

MINUTES  
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON  
THURSDAY 8 JULY 1999  
CHAMPLAIN ROOM  
1:30 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Munter

Members: D. Beamish, C. Doucet, D. Holmes, H. Kreling, A. Loney, M. McGoldrick-Larsen

Regrets: W. Byrne, L. Davis

INQUIRIES

VACANCIES IN SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING UNITS

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen raised the following Inquiry:

**Would staff report back on the number of vacancies in seniors' housing units, whether these are all subsidized units; what was the situation in the past; how long is it taking for these units to be filled.**

Councillor D. Holmes also requested information on why the units are empty, how many evictions have there been because of policy changes, the number of illegal activities that go on in these buildings (drug abuse, prostitution, etc.) and the availability of support services to residents.

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- Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee.
2. Items requiring Council approval will be presented on 14 July 1999 in Community Services Report No. 34.

## PRESENTATION

1. “1-2-3 READ WITH ME/LIS AVEC MOI” PROJECT-FORUM OF OTTAWA-CARLETON PUBLIC LIBRARIES  
-Coordinator, Community Services Committee report dated 24 Jun 99

The Committee heard from Ms. Barbara Herd, Chair, “Baby Kits” Committee and Ms. Vera Yuzyk, Development Officer, Ottawa Public Library. Ms. Herd provided details about a pilot infant literacy program called 1,2,3 Read With Me/1,2,3 Lis avec moi. The goal of the program is to educate the parents/caregivers of 10,000 babies born in Ottawa-Carleton during the Millennium Year about the importance of early reading, starting at birth. Ms. Herd said this is a preventative program that will contribute to a reduction in illiteracy, to better educated parents and to less dependence on social assistance in later years.

Ms. Yuzyk said the project will need four (4) key partners, and the Region is being asked to contribute \$17,274 as its share. The federal government has been asked to contribute \$17,275 and both the Province of Ontario and the Ottawa Citizen Literacy Foundation will be approached later in the year. Ms. Yuzyk listed a number of contributing agencies including the United Way/Centraide Ottawa-Carleton, the Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario and the Regional Health Department who will do some follow-up through the *Healthy Babies, Healthy Children* program. She made reference to a Health Canada document entitled “How Does Literacy Affect the Health of Canadians?” calling it an excellent paper that touches on some of the mechanisms by which literacy affects health and suggests ways in which the health field can respond.

Mr. Nicholas Patterson, Economist, posited that the best thing libraries can do for literacy is to remain open more often. He pointed out the library has the same budget it had eight years ago but it is open less often and he suggested it drop new projects and have more frequent hours of operation. Mr. Patterson went on to say that Canada has the worst public education system in the western world, notwithstanding the fact it spends more per student to get this result. Only 4% of the education system in Canada is private, a percentage that is vastly inferior to that in the United States. In recent mandatory literacy tests, 40% of the students at one of the largest public colleges in Canada could hardly read and write. Mr. Patterson suggested the libraries not worry about infant literacy and that governments concentrate on improving the education system.

Responding to a question from Chair A. Munter, the Social Services Commissioner, D. Stewart, confirmed that, as of 1 August 99, there will be sufficient savings in the National Child Benefit Program to cover the amount of funding requested by the Forum of Public Libraries of Ottawa-Carleton.

Councillor D. Holmes asked whether organizers could guarantee that clients of the Social Services Department will have access to the program and that follow-up will occur. Ms.

Herd said the libraries will be working with other community partners to ensure follow-up is done. Ms. Yuzyk added that partners agencies are working with people at-risk and the goal is to develop these partnerships more extensively.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen put forward the view a project such as this would more properly be funded by publishers. She wondered whether it wouldn't make more sense to begin this initiative when a child is registered to start school and also, how many parents would see the value of it beginning at birth. Ms. Herd pointed out that the value of speaking and reading to babies from day-one has been documented and it could be too late to wait for a child to be registered for nursery school before beginning the process.

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen echoed earlier statements about libraries being challenged to remain open, and she asked where the funds needed to ensure staff follow-up would be found. Both Ms. Herd and Ms. Yuzyk reiterated that the libraries are committed to making the program work, and will look to their community partners to ensure the necessary follow-up is done. In response to a further question from the Councillor, Commissioner Stewart indicated that approximately 25% of the 10,000 children expected to be born in Year 2000 will be born to parents living below the poverty line.

Chair Munter presented a Motion from Councillor Holmes, asking that the requested funding be provided, subject to a number of caveats.

Councillor A. Loney said the program has the potential to improve learning and to stimulate life-long study in participants. He expressed his support for funding on a one-time only basis, positing that funds should come from the lower tier municipalities, who are responsible for library services. Councillor Loney also presented the following Motion for consideration:

**WHEREAS the request for regional funding from the Chief Librarians of Ottawa-Carleton is further evidence of the region-wide nature of public library services;**

**RESOLVED that the Committee and Council agree to accept the transfer of all public library services along with the attendant tax points.**

Chair Munter ruled the Motion Out-of-Order.

