

NO: **F010**

COUNCIL DATE: **January 23, 2012**

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## FINANCE COMMITTEE

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **January 20, 2012**

FROM: **City Manager**

FILE:

SUBJECT: **Surrey Child Advocacy Centre (Sophie's Place)**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager recommends that the Finance Committee recommend that Council:

1. receive this report as information;
2. approve an allocation of \$25,800 to Sophie's Place (the Child Advocacy Centre) from the Council Initiative Fund for the purposes outlined in this report; and
3. authorize staff to work with partner agencies in developing a sustainable operating model for Sophie's Place and to provide a further report to Council complete with recommendations at the conclusion of that work.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the Child Advocacy Centre (CAC) known as "Sophie's Place" and seek Council approval for funding for capital improvements and lease payments for six months as the City's contribution of seed funding for this initiative.

## BACKGROUND

In Canada in 2008, there were 85,440 cases of child abuse that were substantiated and another 17,918 cases that were suspected but not substantiated. These figures reflect only the cases that are reported and investigated through Canadian Child Welfare services. In Metro Vancouver, there are over 1,000 reported cases of child sexual or physical abuse each year.

In July 2011, the RCMP prepared a Child Advocacy Centre Business Case that concluded the "child-centered model" of responding to the needs of victims of child abuse is superior to the current model. The business case identified the Zebra Centre, located in Edmonton, as a successful "Child Advocacy Centre" model that could serve the Metro Vancouver region.

## Overview of Sophie's Place

Sophie's Place is located on the second floor of the Child Development Centre at 9460 – 140 Street and is scheduled to open on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. Sophie's Place will be seamless, coordinated and collaborative approach to addressing the needs of children who are victims of abuse or children who have witnessed a crime.

Sophie's Place is focused on minimizing system-induced trauma for such children by providing a child-friendly setting while addressing their circumstances and needs. Professional services offered by a Child Advocacy Centre (CAC) include, among other things, coordinated interviews by law enforcement and Crown Counsel, examination of the child by a pediatrician or child psychologist and trauma counseling.

The goal of the CAC is to minimize the number of interviews and questions directed at the child thereby minimize any additional system-induced trauma. Often children are traumatized as they are required to repeat their story many times, in many settings, to many different people. The CAC interview approach also provides stronger evidence, which can enhance the potential for charges to be laid and for guilty pleas, convictions and appropriate sentences. Investigations into child abuse cases in a community with a CAC are 45 percent less expensive than a community without a CAC.

A CAC brings together a multi-disciplinary team in a child-focused, safe and nurturing environment. It is expected that the CAC will include:

1. RCMP;
2. Crown Counsel;
3. Specialized medical support and treatment;
4. Specialized mental health services;
5. The Ministry of Children and Family Development; and
6. Victim Services.

The City is working with the Surrey RCMP, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Centre for Child Development of the Lower Mainland and the Child Development Foundation of British Columbia to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize a partnership for the operation of Sophie's Place. Surrey RCMP has committed a small team that can begin working out of the Sophie's Place facility shortly.

City staff and representatives of the Child Development Centre are evaluating several management models for the CAC with a view to establishing a sustainable model for the Centre in 2012. It is expected that Sophie's Place will have a multi-disciplinary advisory board comprised of senior staff from the respective partners. In the interim Sophie's Place will be managed by the CEO of the Child Development Centre.

The City's commitment to provide some seed funding for Sophie's Place will help to leverage funding and other contributions from other agencies that are important to the success of the CAC. It is expected that Sophie's Place will have 1 to 3 staff positions, funded initially through grants, to coordinate the activities of the Centre. In addition to the RCMP, it is expected that organizations such as the Ministry of Children and Family Development could locate relevant staff at the Centre.

## **Funding Priorities**

The first priority is to fully fit out, including the provision of proper security, for Sophie's Place. The next priority is to secure the lease payments for the space which Sophie's Place occupies in the Child Development Centre. With these two priorities satisfied Sophie's Place will be able to open with the RCMP establishing an initial presence at the Centre and with the RCMP and others commencing the process of delivering service from the Centre.

### ***Fit Out:***

The fit out of (i.e., tenant improvements for) Sophie's Place in the Child Development Centre has resulted in direct expenditures of approximately \$29,000 including structural, electrical, security, finishes and furnishings. It is noted that a variety of individuals and groups (e.g., Firefighters Charitable Society, the business community, City staff, the Child Development Centre, etc.) have made cash or in-kind donations in support of preparing Sophie's Place for occupancy with a total value in excess of \$74,000.00, which is over and above the \$29,000 referenced above.

### ***Lease:***

A lease agreement is being drafted for Sophie's place as a tenant in the Child Development Centre. The lease, which is considered to be favourable from a financial perspective calls for a monthly payment of \$1,800 or the equivalent of \$10,800.00 for six months.

### ***Next Priority:***

The next priority will be to secure funding for staff for the CAC; specifically, a Director that can lead the growth and maturing of the Centre in a sustainable way.

### ***Funding:***

Some sources of funding have already been identified to support the CAC. Firstly, a portion of the proceeds from the 2012 Mayor's Gala will be allocated to Sophie's Place. Secondly, Sophie Simmons will hold one fundraising event a year with the proceeds from the event being committed to Sophie's Place.

