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**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE****B**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CITY PARTICIPATION ON BURNABY TASK FORCE  
ON HOMELESSNESS**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT Council authorize staff to participate on the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness, as outlined in this report.
2. THAT a copy of this report be sent to the Co-chairs of the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness: Dr. Nadine Loewen, Fraser Health Authority, #4000-4946 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 4H7; and Major Elizabeth Grad, 6125 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, B.C. V5H 3J1.

**REPORT**

The Community Development Committee, at its Open meeting held on March 28, received and adopted the *attached* report assessing a request from the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness for City participation on the Task Force.

With the completion of the GVRD Homelessness count and the information generated by Burnaby's outreach worker and the Woodward report on homelessness, the Committee noted that there would be merit for the City to participate on the Task Force. The Committee further noted that such participation would yield mutual benefits for the City and Task Force, fostering collaboration, co-operation, and the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Colleen Jordan  
Chair

Councillor Dan Johnston  
Vice Chair

Councillor G. Evans  
Member

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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 2006 March 15

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** PL 16000 20  
*Reference: Homelessness*

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CITY PARTICIPATION ON BURNABY TASK FORCE  
ON HOMELESSNESS**

**PURPOSE:** To assess a request from the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness for City participation on the Task Force.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** staff be authorized to participate on the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness, as outlined in this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to the Co-chairs of the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness: Dr. Nadine Loewen, Fraser Health Authority, #400-4946 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC, V5G 4H7; and Major Elizabeth Grad, 6125 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC, V5H 3J1

**REPORT**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of 2006 February 22, the Community Development Committee received a delegation from the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness. The delegation provided background on the Task Force and its activities to date, shared profile information on Burnaby's homeless population, summarized key service gaps and priorities for the future, and requested that the City designate a staff member to participate on the Task Force. The Committee, in turn, requested that staff prepare a report on the Task Force's presentation. This report responds to that request. It consists of three sections: 1) background on the Task Force and its presentation to the Community Development Committee; 2) an assessment of the request for City participation on the Task Force; and 3) concluding comments.

**2.0 BURNABY TASK FORCE ON HOMELESSNESS**

The Fraser Health Authority (FHA) initiated the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness in January 2005 to identify and address issues of homelessness in the city. The Task Force

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meets monthly and is composed of representatives from the FHA, community agencies, and faith groups. It is currently co-chaired by Dr. Nadine Loewen, Medical Health Officer with the FHA and Major Elizabeth Grad, with the Salvation Army. The Task Force has been assisted in its efforts by an outreach worker position, administered by Progressive Housing Society and funded by the Health Authority. The role of the outreach worker was to work with homeless people in the city and to profile their history and needs.<sup>1</sup>

At the 2005 February 22 Community Development Committee meeting, the delegation indicated that the Task Force's work plan is divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 – Information Gathering and Report Preparation
- Phase 2 – Advocacy and Implementation

The delegation noted that, with respect to its Phase 1 activities, the key sources of information were:

- The GVRD Homelessness Count for Burnaby and the Region (a “point in time” count originally undertaken in 2002 and repeated on 2005 March 15)
- A six month survey of Burnaby's homelessness population (a longer term, “period prevalent” look at homeless people in the city undertaken by Burnaby's homelessness outreach worker)<sup>2</sup>
- *A Summary Report of Homelessness in Burnaby 2005*, prepared for the Progressive Housing Society by Jim Woodward and Associates, which examined the GVRD and outreach worker's homeless count data in conjunction with information on local services for homeless people
- Literature
- Knowledge and experiences of Task Force members.

In summing up its Phase 1 efforts, the delegation concluded:

- There are homeless people in Burnaby and the numbers are increasing
- The causes of homelessness are complex – both societal and individual
- The solutions to homelessness need to form a complex continuum.

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<sup>1</sup> At its meeting of 2004 November 29, Council adopted a recommendation from the Housing Committee to request the FHA to allocate funding for a street outreach worker position for Burnaby. When the Committee and Council learned of the funding commitment, a subsequent letter was sent to the Health Authority to express the City's appreciation. The FHA funded the position for two six-month terms, with the second due to expire on 2006 March 31. Progressive Housing Society is currently pursuing other funding sources to extend its outreach services.

<sup>2</sup> The GVRD Homelessness Count identified 40 homeless people in Burnaby on 2005 March 15, while the outreach worker identified 61 homeless people over a six month period last year. The researchers advise that, given the differences in methodology, the two sets of data cannot be compared statistically.

With respect to Phase 2 activities, the delegation reported that the Task Force has struck subgroups to address five priority needs:

- Outreach Worker Subgroup - to explore funding opportunities for a permanent outreach worker position in Burnaby;
- Basic Needs Subgroup - to consider options for the provision of food, shower, and toilet facilities for homeless people;
- Extreme Weather Response Plan Subgroup - to prepare an extreme weather response plan and select a location for an extreme weather shelter;
- Minimum Barrier Emergency Shelter Subgroup - to works towards the establishment of an emergency shelter in the city; and
- Community Awareness Subgroup - to raise awareness about homelessness in Burnaby.

### **3.0 REQUEST FOR CITY PARTICIPATION ON THE TASK FORCE**

#### **3.1 Previous Requests**

In 2005 January, the FHA sent a letter requesting the City to designate a staff member to co-chair the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness with the Health Authority. The Housing Committee considered the request at its meeting of 2005 January 25, concluding that it would be appropriate to decline the invitation – at least until the forthcoming local homelessness count (March 2005) had been completed and more definitive information on Burnaby’s homelessness situation became available. City Council, at its meeting of 2005 February 07, supported the Committee’s recommendation.

