

CITY OF BURNABY

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**D**

**RE: CAUSES OF CRIME: AN OVERVIEW**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council forward this report to the Community Policing Committee for information.

R E P O R T

The Social Issues Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2004 September 29, adopted the *attached* report regarding social issues that contribute to crime and ways in which the Social Issues Committee and Community Policing Committee could potentially collaborate to address such issues.

The Committee advised that responding to the underlying conditions which generate crime is a complex and multi-jurisdictional undertaking which is beyond the capacity of a single municipal government or its advisory committees. Given this challenge, it is proposed that, as issues are identified and brought before the Committees or Council in future, efforts be made by both staff and Committee members to identify instances where joint initiatives would be beneficial.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor D. Johnston  
Chair

Councillor L. Rankin  
Vice Chair

Councillor S. Dhaliwal  
Member

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

**TO:** SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

2004 September 23

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

OUR FILE: 2410 20  
Social Issues Committee

**SUBJECT:** CAUSES OF CRIME: AN OVERVIEW

**PURPOSE:** To respond to a request that staff provide suggestions for possible collaboration between the Social Issues Committee and the Community Policing Committee on the root causes of crime.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council be asked to forward this report to the Community Policing Committee for information.

**REPORT**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

At the 2004 January 28 meeting of the Social Issues Committee, Mr. Mario Miceli appeared as a delegation on behalf of the Community Policing Committee. Mr. Miceli reported that the Community Policing Committee was seeking the assistance of the Social Issues Committee in identifying the root causes<sup>1</sup> of crime, and was interested in exploring ways in which the two Committees could work together to address one or more of those causes in the Burnaby community. As a result of the delegation, the Social Issues Committee requested a staff report outlining social issues that contribute to crime, and exploring ways in which the two committees could potentially collaborate to address such issues.

This report responds to that request.

**2.0 CAUSES OF CRIME**

A large body of research documents the causes of crime, and suggests that crime is primarily the outcome of multiple adverse economic, familial, social and cultural conditions. No one

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<sup>1</sup> The literature notes that "root cause" is not the most accurate term, as no one variable or risk factor can be considered in isolation from others.

condition on its own is a reliable indicator of probable criminal activity; the relationship between the conditions or risk factors is complex, as they can interact with and amplify the effects of each other.<sup>2</sup> While any one risk factor may not necessarily have a direct relationship with crime, when several factors are combined, the probability that crime will occur can be increased.

The most direct relationship between a risk factor(s) and criminal activity can be found with age and gender. Statistics indicate that young males are much more likely to be involved in crime than any other population group.<sup>3</sup>

The other risk factors most often associated with crime can be grouped into the following categories:

- economic factors
- familial factors
- social factors

These risk factors are discussed below.

### **2.1 Economic Risk Factors**

Poverty, which can be defined as the lack of financial resources as well as the lack of meaningful employment and educational opportunities, is a significant risk factor for crime. Poverty and the conditions arising out of it - poor housing, poor nutrition and health, chronic stress, hopelessness, frustration, and humiliation - can combine to create populations which are at high-risk to commit crime. The groups in Canadian society who are most at-risk of living in poverty are aboriginal people, single-parent women, older single women, and young families with children under 18 years.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, low family income and poor housing can affect the school performance of a youth, which in turn can affect the likelihood that the youth will engage in crime.

<sup>3</sup> According to the *Resource Guide on Crime Prevention Through Social Development* developed by the John Howard Society of Alberta in 1995, pg. 6, young male adults between the ages of 18 and 34 make up the largest single sector of the Canadian population charged with violent and property offences. Males youths, aged 12 to 17 years, account for the next largest group accused of violent and property crime.

## 2.2 *Familial Risk Factors*

Dysfunctional family conditions are a risk factor for criminal behaviour, particularly for children being raised in such situations. Research suggests that inadequate parenting,<sup>4</sup> parental conflict, parental criminality, child neglect and family violence are consistent indicators of future delinquent behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.3 *Social Risk Factors*

Social risk factors for criminality include lack of access to power, real or perceived inaccessibility to services, substance abuse, and negative peer influences. Inequality and racism also continue to keep many people at an economic and social disadvantage, and thus at risk to engage in criminal activity.

