



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Planning Committee
From: Terry Crowe
Manager, Policy Planning

To Planning - Apr 8, 2003

Date: March 25, 2003

File: 0100-20-RCSA1-01

**Re: RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL POVERTY
RESPONSE INITIATIVE PROGRESS REPORT**

Staff Recommendation

That, as per the Manager of Policy Planning Report dated March 25, 2003;

- (1.) Council approve the City's 2003 Poverty Support Work Program (**Attachment 3**), and
- (2.) \$15,000 be provided to the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council (RCSAC) Poverty Response Initiative from the \$20,000 remaining in Casino Funds from 2002.

Terry Crowe
Manager, Policy Planning

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Att. 9

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CONCURRENCE

CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER

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Staff Report

Origin

On February 5, 2002, the RCSAC presented the Richmond Poverty Response Committee Report, "*Poverty in Richmond, A Sense of Belonging*" to Planning Committee (recommendations included as **Attachment 1**). The following referral motion was carried:

That the report be referred to staff for further review, by May 2002, with particular emphasis on:

- (1.) *possible opportunities for affordable housing;*
- (2.) *the availability of a \$10,000 budget for operating; and*
- (3.) *the identification of possible locations, within the existing structure (e.g., at community centres), for a community sports equipment locker and programs.*

This report:

1. provides a general update regarding the progress of the Poverty Response Initiative,
2. addresses the above referral,
3. presents the Advocacy Task Force Report, which addresses the need for advocacy services in Richmond, and
4. proposes a City 2003 Poverty Support Work Program.

Findings Of Fact

It is the RCSAC which initiated and undertook the Poverty Response Initiative.

The Poverty Response Committee coordinates the work of four Task Forces.

RCSAC Poverty Response Committee	
Task Forces and Reports	
Task Forces	Reports
Housing	Affordable and Accessible Housing Task Force Report
Gift Giving/Access to Recreation	Gift Giving Task Force Report
Families	N/A
Advocacy	Advocacy and Legal Services for People Living in Poverty in Richmond

Analysis

1. Poverty Response Initiative Update:

To inform Council regarding the progress of this initiative, please find attached:

- A cover letter from the RCSAC (**Attachment 2**);
- An integrated 2002 Progress Report and 2003 Work Program which lists the recommendations, progress to date, next steps and the 2003 City Poverty Support Work Program (**Attachment 3**);
- 2003 Poverty Response Committee Action Plan (**Attachment 4**);
- Reports from the following Task Forces of the Poverty Response Initiative:
 - (a.) Affordable and Accessible Housing Task Force (**Attachment 5**),
 - (b.) Gift Giving Task Force (**Attachment 6**), and
 - (c.) Advocacy Task Force, "Advocacy and Legal Services for People Living In Poverty in Richmond" (**Attachment 7**).

Comments:

(1.) Poverty Response Process and Results

Addressing poverty is a complex undertaking, as illustrated in the various reports presented by the RCSAC's Poverty Response Committee. Members of the community and organizational representatives, working together on the Task Forces, have identified a range of possible strategies and partnerships. They have also identified future actions to take in the development and implementation of a comprehensive poverty strategy for Richmond.

(2.) Developing Community Capacity

By creating new alliances through the various task forces and cultivating new leadership in the community, the Poverty Response Initiative continues to strengthen Richmond's capacity to respond to poverty.

2. Referral:

Actions taken in respect to the three topics identified by the Planning Committee in their referral of February 5, 2002 are as follows.

(1.) Possible opportunities for affordable housing:

The progress report from the Affordable and Accessible Housing Task Force (**Attachment 5**) describes a range of actions taken by the Task Force to promote the availability of affordable, accessible housing in Richmond (e.g., raising community awareness, exploring housing registries, proposing policies, etc.).

The main ways for the City to address the housing needs of those in poverty are to continue to provide affordable housing and address emergency shelter needs. Recent City initiatives include:

- Council endorsed the City of Richmond Homelessness Strategy in the fall of 2002.

- The Seniors Affordable Supportive Housing partnership with GVHC at Elmbridge and Alderbridge, which, if it receives the necessary funding allocation from the Provincial Government, will provide approximately 80 units of seniors affordable supportive housing in 2004.
- In 2002, the City assisted Nova House by providing a 60-year lease on City land.
- In 2003, the City purchased land for an emergency shelter and other social services at 8111 Granville.

Further opportunities for the development of affordable housing will continue to be pursued.

(2.) The availability of a \$10,000 budget for the RCSAC to operate the Poverty Response Initiative:

In 2002, the RCSAC requested \$10,000 from the City to assist in funding a Poverty Response Coordinator.

- (a.) No funding was received from the City in 2002 for this purpose.
- (b.) In 2002, the United Way provided funding of \$15,000 for a Poverty Response Coordinator, and \$5,000 to conduct an advocacy service needs assessment (for report, see **Attachment 7**).

For 2003, the RCSAC has sought funding for the Poverty Response Initiative from the following sources:

- (a.) \$30,000 for a Poverty Response Coordinator:
 - City grants (\$15,000 requested, turned down because applicants must be non-profit organizations)
 - United Way (\$15,000 received for 2003; see **Attachment 8**)
- (b.) \$15,000 for Advocacy Directory and Gift-Giving Strategy:
 - Human Resource Development Canada, for the development of an Advocacy Directory and a coordinated inter-agency Christmas Giving strategy (\$15,000 requested; grant allocations currently on hold until 2004).

Comments:

Staff recommend that Council provide \$15,000 for the Poverty Response Coordinator from the \$20,000 remaining in Casino Funds from 2002. The City's \$15,000 would be added to the United Way \$15,000 to hire a Poverty Coordinator in 2003.

Pros:

With a City contribution, greater progress in the following areas will be achieved:

- Continued work on Poverty Response recommendations in the areas of:
 - affordable and accessible housing,
 - advocacy,
 - families and food security,
 - Christmas and year-round gift giving, and
 - access to recreation.

- Strengthening of community capacity to address poverty by:
 - developing partnerships and
 - cultivating new leadership.

Cons:

- Cost to the City of \$15,000

(3.) The identification of possible locations, within the existing structure (e.g., at community centres), for a community sports equipment locker and programs.

The RCSAC Poverty Response Committee will be seeking City and other funding for equipment locker(s). Locations have yet to be identified. Community centres will be explored.

The Recreation and Gift Giving Task Forces have now merged and will work towards the implementation of this recommendation.

(4.) Referral – Next Steps

The RCSAC Poverty Response Committee will continue to work on the above referrals and other poverty initiatives in 2003.

3. Poverty Advocacy Task Force Report (Attachment 7):

In the original “Poverty Response Recommendations Progress Report 2002”, the following recommendation was made (**Attachment 1**):

- “the City support the Advocacy Task Force while it undertakes its feasibility study for a legal advocate located in Richmond. This legal advocate will assist residents to access the benefits they are entitled to and to work with tenants who face substandard housing conditions.”

The feasibility study referred to in this recommendation was undertaken in 2002 with funding received by the RCSAC from the United Way. The report “Advocacy and Legal Services for People Living In Poverty in Richmond” (**Attachment 7**), resulted from this work.

The following recommendations are made:

1. *the City of Richmond develop a hands-on approach to poverty and housing similar to the City of Vancouver's in-house program. Staff within the City of Vancouver would be willing to assist the City of Richmond to develop this program;*
2. *the City of Richmond work quickly to develop a direct, front line advocacy and legal service in Richmond for its citizens who live in poverty;*

3. *this service be developed and operated in a collaborative, community-based manner to ensure its success;*
4. *the City of Richmond provide an advocacy and legal service in Richmond as conveniently as possible for people who live in poverty, e.g. Caring Place, City Hall or close to the welfare office; and*
5. *the City of Richmond develop a public-private-nonprofit partnership by providing a portion of the funding and working with other levels of government, corporations in Richmond and other funders to co-fund this service.*

Comments:

The following analysis addresses the five recommendations made in the Advocacy Task Force Report.

(1.) Establishing in Richmond a Housing Service similar to Vancouver's Housing Centre (Recommendation #1 from Advocacy Report)

Comparison of responsibilities

The City of Vancouver's Housing Centre provides support for social housing through multiple programs. **Attachment 9** compares the responsibilities of Vancouver's Housing Centre with those of Richmond's Policy Planning Department (responsibilities of other municipalities in the Lower Mainland, e.g. Burnaby and New Westminster are comparable to those of Richmond).

The key differences in the ability of Vancouver and other municipalities to deliver housing services are:

- Vancouver's Charter gives it a greater legal power than other municipalities to raise funds from developers for affordable housing.
- Vancouver's Housing Centre has a staff of ten. In comparison, Richmond has .3 FTE dedicated to affordable housing.

Factors Affecting Richmond's Affordable Housing Responsibilities

Affordable housing financing, policies and implementation in Richmond will be affected by:

- the proposed Community Charter land use section, yet to be released, which may include new ways in which financial contributions from developers may be sought;
- results of the upcoming report from the Manager of Policy Planning regarding "Financing Social Housing, Childcare and Public Art";
- an updated Affordable Housing Strategy, possibly to be developed by Policy Planning staff in 2003, and
- the availability of senior government affordable housing programs and supports.

Next Steps

- (a.) Further exploration of affordable housing services may be considered once:

- Council decisions regarding financing affordable housing are known, and
 - the Community Charter land use section is known and approved.
- (b.) Further work on Richmond's affordable housing responsibilities should be incorporated into the possible update of the Affordable Housing Strategy. This will be dependent on the availability of sufficient resources.
- (c.) Council will be informed of progress in these areas by periodic updates in forthcoming Staff reports.
- (2.) **the establishment, development, operation, location and funding of a direct, front line advocacy and legal service in Richmond for its citizens who live in poverty**
(Recommendations 2 to 5 from the Advocacy Report, **Attachment 7**).

The Advocacy Task Force proposes to develop collaborative models (see **Attachments 4 and 7**) in which roles will be identified.

Next Steps:

Staff recommend that the RCSAC Poverty Response Committee's Advocacy Task Force prepare the models for the City's and other partners' consideration.

Considerations:

Service Agency Role

The development and operation of such a model and service is best undertaken by a service agency(s).

City Contributions

Possible options for City contributions to the operation of such a service include:

- providing land and/or space at reduced, minimal or no cost to an agency able to secure funding for such a position,
- providing funding to assist in the start-up and/or operation of this service through City Grants,
- other, as may arise.

