Victoria and the regulation guidelines used for the renewal of such licences. It was requested that the CRTC advise of any plans to address the recent comments that appeared in the Vancouver Sun concerning violent movies and television programs. Letters were also written to the Sun and Province newspapers, Globe and Mail, Burnaby Now and the Burnaby News requesting information on the policy with respect to the reporting of violence.

The Committee discussed the primary concern to focus and provide information on youth violence. It was announced that Doug Lewis, Solicitor General had proposed that any young offender who has been charged with a second offence in the context of youth violence would automatically advance to adult court and be punished as an adult.

At the Burnaby Council meeting held on 1993 January 04, Council received correspondence from the Village of Belcarra requesting support of a resolution for review of the Young Offenders' Act. In response to this item of correspondence, Council referred same to the Committee for review. For the Committee's information a copy of the resolution was circulated.

The resolution read as follows:

"WHEREAS it would appear that the Young Offenders' Act of Canada, as currently enacted, is inadequate for the needs of modern society;

AND WHEREAS young offenders in Canada appear to enjoy an extraordinary status under this Act which may not achieve the appropriate balance between the rights of young offenders and those of society as a whole;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT the Solicitor General of Canada be requested to review the current Young

Offenders' Act, with all relevant parties, for the purpose of identifying needs changes to improve the Act."

Arising from discussion of the Young Offenders' Act, a report was forwarded to Burnaby Council recommending that Council respond to the request from The Village of Belcarra acknowledging that there appears to be a problem with the increase in youth violence and youth crime and that the Committee supports a review of the Young Offenders' Act in response to that problem; and further, that Council also encourage the Minister of Justice to look at the overall problem of youth violence to provide adequate treatment or preventative facilities in addition to the legislative services.

The Committee entertained a delegation from VINA (Violence is Never Acceptable) to update the Committee on the current activities. A Sub-Committee was formed to raise the profile of VINA.

The Committee discussed the subject of violence in the entertainment industry and directed that letters be sent to CRTC and CCTA with copies sent to the B.C. Family Court Committees and the Burnaby School Board.

The Committee requested that a letter be forwarded to the CRTC requesting particulars of the agenda and format for the upcoming commission on television violence and whether they are going to be receiving written briefs and/or holding public hearings with respect to violent programming.

The Committee decided, pending the response from the CRTC, that if public meetings were to be held in the lower mainland, it was suggested that the Committee look at some kind of advanced public meetings for the citizens of Burnaby to receive input and publicize to the citizens of Burnaby that these hearings are upcoming and that the Committee would consider submitting a brief to the CRTC.

April, May, June

The Committee had received correspondence from the Coalition for Gun Control requesting information with respect to development of education projects and the use of firearms.

The Committee then instructed that a letter be forwarded to the Coalition for Gun Control - Gun Control Education Project inquiring as to its: identity, purpose, mandate, principle officers and funding sources. The Committee wrote to the Burnaby RCMP attaching a copy of the Coalition letter, requesting comments. A letter was also written to the Burnaby School District No. 41 advising that the Committee was writing to the Gun Coalition and the School District would be informed upon receipt of information.

The Committee decided that in light of increasing public concerns regarding unlimited access by children to violent programming on television, it was requested that the CRTC respond to public concerns by developing some guidelines within the industry with respect to when and what type of programming will be broadcast.

The CRTC advised that a month of public hearings regarding future broadcasting in Canada were held which addressed such things as authorization, packaging and distribution of programming services in Canada. Their focus is on cooperative voluntary measures including responsible industry and self-regulation as well as long term educational efforts to help parents, teachers, children and others get the best out of television.

A letter was forwarded to Mr. Ken Novarowski, President, B.C. Teachers Federation advising of the work the Committee has done in this regard and request that he respond in an advisory capacity to the Committee with any information for further action.

A letter be forwarded to the CRTC to inquire if any further input is contemplated in the form of receiving briefs, public hearings or both on this issue specifically.

A letter was forwarded to the CRTC stating that the Committee acknowledged their concern in dealing with this matter in a legislative framework but rather preferring to deal with it by raising public awareness; accordingly, the Committee suggested that they create an ongoing process, whether it be a Committee or something of that sort, to continue to invite and to receive public input on the issue.

The Committee requested that Dawn Black, M.P. Burnaby-New Westminster be contacted to obtain a copy of her private members bill on anti-stalking and also to obtain a copy of the anti-stalking bill that is presently before the House and introduced by the government.

October, November and December

Director of the Burnaby/New Westminster Family Court counselling appeared before the Committee to outline a proposal for a Family Justice Centre in New Westminster. What is being considered is the concept of getting a number of family services that people require into one centre (one stop shopping concept). The pilot project is scheduled to commence 1993 December 01 to 1994 March 31.

A delegate attended the 1993 Family Court Conference in Terrace, B.C. There were 15 delegates in attendance. The title of the Conference was "Not in My Back Yard" which refers to the corrections facility that exists in Terrace.

A delegation was received in relation to violence on video games and the lack of recreational facilities for youth in Burnaby which very often is the cause of youth 'hanging out' at 7-Eleven stores and video arcades.

It was requested that the Committee write to the federal and provincial authorities to ascertain what governing restrictions are in place to monitor the video games and if so, what those restrictions entail.

An invitation is to be extended to representatives from the RCMP, Planning Department, Licence Department and the Vancouver Youth Advisory Board to attend a joint meeting of the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee and the Burnaby Family Court and Youth Justice Committee on Wednesday, February 23 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber to address points of view regarding violence on video games.

The Committee requested that a letter be forwarded to the Surrey Municipal Licence Department to ascertain the Municipality's procedures for the licencing of video arcades.

Staff were requested to write to representatives in Ottawa and Victoria to ascertain what regulations exist regarding the content of video games specifically with respect to violence.

Staff were requested to write to the CRTC acknowledging receipt of the news release and requesting notification beforehand of any working sessions that the CRTC is organizing so that consideration could be given in the decision-making process. Staff were requested to forward a letter to the Legal Services Society of B.C. outlining the Committee's position regarding the Public Defender System (Legal Services).

A delegation was received addressing the concern for the lack of recreational facilities for youth in Burnaby which very often is the cause of youth 'hanging out' at 7-Eleven stores and video arcades. The delegation spoke out against what our youths are being exposed to on video games.

A concern was expressed if there was any governing body to scrutinize the video games that are coming into Canada and do the authorities know what these games entail. Discussion ensued on whether arcades should be open as late as 4:00 a.m. It was suggested that the arcades close at 1:00 a.m. with an age and time restriction combined.

It was suggested that the Committee write to the federal and provincial authorities to ascertain what governing restrictions are in place to monitor the video games and if so, the Committee should be apprised of what those entail.

The Committee requested that a letter be forwarded to the Legal Services Society of B.C. outlining the Committee's position regarding the Public Defender System (Legal Services).

Staff were requested to obtain more specifics regarding plans and projects with respect to 'Stop the Silence on Violence'.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Baker
Chair