



**RCSAC | RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

January 25, 2002

Mayor Malcolm Brodie and Council
Richmond City Hall
6900 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

We are pleased to send you the report of the Poverty Response Committee of the RCSAC. This report represents the work undertaken over the past year to further research the issues and barriers outlined in the November 2000 Report; "Poverty in Richmond, A Sense of Belonging". The attached report (January 2002) identifies possible strategies and community based solutions for those residents in Richmond who live in poverty.

The report was finalized before the recent budgetary and legislative announcements made by the Provincial government. At this point we do not have a full understanding of how these changes may impact Richmond residents presently living in poverty or those residents living just above the poverty line in 2002 nor the longer-term impact as a result of the reduction in services.

We want to take this opportunity to thank Council for their support over the past year through the \$10,000 Casino grant and through meeting space and staff assistance.

The continued work of the Committee in 2002 has been supported by grants from the United Way (\$15,000 for coordination, and \$5,000 for research on advocacy needs in the community). We respectfully request that Council support the continued work of the Committee with a \$10,000 grant to enable the committee and its task forces to pursue and implement the recommendations outlined in our report.

Sincerely yours,

JS for A. McKittrick + A Rigby

Co-chairs
Annie McKittrick and Angela Rigby
Poverty Response Committee

6911 No. 3 Road, Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1 Tel: 604-221-0309



RCSAC | RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL

RICHMOND POVERTY RESPONSE
COMMITTEE

REPORT TO RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL

January 2002

The following people are the members of the Connecting Committee, which is responsible for the administration of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee. The members of the Connecting Committee guided the development of this report.

Connecting Committee Members:

Annie McKittrick
Angela Rigby
Margaret Hewlett
Chris Salgado
Sharon Birch
James Sullivan
Lesley Sherlock

The report was prepared by: Michelle Ninow, MCIP

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.

Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	5
1.1	Background.....	5
1.2	Task Force Development.....	5
2.0	Process and Findings.....	6
2.1	Process.....	6
2.2	Findings.....	6
2.2.1	The Housing Task Force Report.....	6
2.2.2	The Advocacy Task Force Report.....	9
2.2.3	The Access to Recreation Task Force Report.....	11
2.2.4	The Families Task Force Report.....	14
2.2.5	Christmas Hamper/Donation Programs.....	17
3.0	Next Steps and Recommendations.....	18
3.1	Next Steps.....	18
3.2	A Summary of Recommendations.....	18

RICHMOND POVERTY RESPONSE COMMITTEE REPORT TO RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

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

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee is a sub-committee of the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council (RCSAC), an inter-agency council composed of staff and volunteers from community service agencies, which has played an active role in Richmond as an advisory committee to the City of Richmond. The Poverty Response Committee oversees the Poverty Response process. The committee is inclusive and its membership consists of the members of four poverty-related task forces as well as community members. New members or visitors are welcome at any meeting.

In the fall of 1999, the RCSAC produced a report card on poverty in Richmond, **Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging**. The main objectives of the 1999 Report were to provide accurate information on poverty in our community and to support and assist in the development of community initiatives. Once the Report was presented to the community, the Poverty Response Committee was formed. The mandate of this Committee is to follow up on the findings of the Report Card with community driven action.

The Poverty Response Committee received a \$10,000 grant from the City of Richmond to begin developing the follow up process. The Committee hired a co-ordinator for the process.

1.2 *Task Force Development*

The Poverty Response Committee has established four task forces, which each focus on a specific area related to poverty. They are:

- Housing
- Advocacy
- Access to Recreation
- Families

The general mandate of the task forces is as follows:

- To understand poverty better in the context of Richmond.
- To develop a set of recommendations about alleviating poverty in the community for Richmond City Council
- To develop a set of goals and targets for alleviating poverty in Richmond.
- To conduct and access research and consult with experts (both within the community and external) as required to understand the issue better.
- To communicate openly with the Richmond public by sharing information and providing regular updates about activities.

2.0 PROCESS AND FINDINGS

2.1 Process

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee began recruiting members for the task forces in July and August 2001. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers and personal invitations were extended to individuals who were identified as potentially having an interest in a specific task force issue. All RCSAC members were also notified of the opportunity for involvement.

