

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**RE: CONTINUED CITY INVOLVEMENT IN FCM QUALITY OF LIFE
REPORTING SYSTEM**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT a letter be sent to the Chair of the FCM Social Infrastructure Committee which indicates the City's intention to:
 - a) cease participation in the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System for 2002,
 - b) offer staff support, as appropriate and necessary in the short term, to help the FCM QOLRS Technical Team with any adjustments necessitated by Burnaby's withdrawal from the project, and
 - c) reassess the City's future participation in the project later in 2002, taking into consideration such factors as the QOLRS evaluation currently being conducted by the FCM, the potential participation of the GVRD in the project, or the possible development of more locally relevant set of indicators that could be developed for the region and Burnaby.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to the Mayor and Council of the City of Vancouver.

R E P O R T

The Community Issues and Social Planning Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2002 January 23, received the attached report providing an overview of the FCM, Quality of Life Reporting System project. The Committee did not support Recommendation #1 of the attached report as it does not agree with G.V.R.D. participation in this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor D. Johnston,
Chair

Councillor N. Harris,
Vice Chair

<p>:COPY - CITY MANAGER - DIRECTOR FINANCE - DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING - DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES</p>
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TO: COMMUNITY ISSUES &
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

2002 JANUARY 23

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

OUR FILE: 17.828

**SUBJECT: CONTINUED CITY INVOLVEMENT IN FCM
QUALITY OF LIFE REPORTING SYSTEM**

PURPOSE: To provide recommendations regarding the City's continued participation in the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Chair of the GVRD Board to request that the Regional District, as part of its Sustainable Region Initiative, explore the possibility of participating in the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System.
2. **THAT** a letter be sent to the Chair of the FCM Social Infrastructure Committee which indicates the City's intention to:
 - a) cease participation in the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System for 2002,
 - b) offer staff support, as appropriate and necessary in the short term, to help the FCM QOLRS Technical Team with any adjustments necessitated by Burnaby's withdrawal from the project, and
 - c) reassess the City's future participation in the project later in 2002, taking into consideration such factors as the QOLRS evaluation currently being conducted by the FCM, the potential participation of the GVRD in the project, or the possible development of more locally relevant set of indicators that could be developed for the region and Burnaby.
3. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to the Mayor and Council of the City of Vancouver.

R E P O R T

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At its meeting of 2001 December 10, Council reviewed a letter from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) seeking confirmation of the City's continuing support of the Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS). Accompanying the letter was an invoice for \$5400, representing Burnaby's financial commitment to the project for 2002. Council referred the letter to the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee (CISPC) for assessment and review.

This report is intended to help the Committee in responding to Council's request. It provides an overview of the QOLRS, summarizes current priorities for the System, discusses the relevance of the QOLRS to Burnaby, and closes with conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF QUALITY OF LIFE REPORTING SYSTEM

The purpose of the QOLRS is to provide a framework for monitoring quality of life in Canadian municipalities over time. FCM initiated the project in 1996, following concerns about Federal Government cuts to transfer payments and social program spending that were occurring at the time. The project was predicated on two assumptions: 1) regardless of the complex jurisdictional arrangements for social programs, municipal governments should work to improve social and economic conditions in their communities; and 2) municipal governments require more sophisticated policy instruments if they are to play an effective role regarding social policy concerns.

Eighteen Canadian municipalities, including Burnaby, are currently participating in the project (see list of participants in Appendix 1, *attached*). To participate, municipalities are required to make an annual financial contribution to the project (currently \$5400 per municipality per year) to offset project costs (e.g., data acquisition, report production, consultant fees). Participating municipalities are also expected to dedicate staff time to the coordinating body for the project, the QOLRS Technical Team.

In launching the QOLRS, FCM stressed that the System should not be regarded as a simplistic report card, whereby municipalities are ranked against one another. Rather, its purpose was to provide a tool for participating municipalities and senior governments to:

- 1) identify and raise awareness of issues affecting quality of life in Canadian municipalities,
- 2) better target policies and resources aimed at improving quality of life,
- 3) support collaborative efforts to improve quality of life, and
- 4) establish municipal governments as strong and legitimate partners in public policy debates in Canada.