## 3.0 **CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

There are three major approaches to crime prevention: incapacitation, situational crime prevention, and crime prevention through social development. Of the three, only crime prevention through social development (CPSD) addresses the underlying risk factors for criminality.<sup>6</sup> CPSD aims to stop crime before it happens by tackling those economic, familial, social and age and gender conditions which contribute to crime, and which are amenable to change. CPSD is about changing the quality of life for individuals, families and communities, and about building a more equitable and healthy society. It is not meant as an alternative to other approaches to crime prevention, but as a complement.

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<sup>4</sup> Inadequate parenting includes lack of parental supervision, lack of parent-child involvement, and lack of parent-child communication.

<sup>5</sup> In its article, *The Root Causes of Crime*, pg. 7, the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council cites the following findings from research studies: 50% of violent young offenders had witnessed spousal abuse in the home; abused children were three times more likely than the rest of the population to become violent adults; sexually abused children were eight times more likely to be sexually violent as adults.

<sup>6</sup> While incapacitation and situational crime prevention have a role to play in keeping communities safe, neither are particularly effective in preventing crime or recidivism. Incapacitation, which involves punishment through the criminal justice system, fails to rehabilitate many offenders. Situational crime prevention aims to reduce the availability and the attractiveness of opportunities for criminal activity, through such measures as increased security, and target-hardening, but it often simply deflects criminal activity to another location.

Experience suggests that the most important variable in efforts to prevent crime through social development is the timing of intervention. Research into persistent offending has emphasized the need to focus prevention efforts on early childhood years, both because the most critical time for healthy social and emotional development is from birth to 5 years of age, and because the early life of persistent offenders is often characterized by such risk factors as family violence and neglect, difficulties in school, inadequate housing, and youth unemployment.

#### 4.0 ADDRESSING THE RISK FACTORS IN BURNABY

##### 4.1 Context

The success of any initiative aimed at preventing crime through social development is dependent on the availability of a wide range of economic, family and social support programs/services in the community. In Burnaby, as in other communities, relevant programs and services are sponsored by a wide range of institutions including the Federal government, the Provincial government, the Regional Health Authority, the School District, the City, the police, non-profit service agencies, and informal/volunteer organizations. Available programs and services vary in their focus on one or multiple risk factors, and on narrow or wide target population groups.

An inventory of all services and programs in Burnaby which could have an impact on the risk factors for crime is beyond the scope of this report.<sup>7</sup> Given that the Province funds the majority of programs and services which focus on children, youth and families, and which target the risk factors for crime, the report focuses primarily on services offered by Provincial ministries and by non-profit service providers. As Committee members are aware, however, as part of its Core Services Review initiative, the Provincial government has made significant funding cuts to all areas of government, including health care, education, social assistance, child care, and services to children, youths and families.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the cuts, many programs and services available in Burnaby three years ago are no longer offered. Many of those programs and services which continue to operate are doing so on a reduced basis, despite a greater number of potential clients requiring service.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, no attempt has been made to identify and document all the services offered by the Fraser Health Authority, the Burnaby School District, the City of Burnaby, or the Burnaby RCMP.

<sup>8</sup> In its 2002 document, *A New Era in British Columbia: A Profile of Budget Cuts Across Social Programs*, pg. 1, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy reports that the Provincial government's three year program of job and spending cuts initiated in early 2002 will have reduced Provincial expenditures on social and environmental programs by \$3.6 billion by 2005. According to the Caledon Institute, this amounts to one of the largest budget and public sector cuts in Canadian history.

