

COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BURNABY –NEW
WESTMINSTER TASK FORCE ON SEXUALLY EXPLOITED AND AT-
RISK YOUTH**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council authorize the allocation of \$4,000 from the 2014 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget to the Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth to support its 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 2014 March 13, received and adopted the *attached* report providing an overview of recent and planned activities of the Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor P. Calendino
Chair

Councillor P. McDonell
Vice Chair

Councillor A. Kang
Member

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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE

DATE: 2014 March 3

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 1750 20
Reference: Sexual Exploitation

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BURNABY-NEW WESTMINSTER
TASK FORCE ON SEXUALLY EXPLOITED AND AT-RISK YOUTH

PURPOSE: To provide an overview of recent and planned activities of the Burnaby-New Westminister Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council be requested to authorize the allocation of \$4,000 from the 2014 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget to the Burnaby-New Westminister Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth to support its 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 Westminister Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth (the Task Force) has been working since 1998 to address the sexual abuse of children and youth in the sex trade. The Task Force, a subcommittee of the Community Policing Committee, is a multi-sectoral coalition, with staff representation from the City of Burnaby, the City of New Westminister, the Burnaby and New Westminister School Districts, the Fraser Health Authority, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and a number of non-profit agencies who provide services to youth. Over the years, the work of the Task Force has focused on three goals:

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

The Committee and Council were last updated on the overall work of the Task Force in 2012 October. This report provides an overview of the Task Force's key activities over the past year, and outlines the Task Force's priorities for its next two-year workplan (2014 – 2016).

2.0 OVERVIEW OF RECENT TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

During 2013, the Task Force focused its efforts in three main areas: research to support leadership and advocacy for services; youth engagement, awareness and communication; and general community education and awareness.

2.1 Research to Support Leadership and Advocacy for Services

In order to advocate for appropriate and effective services and supports for sexually exploited youth and their families, the Task Force undertook research to gain a greater understanding of the scope and nature of youth sexual exploitation locally.

To that end, the Task Force conducted its second one-month "count" of at-risk and sexually exploited youth in February 2013. The count was conducted by local service providers who, for the entire month, tracked the youth they worked with who were at-risk of being lured into the sexual exploitation, were suspected of being sexually exploited, or were known to be so. The intent of the count was to identify the number of local youth meeting those criteria, and to obtain information about them including age, gender and ethnicity; methods of recruitment being used; living situations; habits with regards to substances such as alcohol and drugs; and degree of connections to schools or other supports. The total number of youth identified in the count in 2013 was 217. Approximately 25 youth service locations took part in the count, which was a follow-up to a similar count conducted in February 2011, which identified 148 youth. The count provides valuable information about youth experiencing sexual exploitation in our community, including that:

- 25 youth (12%) were "confirmed" as being sexually exploited and another 46 youth (22%) were suspected of being exploited;
- most of the youth (81%) were aged 17 years and younger, with 33% younger than 15 years;
- 62% of the youth lived with their families;
- 83% attended school, at least occasionally;
- 47% of the youth were using drugs and alcohol, although the practices of almost one-third of the youth were unknown; and
- 40% of the youth were Caucasian, while Aboriginal youth represented 14%. The remaining percentage represented a range of ethnicities.

The trend, first noticed in 2011, away from street exploitation and towards internet and boyfriend/pimp exploitation continues. It would appear that those under 15 years are more vulnerable to being exploited via the internet, while those aged 18 – 25 years, and especially girls, are more vulnerable to boyfriend/pimp exploitation.

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The results of the count were shared with Burnaby's and New Westminster's five Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in July 2013 at a meeting with Task Force representatives. The intent of the meeting was to raise awareness about the issue among the MLAs and to engage their assistance in advocacy efforts regarding youth outreach, substance abuse, mental health, and housing services. The MLAs requested additional information on current and past service levels, and sources of funding for those services. The Task Force continues to work on this request.

The results of the count were also shared with the local media, and both local bi-weeklies, *The Burnaby Now* and *The Burnaby NewsLeader* featured articles on the results in 2013 November.

As well, the Task Force sponsored a service provider education/networking session in 2013, as a means of enhancing service delivery. Over 80 local service providers attended a half-day session in 2013 January focused on social media, its role in sexual exploitation, and how to stay connected with youth.

2.2 Youth Engagement, Awareness and Communication

The intent of the Task Force's work in this area is to promote fun and healthy activities for youth in order to build self-esteem and trusting relationships with adults, and to educate/raise awareness among youth – via the technology favoured by them – of the dangers of participation in the sex trade. To this end, the Task Force – with the help of Youth Voice¹ – completed four projects during 2013.

First, in 2013, the Task Force sponsored its fourth annual five kilometer walk/run to raise awareness of the recruitment of youth into the sex trade, and of the resources available to support at-risk and sexually exploited youth. The walk/run was held in Confederation Park during Youth Week in May 2013, and attracted approximately 300 participants. Local service providers staffed booths with information about services available to sexually exploited and high-risk youth.

Second, the Task Force printed and distributed copies throughout the community of a youth-designed poster focused on the dangers of the sex trade. The printed poster was the winner of a poster contest sponsored by the Task Force in 2012, and was displayed at member agency offices and locations, and City Youth Centres.

