

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: 2016 January 4

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 1750 20
Reference: Sexual Exploitation

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2016 Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2017 Boards, Committee and Commissions budget to the Burnaby-New Westminister Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth to support its two-year workplan, as detailed in Section 3.0 of this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Social Planning Committee for information.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Burnaby-New Westminister Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth (the Taskforce) has been working since 1998 to address the sexual abuse of children and youth in the sex trade. The Taskforce, a subcommittee of the Public Safety 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 Burnaby RCMP, the New Westminister Police, 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 Taskforce has focused on two goals:

- 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 Taskforce in 2014 March. This report provides an overview of the Taskforce's key activities since that time, and outlines the Taskforce's priorities for its next two-year workplan (2016 – 2017).

2.0 OVERVIEW OF RECENT TASKFORCE ACTIVITIES

Since 2014, the Taskforce focused its efforts on two main areas: targeted service delivery for exploited and at-risk youth; and community/youth engagement and education.

2.1 Targeted Service Delivery

In order to advocate for appropriate and effective services and supports for sexually exploited youth and their families, the Taskforce undertook its third "count" to gain a greater understanding of the scope and nature of youth sexual exploitation locally.

The Taskforce conducted its third one-month "count" of at-risk and sexually exploited youth in February 2015. 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 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 2015 was 180. Approximately 20 youth service locations took part in the count, which was a follow-up to similar counts conducted in February 2011 and in February 2014. The 2011 count identified 146 youth, and the 2013 count identified 217 youth. The count provides valuable information about youth experiencing sexual exploitation in our community, including that:

- 24 youth (13%) were "confirmed" as being sexually exploited and another 40 youth (22%) were suspected of being exploited. The remaining 116 youth (65%) were at-risk;
- most of the youth (74%) were aged 17 years and younger, with 21% younger than 15 years;
- 66% of the youth lived with their families;
- 75% attended school, at least occasionally;
- 23% of the youth counted noted regular use of drugs and/or alcohol;
- 41% of the youth were Caucasian, while Aboriginal youth represented 23%. The remaining percentage represented a range of ethnicities; and
- 48% of youth counted identified as being from Burnaby, 36% identified as being from New Westminster, and 16% identified as being from other communities (e.g. Surrey).

The trend, first noticed in 2011, away from street exploitation and towards internet and boyfriend/pimp exploitation continues. It would appear that those under 17 years are more vulnerable to being exploited via the internet, while those aged 18 – 24 years, for both males and females, are more vulnerable to boyfriend/pimp exploitation. These results continue to inform local service provision and have strengthened partnerships between Taskforce member agencies.

The results of the count have been shared with Burnaby's and New Westminster's Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in 2015 November/December at meetings with Taskforce representatives. The intent of the meetings was to raise awareness about sexual exploitation of youth 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, particularly in relation to youth safe house and detox beds. The Taskforce 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 New Westminster Record*, featured articles on the results in 2015 September.

2.2 Community/Youth Engagement and Education

The intent of the Taskforce's work in youth engagement and education 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 Taskforce – with the help of Youth Voice¹ – has hosted an annual youth-oriented awareness raising activity in conjunction with annual Youth Week activities in early May.

As well, the Taskforce sponsored a service provider education/networking session in 2014, as a means of enhancing service delivery. Over 50 local service providers attended a half-day session in 2014 November focused on social media, its role in sexual exploitation, and how to stay connected with youth.

In addition, the Taskforce partnered with the Burnaby School Board's District Parent Advisory Council (SD41-DPAC) to host a parent's education evening in 2015 April. This event was hosted at Burnaby Central and included a panel of Burnaby RCMP and relevant service providers. The content focused on awareness and prevention/intervention measures. Approximately 40 parents attended this event. The partnership is continuing, as the Taskforce will be participating in an early 2016 general meeting of DPAC to participate in parent education and discussion/feedback regarding 'safe' relationships, consent, and the appropriate use of technology by youth.