Given this context, the following is a cursory overview of some of the programs/services and special initiatives which target the risk factors for crime, and which are currently operating in Burnaby. For ease of presentation, the services and initiatives are presented as responses to the different categories of risk factors. However, it is important to note that such conceptualization is somewhat simplistic, in that many services or programs target several risk factors.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4.2 *Programs/Services Targeted to Age and Gender Risk Factors***

As noted above, male youths are more likely to be involved in crime than any other population group. Outside of the family, the primary responsibility for providing supports and services to youth rests with the Provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The Ministry provides a range of services to youths in difficulty, including those who are sexually exploited, living on the street, addicted to drugs or alcohol, suffering from mental illness, or experiencing any combination of the above factors. MCFD is also responsible for youth justice programs, including probation, bail supervision, custody, and community service programs, and other diversion programs.

MCFD services are complemented by programs/services offered by other institutions, including the Fraser Health Authority's free youth health clinic, the City's four youth centres and Youth Services program, and the RCMP's School Liaison Officers. Non-profit service agencies offer a range of programs targeted to youth - particularly those deemed "at-risk" - including sexual abuse counselling, counselling and practical support to pregnant and/or parenting teens, group homes and other forms of shelter, wilderness programs for youths on probation, meals, clothing, supports for the transition to independent living, and drug and alcohol prevention and treatment programs. Some agencies offer gender-specific programs for girls and boys.

#### **4.3 *Programs/Services Targeted to Economic Risk Factors***

As noted above, poverty is a significant risk factor for crime. Data from the 2001 Census indicate that more than a quarter of Burnaby residents (26%) had incomes below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-off (LICO), a statistic commonly used as a measure of poverty in Canada.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, an employment readiness program for immigrant women which also offers free child-minding can be seen to be addressing economic (job readiness), social (immigrant support), and familial (child socialization, parent support) risk factors.

The main responsibility for ensuring that Canadians have adequate income to meet their basic subsistence-level needs falls to the two senior levels of government. Between them, the Federal and Provincial governments oversee old age pensions, the Canada Pension Plan, unemployment insurance, income assistance, and minimum wage level policies. The two senior levels of government are also responsible for addressing many of the conditions arising out of poverty, including inadequate housing, and poor nutrition and health.

As previously noted, however, senior government services and programs which target the negative economic conditions of Canadians and British Columbians have been curtailed in recent years.<sup>10</sup> As a result, policy analysts and agency representatives claim that low-income individuals and families are struggling even harder to survive on a day-to-day basis.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the difficulties, non-profit service agencies in Burnaby continue to offer a range of services to support low-income families and individuals. These include, among many others, low-cost pre-school and child care programs, free income tax clinics, free law clinics, summer day camps for children, services for parenting and/or pregnant teens, free meals, and community kitchens. In addition to regular programming, agencies have, from time to time, also initiated short-term projects such as the Christmas Bureau and the “Coats for Kids” project<sup>12</sup> to respond to critical emerging community needs. In recent years, a number of non-traditional service providers have sprung up to complement the work of non-profit service agencies and to fill the vacuum left by the senior levels of government. Hot breakfast and lunch programs, and clothing exchanges are now commonplace in Burnaby schools, and many Burnaby churches offer similar supports.

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<sup>10</sup> The recent restructuring of the welfare system in British Columbia has resulted in lower social assistance rates, higher eligibility requirements for social assistance, and the replacement of local Ministry of Human Resources offices with 1-800 numbers. As well, the development of new non-profit and affordable housing for families has dwindled to a trickle since the Federal government’s departure from the subsidized housing scene in 1992, and the B.C. government’s refocusing of housing dollars away from low-income families and individuals and towards assisted living for seniors.

<sup>11</sup> It has been estimated that prior to the recent social assistance cuts in British Columbia, the maximum welfare income available to a single parent with one child covered only 65% of minimum living costs, while the rates for single persons covered only 45% of their minimum living costs. (Source: *A Bad Time to Be Poor: An Analysis of British Columbia’s New Welfare Policies*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia, June 2003, pg. 20).

<sup>12</sup> In winter 2003, warm winter coats for children were collected from businesses and community members and distributed to low-income families.