Most task force meetings have been held at Richmond City Hall. A few meetings have been held at local agency offices at Caring Place. All meeting space has been provided free of charge. Attendance at each of the task force meetings has varied, but usually averages between eight to twelve people.

Task force meetings have usually started between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. so that community members who work outside of Richmond can manage to attend the meetings at the end of their workday and those that work in the community can fit the meeting in before they leave work.

The work of the Poverty Response Committee and the individual task forces is co-ordinated by a small administrative group called the Connecting Committee, which meets monthly. This administrative group has developed press releases, hosted community discussions, directed the work of the co-ordinator, and guided the application of funding proposals.

2.2 Findings

The Poverty Response Task Forces have drafted the following four sub-reports, which include ideas for further consideration as well as recommendations. The sub-reports are presented here as the task forces have written them. In addition, a synopsis of a discussion about Christmas hampers/donation programs, hosted by the Poverty Response Committee is included in this section.

The work that has been undertaken by the task forces is significant. These are volunteer groups of citizens and professionals who have a keen interest in alleviating poverty in Richmond. Within four months these groups have each met between four and nine times. They have expanded and solidified their membership. They have gathered information from external sources, debated the issues, generated ideas, and developed the best recommendations possible, given the time constraints. None of the task forces view their work as being complete. All will continue to meet in 2002 to carry on the process of understanding poverty in Richmond and suggesting ways to alleviate its effects. Recent confirmation of project funding from the United Way of the Lower Mainland for 2002 (\$15,000 through the Mapping & Mobilizing Program) will ensure the continuity of the Poverty Response Committee and the task forces.

2.2.1 The Housing Task Force Report

The Housing Task Force was set up by the Richmond Poverty Response Committee as one of four committees to address key areas identified in the Poverty Report Card (November 2000). The Housing Task Force met six times from August 9, 2001 to November 22, 2001.

Building from a membership that covered a cross-section of community groups and affordable housing sectors, we invited representatives of key components involved in the implementation of affordable housing to supplement our knowledge of the issue.

Rob Innes from the City of Richmond Policy Planning department was our first guest speaker. He provided a brief outline of the affordable housing stock within Richmond, the procedures for developing new affordable housing, and clarified the City's existing Affordable Housing Policy.

Michelle Neilly from B.C. Housing was our second guest. She outlined the structure of B.C. Housing. A key part of her lecture dealt with the expansion of the B.C. Housing Registry to include complexes not financed or managed by B.C. Housing.

Our third guest was Linda Thomas, Director of Housing Services for the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board. She outlined the role that the Health Board plays in providing housing. A key part of the discussion was the move toward supportive housing that allowed people to keep their home in the community longer. The guest speakers provided the task force members with valuable information, which assisted them to develop some fundamental principles about housing.

The Housing Task Force members agree that affordable housing is not a charitable gift. A vibrant community needs access to the rich human resources available across the spectrum of income and physical capabilities. In the new global environment, no community can succeed while shutting out any group from participating. Therefore, affordable, accessible housing is a necessary requirement of any growth-oriented city. Richmond has an award winning track record for municipal management, but to achieve any long-term goals it needs to ensure that it is able to maximize its human resources. This can only be done if accommodation is available for all sectors of society, and this can only be accomplished with a committed effort to ensure that there is enough affordable accommodation available to meet the needs of the community. We recognize that the City does have an Affordable Housing Policy, Strategy, and Reserve Fund, however we would like to recommend the following steps to strengthen the City's initiatives in this area.

Recommendations

A City Housing Registry

The Housing Task Force is looking at impediments to the creation of affordable housing, with the intention of creating a positive climate for affordable housing. Our first goal is to ensure the maintenance and maximization of current housing stocks. While we are intrigued by the BC Housing Affordable Housing Registry, we also felt there was a place for a Richmond registry that provided a venue for all types of housing to advertise their availability. This new registry would provide more information than the existing City brochure entitled "Housing and Care: A directory of Assisted Housing Facilities in Richmond", which does not list current vacancies nor any market-based options.