Councillor C. Doucet alluded to an earlier comment about publishers supporting the program and he posited publishers in Canada would be unable to fund these kinds of programs. He called this a very good project which should be supported by the local municipalities. He pointed out that the Region is regularly called upon to step in to cover costs it is not required to cover and a way must be found to get "out of this box". Councillor Doucet said he also agreed with the approach suggested by Councillor Loney.

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen said she knew the value of libraries to communities, however she is having difficulty supporting this program. She spoke about the fact that 25% of children will be born to parents living below the poverty line, and she expressed the view that funding this project may not represent the best value for the Region. The Councillor made reference to the fact the libraries will be looking to their community partners to do the necessary follow-up, and she wondered whether this means these agencies will in turn be asking the Region for additional funding to meet their obligations. Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen emphasized the need for the Region to stick to its mandated responsibilities.

Councillor Holmes said the Region's mandate is its clients and they need to be able to access libraries. She expressed uncertainty about what will happen in the event provincial and federal funding is not approved. She wanted to ensure clients of the Social Services Department get access, and, for this reason, she asked that the libraries present a progress report to Committee half-way through the project.

Chair Munter expressed the hope there would be continued advocacy for more money for libraries so they can continue to be available to everyone. He pointed out the Region is being asked to fund 25% of a project that tries to link parents and their children to a public resource and, as such, it is a valuable program.

The Committee then considered the following Motion:

**That funding in the amount of \$17,274 be approved for the "1,2,3 Read With Me/ 1,2,3 Lis avec moi" Project (to come from the savings from the National Child Benefit Program), subject to:**

- a) the libraries working closely with the Health and Social Services Departments to ensure that outreach occurs to ensure the participation of low income parents and that the library report back to the Committee after the distribution of the first 4,000 kits on their success in reaching these families.**
- b) the Region being clearly identified as a co-sponsor on all materials; and,**
- c) the Finance Department provide its comments on this matter when it rises to Council.**

CARRIED, as amended

REGULAR ITEMS

SOCIAL SERVICES

2. TASK FORCE ON POVERTY REPORT

- Social Services Commissioner's report and Executive Summary dated 24 Jun99
- Report, "People First: Creating Hope Through Change", July 1999, issued separately

The Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Poverty, Mr. Cliff Gazee and Ms. Jocelyne St Jean, presented their Interim Report, dated July 1999. The report makes recommendations for implementation in the following topic areas: Employment/Income Security, Education, Child Care and Transportation and these were outlined by Mr. Gazee and Ms. St Jean.

Mr. Gazee acknowledged the contributions of the Committee and Council, the Organizing Committee of The People's Hearings/Les gens d'abord, community developers and others who participated in the work of the Task Force. Ms. St Jean called the Task Force an exciting process that united people living in poverty with those who are working to develop policies to assist them. Mr. Gazee noted that the recommendations presented have no financial implications and that a final report will be presented in December 1999.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, thanked all the participants, noting the Task Force was an attempt to involve those in the community and something that has given hope to many persons living in poverty. In reply to a question from Councillor D. Holmes, Mr. Gazee confirmed the final report will also contain recommendations for consideration.

Committee discussion focused on the cost implications associated with the Task Force's interim recommendations. The Social Services Commissioner, Mr. D. Stewart, indicated one reason the report is before Committee is for staff to receive direction. He pointed out that addressing some of the concerns expressed has begun through other forums such as the Community Action Plan on Homelessness and the Regional Chair's Task Force on Employment.

The Committee heard from Nicholas Patterson, an Economist, who indicated there is an abundance of housing and many rooming houses available to persons on low incomes. In addition, there already exists an extensive network providing broad access to computers, assistance with job searches, preparation of résumés and similar activities. Mr. Patterson posited the focus should be on the atrocious state of affordable housing which is under-financed. He stated that the housing stock requires \$5 to 10 million in capital improvements and approximately \$1 million to assist with operating costs. He said that many persons living in shelters are victims of inadequate supervision caused by funding cuts and the attendant abuses and that he was prepared to provide additional details in support of this contention.

Ms. Connie Woloschuk, speaking in her capacity as Co-Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness, spoke in support of the Task Force's interim report. She noted she had been pleased to see the wide range of recommendations contained therein and she indicated she intends to be actively involved in their implementation, under regional staff's coordination. Ms. Woloschuk said she was aware of the stresses and strains of poverty, and she had appreciated participating in the work of such a wide, knowledgeable group of

individuals. She added that a report such as this one, coming from sometime clients of social agencies, illustrates they are fully contributing members of society.

Councillor D. Holmes presented a Motion calling for work to begin on cost implications related to the Task Force recommendations and for reports to be brought back to the respective Standing Committee(s) responsible for implementation. She pointed out that staff are already at work in the area of housing, and other regional departments will need to become involved in measure to bring about the implementation of those under their respective jurisdictions.

