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**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 2009 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 2009 March 12, received and adopted the *attached* report providing Council with 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 P. McDonell  
Vice Chair

Councillor R. Chang  
Member

Copied to:	City Manager Deputy City Manager Director Planning & Building Director Engineering Director Finance Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services OIC - RCMP Chief Librarian
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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 2009 March 5

**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.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2009 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 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, 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 create the legal and procedural means for intervention when children and youth are being sexually exploited in the sex trade;
- to ensure adequate provision of 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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From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Update on the Activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster Task  
Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth  
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The Community Policing Committee and Council were last updated on the work of the Task Force in 2007 February. This report provides an overview of Task Force activities over the past two years, and outlines the Task Force's current priority initiatives.

## **2.0 OVERVIEW OF RECENT 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 pertaining to the first two goals cited above have mostly been focused on encouraging the City Councils 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 during 2007 and 2008 are identified below. An overview of Task Force initiatives between 1998 – 2008 can be found in Appendix 1, *attached*.

### **2.1 Legal and Procedural Means to Intervene**

In pursuit of legal and procedural changes supporting intervention, the Task Force has worked with Burnaby City Council since 1997 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. The most recent request was outlined in a letter from Mayor Corrigan to Prime Minister Paul Martin in December 2005. Those efforts paid off, as the Federal *Tackling Violent Crime Act*, passed in 2008 May, makes it illegal for adults to have sex with children under the age of 16 years. The legislation contains a “close in age” provision allowing sexually active teens within a four year age range to have sexual relations with each other without breaking the law.

### **2.2 Support, Services and Treatment**

In an effort to improve services and support for high-risk youth, members of the Task Force focused considerable time and energy during 2007 and 2008 on liaising with Burnaby's and New Westminster's Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). Following up on an autumn 2007 Community Policing Committee report to Council on gaps in services for high-risk youth in Burnaby, the Task Force engaged the MPs and MLAs in two conversations in 2008. In 2008 January, representatives of the Task Force, Burnaby City Council, and the Burnaby Board of Education met with two MPs and two MLAs to provide them with information on the services and supports most in need, and to discuss what each of the senior elected officials could do to respond to the service issues. At the request of the MPs and MLAs, Task Force members organized a second meeting in 2008 June, in which the elected officials were given the opportunity to converse with youth who have experienced the service gaps first-hand. One MP and three MLAs met with four high-risk youth

who discussed with them the need for more responsive educational options, and more youth outreach workers, safe houses/affordable accommodation, youth health clinics, and youth centres. At the request of the elected officials, a follow-up meeting with youth is planned for 2009.

## **2.3 Prevention**

Task Force initiatives focusing on prevention can be divided into three main categories, as follows.

### ***2.3.1 General Community Education and Awareness***

The Task Force has engaged in the following community education and awareness efforts during the past two years:

- Successful liaison with the Provincial Ministry of Education (through the Burnaby Board of Education) regarding translation of its existing English-language webpage on internet safety into eleven additional languages; and
- Participation in the ninth and tenth annual “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” Awareness Weeks.

### ***2.3.2 Support for Service Providers Working with High-Risk and Sexually Exploited Youth***

To assist service providers with their intervention and prevention work with youth, the Task Force sponsored a half-day information/training session on internet safety in 2007. A second education session, held in 2009 February and detailed in Section 3.2 below, was targeted particularly to service providers working with immigrant and refugee youth.

### ***2.3.3 Education and Awareness-Raising with Youth***

To help reach youth themselves with important prevention information, the Task Force created *Youth Voice* in 2007. *Youth Voice*, a facilitated, regularly-scheduled group for youth, is intended to increase the involvement (and voice) of youth in the work of the Task Force, and to help promote awareness among youth about sexual exploitation, its prevention, and support services available. It was through *Youth Voice* that the Task Force was able to create the aforementioned opportunity for MPs and MLAs to discuss service gaps with youth.

## **3.0 CURRENT TASK FORCE PRIORITIES**

Each year, the Task Force engages in a strategic planning process to identify priority activities for the following year. The priorities identified for 2009 are discussed below.