Therefore, it is recommended that:

- i. 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.**
- ii. 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.**

The Housing Standards Maintenance

While maximizing the usage of current affordable housing units would be a low cost way of increasing the provision of affordable housing, steps are needed to ensure that current stock is maintained at a satisfactory level. Therefore, the Housing Task Force recommends:

that, the City of Richmond 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. These 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 standard.

Affordable Housing

Three elements have been identified as necessary for the creation of affordable housing: Capital, usually with some portion coming from a government source; a favorable regulatory environment that eliminates hurdles instead of creating them; and a political commitment by individual politicians. Three steps are recommended by the task force to achieve this goal:

1. Funding

Through these presentations and member discussions, it became clear that the key resource necessary for the building of new affordable housing is money. Unfortunately, fiscal constraints at all levels of government have made access to government financing difficult. **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.**

2. Task Force

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.

3. Reporting

The City of Richmond report annually on their progress in providing affordable housing. Specific reference should be made to two areas:

- i. **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 rates and the level of accessible housing should be also are tracked.**
- ii. **In instances where zoning changes increase property value (often called a density bonus – which enables the municipality to allow developers to build to a higher floor area ratio in exchange for affordable housing units), 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 the 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 by the City 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 (e.g. parkland or community facilities).

Definitions

To track progress we need to agree on the measurements. We support the City’s existing definition of affordable housing and feel that a definition of accessible housing is also needed.

It is recommended that:

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.

2.2.2 The Advocacy Task Force Report

The Advocacy Task Force has met on five occasions for the purpose of:

- Determining what type of advocacy services are 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.

The Advocacy Task Force has identified the resources, which are currently available to Richmond residents, again however, 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:

Resource	Details
Law Students Legal Advice Program	Takes place every Wednesday from 7-9pm. Law students will give legal advice and will appear in some courts and tribunals. Telephone 604-822-5791. Financial need is a requirement for assistance.
Salvation Army Pro Bono Lawyer Consultation Program	Located at 8280 Gilbert Road in Richmond. Appointments can be made with participating lawyers who will provide summary advice but will not represent the party. Telephone 604-277-2424. Financial need is a requirement for assistance (the party must not qualify for legal aid.)
C.B.A. Lawyer	Referral made to a lawyer in Richmond who practices in the relevant area. Cost is

Resource	Details
Referral Service	\$10.00 for 1/2 hour meeting. Any further work on the matter is done at the lawyer's regular billing rate. Telephone 604-687-3221.
Law Line	Basic legal information provided over the telephone by law librarians. No legal advice given. Telephone 604-601-6100.
Dial-a-Law	Pre-recorded legal information on various topics provided by the B.C. branch of the Canadian Bar Association. Telephone 604-687-4680.
The Legal Services Society of BC	Provides legal advice and client representation for poverty law issues providing the clients meet the Society's financial eligibility and other criteria. The Legal Services Society office however is located in Vancouver at Robson and Seymour. Client can apply for legal assistance at the Area Director's office, located on Anderson Road in Richmond. However, if they are found eligible they are required to either drive downtown and incur a parking expense or pay a two zone bus fare to meet with and receive the services of Legal Services staff.

Looking forward to working together in the year 2002.

The Advocacy Task Force has 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 will be 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)
- To understand how advocacy is currently being provided to Richmond residents
- To understand the most effective way to deliver advocacy services in Richmond

Recommendations and Ideas for further consideration

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 individuals, 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 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. 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 barriers 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.**

2.2.3 The Access to Recreation Task Force Report

In response to the Poverty Report Card prepared in November 2000 for the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council, recreation was identified as an area that should be investigated further to see how a lack of access affects people living in poverty. "It is widely accepted that participation in recreational activities enables children to achieve better physical and emotional health, develop psychosocial skills, and improve their self esteem" (Canadian Council on Social Development). Children who participate in organized activities outside of school such as sports, music, the arts, or clubs tend to have higher self esteem, interact better with friends and perform somewhat better in school according to new data from the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth (NLSCY) (Stats Canada).