#### 4.4 *Programs/Services Targeted to Familial Risk Factors*

As noted above, dysfunctional family conditions such as child neglect, inadequate parenting, parental conflict, and domestic violence can be precursors to criminal behaviour.

The main responsibility for policies and programs aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of children, youth and their families rests with the Provincial government. With regards child safety, MCFD carries out its statutory responsibility, under the Provincial *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, to investigate and respond to reports of child neglect and abuse. In extreme circumstances, children who are deemed in need of protection from their parents or guardians are apprehended by the Ministry and placed in foster homes or group homes.

To support the healthy development of children and families, Provincial ministries and local non-profit service agencies provide a range of programs and services intended to enhance the child-raising capabilities of parents, and to improve communication and interaction within families. These programs and services include alcohol, drug, sexual abuse, and other types of counseling services; child care and child-minding; a range of parent support programs such as anger management for parents, parenting skills for single-parents, and child-raising tips for parenting teens; and a transition house and second-stage housing for women and children fleeing abusive relationships.

#### 4.5 *Programs/Services Targeted to Social Risk Factors*

As noted above, social risk factors for criminality can include lack of access to power, real or perceived inaccessibility to services, substance abuse, negative peer influences, and inequality and racism. As with other risk factors, primary responsibility for providing programs which address many of the social risk factors lies with the senior levels of government. With respect to racism, both the Federal and Provincial governments offer supports to new immigrants and refugees, and attempt to raise public awareness of the magnitude and impact of racism in Canadian society. With respect to substance abuse, primary responsibility for prevention and treatment programs for substance abuse lies with the Provincial government and the Regional Health Authorities.

Non-profit service agencies and other organizations in Burnaby continue to offer a range of services targeted to social risk factors. These include ESL classes and settlement and integration programs for new immigrants, substance abuse services, and youth leadership and mentoring programs. Agencies are also striving to improve access to their services through language translation, outreach into the community, and the adoption of culturally appropriate practices in service delivery.



#### 4.6 *Special Initiatives*

There are currently a number of special community-wide initiatives taking place in Burnaby which target risk factors for crime, and which are the result of collaborative action on the part of service agencies and individuals. Some of the more relevant initiatives - Food First, Vibrant Burnaby, Burnaby Restorative Action Group, and Burnaby Children First - are outlined below.

##### 4.6.1 **Food First**

The Food First Initiative, which involves seven Burnaby service agencies, has been supporting projects that both help feed hungry children and families, and build skills and improve nutrition since 1997. Food First's bi-annual fund-raiser, "Empty Bowls", aims to raise public awareness of hunger issues and provide partial funding for small, neighbourhood-based hunger-abatement initiatives such as the Pregnancy Outreach Program's Cooking Workshop, and Burnaby Boys' and Girls' Club's Healthy Cooking and Snack Program.

##### 4.6.2 **Vibrant Burnaby**

Vibrant Burnaby (formerly known as the Burnaby Poverty Initiative) is a project of Burnaby Inter-agency Council, which is an umbrella group of social service agencies in Burnaby. Launched in 2001, the Initiative includes representation from a number of service agencies, the City, the School District, and the community-at-large. With funding from the United Way, the Initiative's first task was the preparation of a poverty profile for Burnaby.<sup>13</sup> The Vibrant Burnaby group is currently seeking to update the poverty profile and to identify sources of funding to carry on its work. That work will include increasing public awareness of the magnitude and impact of poverty in Burnaby, establishing broader community participation in Vibrant Burnaby, and identifying a high-impact project to pursue.

##### 4.6.3 **Burnaby Restorative Action Group**

The Burnaby Restorative Action Group is a collaboration between Burnaby residents and service providers who are interested in developing a youth-focussed restorative justice program in Burnaby. Restorative justice differs from retributive justice, upon which Canada's formal justice system is based, in that it focuses on what needs to be

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<sup>13</sup> *Beyond Statistics: The Burnaby Poverty Profile - Statistics and Stories of Poverty in Burnaby*; Burnaby Poverty Initiative Steering Committee and the Burnaby Interagency Council, July 2002.

healed, what needs to be repaid, and what needs to be changed if certain types of events or crimes are not to take place again. One of its aims is to have the offender take responsibility for his/her actions and to acknowledge the negative impact of his/her behaviour on the victim and the wider community.

