
COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2007 Provisional Community Policing Committee budget to support Task Force initiatives as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.
2. 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 2007 April 12, received and adopted the *attached* report providing an overview of recent and planned activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor P. Calendino
Chair

Councillor C. Jordan
Vice Chair

Councillor G. Begin
Member

Copied to:	City Manager
	Deputy City Manager
	Director Engineering
	Director Finance
	Director Parks, Recr. & Cult. Services
	OIC, RCMP
	Director Planning & Building

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

DATE: 2007 February 01

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 1750 – 20
Ref: Sexual Exploitation

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2007 Provisional Community Policing Committee budget to support Task Force initiatives as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.
2. **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 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, 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 create the legal and procedural means to intervene when children and youth are being sexually exploited in the sex trade;
- to provide support, services and treatment for sexually exploited children and youth; and
- to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth.

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This report provides an overview of Task Force activities associated with each of the goals, and outlines the Task Force's current priority initiatives.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

Changes to Provincial and Federal legislation and policy, and provision of services and treatment, are matters beyond the jurisdiction of municipal government. Therefore, Task Force initiatives on the first two goals cited above have mostly been focused on encouraging the Cities of Burnaby and New Westminster to advocate with the two senior levels of government for necessary changes. For the most part, Task Force initiatives have focussed on the third goal – prevention - and on activities which can be undertaken at the local level. The main initiatives of the Task Force to date are identified below. A more detailed overview of Task Force initiatives can be found in Appendix 1, *attached*.

In pursuit of legal and procedural changes supporting intervention, the Task Force has worked with Burnaby Council on several requests to the Federal government for changes to the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of consent for sexual activity from 14 to 16 years. A Federal bill proposing the amendments is currently at the Committee level.

In an effort to improve services and support for high-risk youth, members of the Task Force spent considerable time and energy during 2006 liaising with representatives of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) regarding the possibility of reinstating a safe house for sexually exploited youth in Burnaby. Thus far, the MCFD position has been that the Province is unable to fund the operation of a safe house in Burnaby and that any financial resources required for such operation will have to be derived from a wide range of community partners. Broader discussions with a range of community organizations continue on the subject.

Task Force initiatives focusing on prevention can be divided into two main categories:

- 1) community education and awareness; and
- 2) support for service providers working with high-risk youth.

With regards community education and awareness, the Task Force has engaged in the following efforts over the past several years:

- delivery of presentations to community groups, parents and the general public;
- distribution of pamphlets which have been translated into seven languages in addition to English;
- creation of posters targeted to youth containing information young people need to know in order to protect themselves and their friends from recruitment;
- creation of a *Youth Info Card* containing information about resources available; and
- participation in eight annual "Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth" Awareness Weeks.

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With regards assisting service providers with their intervention and prevention work with youth, the Task Force has undertaken the following initiatives:

- delivery of training sessions focused on intervening with high-risk youth, engaging in effective collaboration, developing assets or resilience in children and youth, avoiding burn-out while working with high-risk youth, and understanding youth sexuality; and
- development and distribution of *The Magenta Pages*, an inventory of youth-focussed services which can be accessed by Burnaby and New Westminster service providers for their clients.

The Task Force also assisted the City of Burnaby with the development of a new City bylaw aimed at regulating escort agencies, massage parlours, and other businesses believed to be fronts for prostitution

3.0 CURRENT TASK FORCE PRIORITIES

Each year, the Task Force engages in a strategic planning process to identify priority activities for the follow year. The priorities identified for 2007 are discussed below.

3.1 Creation of 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 plan to develop an orientation package for Grade 8 students which focuses on healthy relationships and self esteem. As a start to the project, focus groups have been conducted with youth in a variety of settings 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. The intent is to have the orientation package ready for the beginning of the 2007-08 school year.

3.2 Pursuit of 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 topic as sensitive 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. The concept is based on forty developmental assets which have been identified as the foundation upon which healthy development of

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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.

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

- determining the existing level of developmental assets among Burnaby youth by surveying a sample of 12 – 18 year olds;
- sharing the results from the survey and highlighting 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;
- increasing the number of local “asset champions” able to make community presentations (and to otherwise support an awareness campaign) by sponsoring training sessions; and
- ensuring 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.