Pros:

- The need for an advocacy service in Richmond is well documented in the attached report.
- The City Grants program might consider supporting such a service, knowing that this service gap exists.
- Partnering with a service agency and other funders would increase the viability of such a service in a time of scarce resources.

Cons:

- Cost to the City of land and/or space provision.

- Cost to the City through provision of a City Grant.

Financial Impact

In 2003, that Council provide \$15,000 to the RCSAC Poverty Response Initiative from the \$20,000 remaining in Casino Funds from 2002.

Conclusion

1. The RCSAC Poverty Response Committee has done considerable work toward implementing the poverty recommendations.
2. The City can establish a 2003 Poverty Support Work Program.
3. In 2003, staff recommend that the City provide \$15,000 financial support to the RCSAC Poverty Response Committee.



Lesley Sherlock
Social Planner
(4220)

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RICHMOND POVERTY RESPONSE COMMITTEE REPORT, JANUARY 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Process

In 2001, the Richmond Poverty Response Committee was formed following the publication of the report card on poverty in Richmond, **Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging**. The mandate of this Committee is to follow up on the findings of the Report Card with community driven action.

This Report to Richmond City Council contains a series of recommendations and ideas for further consideration for the alleviation of poverty in Richmond. It is the result of four months work by four task forces, which comprise the Richmond Poverty Response Committee.

The work presented in this report was made possible through a grant from the City of Richmond. The Poverty Response Committee was asked by Richmond City Council to provide a series of recommendations for action on poverty related issues in the community. While the recommendations presented in this report cover a wide spectrum of issues and concerns in the community they are not comprehensive. It is the goal of the Poverty Response Committee to continue work on these recommendations to further refine them and encourage action on these issues.

Recommendations

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee proposes the following recommendations for Richmond City Council's consideration. These recommendations have been developed by a cross section of community members who have participated on the four poverty-related task forces: Housing, Advocacy, Access to Recreation, and Families.

Housing

The Housing Task Force recommends that:

- BC Housing and the City of Richmond create a housing registry for Richmond located at City Hall and accessible via the City's Website.
- The City budget funds to assist with the creation of this registry.
- The City adopt a standard of maintenance for affordable housing units.
- The City advocate for increased funding commitments from the Federal and Provincial governments for affordable housing.
- The City establish an Affordable Housing Task Force as a standing committee.
- The City report annually on their progress in providing affordable housing.
- The City adopt a definition of accessible housing.

Advocacy

The Advocacy Task Force recommends that:

- The City support the Advocacy Task Force while it undertakes its feasibility study for a legal advocate located in Richmond. This advocate would assist residents to access the benefits they are entitled to and to work with tenants who face substandard housing conditions.
- Poverty law workshops for community workers and residents be held in Richmond.
- Community groups are supported so that they can mobilize for positive change in Richmond.

Access to Recreation

The Access to Recreation Task Force recommends that:

- The City endorse the idea of the community sports equipment locker being proposed by the Richmond Sports Council and consider providing financial support for this initiative through the grant application process (either Casino funding or the City's grant process).

Several ideas for further consideration are listed in the Access to Recreation section of this report.

Families

The Families Task Force recommends that:

- A co-ordinated centre for counseling, self-help programs, advocacy, referrals, networking, and information services for families living in poverty be established in Richmond.
- A universal breakfast program for all Richmond schools be initiated (potentially funded by the business sector).
- New shelters and emergency services for women and children in transition, and young men in crisis be developed.
- Funding for family services in East Richmond be maintained and that additional services be added.
- The City encourage the provincial government to maintain support for childcare in Richmond.
- Support is provided for people to develop employment/entrepreneurial skills that are suited to the Richmond community.

Christmas Hamper/Donation Programs

In addition to initiating the four task forces, the Poverty Response Committee also held a community discussion about Christmas hamper/donation Programs in Richmond. The Poverty Response Committee hopes to hold another Christmas Hamper/Donation meeting in 2002 to continue discussions about how to better co-ordinate the individual activities of Richmond organizations so that all families in need will be reached during the holiday season. The Poverty Response Committee recommends that:

- The City support the collaboration of organizations and groups that sponsor Christmas hampers/donation programs in Richmond through ongoing discussions co-ordinated by the Poverty Response Committee.

Next Steps

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee has received funding from the United Way of the Lower Mainland (\$15,000 through the Mapping & Mobilizing Program) to continue the work of the Poverty Response Task Forces in 2002. Although the above funding is in place, the Poverty Response Committee anticipates the need for an additional \$10,000 to continue this work in an effective manner. The goal of the work in 2002 will be to further refine the recommendations and ideas in this report and develop an action plan for poverty in Richmond.

Prepared by:
Michelle Ninow
Poverty Response Coordinator



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ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 26, 2003

Dear Mayor Brodie and Councillors,

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee is pleased to give you an update of its activities and discussions over the past year. In particular, we are enclosing a report on the need for advocacy services for Richmond residents that was funded by the United Way.

We have also explored how as a community we can increase the participation of children from low income families in community sports and how to maximize and publicize community efforts at Christmas to provide for needy families.

Over the coming year, we are going to be looking at increasing the programs that provide food to youth, children and their families in schools or through community activities. We are also mindful of the changes in provincial legislation and in funding programs that impact families on social assistance or who depend on social service agencies whose funding has been cut ie. legal aid.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the co-chairs of the committee, myself or Esther Oh or our administrative coordinator at 604-271-9474.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. McKittrick'.

Annie McKittrick
co-chair
Poverty Response Committee

March 21, 2003

**2002 Progress Report & 2003 Work Program
RCSAC Poverty Response Initiative
City of Richmond**

Purpose

1. To identify 2002 progress in addressing poverty in Richmond.
2. To identify 2003 poverty initiatives for the RCSAC, Poverty Response Committee and Task Forces.
3. To identify, for the City of Richmond, a 2003 Poverty Support Work Program.

Background

- On February 5, 2002, the RCSAC presented their Richmond Poverty Response Committee Report to Planning Committee.
- Planning Committee referred the report to staff for further review.
- On June 10, 2002, Council endorsed that "the recommendations from the Richmond Homelessness Needs Assessment and strategy be co-ordinated with recommendations from the Poverty Response Group Report". This co-ordination will occur in 2003.

Recommendations in the 2002 RCSAC Poverty Response Committee Report		RCSAC Poverty Response Committee and Task Forces		City of Richmond
		2002 Progress to Date	2003 Next Steps	2003 Poverty Support Work Program
1. Housing (1.) The City of Richmond, in conjunction with BC Housing, create a Housing Registry and Database that will compile lists of available residences for rent. This Database should include name & numbers of apartments and co-ops, but should also provide a means by which potential landlords could advertise available residences. This registry would be located at City Hall for people to access or as a link to the City's web page.		BC Housing Director of Housing Operations Michelle Neilly indicated that they are currently working on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including co-ops, GVHC, Affordable Housing and other non-market providers on the current registry • as GVHC and co-ops offer both market and non-market units, BC Housing plans on providing links to both types of units (for non-profit providers only) • developing policies and procedures regarding decentralized access points such as those proposed There are no plans at present to expand the Registry to private landlords who have other avenues of finding tenants.	BC Housing still working on incorporating additional Richmond non-profit operators in Registry (currently adding GVHC and Affordable), private landlords would not be able to advertise decentralized access point would require a staff person to provide access to the public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City will not operate and maintain such a registry because of a lack of resources • City Staff will continue to assist the PRC, on request and as City resources are available, regarding alternative ways to make a registry available. 	

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Recommendations in the 2002 RCSAC Poverty Response Committee Report	RCSAC Poverty Response Committee and Task Forces		City of Richmond
	2002 Progress to Date	2003 Next Steps	2003 Poverty Support Work Program
(2.) The City budget funds to assist with the creation of this registry. The Housing Task Force is willing to also seek funding for this from an outside resource if this will help in achieving this goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as above • to date, no dollars proposed in 2003 	-as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above
(3.) The City adopt a standard of maintenance. This standard would include the key characteristics in a model bylaw prepared by the former Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Province has a model Standard of Maintenance Bylaw, referred to in recommendation, for use as a model • Community Bylaws staff have had an initial meeting with the Task Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force to determine specifically what issues it would like such a bylaw to address (e.g., safety, public health, upkeep) • continue to discuss service delivery options with City staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff will assist the PRC in exploring this bylaw. • Community Bylaws staff have had an initial meeting with the Task Force
(4.) The City advocate through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for increased funding commitments from the Federal government and through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for maintaining funding from the Provincial government for affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force is seeking input from other community groups. 	Task Force to propose wording of letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City will support these initiatives. • PRC will draft letter.
(5.) The City establish an Affordable Housing Task Force as a standing committee to assist the city and community groups in the building and maintenance of affordable housing.	<p>-Council recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Homelessness Strategy be used as a framework to guide and coordinate local efforts • that Homelessness Strategy recommendations be coordinated with recommendations from the Poverty Response Report <p>-The Affordable Housing Task Force is now represented on the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Steering Committee</p>	Staff to recommend strategy to Council, which reviews the establishment of Advisory Body, in consultation with Housing Task Force, Homelessness Cte., non-profit housing sector and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City is considering a review of the Affordable Housing Strategy in 2003 budget deliberations. • The City can continue to work with community stakeholders in building and maintaining affordable housing.
(6.) The City report annually on their progress in providing affordable housing...	N/A	Staff to present first annual report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will present an annual report regarding progress in providing affordable housing.
(7.) The City adopt the following definition of accessible housing: "Housing the design of which allows a person with a disability, without assistance, to approach, enter, and make full use of all areas in and features of the unit."	N/A	To be considered in proposed Affordable Housing Strategy, conducted in consultation with community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City will explore this possibility.