**3.1 Participation in “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” Awareness Week, March 8 - 14, 2009**

As it has for the past ten years, the Task Force plans to highlight sexual exploitation awareness week by requesting Burnaby and New Westminster City Councils to proclaim the week, by distributing magenta ribbons to the public, and by displaying banners on pedestrian overpasses with the message “Buying sex from a child or a youth is a crime. It is child abuse!”

**3.2 Sponsorship of an Educational Session for Service Providers Working with Immigrant and Refugee Youth**

Because cultural minority youth are at particular risk for recruitment into the sex trade, a one-half day education session was held on 2009 February 18 for the new settlement workers in schools, staff from non-profit agencies serving immigrant and refugee youth and their families, and others who come into contact regularly with minority culture youth. The participants were provided with a general presentation on aspects of youth recruitment into the sex trade (e.g., warning signs that a child or youth is at risk of recruitment, how to identify recruiters and pimps, life in the sex trade, available resources). A panel of experts on internet safety, youth sexual exploitation, youth outreach, and youth health services also provided valuable information and responded to audience questions.

**3.3 Ongoing Awareness-Raising with Cultural Minority Groups on Internet Safety**

Arising from the Burnaby Board of Education’s success in 2008 in urging the Provincial Ministry of Education to provide on-line internet safety information in twelve languages, the Task Force will work to make local cultural minority groups aware of the availability of that information.

**3.4 Ongoing Involvement of Youth in Task Force Work**

The Task Force will work with youth and other partners to enhance the voice of youth in Task Force activities. The work may take the form of strengthening the existing group, *Youth Voice*, or of finding an alternative vehicle for youth participation.

**3.5 Advocacy on Supports and Services for High-Risk and Sexually-Exploited Youth**

As noted above, the Task Force will continue to work with youth and local MPs and MLAs on responding to the gaps in local services for high-risk and sexually exploited youth. It is expected that this work will accelerate after the 2009 May Provincial election.

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From: *Director Planning and Building*  
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### **3.6 Gathering Statistics on Child and Youth Sexual Exploitation in Burnaby and New Westminster**

Since 1999, information on the number of local youth in the sex trade has been provided to the Task Force by committees of front-line service providers in both Burnaby and New Westminster. Those integrated case-management committees, created by the Task Force in 1998, were tasked with monitoring local youth in – or at-risk of recruitment into – the sex trade, in order to ensure appropriate and adequate supports and services were available. As an off-shoot of their work, the committees were able to provide the Task Force with annual statistics on the youth followed. Those statistics have been a critical aid in advocacy work regarding services.<sup>1</sup>

Given increasing concerns with privacy, and the consequent tightening of confidentiality policies in many organizations, members of the integrated case management committees are no longer able to provide the Task Force with an annual written report on the number of local youth with active or peripheral involvement in the sex trade. Therefore, the Task Force will, during 2009, seek to identify and implement an alternative way to access reliable statistics on child and youth sexual exploitation in Burnaby and New Westminster.

To support its proposed 2009 initiatives, the Task Force requests that the Community Policing Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2009 Provisional Community Policing Committee budget to the Task Force. This request is consistent with requests made for Community Policing Committee funding to support Task Force activities in 2001, 2006, and 2007.<sup>2</sup> Sufficient budget funds are available to satisfy the request.

## **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 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 prevention – through raising public awareness of commercial sexual exploitation, and supporting front-line service providers in their work.

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<sup>1</sup> The Burnaby-based committee tracked an average of 59 high-risk or sexually exploited children and youth each year between 2000 and 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of the Task Force's initiatives over the years have been funded by Federal and Provincial grants which are no longer available.

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For 2009, the Task Force has identified six priority activities as follows:

- participation in “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” Awareness Week, March 8 – 14, 2009;
- sponsorship of an education session for service providers working with immigrant and refugee youth (accomplished in 2009 February);
- ongoing awareness-raising with cultural minority groups on internet safety;
- ongoing involvement of youth in Task Force work;
- advocacy for supports and services for high-risk and sexually-exploited youth; and
- implementation of an effective vehicle for accessing reliable statistics on child and youth sexual exploitation in Burnaby and New Westminster.

To support these Task Force priorities, it is recommended that the Community Policing Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$5,000 from the 2009 Provisional Community Policing Committee budget to the Task Force. Sufficient budget funds are available for this purpose.