City staff is exploring other funding opportunities, including those outlined in the following sections.

## **Funding Opportunity: Department of Justice Victims Fund – Child Advocacy Centre Initiative**

The Government of Canada has made \$2 million available per year through the Victims Fund – Child Advocacy Centre Initiative to create new CACs or to enhance existing CACs in Canada. The Child Advocacy Centre Component is part of the larger Victims Fund, which is a grants and contributions program that supports a wide range of projects and activities designed to improve the experience of victims in the criminal justice system.

Projects can receive funding of up to \$175,000 per year for two years, with an option to re-apply for funding after the end of the two-year agreement. A maximum of \$500,000 can be allocated to one project over 5 years.

Funding is available for feasibility studies, planning and development activities as well as for providing services or enhancing services to children. Funding will be considered for the following types of expenses:

- Wages and benefits
- Rental or leasing of space and equipment
- Consultant and/or contractor fees
- Reasonable operating expenses

The funding cannot be used for:

- Capital expenses (e.g. purchases of land, buildings, and vehicles)
- Retroactive funding
- On-going cost or core operational expenses (i.e. core funding)

Grants for the 2011 fiscal year 2011 have been distributed and no funding remains for CACs in BC for the current fiscal year. There is no deadline for applications for fiscal year 2012. Staff has been advised that applications should be submitted early in 2012 as there is competition for the funds from other jurisdictions and the approval process takes approximately four (4) months.

### **Funding Opportunity: Provincial Civil Forfeiture Grant**

Civil forfeiture involves the Province taking physical assets from individuals who have acquired such assets using the proceeds of unlawful activities. The Province has employed civil forfeiture as a means to deter unlawful activity since 2006. The Government can forfeit non-real estate assets valued under \$75,000 through an administrative process. All other assets can be acquired through a court process. The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General administers the program through the BC Civil Forfeiture Office (BCCFO).

The assets that are gained through this process are sold and the funds are put in reserve to support grants to local governments for programs targeted at crime reduction. Grants totaling approximately \$1.5 million have been distributed under this Program since it began in 2006. Each funding round identifies a theme. The last round of funding focused on programs and projects that were targeted at preventing sexual exploitation.

In past years, grants have typically ranged from \$25,000 to \$40,000. This year the BCCFO is considering increasing the amount of each grant that it provides.

Grants are available for crime prevention programs that include one of the following purposes:

- Compensation of eligible victims;
- Prevention of unlawful activities; and
- Remediation of the effect of unlawful activities.

Capital projects are not eligible.

The BCCFO is currently seeking approval through the Treasury Board to release additional funds and expects that grants will be available in the spring of 2012. When funds are released, an official funding announcement will be made by the Solicitor General's office.

City staff has been in discussion with staff of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Civil Forfeiture Office (CFO) with a view to better understanding how to go about applying for funding under their programs and to discuss the Sophie's Place project. Both the DOJ and CFO have indicated support for Sophie's place.

As noted in a separate Corporate report to Council, staff is currently preparing an application to the CFO for a grant for Sophie's Place and will submit such an application upon receiving notice that a new round of funding is available under the Civil Forfeiture Program.

**Next Steps:**

City staff is working with the Centre of Child Development and other partners to finalize a sustainable business plan for Sophie's place, which will be presented to Council when it is completed.

**Recommended Course of Action:**

To assist in covering the capital costs of Sophie's Place and to allow the Centre to become operational in advance of the organizational model being finalized, it is considered reasonable that the City provide some seed or interim funding to the CAC, which will act to demonstrate the City's commitment to this important initiative and should leverage funding commitments from other important partners. In this regard, it is considered reasonable that the City commit to contributing \$15,000 toward the capital improvements that have been completed and an additional \$10,800 toward covering the first six months of lease payments for the facility for a total commitment of \$25,800. This should allow enough time for a sustainable operating model for the Centre to be developed after which a further report complete with recommendations will be forwarded to Council.

**Status of the Council Initiatives Fund:**

Appendix "A" provides information on the status of the Council Initiatives Fund on an assumption that Council will adopt the recommendations of this report.

**SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Sophie's Place will support the goals and objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly, the following action items:

- Action item SC5: "Create a child and youth friendly city;" and*
- Action item SC11: "Address crime and public safety".*

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that the Finance Committee recommend that Council:

- approve an allocation of \$25,800 to Sophie's Place (the Child Advocacy Centre) from the Council Initiative Fund for the purposes outlined in this report; and
- authorize staff to work with partner agencies in developing a sustainable operating model for Sophie's Place and to provide a further report to Council complete with recommendations at the conclusion of that work.

Murray Dinwoodie,  
City Manager

MDD/mc

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### **Attachment:**

Appendix "A": Status of the Council Initiative Fund



2012 FINANCIAL PLAN  
COUNCIL INITIATIVES

Appendix A

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Description	Amount	Allocation to date	Remaining
Carried Forward from Prior Year	280,741		
<b>2012 Approved Budget</b>	<u>250,000</u>		<b>\$ 530,741</b>
Arts Umbrella Surrey (2nd year of 3-year program)	25,000		
Arts Umbrella re: Tenant Improvements	50,000		
Sophie's Place	25,800		
<b>Allocations for 2012</b>		<u>\$ 100,800</u>	<u>\$ 429,941</u>