2. Advocacy				
(1.) The City support the Advocacy Task Force while it undertakes its feasibility study for a legal advocate located in Richmond. This advocate would assist residents to access the benefits they are entitled to and to work with tenants who face substandard housing conditions.	"Advocacy and legal services for people living in poverty in Richmond" – draft report complete	Present report to April 8, 2003 Planning Cte.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">DoneThe next step is for the PRC Advocacy Task Force to prepare appropriate models on which to base a legal advocacy service for people in poverty,City staff will assist in evaluating the models once prepared.	
(2.) Poverty law workshops for community workers and residents be held in Richmond.	"Workshop for Richmond's Frontline Workers" held on June 25, 2002, attendance approx. 45	One complete – more may be undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City supports the Advocacy Task Force in hosting the workshops, for example, by providing space.	
(3.) Community groups are supported so that they can mobilize for positive change in Richmond.	Information provided at June 25, 2002 Workshop re: BC Benefits, housing law, disability benefits and family law	Help identify what legal and advocacy service needs are required, specific to respective situations and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City can support, as resources as available, the Advocacy Task Force, for example, by providing meeting space.Information was provided at a June 25, 2002 workshop.	
3. Access to Recreation				
(1.) The City endorse the idea of the community sports equipment locker being proposed by the Richmond Sports Council and consider providing financial support for this initiative through the grant application process (either Casino funding or the City's grant process).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recreation Task Force had not met due to other demands on staff time (staff chaired this Task Force)Recreation and Gift Giving Task Forces have merged	Idea needs to be developed, grant application submitted for 2004 funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City can endorse the idea of the community sports equipment locker.The City will consider providing financial support for this initiative at the time of application.	
(2.) Development of other recommendations as identified	As above	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City will consider.	
4. Families				
(1.) A co-ordinated centre for counselling, self-help programs, advocacy, referrals, networking, and information services for families living in poverty be established in Richmond.	No further exploration of this recommendation to date	Families Task Force may combine with Child, Youth & Families Subcte. of the RCSAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City will assist the PRC in exploring this idea.	
(2.) A universal breakfast program for all Richmond schools be initiated (potentially funded by the business sector).	Families Task Force expanded mandate to include food security programs, new members incorporated	To pursue implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An initiative for the Richmond School Board.	
(3.) New shelters and emergency services for women and children in transition, and young men in crisis be developed.	N/A	To be coordinated with Homelessness Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City will continue to support these services and projects where they are feasible.	

(4.) Funding for family services in East Richmond be maintained and that additional services be added.	Richmond Family Place and Family Services of Greater Vancouver are offering outreach programs in East Richmond	Identify other services needed (existing and new)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initiative for Richmond Family Place and Family Services of Greater Vancouver. • The City will monitor the need for additional services.
(5.) The City encourage the provincial government to maintain support for childcare in Richmond.	2001-2006 Child Care Needs Assessment Report & Recommendations sent to Provincial Government	Follow-up will be pursued by Child Care Development Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City will continue to do this.
(6.) Support is provided for people to develop employment / entrepreneurial skills that are suited to the Richmond community.	Staff discussion with Marcia Freeman, Manager of Business Liaison – City does not offer skills or business development programs	Explore other avenues of support with businesses and other funders (e.g., Chamber of Commerce and Coast Capital)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City does not directly provide such services. • The City will assist the PRC in exploring alternatives.
5. Gift Giving Programs			
(1.) The City support the collaboration of organizations and groups that sponsor Christmas hampers/donation programs in Richmond through ongoing discussions coordinated by the Poverty Response Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRDC funding has been applied for to develop a coordinated inter-agency Christmas and Year-Round Giving strategy. • Developing directory of agencies offering Christmas funds/hampers for use by referring agencies (in process) 	Waiting to hear back re: HRDC funding	The City will support this collaboration.



THE POVERTY RESPONSE COMMITTEE

Poverty Response Committee - Action Plan **General Meeting, January 29, 2003** **Debeck House, Richmond, B.C.**

- 1) **Housing Task Force**
To pursue the formation of an Advisory Committee to Richmond City Council by combining representation from all committees involved in housing issues in Richmond such as the Homelessness Committee, Affordable Housing and Seniors Housing groups.
- 2) **Advocacy Task Force**
To take the Advocacy Task Force Report to Richmond City Council and bring in other agencies within the community to develop a collaborative model for the maintenance of an Advocacy Office in the City of Richmond.
- 3) **Recreation Task Force**
Outreach by the Recreation Task Force to be more inclusive of community agencies and community representatives to pursue new projects. Current projects underway are the administration of an equipment locker and CAP hours for after school participation.
- 4) **Gift Giving Programs Task Force**
Compiling a resource directory for residents and agencies as a reference guide for services and year around gift giving programs for families in need. Resource guide may also be integrated into website format with Richmond Public Library system and/or with the RCSAC website. HRDC application has been forwarded to launch such a directory.

Recently completed project included a directory of agencies, target criteria and dates for agencies to make referrals to for those requiring assistance during the Christmas season. The aforementioned objective would be to expand on this concept to match up services and agencies providing goods to those requiring assistance and goods on a year round basis.
- 5) **Families Task Force**
Reduce the scope of the Families Task Force to pursue the objective of a meal program for youth and children particularly in areas with low income catchments. Seek possible administration through the school district.



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THE POVERTY RESPONSE COMMITTEE

6) **Poverty Response Committee Action Plans**

More community outreach required. Submit press releases to local media and run advertisements in local publications.

Require more planning and liaison between the Poverty Response Committee and the Steering Committee of Richmond Community Services Advisory Council.

Seek an additional Co-Chair to the Poverty Response Committee.

Richmond Affordable & Accessible Housing Task Force

Progress Report to The Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee and City Council

February 10, 2003

The Housing Task Force became very active immediately after its inception. Since our first meeting on August 9, 2001, we have held meetings monthly. Our base is comprised of representatives of community organizations and concerned citizens from a cross section of Richmond residents. The connecting vision and passion we share is 'Richmond needs and deserves affordable and, of equal importance, accessible housing'.

There are three main goals which this Task Force has set for itself:

1. Community Awareness

At the city sponsored Open House on Homelessness (Spring 2002) through the discussion groups it became very clear that Richmond has two communities: 'the haves' and the 'have nots'. Moreover, it is apparent that the 'have' community is unaware of the many of the obstacles faced by the 'have not' community. Building community awareness of these issues is a necessary first step and the Committee has taken this as one of its major challenges. Richmond is known for its rich history of pulling together as a community to solve common problems and this gives us a feeling of confidence for the future.

Action taken:

Our action has been to develop a series of display panel boards and a binder presentation which highlight Richmond's housing issues. These were displayed at the Senior Health and Wellness Fair; the Steveston Salmon Festival; in numerous Community Centres, Libraries and the Multicultural Centre during Affording Housing Week. Our ongoing effort will be to display these at future community events.

2. Housing Policy

Richmond like most BC communities has a housing policy with many laudable goals. We also have civic politicians from across the ideological spectrum who support the need for more accessible

affordable housing. There are, however, recent clear instances of land developments where affordable housing has been a distant consideration. As well, our emergency shelters in Richmond are woefully inadequate. In light of this and other needs, the Task Force at its inception was charged with developing housing policies to forward to Council.

Our action:

We developed a number of key recommendations. During the fall of 2001 the Committee met with representatives of the City of Richmond, BC Housing, and the Vancouver Richmond Health Board. From these meetings and subsequent discussions we developed a policy document that was included in the Richmond Poverty Response Committee's January 2002 Report to Richmond City Council. You will find attached a status report outlining the progress made by city staff and the Housing Task Force.

We participated at DCC meetings, the Flex House opening, zoning panels, and have presented ideas for the revision of the City's affordable housing strategy. We also appeared on behalf of the Homelessness Task Force when they reported to Council.

3. Creating New Housing

Over the previous decade the Provincial Government provided money for new housing projects -- one of only two provincial governments to fund new housing. The prospects of this funding being maintained are very slight. The City of Richmond also has a fund dedicated to building affordable housing, but no new money has been added to this fund in almost a decade. New federal money is appearing on the horizon, but there is no guarantee of Richmond receiving any significant amounts.

Our Action:

At every opportunity, we remind our 3 levels of government of their collective responsibility. The Task Force understands the great need to find additional sources of funds to increase the pool of capital for housing. Community based funding may assist in leveraging in government assistance because we know we cannot depend on government contributions alone. Task Force members participate in both the Homelessness Task Force and the Seniors Housing Task Force and are connecting with actual projects and other community partners.

Housing Task Force Recommendations Status Report:

The following recommendations were put forward to Council, via the Richmond Poverty Response Committee and Richmond Community Services Advisory Council (January 2002).

- The City recommendation of Richmond, in conjunction with BC Housing, create a Housing Registry and Database that will compile lists of available residences for rent. This Database should include name & number of apartments and co-ops, but should also provide a means by which potential landlords could advertise available residences. This registry would be located at City Hall for people to access or as a link to the City's web page.
- The City budget funds to assist with the creation of this registry. The Housing Task Force is willing to also seek funding for this from an outside resource if this will help in achieving this goal.

In a climate when funding for affordable housing is scarce. It is important to maximize the use of current housing stock. The Task Force believes that a registry would prove invaluable in maximizing usage of existing housing. Some efforts have been made to connect with other registries.

- The City adopt a standard of maintenance. This standard would include the key characteristics in a model bylaw prepared by the former Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The characteristics are:
 - Compliance with other local regulations
 - Public consultation in determining standards
 - Definitions
 - Responsibility for administration
 - Notice to comply
 - Penalties and enforcement

The standards should apply to all accommodations including residential, rental, hotel, and community care facilities. The compliance procedures should not necessarily require shutting down of rental units if good faith efforts are made to bring the unit up to standards.

The Task Force is scheduling to meet with a representative of the City's Community Bylaw department, and with their help will provide the City staff with an outline of what is needed in a standard of maintenance.

- The Housing Task Force recommends that the City of Richmond advocate through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for increased funding commitments from the Federal Government and through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for maintaining funding from the Provincial Government for affordable housing.

The Task Force is seeking input from other community groups, before suggesting wording.

- The City of Richmond establish an Affordable Housing Task Force as a standing committee to assist the city and community groups in the building and maintenance of affordable housing.

Waiting for city staff report on recommendation. This recommendation was also reflected in the Richmond Homelessness Needs Assessment and Strategy report (May 2002). Currently the city has three similar groups: The RCSAC Housing Task Force, The Senior Housing Task Force, and The Homelessness Task Force. All of these groups could easily work under one umbrella group that would also serve to make a vehicle for community input on affordable and accessible housing policy. Implementation of this recommendation is a priority for the Task Force.

- The City of Richmond report annually on their progress in providing affordable housing. Specific references should be made to two areas:
 - The annual report should compare changes in affordable housing stock, both against previous year's levels and against changes in the levels of housing stock in general. Specific measures such as conversion rate and the level of accessible housing should be also are tracked.
 - In instances where zoning changes increase property value (often called a density bonus), the City shall consider this increase in property value an expenditure. The City shall justify these expenditures by indicating what value was gained by the city in return for these zoning changes. The annual report shall indicate the level of these expenditures and the types of benefits returning to the city for these expenditures. This will allow objective measurement of the aggregate value attained for its zoning upgrades. Perhaps more importantly it will provide a measure of the relative commitment of the City to affordable housing compared to other community goals (eg. Parkland or community facilities).