Finally, the Taskforce conducted a 'refresh' of its youth services website "Where to Find 411"², which was launched in 2011 October. The independently-hosted website, which averages at 300 – 400 visits per month, provides information on the work of the Taskforce, the issue of youth sexual exploitation, relevant local programs and services, and links to other pertinent supports and resources, and is maintained by Taskforce members. The refresh included a new colour

¹ Youth Voice is a facilitated, regularly-scheduled advisory group of local youth created by the Taskforce in 2007. This group's role has now expanded and it also assists with the planning and delivery of annual Youth Week activities, as well as providing input to youth-related programs and services as required.

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

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scheme, a reorganization of the home page, and updated content. The website is designed for youth, but is also a resource for youth service providers.

2.3 Taskforce Operations and Representation

The final primary area of focus for the Taskforce over the past two years has been to further expand its membership in order to ensure appropriate and broad representation. For example, representatives from newcomer settlement organizations have been invited to participate in order to ensure these perspectives are represented. As well, the Taskforce has endeavored to remain briefed on current legislative changes and updates which may impact its initiatives.

3.0 2016 – 2017 WORKPLAN

Over 2015 October/November, Taskforce members reviewed the previous workplan and identified updated priority themes. The Taskforce will continue to work toward advancing the main goals of service provision, community and youth engagement, education and advocacy, with particular focus on two priority areas.

3.1 Leadership on Service Delivery

As a follow-up to the 2014-2015 priorities, the Taskforce hopes to re-establish a community-based integrated case management committee in Burnaby and New Westminster that will meet regularly to discuss integrated supports and care coordination for particularly at-risk and sexually exploited youth. The Taskforce sponsored similar committees in the past, whereby service providers, based on strict confidentiality, would meet regularly to discuss youth of particular concern. These direct conversations permitted enhanced and coordinated service delivery between providers, and further added to the protection of community youth. One of the Taskforce's main tasks in 2016-2017 will be to ascertain how the proposed committee can be re-established and operate within the scope of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and any other related legislative requirements.

As well, in order to ensure that this integrated case management approach is properly informed by the local context, the Taskforce is planning to facilitate a fourth "count" of sexually exploited and at-risk youth in Burnaby and New Westminster in 2017.

3.2 Expansion of Community/Parent Education Involvement

The Taskforce has been encouraged by the 'uptake' and success of its collaborations with the Burnaby School Board's District Parent Advisory Council (SD41-DPAC) and intends to continue these efforts, and to expand them into New Westminster. The direct opportunities for parent/community education that these partnerships enable are invaluable in providing information, training, and awareness regarding the prevention of sexual exploitation of youth.

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To complement these direct and targeted education efforts, the Taskforce hopes to continue its broader community education efforts including working with Youth Voice, and maintaining and promoting the 'Where to Find – 411' website. The Taskforce also intends to investigate the creation of an "app" to widen the website's appeal and usage. Finally, Taskforce members are proposing to continue working together to host relevant and engaging service provider continuing education events on the topic of sexual exploitation, and to encourage further collaboration and service delivery coordination.

To ensure adequate funds are available to complete the activities described above, the Taskforce is requesting an allocation of \$2,000 from the 2016 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and \$2,000 from the 2017 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget. For accounting purposes, these requests are required to be separated between the two fiscal years.

Such a request is consistent with requests made previously through the Public Safety Committee to support Taskforce activities in past years.³ 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, including costs related to hosting community/parent education events and ensuring the Taskforce's informational website remains current. All Taskforce members contribute in-kind support to workplan initiatives, including members' staff time, provision of event venues, and contributions towards the development of educational content.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce 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 2014-2015, the Taskforce focused on activities that:

- Undertook research to better understand the scope and nature of youth sexual exploitation in the community;
- 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, particularly parents, of methods of preventing sexual exploitation of youth.

Within its next two-year workplan (2016 – 2017), the Taskforce 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 community/parent engagement on these important issues.

³ Similar requests were made, and approved, in the years 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014.

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To support these Taskforce priorities it is recommended that the Public Safety Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2016 Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and \$2,000 from the 2017 Boards, Committee and Commissions budget to the Burnaby-New Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth to support its two-year workplan, as described in Section 3.0 of this report.

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


Lou Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

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