

COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF THE BURNABY-NEW WESTMINSTER
TASK FORCE ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND
YOUTH**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council, through the Mayor, write to the Federal Minister of Justice about the importance of amending the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of consent for sexual activity from fourteen to sixteen years.
2. THAT Council approve the allocation of \$5,000 from 2006 budget to the Task Force to cover expenses for Task Force initiatives as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.
3. THAT copies of the correspondence to the Federal Minister of Justice be forwarded to all Burnaby Members of Parliament.
4. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee for information.

REPORT

The Community Policing Committee, at its meeting held on 2005 October 13, received and adopted the *attached* report providing an overview of recent and planned activities of the Burnaby-New Westminister Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth, and to request Council's continued support for the work of the Task Force.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Doug Evans
Chair

Councillor Colleen Jordan
Vice Chair

Councillor Pietro Calendino
Member

Copied to:	City Manager Deputy City Manager Dir. Parks, Recr. & Cult. Services OIC, RCMP Director Finance Director Planning & Building
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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

DATE: 2005 October 05

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: PL 2410-20
Reference: Community Policing

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF THE BURNABY-NEW WESTMINSTER
TASK FORCE ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND
YOUTH**

PURPOSE: To provide the Committee and Council with an overview of recent and planned activities of the Burnaby - New Westminster Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth, and to request Council's continued support for the work of the Task Force.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council, through the Mayor, write to the Federal Minister of Justice about the importance of amending the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of consent for sexual activity from fourteen to sixteen years.
2. **THAT** the Committee allocate \$5,000 from its 2006 budget to the Task Force to cover expenses for Task Force initiatives as outlined in **Section 3.0** of this report.
3. **THAT** copies of the correspondence to the Federal Minister of Justice be forwarded to all Burnaby Members of Parliament.
4. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee for information.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (the Task Force) has been working since 1998 to address the sexual abuse of local children and youth in the commercial sex trade. The Task Force, a subcommittee of the

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Community Policing Committee, is a multi-sectoral coalition, with representatives from the Burnaby and New Westminster School Districts, the RCMP, the Fraser Health Authority, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the City of Burnaby, the City of New Westminster, and a number of non-profit agencies providing services to youth. The work of the Task Force is based on three goals, as follows:

- to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth;
- to create the legal and procedural means to intervene when children and youth are being sexually exploited in the sex trade; and
- to provide support, services and treatment for sexually exploited children and youth.

This report provides an overview of recent Task Force activities, outlines the Task Force's priority initiatives for the coming year, and requests Council's continued support for the work of the Task Force.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

Members of the Task Force acknowledge that the provision of services and treatment, and changes to Federal and Provincial legislation are matters beyond the jurisdiction of municipal government. Therefore, some Task Force recommendations to Committee and Council have focused on advocacy to the senior levels of government. The Task Force has also developed new tools to increase the effectiveness of the work of local service providers. For the most part, however, the Task Force has focused its energies on prevention, and in particular, on public education on the issue of sexual exploitation. A brief description of recent Task Force activities follows.

2.1 Requests for Changes to the Criminal Code of Canada

The City of Burnaby, with the encouragement of the Task Force, has made several requests to the Federal government, both directly and through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, to raise the age of consent for sexual activity from fourteen to sixteen years. For the most part, these requests have received polite responses indicating that the Federal Minister of Justice is reviewing the issue.

The Federal Department of Justice did review age of consent as part of a 2000 national consultation process on child victims and the criminal justice system. Proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada which would have raised the age of consent were introduced in late 2003, but expired in 2004 June when the Federal election was called. While the government itself has not re-introduced the bill, a private member's bill aimed at raising the age of consent was defeated in the House of Commons in 2005 September.

2.2 Establishment of Integrated Case Management Committees

The Task Force was instrumental in the creation of multi-agency committees of front-line service providers in Burnaby and New Westminster to track specific sexually exploited and at-risk young people. While the work of the committees is confidential and the identities of young people they are working with are protected, the committees are a mechanism for estimating the numbers of sexually exploited young people in the two communities, for promoting collaborative work among agencies, and for identifying for the police, schools and other service providers any new trends in recruitment or gaps in service.