3.3 Participation in “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” Awareness Week, March 12 – 18, 2007

As it has for the past eight years, the Task Force plans to highlight the 2007 awareness week by requesting Burnaby City Council to proclaim the week, by distributing magenta ribbons to the public, and by displaying banners on pedestrian and SkyTrain overpasses, and on City of Burnaby garbage trucks. The community policing supplement in the *Burnaby Now*, “The Beat” will be used to raise public awareness of the role of the internet in the sexual exploitation of

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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children and youth. The Task Force also plans to host an educational-networking luncheon for service providers during the awareness week. More detail on the session is provided below.

3.4 Sponsorship of a Service Provider Educational-Networking Luncheon on Internet Safety

The theme of the Task Force's 2007 forum for service providers is internet safety. A four hour session will be sponsored on March 14, 2007 with the assistance of the Safe Online Outreach Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the dangers of the internet for young people. As with past forums, the Task Force expects about 70 local service providers to attend the event.²

3.5 Sponsorship of An Awareness Campaign with Cultural Minority Groups on Internet Safety

Because cultural minority youth are at particular risk for recruitment into the sex trade, the Task Force has plans to make the information disseminated at the internet safety session available to cultural minority groups in their own languages.

In addition to the priority initiatives outlined above, the Task Force will make an effort to liaise with and provide education to SkyTrain and other police services about working with high-risk and sexually exploited youth. Members of the Task Force also hope to engage local Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly in a discussion on youth issues, and the need for additional services and resources to support high-risk youth.

The work program outlined above will have resource implications, the most significant of which is funding for the proposed work on asset development. The Task Force has been exploring and will continue to explore external funding sources to support that work. The resource requirements for the remaining priority initiatives, as well as for any unplanned projects which may present themselves over the course of the year, are minimal. The Task Force requests, therefore, that the Community Policing Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2007 Provisional Community Policing Committee budget to the Task Force to support those remaining priority initiatives.

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 children and

61 ² The event has been planned in collaboration with the four Community Policing Advisory Committees, which are hosting an evening event targeted to parents on the same topic on the same day.

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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 supporting front-line service providers in their work.

For 2007, the Task Force has identified five priority activities as follows:

- creation of an orientation package for students entering Grade 8;
- pursuit of asset development work;
- participation in "Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth" Awareness Week, March 12 – 18, 2007;
- sponsorship of an educational-networking luncheon for front-line service providers on internet safety; and
- sponsorship of an awareness campaign with cultural minority groups on internet safety.

A variety of external funding sources will be approached to support the proposed work on asset development. To support other Task Force priorities, as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report, it is recommended that the Community Policing Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2007 Provisional Community Policing Committee budget to the Task Force.

It is further recommended that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Issues Committee for information.


B. Luksun, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/jc/sa

Attachment

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

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

The work of the Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth is based on three goals, as follows:

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

Changes to Provincial and Federal legislation and policy, and provision of services and treatment, are matters beyond the jurisdiction of municipal government. Therefore, Task Force initiatives on goals related to those matters have mostly been focused on encouraging the Cities of Burnaby and New Westminster to advocate with the two senior levels of government for necessary changes. For the most part, Task Force initiatives have focussed on prevention and on activities which can be undertaken at the local level. The main initiatives of the Task Force to date are outlined below.

Legal and Procedural Changes Supporting Intervention

The main focus of the Task Force relating to legal and procedural changes has been to support Burnaby Council's several requests to the Federal government for changes to the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of consent for sexual activity from 14 to 16 years. At this point, a Federal bill on age of consent is being considered at the Committee level. Federal sources advise that it may be autumn 2007 before the bill is considered by the House of Commons.

Earlier requests by Burnaby Council and many others across country did result in changes to the Criminal Code in 1999 which make it easier to prosecute pimps and johns. As well, in 2005, the Federal government amended the Criminal Code to facilitate changes to the court system which will better support the testimony of and protect child victims and witnesses. The reluctance of young people to testify against their abusers was an issue highlighted in the 1998 Task Force report.