Two QOLRS Technical Reports have been released to date - one in 1999 May and the other in 2001 March. The Technical Reports provide an array of demographic and social data on the municipalities participating in the project. The data are organized around the following eight QOL measures or theme areas:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Population Resources | 5) Community Stress |
| 2) Community Affordability | 6) Health of Community |
| 3) Quality of Employment | 7) Community Safety |
| 4) Quality of Housing | 8) Community Participation. |

Copies of the full Technical Reports, along with summaries of the highlights for Burnaby, have been distributed to Council. Staff has also made presentations regarding the Technical Report highlights to the CISPC, Family Court & Youth Justice Committee, District Community School Advisory & Coordinating Committee, Burnaby Inter-Agency Council, and other groups. Copies of the Technical Reports can be downloaded through the FCM's web site: www.fcm.ca

3.0 CURRENT PRIORITIES

The current priorities of the QOLRS are as follows:

- 1) **Evaluation:** The most pressing concern of the Technical Team is to launch an evaluation of the QOLRS. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine the effectiveness of the Reporting System in reporting on, and promoting awareness of, quality of life issues affecting Canadian communities. Results of the evaluation will be used to establish a five year plan for the QOLRS, as well as to define the framework for the next Technical Report, scheduled for 2003. Consultants were retained to undertake the evaluation in 2002 January, and are expected to submit their final report by early summer.
- 2) **New Indicators:** As indicated, the quality of life indicators are organized around eight measures or theme areas (e.g., population resources, community affordability). To augment the System, the QOL Technical Team is working on development of indicators for two additional areas: the environment and social infrastructure. Also, the Team has entered into discussions with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to develop indicators pertaining to homelessness. The specific interest of HRDC is on indicators which measure households at risk of homelessness and how well communities are dealing with homelessness. If appropriate measures can be developed, HRDC has committed to contribute a total of \$250,000 over the next two years to the QOLRS.
- 3) **Issue Paper:** The QOL Technical Team has committed to producing Technical Reports every two years. In intervening years, the Team will prepare issue papers which focus on specific concerns pertaining to quality of life in Canadian municipalities. The plan for 2002 is to prepare a paper relating to the growing income gap in urban regions, using a large metropolitan area (e.g., Toronto) and smaller municipality (e.g., Saskatoon) as case studies. A small consulting budget has been set aside for this project.
- 4) **Qualitative Data:** An acknowledged weaknesses of the QOLRS is that it relies exclusively on quantitative data, and lacks a qualitative dimension. For example, it uses criminal justice and public health statistics as indicators of community safety; however, it contains no information on how safe residents actually feel their community to be.

Acknowledging the need for a qualitative dimension, the Technical Team has agreed to explore the use of surveys or other options to gauge the community's perceptions of various quality of life concerns. A key challenge will be to find a mechanism for gathering the qualitative data that is effective, sustainable (i.e., can be replicated over time), and financially viable (e.g., conducting scientifically sound surveys of the participating municipalities would be far beyond the current resources of the project).

4.0 RELEVANCE TO BURNABY

To determine whether or not the City should continue to participate in the QOLRS, it is necessary to assess the relevance of the System for Burnaby. Specifically, the questions are: a) does the City get good value for its contributions? and b) is the QOLRS the best approach for the City and region to track changes in quality of life locally?

As noted Burnaby, along with other participating municipalities, is expected to make annual financial contributions (\$5400 for 2002) to participate in the project. The City is also expected to dedicate staff time towards work of the QOL Technical Team.

To date, the chief products generated through the QOLRS are two QOLRS Technical Reports. Staff believes that the Technical Reports are solid documents which provide an array of interesting and useful information. Further, we believe that the quality and utility of future reports should improve as new indicators are added, the breadth of historical data expands, and efforts are made to make the documents more user-friendly.

While acknowledging these positive features, two concerns should be noted:

- 1) **Geographic scale:** Burnaby is the second smallest municipality participating in the QOLRS. Also, along with Vancouver, Burnaby is the only municipality in the project that is part of a larger Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) or regional jurisdiction (i.e., the GVRD). As a result, local data have not been available for some indicators that have required a larger sampling frame (e.g., age-specific employment and unemployment figures). Also, for some indicators, statistics for the Vancouver CMA or other broader geographic area have been used for the city (e.g., apartment rental and newspaper circulation figures). In short, the data for Burnaby has generally been more limited and more problematic than that for other participating municipalities.
- 2) **Resource requirements:** In addition to Burnaby's annual financial contribution, City staff have undertaken such duties as participating in bi-monthly conference calls with the Technical Team, serving on assorted project subcommittees (e.g., to develop new indicators, assess consultant proposals), gathering locally-generated data (e.g., City

voting participation rates, costs of a local “basket of goods and services”), and reviewing draft project reports. Given Burnaby’s relatively smaller size and staff complement, a case could be made that meeting the expectations of the QOLRS would be more challenging for our City than for other project participants. Further, notwithstanding the merits of the QOLRS, Burnaby’s involvement has necessitated trade offs, precluding staff from work on other priority tasks.