Canada's new Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) requires police to pursue alternatives to the formal court system for first time offenders. The Burnaby Restorative Action Group, which has been meeting since 2002, is hoping to establish a community-based program which would provide some of those alternatives. The proposed community-based program would complement the work of Burnaby Youth Services.

**4.6.4 Burnaby Children First**

The Burnaby Children First Committee was created in late 2003 by MCFD to develop a plan for providing early childhood development services in Burnaby. The Committee, which consists of representatives from the community and a wide range of Burnaby agencies offering services to children and families, finalized its Strategic Action Plan for Early Childhood Development in June 2004. Implementation of the plan has a five-year time-line, and will be monitored by a subcommittee of Burnaby Inter-Agency Council.<sup>14</sup>

**4.7 *City of Burnaby Involvement***

As the level of government closest to its constituents, municipal government is in a unique position to observe the social, economic and other challenges faced by individuals, families and communities. However, municipal government lacks the mandate and resources to play a major role in the delivery of services which address threats to quality of life, and must ensure it avoids accepting "downloaded" program responsibility.

Despite these limitations, the City of Burnaby does respond to quality of life issues in a number of ways.

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<sup>14</sup> The ability of Burnaby Children First to accomplish its goals will be enhanced by the recent work of Dr. Clyde Hertzman from the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Hertzman has worked with the Burnaby School District to measure the school-readiness of Burnaby kindergarten children by measuring their development in the following areas: communication skills and general knowledge, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, physical health and well-being and social competence.

First, under the terms of the Provincial Local Government Act, local governments are empowered to develop and adopt Official Community Plans to guide development and meet the anticipated needs of the community. Burnaby's Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted by Council in 1998. It is a general statement of broad objectives and policies regarding land use in Burnaby. The OCP provides for the integration of land use, transportation, the environment, heritage, community facilities and services, and social and economic planning into a broad strategy to direct the growth and development of the City. While not intended as a tool for addressing specific social problems, the OCP does provide the framework for responsible urban development.

A strategic direction of Burnaby's OCP involves the creation of more "complete communities" in Burnaby. These are defined as compact settlements which contain what they need within their own boundaries. The creation of complete communities is achieved through efforts to:

- balance jobs and residents in order to ensure opportunities to work closer to home or live closer to work
- provide a greater mix of housing types to ensure more choices for a diversity of age groups and household sizes
- provide a range of community services and facilities
- improve transportation services to commercial, educational, and other activity centres, including local transit and opportunities to cycle or walk to destinations.

The OCP also recognizes the importance of social factors in the positive development and sustainability of the community. The OCP highlights the importance of social policy and advocacy work at the municipal government level. To help facilitate such work, the City maintains a Social Planning function, which both supports community development and community initiatives, and provides advice to Council and its committees whose work focusses on social policy and social issues (e.g., Social Issues Committee, Community Policing Committee). Staff from other departments play similar roles: in fact, staff from the Planning Department, the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department, Citizens' Support Services and Burnaby Youth Services all participate in and, in some cases provide leadership for, many inter-agency initiatives, including the special initiatives outlined above.

Second, the City of Burnaby does provide a range of direct services which contribute to community well-being and which target the risk factors for crime through a

number of programs and/or departments, including the following:

- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services programs and facilities, including youth centres, recreation centres, seniors centres, swimming pools, arenas, Burnaby Village Museum, Shadbolt Centre for the Arts, and parks (some of which have “youth nodes” and some of which have playgrounds);
- Burnaby Public Library, which offers children’s story-times and parent/teacher resources;
- Citizens’ Support Services, which provides volunteers with an opportunity to help deliver services to seniors, children, and people with disabilities;
- Burnaby RCMP, which in addition to regular police service, offers community crime prevention programs such as Block Watch, school liaison officers in high schools, and neighbourhood liaison constables;
- Burnaby Youth Services, which provides early intervention counselling services for youths aged 9 to 17 years and their families as an alternative to prosecution by the courts.

