



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 25, 2005
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Executive Director, Britannia Community Centre

SUBJECT: VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AT BRITANNIA COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTRE

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the creation of a Volunteer Coordinator at Britannia Community Services Centre, subject to classification by the General Manager of Human Resources, at an annual cost of \$54,000 (prorated at \$28,000 for 2005); funding for 2005 to be provided from the General Program Account and for 2006 to be added to Britannia's operating budget without offset.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The Executive Director, Britannia Community Centre recommends approval of the foregoing recommendation.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing recommendation.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council approval is required for the creation of regular full time and part time positions.

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council approval for the establishment of a Volunteer Coordinator position at Britannia Community Services Centre.

BACKGROUND

Volunteerism is a core value that lies at the heart of this community. Britannia Community Services Centre does more than address social needs. It is about social intervention and social investment. Our purpose is to improve the quality of life for residents in Grandview / Woodlands and Strathcona.

Britannia is committed to the development of a volunteer framework around a sense of community. We need to invest in the whole community. Each program season Britannia Centre provides over one hundred and fifty recreational programs each week. These programs rely on the 200 different volunteers to assist in our delivery of services

Britannia Community Services Centre Board of Management identifies the Volunteer Coordinator as a high priority initiative. During the 2005 budget deliberations, the Volunteer Coordinator for Britannia was identified as an initiative that could be funded from the General Program Account.

The City currently provides funding for Volunteer Coordinators at two locations, Carnegie and the Gathering Place. Britannia Community Services Centre has a high demand from its community to provide a sustainable volunteer program, and requires a Volunteer Coordinator to implement such a program.

DISCUSSION

Britannia is a gathering place of many agencies, the meeting point of the community and the melting pot of many cultures. Britannia is also the home base of an Elementary school, Secondary school, Vancouver Public Library - Britannia Branch, Hasting Adult Education Centre, Eastside Family Place, Licensed Pre-school and After-School Care, Frontier College, the Latin American Youth program, Vietnamese Seniors' outreach program, a comprehensive Family Literacy program and an extensive Parks and Recreation department. Britannia Community Services Centre provides a tremendous network of opportunities for individuals. It offers community members volunteer experiences within their own community and within walking distance of their homes. This is an important factor when transportation and finances come into play.

Britannia Community Services Centre provides over a 150 recreational programs each week. These programs are offered to people from the age of 0 to 99 years of age. Many of the volunteers we recruit serve the most vulnerable populations: children, youth and seniors. All volunteers at Britannia need to go through an extensive screening process that includes reference and criminal record checks, matching skills, knowledge and abilities with volunteer opportunities. For example: our World Soccer program requires the assistance of 100 volunteers for positions including coaches, assistant coaches, lines persons and referees. Pre-

school programs need volunteers to assist in providing quality programs to many young children who struggle with English as a second language issues. Volunteer's skills enhance programs and ensure they are fun and safe places to be. Both our seniors and youth areas rely heavily on volunteers to provide programs and services for free to one of the poorest and most vulnerable populations in this city, province and country. Britannia hosts many community special and cultural events such as Lunar New Year, Diwali, Parade of the Lost Souls, Pasta with Santa, Halloween Howl, Canada Day, etc. Volunteers are the backbone of all special events taking on the leadership and responsibility of these events with staff assistance. In each of the four program seasons Britannia needs at least 200 different volunteers to assist in its delivery of services.

There is a high degree of unemployment within the community but also great potential to develop and build on social capital. Britannia has a very high E.S.L. population. Many of the new immigrants and seniors are socially isolated and Britannia plays a key role in connecting them with their community. Britannia Community Centre has also been a key player in the development of a Children's Literacy Program which has a large volunteer base.

The level of professional support, guidance and supervision provided by a Volunteer Coordinator will help to manage and to minimise risk by ensuring that due diligence is carried out, maintained, and properly qualified volunteers are placed in appropriate settings and activities.

By empowering community members to take an active leadership role in the health and well being of their community, the volunteer coordinator will:

- develop and implement a comprehensive proactive volunteer program for Britannia Community Service Centre and satellite programs that focus on leadership opportunities and skill development,
- provide volunteer job opportunities by recruiting, training, interviewing, scheduling, and evaluating volunteers,
- provide positive, quality volunteer opportunities to community members.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The establishment of a regular full time volunteer position (pay grade 19) at an estimated annual cost of \$54,000 (including fringe benefits) prorated for 2005 at \$28,000, as identified in the Interim Budget Report. Funding for 2005, is to be provided from the General Program Account and for 2006 full year funding is to be added to Britannia's Operating Budget without offset.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

This is the creation of 1 regular full-time position at pay- grade 19, subject to classification review by General Manager of Human Resources.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our volunteer program provides an opportunity for us to invest in human capital: skills, time, energy, interest and commitment. It provides social connection that enables community members to act together more effectively and to pursue shared objectives. These networks and bonds of trust have been found to increase a society's productive potential (Putman 1993). In short, Social Capital is good for business. By creating this position the City will be strengthening its social programs by meeting basic needs, removing barriers and building skills.

New immigrants see volunteering at Britannia as the first step to gaining work experience in hopes of getting paid employment in Canada. People come to us seeking volunteer opportunities as a stepping stone to return to work. People not in the workforce, single parents, people with disabilities, people who volunteer in exchange for services all want to contribute in a meaningful way to their community. These people need someone to help them regain confidence and self-esteem while building skills, knowledge and abilities that make them feel confident about returning to the workforce or just volunteering within their community.

Youth use volunteer opportunities for work experience on their resumes. College and university students use Britannia as a fieldwork site. The schools use the Centre for work experience and shadowing opportunities. For older adults, who have recently retired, it is the need to continue working (volunteering) to feel needed, a sense of belonging; they volunteer as their way to keep active in their community. Each comes with their story; each comes with their need; each wants Britannia to address their volunteer need. We need a dedicated staff person to work and interact with these volunteers in a meaningful way and not as an added task off the side of someone's desk. Research supports that if youth who are at risk are connected and engaged in the community their level of risk is reduced.

CONCLUSION

An integrated approach of service delivery provides a proactive allocation of resources to enhance the growth and development of members of the community who wish to take an active positive leadership role within their own community. The Volunteer Coordinator through the recruitment of volunteers will support and link a network of agencies and their expertise that focus on community development. People who volunteer enrich their own lives, develop skills, gain peer socialization skills and that their volunteering helps develop a healthier life style for the volunteer. Britannia's program goals and objectives is to promote community capacity building; providing opportunities for community members to be actively involved in their community and to promote leadership by the citizens.

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