

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

RE: MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' COMMUNITY GRANTS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Minister for Children and Families to
 - a) extend the City's support for the Ministry's decisions to renew the Community Grant funding for agencies traditionally in receipt of the grants,
 - b) ask the Ministry to develop a more consistent and long term planning and funding framework for its contracted services, as discussed in Section 4.0 of this report, and
 - c) indicate the city's willingness to provide information and other necessary support to assist the Ministry with development of the proposed planning and funding framework.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to:
 - . Councillor Casey Cook, Chair of the New Westminster Community & Social Issues Committee
 - . Joan Sawicki, MLA
 - . Pietro Calendino, MLA
 - . Fred Randall, MLA
 - . Christy Clark, MLA
 - . Elaine Murray, Regional Executive Director, Simon Fraser MCF Regional Office

REPORT

The Community Issues and Social Planning Committee, at its meeting held on 1999 November 24 received and adopted the attached report providing the Committee with an update on the status of the Ministry for Children & Families' Community Grants program.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor D. Johnston
Chair

Councillor N. Volkow
Vice Chair

<p>: COPY - CITY MANAGER - DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING - DIRECTOR FINANCE</p>
--

TO: CHAIR & MEMBERS
COMMUNITY ISSUES AND SOCIAL
PLANNING COMMITTEE
1999 November 24

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING
Our File: 17.465

SUBJECT: MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' COMMUNITY GRANTS

PURPOSE: To provide the Committee with an update on the status of the Ministry for Children & Families' Community Grants program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Minister for Children & Families to
 - a) extend the City's support for the Ministry's decision to renew the Community Grant funding for agencies traditionally in receipt of the grants,
 - b) ask the Ministry to develop a more consistent and long term planning and funding framework for its contracted services, as discussed in Section 4.0 of this report, and
 - c) indicate the City's willingness to provide information and other necessary support to assist the Ministry with development of the proposed planning and funding framework.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to:
 - Councillor Casey Cook, Chair of the New Westminster Community & Social Issues Committee
 - Joan Sawicki, MLA
 - Pietro Calendino, MLA
 - Fred Randall, MLA
 - Christy Clark, MLA
 - Elaine Murray, Regional Executive Director, Simon Fraser MCF Regional Office

<p>:COPY - CITY MANAGER - DIRECTOR FINANCE - DIR. PLNG. & BLDG.</p>

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 1999 October 18, Council received a letter from Councillor Casey Cook, Chair of the New Westminster Community & Social Issues Committee. The letter was sent to Burnaby, as well as other municipalities served by the Simon Fraser Regional Office of the Ministry for Children & Families (MCF). The letter identified several concerns regarding MCF's funding of community agencies and asked other municipalities in the Simon Fraser Region to work with New Westminster in reviewing the concerns at a regional level.

Council referred the request to the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee (CISPC) for consideration.

This report offers an overview of concerns relating to MCF agency funding, provides an update on the funding situation, and recommends a response for consideration.

2.0 MCF FUNDING

The New Westminster letter identified a variety of concerns relating to MCF funding, including:

- the length of time for which contracts are renewed and the lack of clarity around their renewal
- insufficient funding for special needs child care (now subsumed under the Supportive Child Care initiative)
- the significant impacts of funding "clawbacks" on their front line service delivery
- the absence of checks and balances for funded programs.

In discussing these concerns with Burnaby non-profit agencies, it became clear that the key concern regarding MCF funding was uncertainty relating to Community Grants. Community Grants were introduced by the Province in the 1970s. While modifications have been made over the years, the focus of Community Grants has remained the same: to provide a means to fund community services that were not being directly delivered by the government.

In 1999, the Ministry provided about 60 Community Grants throughout BC, comprising a total annual budget of \$2.5 million. Burnaby's share of Community Grant funding was \$243,000, allocated amongst four agencies:

- *Burnaby Family Life Institute*: an agency offering workshops, seminars, courses, support groups, and counselling to Burnaby individuals and families.

- *Eastside Family Place Society*: an agency providing a place for parents and other caregivers with small children to meet and socialize, while their children play or engage in other activities.
- *Information Children*: an agency providing practical information, support and referral to parents and caregivers on a range of parenting issues.
- *Lifeline Society*: an agency providing counselling to couples and individuals with low incomes in Burnaby.

Typically, Community Grants are extended for a one year period each fall. This year, agencies received a three month grant extension to 1999 December 31. When agencies learned that MCF intended to review all Community Grants in the province, rumours began circulating that the grants would be completely eliminated. Agencies in different parts of BC began a lobbying campaign to convince the Ministry and MLAs to retain the grants. Their case for retention primarily rested on two points:

- a) Community Grants provide agencies with necessary funds for delivery of important prevention and early intervention services for children and families in need. The agencies contended that the financial and social costs of removing the funds would far exceed any short term savings that might be realized.
- b) Community agencies have experienced an extended period of uncertainty since MCF was established (e.g., the Contract Restructuring process in 1997, the 1.5% funding "clawback" in 1998 and 1999). The threat to Community Grant funding was one more in a series of moves causing uncertainty. Collectively, the moves have had a negative impact on agencies, draining energies that could be better spent on program delivery, decreasing staff morale, and creating difficulties for longer term program planning.

