

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: 2020 January 15

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
Westminster Taskforce on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2020 Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2021 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 detailed in Section 4.0 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 Westminster 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 is a multi-sectoral coalition, with staff representation from the City of Burnaby, the City of New Westminster, the Burnaby and New Westminster School Districts, the Burnaby RCMP, the New Westminster 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 priorities:

- 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 2018 January. 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 (January 2020 – December 2021).

2.0 POLICY SECTION

The report aligns with the following goals and sub-goals of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

- A Safe Community
 - Crime prevention and reduction – Ensure citizens and businesses feel safe in our community
- A Connected Community
 - Social connection - Enhance social connections throughout Burnaby
 - Partnership – Work collaboratively with businesses, educational institutions, associations, other communities and governments
- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community – Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
- A Healthy Community
 - Healthy life – Encourage opportunities for healthy living and well-being

3.0 OVERVIEW OF RECENT TASKFORCE ACTIVITIES

The last two years have been a time of transition for the Taskforce. As was reported in the update report to this Committee from 2018 January, over the past year the Taskforce undertook work to develop a new Strategic Plan, starting in the fall of 2018. However, during its development, activities under the Taskforce's previous workplan and priority areas continued. These activities are outlined below.

3.1 Community/Youth Engagement and Education

The intent of the Taskforce's work in youth engagement has been 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 undertook a social media campaign for Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Awareness Week in 2018 March. The campaign consisted of six messages to be pushed out through member organization's social media accounts. Each message provided a link to further information about sexual exploitation and related support and services. Also, a Taskforce member organization, St. Leonard's Youth and Family Services Society, hosted a youth-oriented awareness activity as part of the City's Youth Week activities in 2018 and 2019.

The Taskforce also finalized a review of its youth services website "Where to Find 411". The independently-hosted website provided information on the work of the Taskforce, the issue of youth sexual exploitation, relevant local programs and services, and links to other pertinent

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supports and resources. Feedback received during youth focus groups determined that youth most commonly seek information and support from trusted adults rather than turning to the internet. As a result, the Taskforce decided to phase out the “Where to Find 411” website and put greater attention to ensuring that front line staff working directly with youth have the information needed to support exploited and at-risk youth. Before the web hosting service expired, the Taskforce undertook a detailed review of the website’s content, identifying information that needed to be updated and that which was no longer relevant and cross-referenced this information with other websites that provided similar information. The Taskforce identified the Kids Help Phone¹ website as an online resource that was easy to use and provided comprehensive information on support and services available in Burnaby and New Westminster. Upon request by the Taskforce, Kids Help Phone agreed to add additional resources for Burnaby and New Westminster that the Taskforce identified as missing on its “Resources Around Me” search engine. The “Where to Find 411” website is now decommissioned.

3.2 Targeted Service Delivery

In order to advocate for appropriate and effective services and supports for sexually exploited youth and their families, the Taskforce has undertaken several surveys of sexually exploited and at-risk youth in Burnaby and New Westminster to gain a greater understanding of the scope and nature of youth sexual exploitation locally. In 2018, the Taskforce undertook a comprehensive review of the youth survey in an effort to ensure those filling in the survey have clear direction and that the information collected was useful, relevant and consistent moving forward. A number of changes were made to this biennial activity, including changing the name to “Youth Survey” instead of “Youth Count”, revising the questions for clarity and additional information, and moving to an online survey for ease of use and data collation. The next Youth Survey is anticipated to take place in 2020.

The Taskforce abandoned its previous efforts to re-establish a community-based integrated case management committee for discussing integrated supports and care coordination for particularly at-risk and sexually exploited youth partially as a result of the establishment of the Burnaby Mobilization and Resiliency Table (BMART), which deals with situations in the community that present an “acute, elevated risk” of harm, victimization or criminality and need attention of more than one agency. Several Taskforce member organizations participate in BMART processes to assist with comprehensive support for youth identified through the BMART.

3.3 Taskforce Operations

In 2018 November, the Taskforce initiated work on developing a new 6-year strategic plan. This process included reviewing past accomplishments and challenges, identifying priorities, and consulting with front line service providers, in order to create a new plan to focus energy and resources and guide the next 6 years of work. The Plan was finalized in June 2019 and resulted in a new vision and mission for the Taskforce.

¹ <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

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Vision: Communities free from sexual exploitation of youth.

Mission: A collaborative network that amplifies youth voices, educates the community, and advocates for responsive policies and services around sexual exploitation of youth.

The Plan identified three priority areas to focus the Taskforce's work: Youth Engagement; Education and Awareness; and Service Provider Capacity Building. The Taskforce has started to initiate work on its new workplan. The focus this past fall has been to create an online version of the youth survey using the revised questionnaire developed through the survey review.

4.0 2020 – 2021 WORKPLAN

The Taskforce will continue to work toward advancing the general goals of service provision, community and youth engagement, education and advocacy, with a particular focus on the three priority areas identified in the 2019-2025 Strategic Plan.

4.1 Youth Engagement

The new Strategic Plan has split Youth Engagement from Education and Awareness to reflect the significant work of each topic area. The Taskforce is currently investigating innovative methods of engaging sexually exploited and at-risk youth to inform its work. This could include facilitating youth-led events, developing a peer mentorship program among youth who have been sexually exploited or at-risk, or other forms of outreach to the general youth population.

4.2 Education and Awareness

The strategic plan focuses raising awareness of youth sexual exploitation among three target audiences: the general public, youth and the business community. Immediate efforts over the next two years will be focusing on the general public through annual activities for Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Awareness Week held in early March. Other activities will include the development of awareness messaging and materials along with a schedule of opportunities to disseminate this messaging for greatest effect. This could include times when there is media coverage of youth sexual exploitation in Canada. Planning for this topic area is in its initial stages and definitive plans will be developed over the next few months.

4.3 Service Provider Capacity Building

Continuing with the work of ensuring that front line service providers have access to the information they need to best support sexually exploited and at-risk youth, the Taskforce plans to coordinate annual networking sessions for service providers to come together to share information and ideas regarding youth sexual exploitation. These sessions are anticipated to vary from year to year. The 2020 activity is anticipated to be a lunch and learn session on a topic to be determined in the coming months. The Taskforce will also work on implementing the new online 2020 Youth Survey with service providers in Burnaby and New Westminster. Outcomes from the youth survey will help the group identify potential gaps in service that could become the basis of future advocacy

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work. It will also be working on developing a process to facilitate regular input from front line youth service providers that can be used to inform the Taskforce's work.

To ensure adequate funds are available to complete the activities described above, the Taskforce is requesting an allocation of \$2,000 from the 2020 Provisional Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and \$2,000 from the 2021 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.² Sufficient budget funds are available in the Boards, Committees and Commissions budget for this purpose, and would support the workplan over the next two year period, new communications projects, improved data collection for the Youth Survey and ensuring information shared with the public 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 and awareness activities.

5.0 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 2018 and 2019, the Taskforce focused on activities that:

- undertook a comprehensive review of online youth-oriented resources;
- overhauled the Youth Survey to improve the Taskforce's ability to collect meaningful and consistent data on sexually exploited and at-risk youth who are connected to services in Burnaby and New Westminster;
- raised awareness among youth of the dangers of the sex trade and resources available to support vulnerable youth;
- raised awareness among the general public about youth sexual exploitation generally and where to find information about local services and supports; and
- completed a strategic planning process to guide the Taskforce's work to 2025.

Within the next two-year workplan (2020-2021), the Taskforce will work through actions included in its strategic plan focusing on empowering youth through engagement, coordinating awareness activities and producing new messaging, and increasing service provider capacity.

To support Taskforce priorities it is recommended that the Public Safety Committee request Council to authorize the allocation of \$2,000 from the 2020 Boards, Committees and Commissions budget and \$2,000 from the 2021 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 4.0 of this report.

² Similar requests were made, and approved, in the years 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018.

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



E.W. Kozak, Director
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CS:sa

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