Provision of Services and Support

Although there has been a major redesign of services for high-risk youth since the Task Force recommendations were formulated in 1998, the priority needs and gaps in service have remained fairly constant. Except for a two year period between 2001 and 2003 when the City of Burnaby and the Province partnered to support a safe house for sexually exploited children and youth in Burnaby, there has not been a safe place for local youth to escape their abusers, and youth detox services remain extremely difficult to access. Members of the Task Force have spent considerable time and energy during 2006 liaising with representatives of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) regarding the possibility of re-instating a safe house for sexually exploited youth in Burnaby. Thus far, the MCFD position has been that the

Province is unable to fund the operation of a safe house in Burnaby and that any financial resources required for such operation will have to be derived from a wide range of community partners. Broader discussions with a range of community organizations continue on the subject.

One of the Task Force's successes in the area of support to high-risk youth has been the creation of a committee of front-line service providers who have been meeting monthly since 1998 to discuss specific young people about whom there are concerns. The level of trust that has been developed among service providers over the years allows them to collaborate on specific cases, and to develop a multi-agency intervention and support plan for the youth. As the committee reports monthly to the Task Force, it has proven an excellent vehicle for providing the Task Force with information on trends in recruitment, gaps in services, and reliable statistics on high-risk and sexually exploited young people in Burnaby. The Burnaby-based committee has tracked an average of 59 high-risk or sexually exploited children and youth each year since 2000.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

Task Force initiatives focusing on prevention can be divided into two main categories:

- community education and awareness; and
- support for service providers working with high-risk youth.

With regards community education and awareness, the Task Force has engaged in the following efforts over the past several years:

- a. *delivery of presentations to community groups, parents and the general public:* the presentations cover a range of topics including who is at-risk for exploitation, who is doing the exploiting, how recruitment takes place, what the warning signs are that a young person is at risk of sexual exploitation, and what individuals can do if they suspect a young person they know is in danger.
- b. *distribution of pamphlets summarizing information delivered in the presentations:* the pamphlets are targeted to adults. Given the particular vulnerability of minority culture youth to recruitment into the sex trade, the pamphlets have been translated into seven languages other than English. The pamphlets have been distributed through agencies represented on the Task Force and other agencies which service immigrants and refugees.
- c. *creation of posters:* the Task Force has created two series of posters targeted to youth which have catchy images and information young people need to know in order to protect themselves and their friends from recruitment. The posters have been distributed widely among community agencies and civic facilities.
- d. *creation of a Youth Info Card:* to reach youth with information about the resources available in the community to help them with their problems, the Task Force created a wallet-sized Youth Info Card in 2002. The card has been updated twice, most recently in 2005. All versions have been distributed to approximately 17,000 youth in Burnaby and New

Westminster, mostly through Task Force partners – the two school districts, and youth-serving agencies.

- e. *participation in “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” Awareness Week:* since 1999, the Task Force has participated in the Provincially-designated awareness week in March of each year. A wide range of activities has taken place including:
- proclamation of the awareness week by both Burnaby and New Westminster City Councils and displays in both City Halls;
 - dissemination of magenta ribbons to the public during the week;
 - display of posters and banners with the message “Buying sex from a child or youth is a crime. It is child abuse!” in public and civic buildings, from pedestrian and SkyTrain overpasses, in SkyTrain stations, on Famous Players movie screens, in shopping centres, in social service agency offices, and on garbage trucks in Burnaby;
 - preparation of media articles in several languages; and
 - airing of commercials on radio and television.

The Task Force has undertaken the following initiatives aimed at assisting service providers with their intervention and prevention work with youth:

- a. *delivery of a two day training session* to address the needs of local service providers for improved skills around intervening with high-risk youth and more effectively collaborating with others to support specific youths.
- b. *delivery of a one day training session* on developing assets or resilience in children and youth.
- c. *delivery of two half-day educational-networking events* focussing on avoiding burn-out while working with high-risk youth, and on understanding youth sexuality.
- d. *development and distribution of The Magenta Pages*, a thirty-five page inventory of youth-focussed services in the Lower Mainland which can be accessed by Burnaby and New Westminster service providers for their clients. The second edition of *The Magenta Pages* was released in March 2005.

As well, in 2001, the Task Force assisted the City of Burnaby with the development of a new City bylaw aimed at regulating escort agencies, massage parlours, and other businesses believed to be fronts for prostitution. By prohibiting the presence of those under 19 years of age on the premises of the targeted businesses, the bylaw attempts to protect those young people who may be sexually exploited in “hidden” venues.