Third, the Task Force launched a promotional campaign for its youth services website "Where to Find 411"², which was launched in 2011 October. The independently-hosted website provides information on the work of the Task Force, the issue of youth sexual exploitation, relevant local programs and services, and links to other pertinent supports and resources, and is maintained by

¹ Youth Voice is a facilitated, regularly-scheduled advisory group of local youth created by the Task Force in 2007.

² The website can be found at: www.wtf411.ca

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Task Force members. The promotional campaign used items such as lipbalm, locker mirrors, window decals and stress balls to promote the website logo and website address.

Finally, the Task Force redesigned and reprinted its Youth Crisis Info card, which is a wallet-sized card advertising the WTF411 website, which provides local numbers for general youth services, substance abuse, housing providers, violence and suicidal emergencies. The card is being distributed through youth serving agencies and schools.

2.3 General Community Education and Awareness

In 2013, as in the past 14 years, the Task Force promoted general community awareness of youth sexual exploitation by requesting Burnaby and New Westminster City Councils to proclaim “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” Awareness Week. Magenta ribbons were distributed, and promotion of the upcoming walk/run for sexual exploitation was undertaken.

3.0 CURRENT TASK FORCE INITIATIVES

In 2013 October, the Task Force invited youth-serving organizations not represented on the Task Force to a half-day session to help Task Force members identify priorities for Task Force work for the next two or so years. The two broadly identified priority themes are as follows.

3.1 Leadership on Service Delivery

Firstly, the Task Force hopes to re-establish a community-based network in Burnaby and New Westminster that will meet regularly to discuss integrated case management for at-risk and sexually exploited youth. The Task Force sponsored similar committees in the past, whereby service providers who had taken an oath of confidentiality would meet regularly to discuss youth of whom they had a concern about. The committees served not only to enhance service delivery to the youth, but also to provide the Task Force with annual aggregated data on the number and behavioural traits of the youth discussed. The committees were disbanded in late 2008 due to concerns on the part of statutory agencies about possible conflicts with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. One of the Task Force’s main tasks in 2014 will be to ascertain how the proposed committees can operate within the scope of the legislation, and any other related legislative changes.

To further ensure that the Task Force shows leadership on service delivery in this area, the group will examine possible avenues for including family, caregiver and community participation in Task Force planning and projects, as appropriate under privacy regulations and procedural requirements, and will also explore cultural awareness within issues of sexual exploitation to inform activities and approaches. Finally, within this focus area, the Task Force will reach out to similar bodies completing similar work across B.C. in order to investigate best practices of other groups and to communicate the table’s successes.

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3.2 Youth and Community Engagement

The Task Force plans to continue to improve and promote the ‘Where to Find – 411’ website, and to investigate the creation of an “app” to widen its appeal and usage. There is also interest in creating an interactive presentation, including a video, to support youth’s understanding of the issue of sexual exploitation. The Task Force will also continue to work with Youth Voice to plan youth-oriented awareness activities.

As well, the Task Force will continue to investigate and create methods of educating parents, caregivers and community members about youth sexual exploitation and to support the ongoing professional development of youth service providers. To these ends, the Task Force is planning to develop a workshop and/or video which can be tailored and presented to each of the audiences. The Task Force also expects to participate in the annual sexual exploitation awareness week, which occurs every year Province-wide in mid-March. For 2014, the Taskforce will again be sponsoring an awareness-building walk/run. This will occur during Youth Week (early May) but will begin to be promoted during sexual exploitation awareness week. In addition, magenta ribbons have again been distributed within the community, a proclamation has been requested, and overpass banners will be displayed.

To help support the initiatives detailed above, the Task Force has access to the remaining \$900 in grant funds awarded to the Burnaby School District by the Province, and earmarked for ‘Where to Find – 411’ website promotion. To ensure adequate funds to complete the remaining activities – such as development of the integrated case management committees, possible enhancements to the website and research on an app, awareness activities, an interactive workshop/video, and service provider professional education sessions – the Task Force would require an allocation of \$4,000 from the 2014 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget. Such a request is consistent with requests made previously through the Community Policing Committee to support Task Force activities in past years³. Sufficient budget funds are available in the Boards, Committees and Commissions budget for this purpose, and would support the proposed workplan over the next two year period.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth has been working since 1998 to address the sexual exploitation of children and youth in the sex trade. In 2013, the Task Force focused on activities that:

- built a foundation for advocacy for services to adequately support vulnerable youth;
- raised awareness among youth of the dangers of the sex trade and resources available to support vulnerable youth; and
- raised awareness among the general public of the continued recruitment into the sex trade of Burnaby and New Westminster youth.

³ Similar requests were made, and approved, in the years 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2012.

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Within its next two-year workplan (2014 – 2016), the Task Force will continue to promote these goals, while also focusing on activities that demonstrate Taskforce leadership on service delivery (e.g. re-establishment of a community-based integrated case management committee), and that further promote youth and community engagement on these important issues.

To support these Task Force priorities and augment the existing \$900 in School District grant funding earmarked for the ‘Where to Find – 411’ website promotion, it is recommended that the Community Policing Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$4,000 from the 2014 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget to the Task Force.

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


Lou Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/RM:sla:sa

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