Participation Varies by Income

Participation in physical activity varies according to income. Young people in lower income households are less likely to be physically active than their upper-income peers, and this

difference seems to be increasing over time. According to the National Population Health Survey, there were greater differences in participation rates for sports activities – such as home exercises and winter or summer sports – between youth in lower and higher-income households in 1998 than there were in 1996. For example, young people in the middle and upper income groups increased their participation in activities like exercise classes, aerobics, or weight training between 1996 and 1998. But the rates went down among lower income youth. Between 1996 and 1998, the gap in participation rates between youth in the lowest and highest income households increased from 2.5% to 19.6%.

Establishing a Committee

On August 15, 2001, the Access to Recreation task force met for the first time with the purpose of:

- Bringing together community members interested in discussing recreation opportunities in Richmond
- Identifying ways to address issues around access to recreation for people living in poverty.
- Make a series of recommendations to Richmond City Council about how our community as a whole could help people living in poverty to increase their participation or become involved in recreation.

It is important to note that recreation services are much larger than opportunities available in community centres, arenas, pools and the arts and cultural centre.

Our initial meeting generated a small amount of interest and through a series of regular meetings, the committee has changed and grown and has had representation from a number of organizations in the community. To date those involved in the committee have included:

City of Richmond, Special Needs staff and Parks Recreation and Culture staff
Richmond Youth Service Agency
SUCCESS
Richmond Health Services
Community members
Thompson/ West Richmond Community Association – staff member
Richmond School Board
City Centre Community Association board member
Richmond Sports Council

As mentioned earlier, it is important that all segments of our community are involved in this process to make recreation more accessible to people living in poverty. It will be through a collective approach that we are successful in establishing some desired outcomes, planning some objectives and initiating community action plans.

Ideas for Further Consideration

Over the series of meetings, the committee has discussed a number of different topics. A brief summary of the discussion in these areas has been included for your information. These topics certainly need exploring in more detail and in most cases, there needs to be more representation at the table from different parties. Though we have a diverse group represented on the committees and many ideas are generated that may help address some of the issues, many of these topics will require involvement from key agencies in the community. A clear desired outcome needs to be established that can be worked towards by the community as a whole.

The Benefits of Recreation

- There is a need to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity and participation in recreational opportunities. The City's Recreation and Cultural Services department is working on this area.

The Recreation Fee Subsidy Program

- This program is currently being investigated by the City's Recreation and Cultural Services staff and best practice research being done with other cities programs.
- Revising aspects of the program may create more opportunities.

Minor Sports registration fees

- There is a need to raise public awareness of available subsidies (e.g. Kidsport, minor sports groups, and service clubs) for most minor sports in Richmond.
- Should minor sports develop additional policies regarding subsidized opportunities?

Minor sports equipment costs

- Currently there is an initiative being developed by Richmond Sports Council to provide an equipment storage locker at a set location. Community members would donate used equipment that could then be used by families who cannot afford to purchase new equipment.

Kidsport funding / sponsorship opportunities

- Information on access to Kidsport (the charitable arm of Sport BC) funding needs to be made available to minor sports groups and the public.
- Is there a need to establish a Richmond based Kidsport fund?
- Are there opportunities for involvement of corporation sponsorship in community opportunities?

Child care issues

- A number of issues relating to babysitting were discussed including availability, timing, and cost.
- Opportunities in city facilities were linked to fitness classes and were only available in the morning during the week (with a couple of exceptions).
- Cost was approx. \$3 per session plus \$1 for siblings. These costs in addition to the cost of an activity at the facility made accessing regular opportunities a financial burden and out of reach for many citizens.
- There are no childcare/babysitting facilities at either of the aquatic centres.
- Are there opportunities to explore volunteer babysitting opportunities to offer free access?
- Could Babysitting Basics students and CAPP hours students be involved in a program?
- Would a babysitting co-op be a model that could be implemented in facilities?

Community facilities and equipment

- There is a need to ensure that facility space is well utilized within the community including the use of schools, community centres, parks, and common areas /recreation rooms in housing complexes.
- Lack of adequate transportation alternatives is often an issue for people living in poverty.