Third, Council has established a committee system involving citizen representatives which allows for in-depth consideration of a wide variety of issues. The Social Issues Committee, for example, has provided Council with feedback and recommendations on the impacts of the Province’s Core Review Process, on the development of a quality child care infrastructure in Burnaby, and on the allocation of affordable City space to non-profit organizations. Similarly, the Community Policing Committee has advised Council on measures to reduce and prevent child and youth sexual exploitation, on combatting graffiti, and on measures to address drug trafficking and other criminal activity in Metrotown.

Fourth, the City supports the work of non-profit community agencies through community grants, and the provision of affordable office and programming space in City facilities such as the community resource centres.

Fifth, the City has implemented a density bonus program whereby developer provision of community amenities such as non-profit office space, child care centres, and affordable and/or adaptable housing can be negotiated through the rezoning process.

Sixth, the City has adopted a formal Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Review process. Through close attention to design elements such as lighting, landscaping, and sightlines, opportunities for and fear of crime can be reduced. In Burnaby, plans for most new developments in the City are reviewed by a CPTED committee composed of RCMP officers, and City staff with landscape design and social policy training to ensure that opportunities for crime are minimized.

Finally, the City undertakes special projects from time to time which support the work of many other organizations. One example is the City's current initiative to develop a Community Asset Mapping (CAM) system for Burnaby. Through community asset mapping, understanding of the current state of the community is enhanced through the identification of the community's assets and resources (e.g., community programs, facilities), as well as its weaknesses. The product of community asset mapping is a series of detailed maps showing the relationship between the location of resources and the demographic characteristics of the community. It is expected that community service agencies and other stakeholders will be able to access the asset information from the City's website later in autumn 2004.

## **5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Research on the causes of crime suggests that crime is primarily the outcome of multiple adverse economic, family, social and cultural conditions working in tandem . Crime Prevention Through Social Development targets those underlying conditions, and attempts to stop crime before it happens through the delivery of a wide range of programs and services. As members of the Committee are aware, however, the Province has made significant cuts to funding for programs and services which target the risk factors for crime in recent years.

Nevertheless, government workers, health agencies, the School District, the City, the RCMP, and non-profit service agencies in Burnaby continue to attempt to deliver programs and services which focus on improving the lives of those most at risk for engaging in crime. As well, a number of special initiatives involving inter-agency and community collaboration, aimed at alleviating hunger and poverty, diverting young people from the criminal justice system, and ensuring healthy beginnings for children have sprung up in Burnaby in recent years.

As well, the City plays a major role in guiding the development of a liveable and healthy community, and provides some programs and services which enhance quality of life. The City lacks the mandate and resources, however, to play a major role in the delivery of services which address the risk factors for crime. The primary role of municipal government in addressing social issues is advocacy and facilitating the efforts of others.

The Social Issues Committee has requested that staff suggest ways in which it can work with the Community Policing Committee to address the causes of crime. Although the two committees have separate mandates, they share a mutual concern for many of the same issues. As this report outlines, however, responding to the underlying conditions which generate crime is a complex and multi-jurisdictional undertaking - an undertaking which is

beyond the capacity of a single municipal government or its advisory committees. Given this challenge, it is proposed that, as issues are identified and brought before the Committees or Council in future, efforts be made by both staff and committee members to identify instances where joint initiatives would be beneficial. In the meantime, it is still considered valuable for both Committees to continue to provide feedback to Council on issues within their mandates, and to keep the other committee informed of relevant deliberations.

It is recommended that a copy of this report be sent to the Community Policing Committee for information. Staff will continue to provide the Committees and Council with information and advice on topics relevant to the risk factors for crime, and to support community initiatives as appropriate.



J.S. Belhouse, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/sla/sa

cc: City Manager  
Deputy City Manager  
Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services  
OIC - Burnaby RCMP