2.3 Development of City of Burnaby Adult Service Business Regulation Bylaw

In 2001, the Task Force assisted Burnaby City Council with development of a new City bylaw aimed at regulating escort agencies, massage parlors, and other businesses thought to be fronts for prostitution. In prohibiting the presence of those under 19 years of age on the premises of the targeted types of businesses, the bylaw attempts to protect those young people who are sexually exploited in "hidden" venues.

2.4 Establishment of Safe House for Sexually Exploited Youth

A partnership between the City of Burnaby and the Province resulted in the establishment in Burnaby of a five bed safe house for sexually exploited youth in 2000. During its three year operation, the safe house operated at near capacity. As members of the Committee and Council are aware, operating funding for the safe house was terminated by the Province in 2003, and the safe house has ceased operation.

2.5 Sponsorship of Public Education and Awareness Initiatives

The Task Force has engaged in a wide range of public awareness activities regarding the sexual exploitation of children and youth. The activities, which have been targeted to a variety of population groups, including youth, parents, service providers, and the community at large, are as follows.

2.5.1 Presentations for Parents and Community Groups

With funding from the Federal National Crime Prevention Program, and in collaboration with Children of the Street Society, the Task Force has prepared a 1½ hour presentation entitled "It Can Happen to Anyone". Targeted to parents and the community-at-large, the presentation provides information on the realities of life in the sex trade, on risk factors for recruitment and recruitment methods, on

warning signs that a child or youth may be in danger of recruitment, and on relevant local resources which can be accessed. The presentation is delivered by Task Force members on request.

2.5.2 Brochures for Parents and General Public

With funding from the Provincial Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution, the Task Force has produced a brochure targeted to adults. The brochure contains information similar to that provided in the "It Can Happen to Anyone" presentation. Given that youth from cultural minorities are particularly at risk for recruitment into the sex trade, the original English-language brochure has been translated into seven additional languages, including Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Farsi/Persian, Punjabi, and Vietnamese. The brochure is available in print form through Task Force member agencies and organizations which work with immigrants and refugees, and can also be accessed on the City's website.

2.5.3 Participation in "Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth" Awareness Week

The Task Force has participated in the Provincially-proclaimed awareness week since inception of the week seven years ago. Over the years, a variety of vehicles for raising public awareness of sexual exploitation have been employed, including:

- proclamation of "the week" by both City Councils and the distribution of magenta ribbons to mark the occasion;
- collaboration with local print media and minority language newspapers to publish articles on sexual exploitation; and
- poster/banner campaigns, with the message "Buying sex from a child or youth is a crime. It is child abuse." This message has been displayed in shopping centres, in municipal facilities, in schools, in social service agencies, on pedestrian overpasses, on SkyTrain guideways, and on City garbage trucks.

2.5.4 Posters Series

The Task Force has produced two series of posters, one aimed at adults, and the other at youth. The adult poster is entitled "It Can Happen to Anyone", and delivers the message "Buying Sex From a Child or Youth is a Crime. It is Child Abuse." These posters have been displayed in public facilities such as recreation centres and libraries, and at offices of Task Force member agencies. The second series of posters - those targeted to youth - contains tips on the realities of living under the control of pimps in the sex trade. The original intention was to display

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the posters in washroom stalls in public venues frequented by youth (e.g., food fairs in malls, movie theatres). However, given the sensitivity of the subject matter, some private businesses have been reluctant to participate in the initiative. Consequently, the posters have been displayed in washrooms in municipal facilities and the offices of Task Force member agencies.

2.5.5 Youth Info Card

With the assistance of a grant from the Provincial Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution, the Task Force developed and distributed a wallet-sized *Youth Info Card* in 2001 containing the names and phone numbers of agencies in Burnaby and New Westminster which can assist youth with a variety of problems. With financial assistance from the Burnaby School District, the card was updated and distributed to all high school students in Burnaby and New Westminster in 2002, and again in June 2005. The card is also available through Task Force member agencies, other venues frequented by youth, and the City's website.

2.5.6 Training for Local Service Providers

With the assistance of a grant from the Federal National Crime Prevention Program, the Task Force developed a two day training course in 2002 to help front-line workers in local service agencies improve their intervention skills with high-risk youth. The training course, which was offered to 60 local service providers, provided information on a variety of intervention models, on agency collaboration, and on local resources available to assist high-risk and sexually exploited youth.

