

TO: CITY MANAGER

DATE: JULY 22, 1998

**FROM: DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
CORPORATE LABOUR RELATIONS**

**SUBJECT: REPORTS IN NEWS MEDIA REGARDING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY
IN THE 6600 BLOCK OF DOW AVENUE**

PURPOSE: To provide information to Council on the action taken by the Burnaby RCMP Detachment and City Inspection Departments in the 6600 Block of Dow Avenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council receive the attached report for information purposes.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Community Policing Committee of Council, Member of Parliament for Vancouver-South Burnaby, Member of Legislative Assembly for Burnaby-Willington.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

The news media has recently reported on criminal activity, "drug trafficking" concentrated in the 6600 block of Dow Ave. The Superintendent of the Burnaby RCMP Detachment has advised Council of the following:

During the past several months a notable change in demographics has been observed in the Dow/Imperial Street areas of the community, in that a significant number of refugees emanating from Honduras have settled in apartments in this area. Within a very short period of time the environment surrounding the Dow apartments changed in a negative manner. It was found that between ten (10) and twenty (20) persons are occupying single family apartments. The degradation displayed by the amount of refuse and litter as well as general unkempt conditions became dramatically apparent. Along with this visual aspect has come increased

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traffic and suspicious activities indicative of drug trafficking and other crimes. These criminal activities are taking place both within the apartment complex area as well as on property adjacent to Maywood School, the Metrotown Skytrain station and within Metrotown shopping complex. Vancouver City Police have arrested persons in the downtown east side for drug trafficking who give these Dow Street addresses as their residence. On one occasion Vancouver City Police investigation lead to the Dow Street apartments and they seized crack cocaine, money and a handgun. Similar occurrences involving New Westminster City Police have also come to our attention.

In addition, a number of small seizures of drugs and stolen property have been made by Burnaby RCMP. In early May of this year Burnaby RCMP made a significant seizure of one pound of crack cocaine, a substantial amount of cash and a handgun. Essentially this confirmed suspicions the area had become a major supplier of a very addictive form of cocaine. It has now impacted all three apartments in the 6600 block of Dow Street. The apartment complex has become home, at any one time to approximately 200 refugees, with more arriving daily. American authorities report young persons are being recruited in the **Teguchgulpa, Honduras** to come to Canada and are promised \$500.00 per month from Social Assistance and \$200.00 per day living expenses from selling crack cocaine. These people are reported to be paying as much as \$5,000.00 for this opportunity.

This unacceptable situation is being addressed from several angles. As a result substantial police resources are tasked with attacking the criminal enterprise in cooperation with a number of external agencies. From a Federal standpoint Canada Immigration, RCMP Immigration and Passport Section, Canada Customs as well as their United States counterparts, including Border patrol, Immigration & Naturalization Service, United States Customs and representatives of the US Consulate are involved. Provincially, Social Services are involved and from the City of Burnaby the Building Inspections Department and the Fire Department as well as the Health Department are all part of a team approach. A concerned citizens committee was also formed to assist in devising ways to address the problem. As a result of the combined and continued pressure of all of these groups interacting with the resident and coupled with limited support from the management of these apartments the situation has been kept temporarily under control. Some of the individuals involved in this drug trade have relocated to South East Burnaby and New Westminster, while others have moved into Vancouver. A significant number remain within the Dow Avenue apartments and are continuing with their illegal activities.

Intelligence indicates what is occurring in Burnaby is typical of the methods used by similar groups to completely take over a neighbourhood. The incidents of violence, gang activity, and lawlessness normally escalate until they have complete control of a community. The team approach being spearheaded by Burnaby RCMP is designed to prevent this from happening.

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The situation remains at a critical stage and of necessity requires constant vigilance. Representatives from all of the various city departments, provincial agencies and federal entities are part of the enforcement team and are focusing their attention on this area throughout the week of July 6th and subsequent weeks. Progress will be monitored weekly.

2.0 RECENT ACTIVITIES

On 1998 July 16, representatives from the Burnaby RCMP Detachment coordinated a meeting of Lower Mainland Police Officers, United States Customs and Immigration Officers, Canadian Immigration Staff and City of Portland Police. Members of City Council and staff also attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to share the experience of the Portland Police and United States Customs and Immigration Officers on their involvement with an identical problem in 1996/97. In addition, the meeting served to provide a briefing on the activities of the Task Force coordinated by the Burnaby RCMP Detachment.

On 1998 July 21, the owner of the three apartments on Dow Avenue attended a meeting with Mayor D. Drummond, Councillor D. Evans, Councillor N. Volkow and representatives from the Manager's Office, License Department, Fire Department and Burnaby RCMP. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the degree of commitment by the owner of the three apartments to work with the Burnaby RCMP and City departments to curtail the illegal drug activity within his buildings, correct building, fire and health deficiencies within the rental units and put in place progressive management of the rental properties that will ensure the buildings will not return to the current situation. The owner of the property did give his commitment on working with the RCMP and City departments.

The owner of the concerned apartments on Dow Avenue was advised that should the Mayor and Council be notified that the RCMP and/or City inspection staff are not receiving the level of cooperation that was committed to, then City Council would consider the option of having the owner appear before a regular meeting of Council regarding the continuance of the Business License for the operation of the three rental apartments.

3.0 CURRENT ACTIVITIES

On 1998 July 23, the City Inspection Task Force, including inspectors from the Building Department, Fire Department, License Department, Environmental Health-Simon Fraser Health Region, in the company of Burnaby RCMP members are conducting a complete inspection of the rental suites in the three concerned apartments. The owner will be given a letter containing noted deficiencies and dates for completed corrections.

The RCMP Task Force is continuing its focus on the current criminal activity in this area and

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will be providing an update report to Mayor and Council.

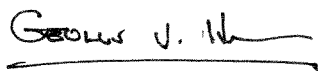
Staff are contacting Provincial Ministries to request their assistance in dealing with the housing problems associated with the concerned apartments. The Burnaby-Willingdon Constituency Office of MLA Joan M. Sawicki has been contacted and is providing assistance in having Provincial Ministry staff respond to critical family needs.

On 1998 July 22, Councillor D. Evans, accompanied by the Deputy City Manager, citizen representative from Community Policing District 4 and a community citizen from the concerned area met with the Member of Parliament for Vancouver-South Burnaby, Herb Dhaliwal. The purpose of the meeting was to request Federal assistance in responding to the associated immigration concerns and ask for special Federal funding for the cost of the Burnaby Detachment Task Force.

In summary, all required RCMP resources are being utilized to remove the criminal activity in the concerned Dow Avenue area and all City inspection resources are being deployed to ensure that the health and safety bylaws are being complied with by the owner of the three apartments. City Departments will be continuing inspections on the three concerned apartments until compliance is achieved. In addition, any additional complaints regarding apartments in non-compliance with City Bylaws in this area will also be immediately attended to in a similar manner.

Further information on the status of the City inspections of the concerned apartments on Dow Avenue will be provided to the Mayor and members of City Council.

Respectfully submitted,



George V. Harvie
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Corporate Labour Relations

Copy Director Finance
Director Planning and Building
Officer in Charge RCMP
Fire Chief
Chief Public Health Inspector
Simon Fraser Health Region