- Participation may be increased through concerted outreach by City staff and community organizations.
- Community equipment could be made available in city facilities for the public to use on a loan basis. Outdoor balls, tennis racquets etc. that are available for use in parks and playgrounds offer a no-cost alternative to the public.

Family programming opportunities

- Explore the opportunities to increase the number of opportunities for families to recreate together in the community as well as opportunities for more parent/child activities.
- Can more programs be available at the same time for siblings to attend?

Marketing and public awareness of opportunities

- There needs to be more awareness available in the community regarding the opportunities available to them.
- City and organizations need to increase information sharing so that there is more access to information at different sources. A network should be created that ensures current information is shared.
- ROAR – Richmond Opportunities for Affordable Recreation, an information brochure, is an initiative of the City’s Recreation and Cultural Services Dept. and should help to provide seasonal information on low cost/no cost opportunities available throughout the City parks and facilities.

Youth / seniors

- Need to improve access to recreation information for these age groups particularly in the area of free and low cost opportunities.
- Can there be different opportunities for teens and seniors to access funding through the fee subsidy program? (This will be addressed in the current review of the program by city staff.)

Recommendations

The discussions that we have had to date have covered a number of different areas and have included some suggestions on ways that access to recreation can be improved for the community. At this point, our committee does not have a series of recommendations to put forth. We do plan to continue meeting and discussing these issues more and then developing recommendations with clear objectives in mind.

Currently we would like to suggest that Council endorse the idea of the community 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.)

2.2.4 The Families Task Force Report

The Families Task Force was formed to focus on poverty issues related to families. It is a fledgling group, which has met four times between October 4, 2001 and December 11, 2001. To date, attendance has fluctuated from meeting to meeting, but ongoing members include the following individuals and organizations:

- Child Care Development Board
- A family therapist

- Touchstone Family Services
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- An elementary school vice principal
- The office of M.P. Joe Peschisolido

Members of the task force recognize that Richmond is generally perceived as an affluent community. Unfortunately, this is not the case for a significant proportion of the community's population. The Richmond Poverty Report Card indicates that in 1996, 22.9% of all families in the community had incomes below the Low Income Cut-off. Nevertheless, poverty remains hidden in Richmond and the needs of those living in poverty can easily be overlooked. Affordability and availability of daily requirements such as housing and services in Richmond is crucial for these families.

Members of the Families Task Force are also concerned that poverty levels may be on the increase in Richmond due to the current economic situation and proposed changes in provincial government programs. Aside from the province-wide situation, people employed in the airline industry and the high-tech field may be especially affected in Richmond.

One of the unfortunate results of economic insecurity is a higher rate of transience. People move to places where they perceive there may be better opportunities. What they may lose in the process is their personal connection to community supports.

As stated above, the Families Task Force is a fledgling group and while the recommendations presented here are important, they are not comprehensive. Additional topics related to poverty and families, which will be discussed in 2002 include: people with disabilities, new immigrants, language, and culture. Members of the task force look forward to ongoing meetings and to monitoring the rapidly changing situation for families living in poverty in Richmond and to making suggestions for how to address these emerging issues.

Recommendations

From these discussions, members of the group developed the following recommendations for helping to alleviate the effects of poverty on families living in Richmond:

Co-ordination of Services

Social services for families living in poverty are not currently co-ordinated in Richmond. In addition, youth at risk have difficulty overcoming multiple barriers to setting and achieving goals. These barriers include eligibility limits to programs, the lack of guidance, and the lack of self-esteem. To address both of these issues it would be helpful to have a "one stop shop" for people who need guidance, counseling, or information.

It is recommended 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. This would include a staffed facility with a telephone service, as well as a web site. People seeking help could have one on one discussions with appropriate service providers or volunteers. Such a centre would cut down on the frustration people are experiencing when trying to make positive changes in their lives.

The School Board's Role

Schools are a community resource not just an educational institution and they play a key role in connecting with families living in poverty. Schools can support families in poverty in many

different ways including raising awareness of poverty issues in the schools, and promoting sensitivity in the manner in which poverty is addressed.