3.0 UPDATE

In 1999 October, MCF officials informed affected agencies that all services funded through Community Grants were being reviewed to determine whether they fell within the Ministry's core mandate. The proposed review was to have occurred in two stages, with a final decision to be made by November 30. Whether because of the province-wide lobbying campaign aimed at protecting the grants or other reasons, the review process was "fast tracked" and decisions were made in early November.

Nine Community Grants in BC were judged to fall outside MCF's core mandate and will be discontinued. The remaining 51 grants, including the four from Burnaby, were deemed to either fit the Ministry's core mandate or, with modifications, be capable of fitting. Rather than extending Community Grants per se, MCF intends to recode or relocate the funding to the contracted services section of its budget.

4.0 DISCUSSION

The Ministry's decision to sustain the funding of the four Burnaby agencies traditionally in receipt of Community Grants is positive. The decision will enable the agencies to continue delivery of important early intervention and prevention services to Burnaby families. Also, the decision will remove the often arbitrary distinction between services funded through MCF contracts and Community Grants, potentially putting all contracted services on a "level playing field."

Notwithstanding these positive aspects, the following concerns remain:

- *Uncertainty:* As noted, moving Community Grants to the contracted services area of the MCF budget has the *potential* of providing increased funding certainty for affected agencies. The current funding is only being extended to 2000 September, however. In the absence of longer term funding commitments, the agencies continue to function in an atmosphere of uncertainty.
- *Communication:* In early November, the Regional Executive Director of the Simon Fraser MCF District wrote to advise affected agencies that their Community Grant funding would be sustained. Despite that effort, staff's discussions with selected agency representatives revealed that confusion remains about the decision (e.g., the length of the extension, the amount of funding involved). Also, an atmosphere of mistrust has developed, with some contacts alleging that the Ministry had not consulted adequately nor given sufficient notice that the Community Grants were under review.
- *Accountability:* While concerns existed about the potential elimination of Community Grants, it was recognized that resources are limited and must be managed as efficiently and effectively as possible - especially in light of increasing demands for services in the future. It was also recognized that agencies receiving public funding need to be held accountable for the funds - i.e., the agencies need to deliver on what they commit to delivering and target their services to areas of priority need. While acknowledging the importance of accountability, the challenge will be to introduce a system of tracking which is not overly onerous and does not detract from an agency's ability to deliver its programs.
- *Long term planning:* The issue that relates to, and overarches, the foregoing issues is the lack of a coordinated long term planning framework for services funded by MCF. A key concern voiced about MCF is the number of major policy changes that have occurred in the short life of the Ministry - the fast tracking, then cancellation, of the contract restructuring initiative is a prime example. A long term planning framework for the services funded by MCF - one developed in consultation with the agencies and other appropriate parties - would greatly enhance the community service delivery system both in Burnaby and BC. It should also improve relations between

the Ministry, its funded agencies, and the broader community. Admittedly, in the real world, no Ministry can guarantee that a plan will be followed over the long term. Also, to be effective, systems need to be responsive to changing needs and circumstances. Nonetheless, while acknowledging its limitations, a long term MCF plan is definitely worth pursuing.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

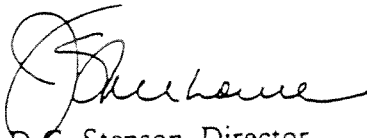
Prompted by a request from the City of New Westminster, this report has examined concerns regarding proposed cuts to MCF funding to non-profit agencies - specifically, Community Grants. The City of New Westminster had asked Burnaby to join it in reviewing and addressing the concerns. Given the Ministry's decision to extend Community Grant funding to 2000 September, reallocating it to other sections of the MCF budget, the immediate "crisis" for the majority of agencies has been averted. Therefore, while ongoing monitoring will be required, it is not necessary at present for municipalities to join forces in advocating for retention of MCF Community Grant funding.

The four Burnaby agencies receiving Community Grant funding provide important preventative and early intervention services to local families. The extension of funding to the agencies should be regarded as positive; however, a number of concerns remain regarding MCF funding. The key concerns relate to ongoing uncertainty, communication, accountability, and long term planning.

With the foregoing in mind, it is recommended that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Minister for Children & Families to:

- a) extend the City's support for the Ministry's decision to renew the Community Grant funding for agencies traditionally in receipt of the grants,
- b) ask the Ministry to develop a more consistent and long term planning and funding framework for its contracted services, as discussed in Section 4.0 of this report, and
- c) indicate the City's willingness to provide information and other necessary support to assist the Ministry with development of the proposed planning and funding framework.

It is also recommended that copies of this report be sent to the Chair of New Westminster's Community & Social Issues Committee and Burnaby's four MLAs.


D.G. Stenson, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING