

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the
Planning Committee meeting of
Richmond City Council held on
Tuesday, February 21, 2017.

To Planning Committee
Feb. 21, 2017
Item # 3

My name is Deirdre Whalen, a long time resident of Richmond and chair of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee (PRC). I've been asked to speak on behalf of the PRC in regards to the staff report that was written in response to the 2015 RCSAC report "Municipal Responses to Child/ Youth Poverty."

The PRC is disappointed that the staff report does not see the need for the City of Richmond to accept the report's recommendations 1 through 4. That said, we are pleased the report recommends that the City should continue to advocate to the provincial government for a province-wide poverty reduction plan with targets and timelines.

It goes on the reference various City documents and strategies that are in the process of being updated. The PRC will certainly participate in these discussions as a stakeholder, but we fell strongly that what is still missing is a cohesive strategy, a made-in-Richmond strategy with targets and timelines, to fully address poverty reduction.

This is why the first recommendation "make poverty objectives of the Social Development Strategy a priority" makes sense. When this strategy is updated, staff should encourage stakeholders to view any improvements through a poverty lens. When you make things better for people living in poverty, it is better for every resident.

The second recommendation asks the City to develop a process using the Surrey poverty reduction plan strategy. This document has a graphic way of showing who is responsible for what. This would be useful for Council to consider since most of your strategy documents state "the city cannot do everything." That is certainly true, and the Surrey document shows how different entities are responsible for different aspects of the poverty puzzle. I have provided a link to the document in this presentation. Please take a look: <http://www.surrey.ca/community/11554.aspx>

The third recommendation could be an easy win for Council. It would require the Community Grants program funding to be augmented with 15% of gaming revenues in order to increase the total funds available for community service agencies. In the absence of any concerted action from the City on poverty reduction, including targets and timelines, these agencies will be taking on more and more clients and could really use the extra funds to continue to provide excellent services.

The fourth recommendation asks the City to investigate innovative programming in Surrey and Burnaby that serve families and youth. This is just a reminder that Richmond may not have all the answers. The original report shows that although Richmond has a similar number of programs and services targeted to these populations, it is not translating into better general and mental health outcomes compared to other Metro cities. Nor is it decreasing the overall level of poverty in Richmond. No matter how you look at it, when all cities use the same statistics and the same parameters, Richmond still has the highest level of poverty in Metro.

Lastly, the PRC is pleased to see a mention of a living wage for City of Richmond employees. I am not surprised that all City employees are enjoying a living wage. I've heard it said that people are proud to work for the City of Richmond. But for City to truly be a great employer and a beacon of community leadership, contract workers in cleaning, security and food service should be proud to work for the City too. I hope this aspect of the staff report will be taken into account when the various strategies are updated.

I would also note that the original report was written in April 2014 and approved by the RCSAC in September 2015. So a lot of changes may have been made in the eight cities cited. For example, there are more living wage cities in Metro now. In light of the time elapsed since the original data was collected, we hope you will encourage staff to review and update City of Richmond strategies based on 2017 information.

Thank you,
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