It is believed that the objectives of the QOLRS are laudable and deserve support, as evidenced by Burnaby’s continued involvement since 1998. However, in light of the foregoing concerns, and the fact that 2002 is expected to be a particularly challenging year for the City (e.g., responding to Provincial cutbacks and program and legislative changes) staff, on balance, believe the City should defer its involvement in the program for this year. Furthermore, it is believed that the QOLRS approach may better be applied at an amalgamated or regional scale, as is occurring with most other participating jurisdictions. In this regard, the GVRD, as part of its Sustainable Region Initiative, is specifically seeking to better incorporate social, economic, and environmental considerations into its regional planning framework. It is believed that the QOLRS might provide an appropriate monitoring tool for the Region to use with this initiative. Rather than merely propose that Burnaby withdraw from the project, it is thus suggested that the Region be requested to consider becoming a partner. Burnaby staff would be pleased to work with the GVRD as it assesses its potential participation in the QOLRS, or seeks to develop a “made in the region” approach for monitoring changes in quality of life locally.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has provided an overview of the QOLRS, summarized current priorities for the System, and discussed the relevance of the System to Burnaby. The intent has been to help the CISPC in providing recommendations to Council regarding the City’s continued participation in the QOLRS.

Based on the review, it is acknowledged that the QOLRS Technical Reports contain an array of interesting and useful data. It is further acknowledged that the quality and utility of future reports should improve as new indicators are added, the breadth of historical data expands, and efforts are made to make the documents more user-friendly. While noting these positive points, the report cited two key concerns regarding the City’s involvement in the project:

- 1) Burnaby is smaller and has a different regional context than most other participating municipalities, which causes problems for the acquisition of some data, and

- 2) the staff and financial resources required for participation have been considerable and may not be sustainable - particularly in light of other existing and anticipated challenges facing Burnaby and other BC municipalities.

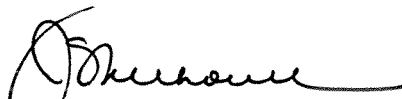
With the foregoing as context, it is recommended that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Chair of the GVRD Board to request that the Regional District, as part of its Sustainable Region Initiative, explore the possibility of participating in the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System.

It is further recommended that a letter be sent to the Chair of the FCM Social Infrastructure Committee which indicates the City's intention to:

- 1) cease participation in the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System for 2002,
- 2) offer staff support, as appropriate and necessary in the short term, to help the FCM QOLRS Technical Team with any adjustments necessitated by Burnaby's withdrawal from the project, and
- 3) reassess the City's future participation in the project later in 2002, taking into consideration such factors as the QOLRS evaluation currently being conducted by the FCM, the potential participation of the GVRD in the project, or the possible development of more locally relevant set of indicators that may be developed for the region and Burnaby.

Lastly, given that the City of Vancouver (the other BC municipality participating in the QOLRS) could be affected by any potential Regional involvement in the project, it is recommended that a copy of this report be sent to the Mayor and Council of the City of Vancouver.

Staff will continue to monitor future developments with respect to the QOLRS and, if deemed appropriate, inform the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee accordingly.



J.S. Belhouse, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JF\sla
Attachment

cc: City Manager
Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
Director Finance
City Clerk

Members of Quality of Life Technical Team

FCM Team: Councillor Michael Phair, City of Edmonton
 Susan Welke, FCM Staff
 Denis Arsenault, FCM Staff
 Terrance Hunsley, Consultant, Advocate Institute
 Tracey Jones, Consultant, Advocate Institute

City of Vancouver	Rick Gates
City of Burnaby	John Foster
City of Calgary	Frank Hoebarth
	John TeLinde
City of Edmonton	Steve Friedenthal
City of Regina	Terry Mountjoy
	Bruce Rice
	Frank Abramovic
City of Saskatoon	Bill Holden
City of Winnipeg	Karen Mitchell
	Georges Chartier
	Ursula Stelman
City of Greater Sudbury	Tin-Chee Wu
	Penny Earley
City of Windsor	Bruno Ierullo
City of London	Pina Sauro
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Region of Waterloo	Lynn Randall
City of Toronto	Lydia Fitchko
	Harvey Low
City of Hamilton	Carmen Bian
	Jane Underwood
Region of Halton	Wendy Kowalski
	Lynne Simons
Region of Peel	LeeAnn Lloyd
Region of York	Joan Christensen
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