

CITY OF BURNABY
HOUSING COMMITTEE

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*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

RE: STREET OUTREACH WORKER TO SUPPORT HOMELESS PEOPLE

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council request the Fraser Health Authority to provide funding for a street outreach position in Burnaby to help assess and address the needs of people who are homeless in Burnaby.

2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to:

Lynn Wood, Executive Director
Progressive Housing Society
7297 Kingsway
Burnaby, B.C. V5E 1G6

Wanda and Eric Mulholland
7476 13th Avenue
Burnaby, B.C. V3N 4K4

Sheila Liddle
7429 13th Avenue
Burnaby, B.C. V3N 2E2

3. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee and the Community Policing Committee for information.

REPORT

The Housing Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2004 November 23, received and adopted the *attached* report regarding the need for a street outreach worker to support homeless people in Burnaby and seeking authorization for the City to request that the Fraser Health Authority provide funding for such a position.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Redman
Chair

Councillor D. Johnston
Vice Chair

Councillor C. Jordan
Member

COPY - CITY MANAGER
- DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING
- DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES
- OIC, RCMP

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
HOUSING COMMITTEE

2004 November 19

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

OUR FILE: 16000 20

SUBJECT: STREET OUTREACH WORKER TO SUPPORT HOMELESS PEOPLE

PURPOSE: To provide the Committee and Council with information on the need for a street outreach worker to support homeless people in Burnaby, and to recommend that the City request the Fraser Health Authority to provide funding for such a position.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Fraser Health Authority be requested to provide funding for a street outreach position in Burnaby to help assess and address the needs of people who are homeless in Burnaby.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to:

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3. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee and the Community Policing Committee for information.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 2004 October 26, the Housing Committee entertained a delegation concerned about homelessness in Burnaby. The delegation consisted of Lynn Wood, Executive Director of Progressive Housing Society, and community members Wanda and Eric Mulholland and Sheila Liddle. It requested that the City facilitate a community planning process focusing on housing and homelessness, and requested City assistance in establishing a number of resources in Burnaby, including:

- outreach worker(s) to assist police in dealing with homeless people
- a centrally-located short-stay cold wet weather shelter
- a permanent minimal barrier emergency shelter

The Committee requested a staff report on the matter, which staff are currently working on. In the meantime, this brief report focuses on the delegation's request for City assistance in facilitating the placement of a street outreach worker in Burnaby.

2.0 HOMELESSNESS IN BURNABY

As members of the Committee are aware, there are no emergency or cold-wet weather shelters located in Burnaby.¹ As well, there are no street outreach mental health or drug and alcohol services operating in Burnaby. Therefore, it has been difficult to quantify homelessness in Burnaby, and to achieve an understanding of the specific issues homeless people are coping with and what types of resources could be marshaled to assist them.

What is known is that there are homeless people in Burnaby. Staff have received anecdotal reports from service providers, City employees, the RCMP, and community members of some homeless people living in parks, in abandoned buildings, under bridges, in the parking lots of and around certain municipal facilities, and in wooded areas in the city. Many of those who are homeless come to the attention of the Burnaby RCMP, either because they are engaged in criminal activity such as stealing food or breaking and entering, or because people

¹ One transition house for women fleeing domestic violence, one ten bed short-term supported facility for adults with mental illness, one six bed facility for youths dealing with drug and-alcohol issues, and one fifteen bed supportive recovery facility for women operate in Burnaby.

who are concerned about the issue and who wish some action taken know of no other resource to call. According to the RCMP, many of the street people who come to their attention are suffering from substance addictions or mental illness. While the RCMP officers do have information on shelter facilities in other municipalities to direct people to, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that people who are either delusional or in an intoxicated state, and who have no financial resources will be able to find their way to such facilities. Moreover, shelter facilities in the Lower Mainland are in such short supply that people are constantly being turned away.

Given that limited police resources would be better spent enforcing the law than attempting to deliver social services, Burnaby would benefit from even a part-time street outreach worker to assist homeless people to access shelter and services to address their particular issues. Recognizing health authorities' responsibilities for the delivery of mental health and substance abuse treatment services, the Fraser Health Authority would appear to be a logical body to fund the proposed outreach position.

3.0 THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF AN OUTREACH WORKER

The proposed outreach worker could either be directly employed by the Fraser Health Authority (FHA) or be contracted by the Authority to a relevant non-profit society. The worker would both provide support and advocacy services to the clients of the non-profit society, and assist other service providers, including the police, to link homeless people to appropriate resources. This latter type of assistance could take a number of forms, including, but not limited to:

- accompanying police officers on call-outs regarding homeless people to assess whether mental illness or substance abuse are issues, and to facilitate the link to appropriate services
- on a case-by-case basis, identifying available shelter options and providing means of transportation to available shelter
- providing support and follow-up, as necessary, to assist people to acquire the resources and/or skills to stabilize their lives.

In addition to providing immediate and direct assistance to people who are homeless, an outreach worker would be a valuable source of information on the extent and profile of homelessness in Burnaby. Such information would greatly assist and inform future endeavours to establish appropriate resources for homeless people in Burnaby.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Very little is known about the extent of homelessness in Burnaby and the particular issues of those who find themselves homeless. There are no emergency shelter facilities operating in Burnaby, and no street outreach mental illness or substance abuse workers to serve homeless people. Many of those who are homeless come to the attention of the Burnaby RCMP, who are hampered in their ability to assist them because of the lack of local shelter, detox, and addictions treatment resources.

The Fraser Health Authority is responsible for the delivery of mental health and substance abuse treatment services in Burnaby. At present, the FHA does not fund a street outreach function in Burnaby. In order to provide concrete immediate assistance to homeless people in Burnaby and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the resources required to support them to stabilize their lives, such a function is required. While a full-time position would be ideal, even a part-time street outreach worker would provide a valuable service in Burnaby.

It is recommended, therefore, that the Committee request Council to write to the Fraser Health Authority requesting that resources be allocated for a street outreach position to help assess and address the needs of people who are homeless in Burnaby. It is further recommended that a copy of this report be sent to all members of the 2004 October 26 delegation to Housing Committee, and to the Social Issues and Community Policing Committees of Council.



J.S. Belhouse, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/sa/jc

cc: City Manager
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
OIC - RCMP