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/sla/sa  
Attachment

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

**OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES  
OF THE BURNABY-NEW WESTMINSTER TASK FORCE  
ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
1998 - 2008**

The work of the Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (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 ensure adequate provision of 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 City Councils 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.

**A. Legal and Procedural Changes Supporting Intervention**

The main focus of the Task Force relating to legal and procedural changes has been to work with Burnaby City 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. In 2008 May, the Federal *Tackling Violent Crime Act* was passed, making it illegal for adults to have sex with children under the age of 16 years. The legislation contains a “close in age” provision allowing sexually active teens within a four year age range to have sexual relations with each other without breaking the law.

Requests by Burnaby Council and many others across country resulted 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 youth-friendly changes to the court system in order to better encourage and support the testimony of and protect child victims and witnesses. The reluctance of young people to testify against their abusers for fear of reprisals was an issue highlighted in the 1998 Task Force report.

Finally, 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.



## **B. Provision of Services and Support**

For a two year period between 2001 and 2003 – as a result of leg work undertaken by the Task Force - the City of Burnaby and the Province partnered to support a safe house for sexually exploited youth in Burnaby. The safe house was closed in 2003 due to Provincial funding reductions.

Although there has been a major redesign of services for high-risk youth since the original Task Force recommendations were formulated in 1998, the priority needs and gaps in service have remained fairly constant. A 2007 report from the Community Development Committee (assisted by the Task Force) to Council on support services for high-risk youth in Burnaby highlighted five service areas in which gaps in service make it difficult to support and/or treat youth who engage in high-risk behaviours. Those service areas are:

- youth outreach;
- youth detox and addictions treatment;
- safe, affordable and supportive housing for youth;
- youth health services; and
- services and supports targeted to six particularly vulnerable groups of youth including Aboriginal youth; homeless and/or street-entrenched youth; youth living in poverty; youth with mental illness and disabilities – both physical and cognitive; immigrant and refugee youth, especially those from war zones and other traumatic situations; and lesbian, gay, trans-gendered, bi-sexual and questioning (LGTBQ) youth.

In an attempt to address the service gaps, Task Force members met twice in 2008 with local Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to request their support in urging the senior levels of government to respond appropriately to the service issues. Those discussions are expected to continue in 2009.

## **C. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth**

Task Force initiatives focusing on prevention can be divided into three main categories, as follows.

### 1. General Community Education and Awareness

With regards to general 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 English-language pamphlets have been translated into seven additional languages. The pamphlets have been distributed through agencies represented on the Task Force and other agencies which serve immigrants and refugees.
- c. *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 to mark “the week” over the years 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;
  - 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.
- d. *dissemination of information on internet safety, particularly to cultural minorities.* After considerable time and effort spent seeking out effective and accessible information on internet safety, in 2008 the Task Force, through the Burnaby Board of Education, was successful in urging the Provincial Ministry of Education to translate English-language internet safety information on its website into eleven additional languages.

## 2. Support for Service Providers Working with High-Risk & Sexually Exploited Youth

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 four half-day educational-networking events* focussing on relevant topics, including:

- avoiding burn-out while working with high-risk youth;
- understanding youth sexuality;
- understanding youth culture around social networking, and the dangers of the internet; and
- recruitment of youth into the commercial sex-trade, targeted specifically at service providers working with immigrant and refugee youth and their families.

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. Two editions of *The Magenta Pages* have been produced – in 2002 and 2005. The resource is also available on the City of Burnaby website.

### 3. Education and Awareness-Raising with Youth Themselves

The Task Force has engaged in the following activities to reach youth with prevention information:

- a. *delivery of presentations*: the presentations cover a range of topics including how recruitment takes place, the reality of life in the sex trade, and resources and support available in the community.
- b. *sponsorship of a one-day youth forum*: the forum provided information similar to that provided in the presentations.
- 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; and
- e. *creation of Youth Voice in 2007*: *Youth Voice*, a facilitated group for youth, is intended to increase the involvement (and voice) of youth in the work of the Task Force, and to help promote awareness among youth of commercial sexual exploitation, its prevention, and support and services available.