It is recommended that a breakfast program in all Richmond schools be established. It should be universal and incorporated into a program, such as a morning play group, so that “poor kids” do not get isolated. Such a program may have to rely on external financial assistance (e.g. business sector). It could potentially be part of a student leadership program, which would incorporate student participation in the planning and implementation of the breakfast program.

Shelters

There is a great need for shelters for women and children in Richmond. Richmond needs more emergency services for youth and families (especially mothers) including shelters and transition services. Existing facilities always seem to be full and there are no youth shelters in Richmond. Additional shelters are also especially needed for young men in crisis. **It is recommended that new shelters be developed in Richmond to serve community members in need.**

East Richmond Family Place

As indicated in the Richmond Poverty Report Card, isolation is a major issue for families living in poverty. While the existing Family Place in Richmond serves many families in need, it is difficult for families in East Richmond to access these services if they must rely on public transportation.

There is a real need for a “Family Place” facility in East Richmond. One of the key services of such a facility would be to provide school preparation for young children and their parents, especially for the multicultural community. **It is recommended that funding for family services in East Richmond be maintained and that additional services be added.**

Childcare

Lack of access to childcare is a barrier for parents (usually women) to going back to work. In addition, anyone with children who takes shift work or evening employment will face even more difficulties, as there is little childcare available outside of traditional working hours.

Proposed changes to welfare rates for single mothers with children over one year will have a negative impact on families in Richmond, if these changes occur without improved access to childcare.

The task force would like to recognize that the City has taken some proactive steps in this area by provided funding to do a needs assessment for childcare in Richmond. This work will be guided by the Child Care Development Board. In addition, the City has also shown its commitment to adequate childcare by developing a childcare policy. **It is recommended that the City of Richmond encourage the provincial government to maintain support for childcare in BC.**

Employment Skills

The Families task force would like to encourage the development of more support for people to gain employment/entrepreneurial skills that are suited to the Richmond community. This would make it more likely that people who live in Richmond might also find employment in the community.

2.2.5 Christmas Hamper/Donation Programs

On August 14, 2001, the Richmond Poverty Response Committee hosted a community discussion about the Christmas hamper/donation program in Richmond. The Christmas hamper/donation program primarily provides food vouchers to needy families in the community. Some organizations also provide Christmas gifts for children. Representatives from several Richmond organizations attended the meeting and discussed how Christmas charitable giving is currently occurring 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.

Ideas for Further Consideration

The Poverty Response Committee and representatives from Christmas hamper/donation programs discussed the following points:

- Isolated families living in poverty need to be linked to a common point of entry, such as a community health nurse, City Hall department, or a community organization such as Volunteer Richmond to receive Christmas donations.
- To maximize the distribution of funds, there should be as few points of entry for Christmas donations as possible.
- Families are poor 365 days year; there should more of an effort to address their needs year round not just at Christmastime.
- An advisory committee for Christmas donations in Richmond should be established. The Committee would consist of representation from the organizations involved in Christmas hamper/donation programs.
- This committee could develop an education program for donors – so giving is done in a respectful and non-stigmatizing manner and an advertising campaign for donations (an example of a potential message - “Donate your tax cuts back to the charity of your choice.”)
- The term “sponsored family” should be used in place of “adopted family” for Christmas donations (adoption is for a lifetime).
- The City should be encouraged to contribute to the Christmas Fund.

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee recommends that:

- **The City support the collaboration of Christmas hamper/donation programs in Richmond through ongoing discussions co-ordinated by the Poverty Response Committee.**

3.0 NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 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.

While poverty is a national issue, it does look somewhat different in each community. One of the key objectives of the Poverty Response Committee is to develop a clearer picture of the key issues connected to poverty in the community. As a result additional task forces may be created, or other initiatives may be undertaken.

3.2 A Summary of Recommendations

The Poverty Response Committee recommends that:

Housing

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

Advocacy

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

Access to Recreation

11. 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 (through the Casino fund or the City Grants Program).

Families

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

Christmas Hamper/Donation Programs

18. The City support the collaboration of Christmas hamper/donation programs in Richmond through ongoing discussions co-ordinated by the Poverty Response Committee.