Councillor A. Loney, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transit Commission, indicated that problems related to single bus ticket sales may be addressed by using vending machines, and the Transit Services Committee will be looking into this matter. Councillor Loney pointed out his overall concern with the report rests with the need for the Department to assess where Council will get value for investment and he cautioned against taking over the obligations of other levels of government.

Commissioner Stewart said the Department has not prioritized the recommendations, however staff can begin to do so if directed by the Committee. He pointed out that some measures depend on the cooperation of the Province, but he was not optimistic about this being forthcoming. Others are underway, and staff believe they can have an update report ready by the first Committee meeting in October.

Councillor C. Doucet said part of the Committee's process will be to determine which recommendations can and which ones cannot be implemented before the Task Force's Final Report is submitted. He posited this in itself will be a form of prioritization.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen suggested staff discuss prioritizing the recommendations with Task Force members. She said it would be important to ascertain what the primary source of funding would be and it might be easier to make decisions if this information were known. She proposed the following Motion:

**That staff review, with input from the Task Force, the recommendations in The People First report, with a list prioritizing the recommendations and that this report come back to the Community Services Committee at the first meeting in October.**

Speaking to her Motion, Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen pointed out that, in a perfect world, there would be no need to prioritize. She posited that having the community work with staff, and asking for a report back, maintains control in the Committee's hands.

Councillor D. Beamish said he would prefer more general comments on the entire group of recommendations to assist the Committee with prioritizing them. Councillor H. Kreling posited Councillor Holmes' Motion directs staff to look into this matter and the Committee will need to decide in which of the areas it wants to move forward.

Chair Munter pointed out the Committee needs to discover how to implement the recommendations that will address the problems faced by, and identified by, poor people, and not engage in more “bureaucratise”. He noted that, while some initiatives are underway, others are beyond the control of Regional Council. In areas such as child care and eligibility requirements, the Region is able to assist, but Council will need to be honest about those measures it will not be able to implement.

Councillor Beamish asked to what extent staff were involved in writing the report and how Commissioner Stewart recommends the Committee deal with the report today. Mr. Stewart indicated staff’s role was to provide expertise and to make suggestions on other initiatives for the purpose of continuity. With respect to the Motions before Committee, Mr. Stewart stated both require that staff review all the recommendations and comment on their short-term implementation, but one calls on staff to prioritize while the other calls for reports back to other Standing Committees, with the attendant loss of control by the Department. He said he would have expected the Department bring the report back to Committee with cost implications and implementation strategies.

Councillor Doucet put forward the following Motion:

- (a) That staff bring forward a report which assigns costs and available resources to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Poverty.**
- (b) That staff put together an advocacy strategy for those recommendations relating to provincial actions required**

Replying to a question from Councillor Holmes, Mr. Stewart said he saw the Department coordinating all the activities, since the lion’s share of the recommendations lies within this budget. After further discussion, both Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen and Councillor Doucet withdrew their Motions.

The Committee then considered the following:

Moved by D. Holmes

1. **That Departments submit reports with programs and strategies to enact the recommendations of the Task Force on Poverty Interim Report, including costs and financial sources, to the Community Services Committee, with coordination by the Social Services Department.**
2. **That the Social Services Department organize strategic advocacy efforts including meetings with MPs and Provincial Ministers to move forward with advocacy recommendations requiring action by the provincial government.**

CARRIED, as amended

3. **UPDATE ON SCHOOL PORTABLES**
  - Medical Officer of Health report dated 24 Jun 99
  - Response to CSC Motion 28 (98)

**That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.**

RECEIVED

4. **APPOINTMENTS: OTTAWA-CARLETON HOUSING BOARD**
  - Regional Clerk's report dated 24 Jun 99

**That the Community Services Committee select Option 1, described below, as the method to proceed with filling four current vacancies on the Ottawa-Carleton Housing (OCH) Board:**

**Option 1      Social Housing Working Group Motion to appoint four OCH tenants, nominated by the OCH Staff/Tenant Interchange.**

CARRIED, as amended

5. **REVIEW OF THE HUMAN SERVICES FUNCTIONS**
  - Chief Administrative Officer's report dated 25 Jun 99

**That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.**

RECEIVED



COUNCILLORS' ITEMS

6. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY GROUP  
- Committee Co-ordinator report dated 7 Jun 99

Councillor D. Holmes asked that the Regional Clerk report back on a policy with respect to advisory groups, in time for consideration as part of the budget discussion. The Committee then approved the recommendation contained in the staff report, as amended by the foregoing.

**That the Environmental Health Advisory Group be given the opportunity to comment on regional reports with environmental significance.**

CARRIED, as amended

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4: 00 p.m.

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CHAIR

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CO-ORDINATOR