Waiting for city staff report on recommendations. By not doing these reports, the City leaves itself open to criticism with no rebuttal. An example of this would be the recent Tenant Rights Action coalition Affordable Housing Report Card.

- The City of Richmond adopt the following definition of accessible housing:

Accessible housing:

Housing the design of which allows a person with a disability, without assistance, to approach, enter, and make full use of all areas in and features of the unit.

Waiting for city staff report on recommendations. Scheduled to be included in revised Affordable Housing Strategy, conducted in consultation with community.

**Report to the Richmond Poverty Response Committee
Gift Giving Task Force
January 20, 2003**

Annually, during the Christmas season, a number of different agencies provide assistance in the form of certificates or hampers to residences of Richmond that are in need. Agencies such as Salvation Army, Richmond Christmas Fund, Catholic Society, Working Poor Christmas Fund, just to name a few, did an excellent job in enlisting the support of individuals, offices and retail stores for donations to distribute among Richmond families in need. In October of 2002, the Richmond Poverty Response Committee contacted the different agencies that offered any kind of Christmas assistance program to begin networking the different organizations in this one common endeavor. As a start, the Poverty Response Committee published a directory of all known agencies and distributed this to front-line social workers and community workers to assist and enable them to direct individuals or families to these agencies.

The birth of the new Gift Giving Task Force came as a natural development of the Christmas Hamper/Donation Project. It is the conviction of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee that giving and the distribution of donated items should be made easily accessible **THROUGHOUT** the calendar year. The initial objectives of the Gift Giving Task Force are as follows:

1. The task force will seek ways to heighten the joy of giving year-round. This most likely will involve community relations to encourage individuals, families, faith communities and corporate partners to find creative ways to consistently give and make contributions to needy residences of Richmond.
2. The task force hopes to be able to bring together different agencies that have this common goal and to network them for greater effectiveness for the Richmond community.
3. With the input of the participating agencies, the task force will initiate the development of an easy and accessible strategy for giving and for distribution. As well, respectful ways for needy families to be able to access donated items will be developed.

As with any new initiative, this is an exciting moment for the Gift Giving Task Force. We are awaiting a reply for funding from HRDC to be able to hire a short-term position to assist us begin the above endeavors. We are also inviting available and like-minded individuals to be part of the new Gift Giving Task Force. We hope that our dreams of a community that seeks to help and support one another will be better realized by the work of the Gift Giving Task Force.

Respectfully,
John Tsang
Chairperson of the Gift Giving Task Force



CHRISTMAS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND 2002

PLEASE NOTE: This directory of different agencies that offer Christmas Assistance is strictly for the use of the participating agencies and front line social workers as a form of referral for individuals or families in need.

Name of Agency	Contact Person	Nature of Christmas Project	Targeted Recipients	Dates for Registration	Dates for Distribution	Additional Comments
BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF DELTA *** TREE OF HOPE - SEARS	Boys and Girls Club of Delta - Warren Smith, 604.515.5457 *** Sears - Brenda 604-278-5542	Boys and Girls Club provide names of children and suggestion for an appropriate item. Stars are placed on a Christmas tree at Sears. Donors pick a star and purchase gift. Donors receive 100 Sears Points.	Recipients are referred by Boys and Girls Club of Delta.	Nov 1	Up until Dec 24 noon.	
RICHMOND CHRISTMAS FUND *** VOLUNTEER RICHMOND INFORMATION SERVICES	Muffet Chambers Manager Richmond Christmas Fund 604.279.7035	Food Vouchers and Hampers. Will also match individuals or groups who would like to prepare a Christmas gift certificate for needy families.	Richmond residents on low income and on Ministry Assistance	Recipient families are to register during the last 2 weeks of Nov. Caring Place, 190-7000 Minoru Blvd. Bring proof of income, photo id, Care cards and proof of Richmond residency		Perhaps the most widely known Christmas Assistance Program. www.volunteerrichmond.ca/christfund.htm
SALVATION ARMY	Kam Tang Family Services 604.277.1593 cell: 604.725.2076 Church Office 604.277.2424	Family Services Responds to calls Clothing, toys, food items, clothing and other items if available	Focus on those who may not qualify for Richmond Christmas Fund, or have past deadline for registration	Ongoing. Up till couple of days before Christmas	Anytime in December	
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY	St. Joseph the Worker, 604-277-8353 St. Paul 604-277-3213 Mr. John Ward	Hampers, food vouchers, toys, any other items as necessary	Anyone	Anytime	Anytime	This society of the Richmond Catholic churches help people in need throughout the whole year.
WORKING POOR CHRISTMAS FUND	Sean Davies 604.276.4107 Jason Kita	Has 2 types of programs available: 1. Accepts donations to a general fund that provides families with grocery gift certificates, swim and skate passes. 2. Arranges sponsorships of families by interested businesses, families, organizations in the community (usually grocery certificates, hampers, toys and/or clothes for the working poor).	Those who may not qualify for Richmond Christmas Fund. Working poor.	Usually referred by Community Health Nurses.	Delivery during the week of Christmas	Each sponsoring group purchase what families need based on approximately \$40 per person per family.

Additional Notes:

- Agencies on this directory have all agreed to be listed in this directory for the use under the above guideline.
- If you know of any other agencies or organizations that offer assistance during Christmas time, please contact John Tsang, member of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee at jtsang@comnet.ca or 604.271.9333. We would like to add to the above list.
- Updated as of November 15, 2002.

ADVOCACY AND LEGAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY IN RICHMOND

A REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS TO
THE CITY OF RICHMOND
FROM RICHMOND'S POVERTY RESPONSE COMMITTEE OF THE
RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

PREPARED BY: CHLOE O'LOUGHLIN

AND

FUNDED BY THE UNITED WAY

JANUARY 2003

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Please note: Due to the rapid change in programs, services and funding we cannot guarantee that the details for the information in this report is current at the time of reading. We have made every effort to ensure that information was current at the date of printing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Richmond has a high rate of poverty and one of highest poverty gaps in Canada. There is a significantly high number of people, especially families, living in poverty in Richmond and the situation has been exacerbated by decreased social assistance payments, high rents and lack of subsidized housing.

There are virtually no services to help Richmond citizens access: financial assistance/benefits, legal services, health and social services and supportive/subsidized housing. In 2001, community agencies in Richmond helped 71 citizens compared to 5,000 in Surrey and 30,000 in Vancouver.

Prior to May 2002, advocacy and legal services were provided by Legal Services Society offices situated in other municipalities to Richmond citizens. The provincial government has now eliminated funding to these services and there are virtually no legal and advocacy services available to Richmond's citizens who live in poverty.

Individuals in Richmond do not know where to get help for legal and/or advocacy needs. They seek help from 'workers' (for example, staff at the welfare or community agency office) who are often poorly informed, not paid nor trained to provide this type of advice and are often in a conflict of interest position.

The Poverty Response Committee strongly recommends that:

1. *the City of Richmond develop a hands-on approach to poverty and housing similar to the City of Vancouver's in-house program. Staff within the City of Vancouver would be willing to assist the City of Richmond to develop this program*
2. *the City of Richmond work quickly to develop a direct, front line advocacy and legal service in Richmond for its citizens who live in poverty*
3. *this service be developed and operated in a collaborative, community-based manner to ensure its success*
4. *the City of Richmond provide an advocacy and legal service in Richmond as conveniently as possible for people who live in poverty, e.g. Caring Place, City Hall or close to the welfare office.*
5. *the City of Richmond develop a public-private-nonprofit partnership by providing a portion of the funding and working with other levels of government, corporations in Richmond and other funders to co-fund this service.*

There is strong community and professional support for these recommendations in Richmond. The Ministry of Human Resources, the Coastal Health Authority and community agencies all express a strong interest in these recommendations, in helping to establish and fund an agency that provides services to Richmond's citizens who are living in poverty.

This report provides information so that Richmond City Counselors, City staff and community agencies can make informed decisions. With advocacy and legal support, citizens' poverty will be reduced their need for health and social services decreased, and the possibility of finding a job increased.

POVERTY IN RICHMOND

Richmond has a significant number of individuals and families living in poverty. Richmond had a higher percentage of families living in poverty than Surrey (18.7%) and the GVRD (18.7%) and identical to Burnaby (23%).

Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging: A Poverty Report Card states:

- In Richmond, there are 4 times as many 2-parent families living in poverty than one-parent families.¹
- In 1996, 22.9% of all families in Richmond had incomes below the Low Income Cut-off (LICO), the measurement used by Statistics Canada to measure poverty.
- Over 1/5 of all Richmond families and nearly 1/3 of all children lived in poverty.² Using these statistics, in 2002 34,400 individuals live in poverty in Richmond.
- Richmond's poverty gap is one of the highest in Canada.³ The poverty gap (also referred to as *depth of poverty*) measures how far incomes are below Canada's low-income cut-off.
- 22.9% of families in Richmond had incomes below the LICO.
- Working age families in Richmond (19 - 64 years old) had average incomes of \$60,600 in 1995.⁴ In the same year, families living below the Low Income Cut-off had average incomes of \$14,900 - about 1/4 of the income of the overall average working age family.

Richmond has been impacted by an influx of immigrants, mostly from Pacific Rim countries. Research indicates that while immigrants generally earn less in the earlier years of settlement, their income level does eventually rise to that of Canadian born residents.⁵

1346 households currently live in subsidized housing in Richmond. 1315 applicants are currently looking for affordable housing in Richmond: 834 families; 202 seniors; 152 young disabled; 7 individuals looking for wheelchair modified units; and 120 transfer requests from tenants already living in subsidized housing.⁶

Poverty worsens significantly in 2002:

In the 2002 report, entitled *Falling Behind: A Comparison of Living Costs and Income Assistance Rates in BC*, the Social Planning and Review Council of BC (SPARC)⁷ reports that welfare benefits cover only 45-65% of the cost of daily living depending on the family type. They state, "Reductions to income

¹ Ibid.

² Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging: A Poverty Report Card. Prepared by the Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee, Richmond Community Services Advisory Council. November, 2000.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ e-mail between Michelle Neilly, BCFMC and David Reay, City of Richmond, Housing Committee dated June 4, 2002.