2.5.7 The Magenta Pages

As a resource for service providers, and with assistance from the Federal National Crime Prevention Program, the Task Force developed *The Magenta Pages* in 2002. *The Magenta Pages* are a concise and user-friendly guide to the range of services for youth in Burnaby and New Westminster, and are targeted primarily to front-line service providers. The types of services inventoried include but are not limited to: advocacy, alcohol and drug, financial, legal, medical, outreach, abuse, and shelter services. *The Magenta Pages* were extremely well-received by local service providers, and were updated in March 2005 with financial assistance from the City of Burnaby. This resource has been distributed through service agency channels in Burnaby and New Westminster, and is also available through the City of Burnaby's website.

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2.5.8 Networking and Education Events for Service Providers

In response to requests from service providers, the Task Force sponsored a networking and education luncheon in May 2004. The intent of the event was to acknowledge the work of those on the front-lines, to assist local service providers to familiarize themselves with other relevant agencies and their staff, and to provide an inspirational presentation of relevance to service providers' work. The luncheon was attended by over sixty local service providers, who heard a presentation by Dr. Gabor Mate on "The Stress of Working with Troubled Youth: Understanding the Problem and Strategies for Coping".

In 2005 February, the Task Force sponsored a one day workshop for over 200 school-based personnel in Burnaby and New Westminster on the concept of asset development. The concept is based on forty developmental assets which have been identified as the foundation upon which healthy development of young people takes place. Financial assistance for the event was provided by the Burnaby and New Westminster School Districts, the Justice Institute of British Columbia, the New Westminster District Parent Advisory Council, and the City of Burnaby. The workshop was very well-received, and participants urged the Task Force to disseminate information on asset development more widely in the community. More detail is provided on asset development, as well as the Task Force's proposed initiatives relating to it, in **Section 3.3** below.

3.0 CURRENT TASK FORCE PRIORITIES

In spring 2005, the Task Force engaged in a strategic planning process to identify priority activities for the following year. Those priorities are discussed below.

3.1 Continue Work To Raise the Age Of Consent for Sexual Activity

At a time when ever-younger children are being lured into the sex trade, members of the Task Force continue to believe that a higher age of consent would serve to protect young people from predators. As noted above, a private member's bill urging a higher age of consent was defeated in the House of Commons recently. Given that the Federal Justice Minister opposed the bill, Task Force members believe that it is critical for the City of Burnaby to again send the message to the Federal government that a higher age of consent is an important tool for ensuring the safety of young people. The Task Force requests the Committee to recommend that the Mayor and Council correspond with the Federal Minister of Justice, citing Burnaby's disappointment with the Federal Minister's stance on the age of consent, and again requesting the required changes to the Criminal Code of Canada.

3.2 Create an Orientation Package for Grade 8 Students

Based on feedback from their front-line colleagues and on their own work experience, Task Force members have become aware that twelve and thirteen year olds are very vulnerable to engaging in high-risk behaviours as they navigate the difficult transition from elementary to high school. In collaboration with school-based personnel, Task Force members and other service providers interested in the project have begun work on an orientation package for Grade 8 students which focuses on healthy relationships and self esteem. As a start to the project, focus groups were conducted with youth in a variety of settings during summer 2005 to identify both their real and imaginary fears about entering high school, and any supports or resources which were or would have been helpful to them. Although it is too early in the process to visualize the ultimate contents of the orientation package, the intent is to have it ready for the beginning of the 2006-07 school year.

3.3 Pursue Funding For More Asset Development Work

Information provided by agencies represented on the Task Force suggests that recruiters and pimps are targeting very young children, and that prevention efforts must be aimed at ten and eleven year olds to be effective. Given the challenges in accessing children in schools to discuss a sensitive topic such as sexual abuse, the Task Force has embraced the positive concept of asset development in young people as a means both of nurturing competence and leadership skills, and of reducing high-risk behaviour. As noted above, the concept is based on forty developmental assets which have been identified as the foundation upon which healthy development of young people takes place.¹ Research suggests that the presence or absence of developmental assets in young people is strongly related to their behavioural choices: as the number of assets in a young person's life increases, school success and service to community also increase, and multiple forms of high-risk behaviour such as alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, violence, and school drop-out decrease.