At its meeting of 2005 April 19, the Housing Committee considered a letter from Dr. Nadine Loewen, Chair of the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness. The letter included draft Terms of Reference for the Task Force, as well as a Draft Data Collection Tool that would be used in gathering information on Burnaby’s homeless population. It also reiterated the invitation for the City to participate in the Task Force. Upon discussing the matter, the Committee confirmed its initial position to refrain from appointing a City staff member to the Task Force.

#### **3.2 Current Request**

In concluding its presentation, the February 22<sup>nd</sup> delegation reiterated the request for City participation on the Homelessness Task Force. The delegation indicated that such participation would support the principles of collaboration, coordination, and cooperation. It would also benefit the Task Force through the expertise that City staff could bring to the table.

Before addressing the request, it should be noted that the City has taken an active role on various homelessness initiatives in recent years. Key examples include:

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- **Designating staff to serve on the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness** – The Steering Committee is composed of government and community agency representatives from throughout the GVRD. It has coordinated preparation of the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver (2001 and the 2003 update). It has also overseen the process of assessing Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) applications for the region, providing recommendations for funding allocations to the Federal Government. Burnaby staff have participated on the Steering Committee since its inception in 2000.
- **Requesting and receiving staff reports on homelessness concerns** – The Housing Committee requested and received numerous staff reports on local and regional homelessness initiatives and concerns. Further, the Committee and Council have advocated on behalf of local agencies seeking resources to assist with addressing homelessness concerns (e.g., funding for the Seniors Housing Information Program and Progressive Housing Society).
- **Developing guidelines for establishment of extreme weather shelters<sup>3</sup> in Burnaby** - The recommended guidelines, developed by the Housing Committee, were adopted by Council on 2005 October 12. At the same meeting, Council also authorized staff to pursue development of a Burnaby Extreme Weather Response Plan. Since adoption of those recommendations, staff has been working with the Burnaby Extreme Weather Plan Subgroup, a subgroup of the Task Force on Homelessness, in efforts to encourage select religious institutions to open their doors to homeless people during periods of extreme weather.<sup>4</sup>

It should also be noted that, while homelessness is an issue of significant community concern, the City lacks the resources or mandate to assume responsibility for providing capital or operating funding for a shelter or other direct services targeted to homeless people. It should also be recognized that (as the Burnaby Task Force has done) homelessness is a complex, multi-faceted problem. To be effective, strategies must look at the causes of the problem (e.g., addictions, mental health issues, family breakdown). They should also focus on helping people get out of the cycle of homelessness, rather than merely addressing their short term shelter needs.

While acknowledging the foregoing, it is believed that the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness has done valuable work over the past year with its Phase 1 activities (i.e., information gathering and report preparation). It is also believed that Task Force has a solid plan of action for its Phase 2 activities (i.e., advocacy and implementation).

As noted, the City's chief rationale for declining previous invitations to participate on the Task Force was the lack of solid information on the extent and nature of homelessness in

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<sup>3</sup> An extreme weather shelter opens a few nights each year in conditions of extreme cold, rain, or snow. The shelter is typically located in a local church or community hall.

<sup>4</sup> A shelter did open for two nights at Burnaby Alliance Church on 2006 February 17 and 18. The shelter remained vacant, however – likely due to the short notification period.

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Burnaby – especially in light of the other homelessness initiatives that the City was pursuing. With the completion of the GVRD Homelessness Count, and the information generated by Burnaby’s outreach worker and the Woodward report, it is believed that it would now be timely to reconsider the City’s initial position. Indeed, it is believed that City participation on the Task Force could be mutually beneficial for the City and the Task Force, fostering collaboration, cooperation, and the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Therefore, on the clear understanding that the City’s role would be that of facilitator, advocate or partner (rather than direct service provider or funder), it is recommended that a Planning Department staff member be authorized to participate on the Task Force.

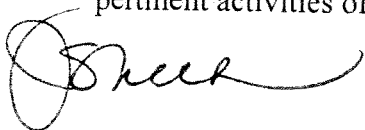
#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

This report has been prepared in response to the Community Development Committee’s request for a report regarding the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness’ presentation to the Committee on of 2006 February 22. The report revealed that, since its inception in January 2005, in its Phase 1 efforts, the Task Force has undertaken important work with respect to generating information and increasing understanding of Burnaby’s homelessness situation. Further, for its Phase 2 efforts, the Task Force has identified clear priority areas of focus for its future activities.

In assessing the request that the City participate on the Task Force, it was noted that the City has also been pursuing several initiatives regarding homelessness in recent years. With the completion of the GVRD Homelessness Count, and the information generated by Burnaby’s outreach worker and the Woodward report, it was concluded that there would be merit for the City to participate on the Task Force. It was believed that such participation would yield mutual benefits for the City and Task Force, fostering collaboration, cooperation, and the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

Therefore, on the clear understanding that the City’s role would be that of facilitator, advocate or partner (rather than funder or direct service provider), it is recommended that a Planning Department staff member be authorized to participate on the Task Force. It is also recommended that copies of this report be sent to the Co-chairs of the Task Force.

With adoption of these recommendations, staff would keep the Committee apprised of pertinent activities of the Task Force on an ongoing basis.



J.S. Belhouse, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

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City Manager  
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