⁷ Goldberg, Michael. *Falling Behind: A Comparison of Living Costs and Income Assistance Rates in BC*. SPARC. 2002. www.sparc.bc.ca/research/falling_behind.pdf [July 2002]

assistance of any kind, whether in rates, types of benefits, or eligibility, must not be considered by the provincial government, as the government is already failing to meet its obligations to these citizens." Despite concern expressed by agencies such as SPARC, on May 1st, 2002, the government of British Columbia cut income assistance payments between 18% and 34% per person (depending on the circumstances of individuals).

As a result, poverty in Richmond has become significantly worse. In Richmond, more children live in poverty in two-parent families (4,385 families) than in lone parent families (1,220)⁸. As of May 1st 2002, these two-parent families with two children receive \$401.06 per month to cover all costs such as food, clothing, school supplies, bus fares, sports equipment - everything except rent.⁹ But in Richmond, due to the subsidized housing shortage, almost 42% of these individuals had to use a portion of this payment to cover rent. Average rent in Richmond in 2002 was \$772.¹⁰

There is an extraordinarily high number of people living in poverty in Richmond and the situation has been exacerbated by decreased social assistance payments, high rents and lack of subsidized housing. The City of Richmond needs to ensure that these individuals can access every possible source of economic assistance from all levels of government. With assistance their poverty can be alleviated, their need for health and social services can be reduced and the possibility of finding a job increased.

Putting a human face on the issues:

The Advocacy Task Force felt strongly that the stories of Richmond citizens who live in poverty should be reflected in this report. Here are a few examples of the stories we heard:

One woman came with her husband and three children to Canada. Her husband was working full time in Jamaica as a car mechanic. In Canada, he was told that he would have to take a course to become a licensed car mechanic before he could work in Canada. They took out a student loan so that he could take the course. Once he finished the course, he was told that he had to apprentice as an unpaid worker for a long period of time. They could not afford this, so he is now working for \$11 per hour making furniture. They cannot pay back the student loan and they have a lot of unpaid bills. She cannot work, due to immigration rules.

One single mother with two children came as a refugee to Canada. Welfare has told her that she has to work or will be cut off. Due to her immigration status she has to pay \$125 per year per child, \$100 per year for work authorization, pay for all her courses, and she is not eligible for day care, English language classes, job clubs, the child tax benefit, or family bonus. She has to pay \$2,500 to legal services to appeal the immigration decision so that she can access the programs that will enable her to work. Last year when she got sick, her friends called an ambulance not knowing that she was not covered for medical. She was charged \$396 for ambulance, it took 8 months for her to pay this bill. She cannot access the food bank because she cannot pay the bus fare, has no bus pass and it is too far to walk.

⁸ Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging: A Poverty Report Card. Prepared by the Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee, Richmond Community Services Advisory Council. November, 2000.

⁹ Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Human Resources. Manual Amendment Letter No. 1. April 1, 2002. 2002/2003 <http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/publicat/vol1/MAL/2002-2003/16-03-1.htm> [July 2002]

¹⁰ Real Estate Board of BC. 2002. www.bchomesales.com/richmond.htm [July 2002]

One woman's son quit school early, and now wants to finish Grade 12. They cannot afford to pay for him to take the courses.

One woman stole items for her children and was charged with theft under \$200. She was given a booklet at legal services in Richmond, told that she had to pay \$70 to see a lawyer. She cannot read, so the booklet was no use to her.

One man needs help getting his OAP as he cannot read. He also needs help getting dental services for his wife who cannot eat because her teeth are hurting her so much. Welfare will only pay for the tooth to be removed, as it is a front tooth she feels that it would be too embarrassing to have it removed.

One woman needs help because she and her husband cannot pay their bills and their services are being cut off. She also needs help because she was in a car accident and she does not believe that she has got her entitlements from ICBC.

LEGAL AND ADVOCACY SERVICES IN RICHMOND

Advocacy and legal services help to alleviate poverty.

- Advocacy services assist individuals to access financial assistance, benefits and treatment to which they are entitled. Advocacy programs help individuals to access assistance such as welfare, BC disability benefits, CPP disability benefits, family bonuses, child tax credit, gas tax rebates, additional homeowner grants, BC Medical, long term care, Pharmacare, dental care, the GAIN income supplement, SAFER, bus passes, consumer protection, basic tax returns, will preparation, suitable housing, and provide legal referrals. They provide representation at appeals and reviews, and sometimes assist with treatment issues (mostly for mental illness issues), child apprehension, mediation and outreach.
- Legal services assist individuals to resolve issues related to their poverty, e.g. debt, child apprehension, theft, immigration and refugee issues, abuse, etc.

These services are required because:

- Individuals who live in poverty often have literacy problems, language and/or cultural barriers, mental illness, disability, and/or mental or physical handicaps that make it difficult for them to learn about and apply for the financial aid that is crucial for their survival.
- There are a myriad of benefits and assistance from a variety of levels of governments, each requiring different application processes and qualifying factors (e.g. a fixed address, a completed income tax return, two pieces of identification, mail within the past month). It is almost impossible for vulnerable, isolated individuals with severe financial limitations to identify these resources and apply for them alone.
- In addition to usual legal issues, individuals living in poverty have legal problems caused by poverty itself: disability and mental illness, lack of employment, poor access to EI, ethnocultural/immigrant/refugee issues, homelessness and inadequate housing, human rights issues, poor access to ICBC claims, legal issues and lack of advice and representation, issues related to seniors, lack of transportation, poor or no access to welfare, issues related to women, workers' rights and/or poor access to Worker's Compensation, issues related to youth. Some legal issues that were specifically mentioned in the survey were: separation and divorce, child and family protection, child custody,

child maintenance, criminal matters, family law matters, no court advocacy for people with mental illness in jail, fraud and fraudulent companies, substandard housing or no access to housing, issues related to mental illness, estate planning, immigration issues, poor knowledge of the justice system, no legal aid, no information about changes to welfare and related benefits. Several agencies mentioned the need for additional languages and culturally appropriate and accessible services. Several agencies mentioned the special legal needs of people with a mental illness. Others mentioned the need to address the special poverty needs of women.

- Lawyers are unlikely to take these cases because there are few people living in poverty who can pay legal fees. Members of the legal bar provide pro bono services in Richmond, but these are not adequate to cover the needs of Richmond citizens. Pro bono services include advice and information but *not representation in court or at administrative hearings*.
- Legal services are crucial because without assistance the individual will end up in further difficulty and cause government increased costs, e.g. child apprehension, jail, increased property crime, poor scholastic results for children living in poverty, etc.
- Recent changes related to youth (reduced priority of older teens by the Ministry of Children and Families and increasing youth unemployment) mean that more youth are living in poverty. They are more vulnerable than older adults to living in poverty due to their lack of experience, education, maturity, lack of community and peer support and a greater propensity to act impulsively without due regard to the consequences or future impact. Legal services for them are crucial.

Funding of advocacy and legal services

Prior to May 2002, Richmond citizens relied, almost exclusively, on one agency for their advocacy and legal services: the Legal Services Society of BC (LSS). (Community agencies did their best to advise individuals with advocacy and legal issues but with extremely limited resources they advised 71 individuals in 2001 compared to 5,000 in Surrey and 30,000 in Vancouver). The lack of services in Richmond meant that numerous individuals were referred to already overloaded agencies in Vancouver. Now agencies in other communities are refusing Richmond citizens.

The LSS offices were located in downtown Vancouver, Metrotown in Burnaby and Bear Creek Park in Surrey. Although Richmond has an Area Director for the purpose of taking legal services applications they do not provide direct client representation, they simply refer clients to a lawyer if appropriate and to other LSS offices that provide poverty law services.

Legal Services received their funds from the Ministry of the Attorney General from a 7% tax paid by lawyers to fund legal aid and provincial and federal government funding. On May 1st, 2002, the provincial government cut this funding to Legal Services (the only mandated provider of advocacy and legal services to people living in poverty in Richmond). Poverty law services previously provided by the Legal Services have now been limited to telephone advice and pamphlets. LSS will no longer be providing staff lawyers or paralegals to represent clients in legal processes. There will be no paralegal service to assist vulnerable adults to access social and economic benefits that will help to alleviate their poverty.

Individuals who were surveyed for this report stated that they would turn to their 'worker' (e.g. staff at a community agency or at the welfare office) for help. But when legislation governing social assistance changed in 2002, staff of community agencies were not advised or informed and often were not sure what changes had been made. 19 out of 20 agencies stated that they would send 1 to 6 staff members to workshops on legal and advocacy issues that affect their clients but there is no

agency in Richmond that provides this type of educational service.

In other communities advocacy services are provided by community agencies and are financed by a variety of funders including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Human Resources, Law Foundation, Direct Access Charitable Gaming, the Vancouver Foundation and other foundations, the United Way, individual donations, Legal Services (no longer available), special events, municipalities, and various federal government training/student programs.

For example, in Vancouver advocacy services are provided by at least 8 community agencies (not including LSS) funded by a minimum of 15 different funders. These community agencies see 30,000 clients per year:

Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA) - 1,000 clients/year
1st United Church - 5700/yr
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre - 1,000/yr
Advocacy Access at the B.C. Coalition for People with Disabilities (BCCPD) - 12,000/yr
The Kettle Friendship Centre - 1500/yr
Mental Patients' Association's (MPA) Mental Health Empowerment and Advocacy Project (MHEAP) – "lots"
Coast Foundation (Seymour St) - 1200/yr
411 Seniors Centre - 5,700/yr

The following is a comparison of citizens who are helped by community agencies in three communities:

Vancouver - 30,000 clients per year
Richmond - 71 clients per year
Surrey - at least 5,000 clients per year

Other communities provide these services through a variety of agencies, financially supported by a variety of funders. Despite the loss of LSS, these communities continue to assist their citizens who live in poverty although in a slightly reduced way in 2002. Due to funding cuts, they will no longer provide services to citizens from other communities such as Richmond.

Barriers and serious lack of services in Richmond:

There are many barriers to accessing legal and advocacy services in Richmond. Barriers included:

- **virtually no services in Richmond.** In 2001, Richmond citizens had to go to Vancouver, Burnaby or Surrey to access Legal Aid Services. (Legal Aid Services' poverty law services are now closed.)
- **lack of knowledge among service providers in Richmond.** In the survey of community agencies, only 4 out of 20 community agencies knew where to refer their clients for help (all the agencies mentioned were outside of Richmond). In 2001, other service providers tried to assist 'off the corner of their desks' although it is not in their job description, they are not advised or informed of legislative changes and they are not trained in these issues.
- **lack of knowledge among people living in poverty about where to seek help.** Seven out of 12 individuals who were surveyed identified 9 legal/financial issues that needed resolution. Only 2 could identify where they could access help for these problems.
- **lack of money to pay for services or transportation.** For example, a 1/2-hour consultation with

a lawyer costs \$10 - more than a person on financial assistance can afford to pay. Clients cannot afford the transportation costs (\$4 locally and \$6 to Vancouver) to ongoing visits to services, especially if they are in another municipality.