Asset development is not a program, but a process of creating relationships. It can be implemented at the individual, organizational and/or community level. The aim is to help parents, neighbours, youth group leaders, schools, service providers, young people themselves, and others to identify the practical things they can do to ensure that every young person within their influence has maximum opportunity to acquire as many developmental assets as possible.

¹ Assets are defined as abilities, talents, strengths, skills and competencies, and can range from family support, service to others, and adult role models, to engagement at school, honesty, interpersonal competence, and a sense of purpose.

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The Task Force is interested to pursue the following objectives and activities related to asset development:

- to determine the existing level of developmental assets among Burnaby youth by surveying a sample of 12 – 18 year olds;
- to share the results from the survey and to highlight the benefits of developmental assets and the ease with which they can be incorporated into existing initiatives by conducting a community awareness campaign. The campaign could consist of presentations, banners or posters with key messages, media articles, and other activities.
- to increase the number of local “asset champions” able to make community presentations (and to otherwise support an awareness campaign) by sponsoring training sessions.
- to ensure the sustainability of the initiative by setting the stage for the creation of a community coalition or leadership group, which could oversee the development and implementation of an asset development strategy for Burnaby.

The Task Force is currently investigating possible funding sources for its proposed work on asset development. On the Task Force’s behalf, the Planning Department recently submitted an expression of interest to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for a \$23,000 grant to undertake the asset development activities outlined above.² Communities with proposals of interest to the UBCM will be requested to develop a more detailed proposal for a project ready to commence in January 2006. Staff will advise the Committee and Council if the City of Burnaby is selected to further refine its asset development proposal.

3.4 Host Networking and Educational Events for Local Service Providers

Given the success of the networking luncheon sponsored in 2004, the Task Force plans to host a similar event in January 2006. Task Force members have surveyed front-line workers in their agencies to determine topics of interest for a presentation.

² In 2005 August, the UBCM announced a request for expressions of interest from municipalities and regional districts for the first phase of grants to be provided under the UBCM’s new Community Health Promotion Fund. The Fund was created through a one-time \$5 million grant from the Provincial Ministry of Health.

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In addition to the priority initiatives outlined above, the Task Force plans to participate in the annual "Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth" Awareness Week in March 2006. It is likely that there will be miscellaneous expenses for activities during the week, such as the printing of posters, and updating and printing of brochures. Past experience has shown that other unplanned projects, for which small amounts of funding are required, often present themselves over the course of the year. The Task Force requests, therefore, that the Community Policing Committee allocate \$5,000 from its 2006 budget to the Task Force for participation in the awareness week and for the other activities outlined in this report.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth has been working since 1998 to address the sexual exploitation of local children and youth in the sex trade. While the Task Force has undertaken some projects aimed at improving or expanding services to high-risk youth, and at improving the ability of the police and others to intervene in cases of sexual exploitation, the Task Force has focused primarily on raising public awareness of commercial sexual exploitation, and on other preventive work.

For the period spring 2005 - spring 2006, the Task Force has identified four priority activities as follows:

- continue work to raise the age of consent for sexual activity;
- host networking and educational events for local service providers;
- create an orientation package for grade 8 students; and
- pursue funding for more asset development work.

The Task Force, through the Planning Department, has recently submitted an expression of interest for a \$23,000 grant from the UBCM to pursue its asset development initiatives. To support other current Task Force priorities, it is recommended:

- that the Committee request the Mayor and Council to correspond with the Federal Minister of Justice about the importance of amending the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of consent for sexual activity from fourteen to sixteen years; and
- that the committee allocate \$5,000 from its 2006 budget to the Task Force to cover expenses for Task Force initiatives as outlined in *Section 3.0*.

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It is further recommended:

- that a copy of the Mayor and Council's correspondence to the Federal Minister of Justice be forwarded to all Burnaby Members of Parliament; and
- that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee for information.

J.S. Belhouse

fa J.S. Belhouse
DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/lr/jc

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

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