- **clients often have special needs** such as a mental illness, mental handicap, disability, Alzheimers, language and/or cultural barrier, inability to read, etc. They often cannot access their economic entitlements or deal with their legal issues without assistance.

Summary:

Simply put, Richmond relied on one funder to provide legal and advocacy services to their citizens who live in poverty and that funding has been eliminated. As a result, Richmond has no specifically mandated service to help individuals access social and economic benefits or to get assistance with legal issues. Due to funding restrictions and lack of training, Richmond's community agencies are not able to assist. For a municipality with one of the highest poverty rates in the Lower Mainland, Richmond has a serious situation that must be addressed.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD ADVOCACY SERVICES IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Some examples of excellent community agencies in other municipalities that provide advocacy services are the Newton Advocacy Group, Active Support Against Poverty in Prince George, the BC Coalition for People with Disability's Advocacy Access program, the Downtown Eastside Resident Association's advocacy program and Calgary Legal Advice. A summary of other services can be found in the Appendix.

The Newton Advocacy Group provides advocacy services primarily to mental health consumers, people receiving financial assistance, people who have children in care or at risk of being in care, and single mothers. They provide services in person, by phone, by e-mail and through a community learning network. They see over 5,000 clients per year to help them access benefits, service and appropriate treatment. Their service is staffed by individuals with a variety of skills and education but who primarily have received or needed services themselves. They provide workshops for staff in Surrey agencies every 2-3 weeks, and each of their programs provided an educational session for the community 4 times per year. They provide services in ten different languages and will pay for interpretation if necessary. Their office hosts Revenue Canada's free income tax assistance programs and a pro-bono legal clinic. Their service is funded by the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Health.

Prince George's Active Support Against Poverty is well known in that municipality. They focus on getting welfare benefits for their clients. They also provide clothing, fax machine, use of computers, and support, i.e. 'whatever the person needs to get out of poverty'. They say that they are a place of last resort in Prince George and they make sure that the person gets help. They have an excellent relationship with the Ministry of Human Resources who give referrals, funds and whatever they can to assist this program. They also get their funding from a vast array of funders including Gaming and the City of Prince George.

Each year **Advocacy Access** (a program of the **BC Coalition for People with Disabilities** in Vancouver) provides extensive advocacy services to over 12,000 people with physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities living in Vancouver. They advocate for BC Benefits, Schedule C health benefits, CPP disability benefits, gas tax rebates, additional homeowner grants for people with disabilities, etc. They provide information on subsidized housing and assist at appeals and reviews. They have 1

coordinator, 5 advocates and a lawyer one day per week. They have been in service for many years and have assisted in the development of most of the other advocacy services in the Lower Mainland. Their manuals and on-site training are outstanding and are often used by other agencies. Their service is funded primarily by Gaming monies and the Law Foundation.

The **Downtown Eastside Resident's Association** (DERA) has 3 advocates and one front line worker who provide advocacy services to 1,000 individuals from the downtown eastside per year. They report that each client has an average of 2.5 issues resolved. DERA has a 90% success rate. They also train 12 advocates per year. The training program is six months long and covers all aspects of advocacy including advanced skills such as writing briefs for tribunals and arbitrations. All advocates and trainees are people who have lived in the downtown eastside and have been on welfare. DERA also provides workshops on poverty issues and advocacy to other agencies so that these community agencies can provide outreach advocacy to citizens in the area. Their service is funded by the Ministry of Human Resources and the Law Foundation.

Calgary Legal Guidance (<http://www.clg.ab.ca>) has a collaborative model that includes paid staff, volunteer lawyers and volunteers within the community. They offer several programs including the Social Benefits Advocacy Program. This program is designed to assist individuals having difficulties maintaining and/or obtaining social benefit government programs such as Employment Insurance (EI), Worker's Compensation Board (WCB), Canada Pension Plan, (CPP), Supports for Independence (SFI) (Social Assistance) and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). Advocates will assist with applications, terminated benefits and appeals. They also offer several other programs including a Court Preparation and Restraining Order Program, Dial-A-Law and an Evening Legal Clinic that provides legal advice for low income Calgarians who do not qualify for Legal Aid, through an evening legal clinic staffed by volunteer lawyers, four nights per week. Some follow-up services are provided by staff lawyers and others. The clinic provides private appointments with a lawyer for summary legal advice, referrals to appropriate services and agencies. They are funded by the City of Calgary, the United Way and the Wild Rose Foundation (equivalent to the Direct Access Charitable Gaming Funds provided by the BC government).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND

Richmond has a high rate of poverty and virtually no services to ensure that individuals and families can access the economic benefits, the legal services, health and social services, and housing to which they are entitled. Extremely limited services are scattered, poorly linked and under-funded. People living in poverty in Richmond do not know where to get help.

1. Development of expertise within the City of Richmond

The situation is so serious that it is strongly recommended that the City of Richmond develop a hands-on approach to poverty and housing. City of Vancouver staff often work on the streets identifying poverty and homeless needs, so that the City has direct access to up-to-date, accurate information so that they can develop policy, take action, and fund community agencies appropriately. Current staff need to develop knowledge and hands-on expertise about poverty and housing or additional staff need to be hired within the City of Richmond so that politicians can effectively address the issue of poverty in Richmond.

It is recommended that the City of Richmond develop a hands-on approach to poverty and housing similar to the City of Vancouver's in-house program. Staff within the City of Vancouver would be willing to assist the City of Richmond to develop this program.

2. Direct, front line advocacy and legal services to individuals

The Poverty Response Committee strongly recommends that a legal and advocacy service be developed to assist Richmond residents in the following way:

- work with individual(s) and families to access benefits they are entitled to, but are having difficulty getting, i.e. disability benefits, BC benefits (welfare), EI benefits, disability benefits, clothing allowances, etc.; and,
- work with those tenants who face substandard housing conditions and assist them to obtain repair orders

There are excellent agencies in other communities that are providing these services that could assist and mentor during start-up. Some of these agencies train and develop advocates who can be hired in Richmond. Advocates are usually trained individuals who have experienced poverty. It is recommended that a team of 3 advocates initially be developed in Richmond with part-time legal supervision to review their files.

This advocacy and legal service should provide:

- information re benefits and service
- advocacy for access to benefits
- assistance re appeals, attending tribunals, etc.
- assistance re issues related to housing
- assistance related to treatment and services in Richmond
- assistance related to child apprehension
- referral to advocacy services at:
 - Alzheimers Society in Vancouver
 - Legal Services Society if appropriate
 - SUCCESS in Vancouver
 - free on-site pro-bono service (provided by Salvation Army, CBA or Western Access to Justice)
 - free Law Students Legal Advice Program
 - free Revenue Canada assisted tax services
 - services in various languages and translation services, if required

An important component of a community-based advocacy and legal service would be legal information dissemination, community mobilization, and support for law reform initiatives and legal cases:

- legal information dissemination
- networking
- provide ongoing information to government sectors, e.g. City of Richmond, and community members so that they can ensure that laws and services reflect the needs of those living in poverty
- community mobilization for positive change in Richmond
- information collection for social planning which would lead to good, appropriate, needed resources
- identification of test cases and referral to legal agencies, e.g. the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, The Community Legal Assistance Society, Westcoast Legal Education and Advocacy Fund, and BC Civil Liberties Association.

It is recommended that the City of Richmond work quickly to develop a direct, front line advocacy and legal service in Richmond for its citizens who live in poverty.

3. Collaborative community based model

It is crucial that City staff, community agencies, members of the legal bar, and funders work collaboratively, become informed and keep current about these issues. As people who live in poverty learn, as they say, from their 'workers' (rather than from brochures, television, phone, computers, etc.), it is crucial that these 'workers' are knowledgeable about the new service and refer individuals for help.

In order to access liability insurance, a lawyer must supervise advocates. A lawyer specializing in the field of poverty law usually provides this service on a part-time basis doing, for example, file review. The advocacy and legal services should provide information via:

- Self-help groups and sharing skills
- Educating/training/networking of community agency staff and advocates re the service and legal and advocacy issues
- Community legal education

The advocates should be encouraged, supported, and funded to continue their own professional development through forums and workshops.

At a meeting of Richmond's community agencies, strong support was given to these recommendations. Agencies expressed their commitment to accessing funding from a variety of resources in order to help fund legal and advocacy services to citizens of Richmond who live in poverty.

It is recommended that this service be developed and operated in a collaborative, community-based manner to ensure its success.

4. Location of service

The City of Richmond can no longer rely on other municipalities to provide services to citizens of Richmond. As a result of funding cuts and the loss of poverty law services, agencies in other municipalities will no longer provide services to Richmond citizens. Because citizens have had to travel to other communities, fewer Richmond citizens received services than other communities.

It is recommended that The City of Richmond provide an advocacy and legal service in Richmond as conveniently as possible for people who live in poverty, e.g. Caring Place, City Hall or close to the welfare office.

5. Collaborative funding model

The City of Richmond can no longer rely on one funder to provide such a crucial service to its citizens who live in poverty. Reliance on one funder makes a service vulnerable to funding cuts.

It is recommended that The City of Richmond develop a public-private-nonprofit partnership by providing a portion of the funding and working with other levels of government, corporations in Richmond and other funders to co-fund this service.

Support for these recommendations:

There is strong community and government support for these recommendations. The Ministry of Human Resources, the Coastal Health Authority and community agencies all express a strong interest in these recommendations, in helping to establish and fund an agency that provides services to Richmond's citizens who are living in poverty.

Conclusion:

Richmond has one of the highest rates of poverty and the lowest rate of advocacy and legal services in the Lower Mainland (virtually none). It is urgent that the City of Richmond Counsellors and staff work with the community agencies to act quickly to provide leadership and funding to develop and maintain a community-based, collaboratively funded advocacy and legal service for people living in poverty in Richmond.

APPENDICES

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Appendix 1:

Background to the Poverty Law Advocacy Project

1. Report to Richmond City Council in January 2002 states:

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee's Advocacy Task Force, in January 2002 reports that the Advocacy Task Force has met on five occasions for the purpose of:

Determining what type of advocacy services is available to the community of Richmond,
Assessing whether or not there is a need for advocacy services which provide client representation;
and,
Determining what other steps can be taken to assist or empower community groups and residents of Richmond with respect to poverty related issues.

Although Richmond has a number of community groups which address and support people with a variety of social and health issues, such as Richmond Multicultural Society, Disability Resource Centre, Richmond Senior Centre Society, etc. these agencies do not provide poverty law advocacy services, in particular, client representation at administrative tribunals and hearings.

2. Recommendations and ideas for further consideration:

2.1 Legal Advocate:

The Advocacy Task Force strongly believes there is a need for a legal advocate to assist Richmond residents with the following:

- work with individual , and families to access benefits they are entitled to, but are having difficulty getting, i.e. disability benefits, BC benefits (welfare), EI benefits, disability benefits, clothing allowances, etc.; and,
- work with those tenants who face substandard housing conditions and assist them to obtain repair orders

The Advocacy Task Force recommends that:

The City support the Advocacy task force while it undertakes its feasibility study for a legal advocate located in Richmond. This legal advocate will assist residents to access the benefits they are entitled to and to work with tenants who face substandard housing conditions

2.2 Community Legal Education

The Advocacy Task Force has identified education as a means to assist and/or empower community groups and residents. There are several ways this can be accomplished:

A one day workshop for community workers which will offer insight and understanding of the following poverty law issues: income assistance, disability applications (disability benefit level I and II with the Ministry of Human Resources and CPP), landlord tenant law, employment insurance and appeals to the Board of Referees.

Task Force members will approach Legal Services Society of BC and/or The People's Law School to facilitate the one-day workshop on "Poverty Law Advocacy" for community groups, including training sessions.

Workshops for residents that can be offered through the local community centres and/or community based schools.

Task force members will approach local community centres and schools to assess whether there is a need for workshops on "Income Assistance", "Landlord/Tenant Rights", "How to apply for disability benefits" and "before and After You Get That Job" etc.

Mobilize community groups to promote change. An example is the closure of the Vancouver Residential Tenancy Branch Office on Melville Street and the impact this closure will have on Richmond tenants, who are served by this office. As of April 1, 2002, Richmond tenants will be expected to attend the Residential Tenancy Branch Office located in Surrey. For tenants who rely on public transit this will mean an increase in bus fare from a two-zone trip to a three-zone trip. Further, the distance required to travel will be greater. Those tenants relying on public transit the length of time to travel to a hearing could be longer than two hours. Also, those tenants in Richmond who have a disability or language barrier this trip becomes that much more arduous.

An advocate could work with community groups in Richmond to show commitment, concern, and open dialogue with the Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancy Branch the barriers to accessing their rights as tenants.

The Advocacy Task Force recommends that:

Poverty law workshops for community workers and residents be held in Richmond.
Community groups are supported so that they can mobilize for positive change in Richmond.

Appendix 2:

The Poverty Law Advocacy Project

The Project:

The Advocacy Task Force received a Community Innovation Grant of \$5,000 from United Way of the Lower Mainland to undertake a feasibility study for an advocacy office in Richmond. The goals of the project were to:

- determine the need for an advocate in Richmond
- understand the needs of those who require the services of an advocate (including people who speak English as a second language and recent immigrants)
- understand how advocacy is currently being provided to Richmond residents
- understand the most effective way to deliver advocacy services in Richmond

Methodology:

A survey was distributed to community agencies by the Richmond Poverty Response Committee of the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council. Community agencies who did not respond received the survey by phone. Twenty responses were received and used as the basis for understanding community need.

A phone survey of 11 Advocacy Services around the province was implemented and results were compiled.

Sixteen people living in poverty in Richmond were surveyed in May 2002 (3 others declined to be interviewed because they could not speak English). 9 were female, 7 were male. 8 were Canadian, 2 Russian, 1 Jamaican, 1 Ethiopian, 1 Polish, 1 Filipino, 1 Iranian, and 1 was Chinese (from Mainland China).

Fourteen phone interviews were held with professional and government groups in or responsible for services and citizens in Richmond.

Draft recommendations were reviewed and revised by the Advocacy Task Force.

In July 2002, this report was presented to a meeting of community agencies. Their feedback was incorporated into the final report. There was unanimous support for these recommendations.

The Advocacy Task Force members

Members of the Advocacy Task Force included Angela Rigby (Chair person), Karen Idins, Jim Kelly, Marshall Thompson, Karen Martin, Barbara Hickey, Corrine Jensen, and Zarina Mosaheb.

The Consultant:

The consultant for this project was Chloe O'Loughlin who specializes in providing assistance to the nonprofit sector. She has worked in the nonprofit sector for 25 years, 14 years as an executive director. She has taught nonprofit management at Vancouver Community College for 15 years and now provides that service at Langara College in Vancouver. She can be reached at 604-874-5323 or by email at peterchloe@shaw.ca.

Appendix 3:

Services currently available in Richmond

In January 2002, the Advocacy Task Force identified the advocacy resources, which are currently available to Richmond residents. These resources do not provide client representation, but will provide legal advice either through a lawyer or in the case of the UBC Law Student's Legal Advice Program under lawyer supervision.

Law Students Legal Advice Program (UBC) (604-822-5791) Takes place every Wednesday from 7-9 pm. Law students will give legal advice and will appear in some courts and tribunals. Financial need is a requirement for assistance. This program recently lost \$37,000 (funding for their supervising lawyer) in cuts to their program so they are reassessing their programs.

Salvation Army Pro Bono Lawyer Consultation Program (604-277-2424)

Located at 8280 Gilbert Road, Richmond. Appointments can be made with participating lawyers who will provide summary advice but will not represent the party. Financial need is a requirement for assistance (the party must not qualify for legal aid).

Canadian Bar Association (CBA) Lawyer (604-687-3221)

Referral made to a lawyer in Richmond who practices in the relevant area. Cost is \$10.00 for 1/2 hour meeting. Any further work on the matter is done at the lawyer's regular billing rate.

Law Line (604-601-6100)

Basic legal information provided over the telephone by law librarians. No legal advice given.

Dial-a-Law (604-687-4680)

Pre-recorded legal information on various topics provided by the BC branch of the Canadian Bar Association.

Legal Services Society of BC

No longer offers poverty law services. Family law is provided only if it involves violence.

Canadian Mental Health Association: Zara McLeod (from the Mental Patient Association's MHEAP program) provides financial advocacy services at CMHA in Caring Place from 2-4 pm on Thursdays. She advocates for financial assistance. In 2001 she saw 47 individuals.

Women's Resource Centre: A part-time advocate sees women who have advocacy needs. In 2001 she saw 24 clients.

Coastal Health Authority: Jan Fletcher of Richmond Health Services, Risk Manager and Customer Relations provides neutral advocacy services re health services that are provided in Richmond.

**Appendix 4:
Resources
Possible funding sources**

BC Gaming Commission - Direct Access Funds. A lot of programs rely on Direct Access Casino monies to fund their advocacy programs. This funding is still available but not guaranteed.

BC Housing - They used to fund Active Support Against Poverty in Prince George. They only fund programs related to BC Housing.

City of Richmond needs to consider funding a legal and advocacy for people living in poverty in Richmond, for example, the City of Prince George is a funder of the organization Active Support Against Poverty.

Coast Capital Foundation - this is Surrey and Richmond Savings merged. They apparently fund this kind of program.

Federal - Summer Student Program

Ilich Foundation, Milan and Maureen

Law Foundation - The Law Foundation funds several advocacy groups around the province. Karima at the Fndn says that they rarely fund new programs that require on-going funding. They funded new groups this year and are unlikely to fund more in the next few years. They will accept proposals. They use the interest from lawyer's trust accounts to fund programs, so if the interest rate improves they can fund more programs.

Legal Services Society - They used to fund the printing of brochures, etc

McPhail Family Foundation, James (a funder of the Disability Resource Centre)

Ministry of Health, Adult Mental Health Services - have recently cut funding to community programs, except M-HEAP, the advocacy program at the Mental Patients Association.

Ministry of Human Resources - they continue to fund advocacy programs around the province.

Notary Foundation

Pacific Coastal Health Authority: Lynn Jones, who oversaw all funded agencies and services related to mental illness in Richmond, has identified this as a priority. Some departments at the Health Authority may consider funding a portion of a service that relates to mental illness or other health issues.)

RCB Foundation (Royal Bank's Foundation)

Richmond Foundation

Richmond Sunrise Rotary Club

**United Way
Vancouver Foundation**

Written resources that may help

Benefits Acts and Regulations copies can be obtained from:

Crown Publications Inc.
521 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1K8
Telephone: (205) 386-4636

Ministry of Human Resources Policy and Procedures Manual - Volume 1 - Income Assistance.

There is a copy in the LSLAP office, at the Law Library, and at the Legal Information Centre of the Legal Services Society. (Volume 3- Health Services Division)

Your Welfare Rights, Income Assistance Under B.C. Benefits; When I'm 64: Senior Citizen Benefits and Services and Disability Benefits: How to Apply.

This publication can be ordered from:

Distribution Clerk, Legal Services Society
Suite 1500, 1140 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6E 4G1
Fax: (604) 682-0965

The Long Haul: End Legislated Poverty's newsletter. Perspectives of those who live in poverty; Information. Contains "FLAWline, (Frontline Advocacy Workers' news; monthly updates of social assistance law changes and experiences with appeals). Suggested 12-month subscription: \$30, payable to End Legislated Poverty. (Free if you can't afford \$).

#211 - 456 West Broadway,
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1R3

CPP Disability Benefits Application Guide: A guide to filling out CPP Disability Benefits applications.

This publication is available from:

Advocacy Access
c/o BC Coalition for People with Disabilities
204-456 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC
Advocacy Access: 604-872-1278

BC Benefits: Advocacy Training Manual. A training manual for BC Disability Benefits applications and appeals. 3 " binder, very comprehensive.

This publication is available from Vernon & District Women's Centre Society

BC Benefits: An Overview: An overview of BC Benefits and its impact on people with disabilities. 12 pages.

This publication is available from:

Advocacy Access
c/o BC Coalition for People with Disabilities
204-456 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC
Advocacy Access: 604-872-1278

Disability Benefits: How to Apply. 20 pages.

This publication can be ordered from:

Distribution Clerk, Legal Services Society
Suite 1500, 1140 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6E 4G1
Fax: (604) 682-0965

Your Welfare Rights: A User's Guide to BC Benefits 79 page booklet. This publication can be ordered from:

Distribution Clerk, Legal Services Society
Suite 1500, 1140 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6E 4G1
Fax: (604) 682-0965

A Guide for Advocates: Knowing Your Rights. Covers the process of appealing and going to tribunal for people dealing with BC Benefits.

This publication is available from:

Federated Anti-poverty Groups of BC
c/o Gisele Guay
1305 95th Avenue
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 1J5
phone: 250-782-2366

"The Advokit": A step by Step Guide to Effective Advocacy. Basic information on how to effectively advocate, and the skills involved. 30 pages. Penticton Advocacy Network.

This publication is available from:

Penticton Advocacy Network
Box 148 - 113, 437 Martin Street
Penticton, BC V2A 5L1
Phone: 250-490-8676

People and Organizations who may help

Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Human Resources

BC Benefits Policy Manual can be found at: <http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/publicat/vol1/index.htm>

PovNet is an internet site for advocates, people on welfare, and community groups and individuals involved in anti-poverty work. It provides up-to-date information about welfare and housing laws and resources in British Columbia, Canada. PovNet links to current anti-poverty issues and also provides links to other anti-poverty organizations and resources in Canada and internationally. They can be found at: <http://www.povnet.org/>.

Front Line Advocacy Workers: ELP funds and facilitates a group of advocacy workers, is overseen by David Mossop, QC of the Community Legal Assistance Society.

Community Legal Assistance Society - May help with judicial reviews. Does test cases. Mental Health Law Project.

800-1281 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, B.C.
Telephone: 685-3425

Pro Bono Law of BC's web site supports pro bono work by BC lawyers and makes legal services as accessible as possible. ProBonoNet BC is an information service only. It does not provide legal advice. <http://www.juricert.com/probono/bc/index.cfm>

Public Interest Advocacy Centre - May help with appeals and judicial reviews. Does test cases.

815 - 815 West Hastings Street

Vancouver, B.C., V6C 1B4

Telephone: 687-3063

Fax: 682-7896

Western Access to Justice will coordinate the provision of pro-bono services. This service is free. They will recruit the lawyers who will provide 1/2 hour of free legal advice. The agency provides the room, etc. This is coordinated by Dougall Christie 604-482-3195.

Revenue Canada will provide and train volunteers who will provide free tax services throughout the year. This is important because individuals cannot access some benefits if they owe outstanding taxes. They may be able to access some income by submitting a tax return. 604-587-2109.

Appendix 5:

Advocacy services in other municipalities

411 Seniors Centre: This program is run at a very large facility in Vancouver. Although they provide services to seniors in the Lower Mainland, they report that only those in Vancouver use their services. They provide extensive services to seniors. Retired social service sector employees who volunteer their time provide the services. They have a volunteer coordinator who manages the volunteers. They provide services in a variety of languages based on the abilities of their volunteers.

Advocacy Access (BCCPD): This program, run by the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, is the largest and most extensive advocacy program in the province (they provide services to 12,000 clients per year). They advocate for benefits, lobby very effectively for change, and educate other advocates and community groups. Due to government cutbacks, they recently lost their funding from the Ministry of Health, Mental Health Services. They provide manuals free of charge to other advocacy programs. Their advocates are people with disabilities.

Calgary Legal Guidance (<http://www.clg.ab.ca>) has a collaborative model that includes paid staff, volunteer lawyers and volunteers within the community. They offer several programs including the Social Benefits Advocacy Program. This program is designed to assist individuals having difficulties maintaining and/or obtaining social benefit government programs such as Employment Insurance (EI), Worker's Compensation Board (WCB), Canada Pension Plan, (CPP), Supports for Independence (SFI) (Social Assistance) and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). Advocates will assist with applications, terminated benefits and appeals. They also offer several other programs including a Court Preparation and Restraining Order Program, Dial-A-Law and an Evening Legal Clinic that provides legal advice for low income Calgarians who do not qualify for Legal Aid, through an evening legal clinic staffed by volunteer lawyers, four nights per week. Some follow-up services are provided by staff lawyers and others. The clinic provides private appointments with a lawyer for summary legal advice, referrals to appropriate services and agencies. They are funded by the City of Calgary, the United Way and the Wild Rose Foundation (equivalent to the Direct Access Funds provided by the BC government).

The **Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA)** has 3 advocates and one front line worker who provide advocacy services to 1,000 individuals from the downtown eastside per year. They report that each client has an average of 2.5 issues resolved. DERA has a 90% success rate. They also train 12 advocates per year. The training program is six months long and covers all aspects of advocacy including advanced skills such as writing briefs for tribunals and arbitrations. All advocates and trainees are people who have lived in the downtown eastside and have been on welfare. DERA also provides workshops on poverty issues and advocacy to other agencies so that these community agencies can provide outreach advocacy to citizens in the area.

First United Church: This program, run by the United Church is one of many programs provided by this Church in the downtown east side of Vancouver. Three advocates provide drop-in services every morning for two hours and see approximately 25-30 people per morning. They advocate for benefits for their clients. They also provide clothing and other services to combat poverty. Funded by church funds. One advocate who is funded by Ministry of Health will be laid off as the funding has been cut.

Kettle Friendship Centre: This program, on Commercial Drive, has been in place for 10 years and provides services specifically for people with a mental illness, and for some people with FAS or brain injuries, and higher functioning people who have mental disabilities. They advocate for benefits

(not CPP), and deal with housing and mental health treatment issues. They have 4 advocates (they lost MoH funding for one advocate) and 1 administrator. One of these advocates focuses specifically on Residential/Tenancy issues and Ministry of Family and Children issues. They host the West Coast Access to Justice Clinic (Dougall Christie's program) for 2 hours per week - free legal advice but no representation in court.

Mental Health Empowerment Advocacy Project (M-HEAP): This program, housed at the Mental Patients Association, is becoming the 'Centre of Excellence' for the province for people with a mental illness. They provide their services in person, by phone (including by a 1-800 line), and by e-mail. There are seven advocates who have a mental illness but have excellent verbal and written skills. This will be the only program in the province to receive funds from the Ministry of Health, Dept of Mental Health Services.

Newton Advocacy Group: Newton provides extensive services. They have 13 people on staff (most have been on welfare, single mothers from abusive relationships, etc. who have been trained on-site). They provide advocacy re economic benefits, issues related to mental illness, disability, etc. They also provide advocacy for parents whose children are in care or at risk of being in care. This is the only agency who has chosen not be supervised by a lawyer so that they will not have restrictions normally related to legal cases, that is, they can advocate in many ways besides legally and they can take cases for individuals who, in a lawyer's opinion 'have no merit' (but may, for example, improve an individual's health or sense of worth.)

North Shore Community Legal Services: This is a legal aid office. There is no advocacy group on the North Shore.

Prince George - Active Support Against Poverty: This program is well known in Prince George. They focus on getting welfare benefits for their clients, not CPP, EI, or WCB. They also provide clothing, fax machine, use of computers, and support - 'whatever the person needs to get out of poverty'. They say that they are a place of last resort in Prince George and they make sure that the person gets help. They have an excellent relationship with the Ministry of Human Resources who give referrals, funds and whatever they can to assist this program. They also get their funding from a vast array of funders including Gaming.

Tenant's Rights Action Coalition: This provincial, on-line, 1-800 and phone service (they don't meet with individuals face-to-face) will tell you what the law says but will not provide legal advice or represent clients at hearings. They provide fact sheets in six languages: Korean, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Punjabi. They have 7 full time employees and 1 part-time administrator. They have a supervising lawyer paid out of the Law Foundation funds.

Vancouver Aboriginal Law Centre: This is a legal aid office. If an aboriginal person has applied and been denied benefits, VALC will get them assistance through UBC's Law Student's Legal Advice Program.

Other Advocacy programs: MOSAIC's Poverty Committee

NOTE: Legal supervision of advocacy services:

A lawyer oversees most advocacy programs - required by the Law Foundation and required in order to get liability insurance. Gillian Andrews provides this service one day per week in Vancouver. In the north it is provided free by legal services. Newton Advocacy Group is the only agency who has chosen deliberately not be supervised by a lawyer because they do not want restrictions normally related to legal cases (see note above.)

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would-be architects from elementary schools on up.

The winners are: **Dina Bulfone**, first place Elementary; **Kyle Martin**, second place Elementary; **Michael Chui**, first place, Secondary; **Wes Dale**, second place Secondary; **Tommy Chui**, first place Open; and **Priscella Wong**, second place Open.

Congratulations to all.

Kudos to the **United Way** of the Lower Mainland for funding that supports the poverty response committee initiatives for Richmondites.

The United Way has recognized the unique structure of the **Poverty Response Committee**, not solely as a

non-profit agency, but rather as a city-wide four-tiered task force. What that means is that people living in poverty and community representatives work together to help find ways to alleviate poverty issues in our city.

The Housing, The Advocacy, The Gift Giving Programs and Access to Recreation and the Family Task Forces work collectively to ensure its objective of ending poverty.

The Poverty Response Committee meets at city hall on the last Wednesday of each month.

Individuals, organizations or businesses interested in getting involved can call 604-271-9474 or e-mail at mlv@telus.net.



TREVOR RALE/RICHMOND NEWS

Reach out and touch some cash prizes Saturday with your text-message capable phone. Jat Hans of Rogers Wireless in Richmond Centre does a text message, which will be the theme of the National Trivia Contest. Anyone can compete in the Rogers AT&T Wireless Motorola Gaming Championship by bringing their phone to Richmond Centre at noon.

**Affordable Housing Responsibilities Table:
City of Vancouver's Housing Centre compared with Richmond**

Vancouver		Richmond
Housing Centre (10 staff)		Policy Planning Staff (.3 FTE)
• lease of City-owned land		Yes
• purchase of sites		Yes
• implementation of 20% social housing requirement of major rezonings		Currently no such requirement, but OCP indicates 20% goal
• operation of social housing units		City not a housing operator
• provision of grants from the affordable housing fund		Yes
• requirement that at least half the social housing units in major projects be designated for families with children		No such requirement
• Tenant Assistance Program, providing direct tenant relocation advice and assistance to people with disabilities or who have been displaced by redevelopment, including offering legal information		No direct tenant service
• condominium conversion reviews, requiring that conversions be evaluated in the context of housing requirements in the area		Yes
• rate of change analysis (i.e., managing development/redevelopment in specific neighbourhoods depending on the rate of change of housing stock)		Not conducted
• preparation of research reports		Yes
• maintains an inventory of non-market housing		Yes