

NO: **R142**

COUNCIL DATE: **June 25, 2012**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **June 18, 2012**

FROM: **General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture**

FILE: **1850-01**

SUBJECT: **Success By Six Program - Provincial Funding Cuts**

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department recommends that Council:

1. receive this report as information; and
2. request that the Mayor forward a letter on behalf of City Council to the Minister of Children and Family Development, with a copy to each of the Premier and the Surrey Members of the Legislative Assembly, with a request that the Province immediately restore to the 2011 levels the funding provided to the *Success by Six* Program and that a copy of this report be included with the letter.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the impact that the reduced funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the *Success by Six* Program will have on early childhood development initiatives in Surrey and to recommend that the City request that Province restore such funding to the 2011 level.

BACKGROUND

Success by Six is a community-driven United Way early childhood development initiative dedicated to providing children with a good start in life. It is supported by Provincial government funding. The Program helps to ensure that children between the ages of 0 and 6 years develop the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical skills they need to be successful as they enter school and to establish a healthy foundation for life.

Success by Six builds and enhances the community by:

- Educating the community about the importance of the early years and encouraging community leaders to become champions for young children;
- Mobilizing local resources to invest in prevention-focused early childhood programs and services; and
- Providing funding to support Early Childhood Development (ECD)-related community projects and programs, including programs in literacy, nutrition, children's play, parenting and family skills development.

The Early Childhood Development Provincial Partnership (ECDPP) is a collaboration between the United Way of BC, the Savings and Credit Unions of BC and the Government of BC, which provides leadership and funding to support *Success by Six*.

In 2011 funding from the *Success by Six* Program was allocated to several agencies and organizations in Surrey including: Options, Crescent Beach Alexandra House, Semiahmoo Family Place, Umoja, Kla-How-Eya and DiverseCity. These agencies provided a range of services including family resource programs, outreach to vulnerable families and specific cultural groups and food and nutrition and transportation supports for families with young children. These are the only programs of their kind that currently exist in Surrey.

In 2011 the Provincial government grant to *Success by Six* was \$5 million. In 2012 Provincial funding has been reduced to \$3.4 million. This has resulted in funding from *Success by Six* to Surrey-based initiatives being reduced by **\$152,025** from \$324,600 in 2011 to \$172,575 in 2012.

DISCUSSION

The United Way of the Lower Mainland is not able to make up for the loss of funding from the Provincial government. The reduction in funding for the Program will undermine important community development work that is currently underway in Surrey and will reduce the early childhood development initiatives that are currently in place in the City. It is broadly recognized that early childhood development is fundamental to a child's success in school and ultimately to successful adult life.

Community Impact

The 2012 funding cuts to *Success by Six* have resulted in the elimination of some important programs including the Parent/Child Mother Goose Program and reduced days of operation for Family Resource programs in City Centre, Cloverdale, Guildford and Newton. The days of operation of the Family Resource Programs have been reduced by a minimum of one day per week across all communities. In some Surrey neighbourhoods families only have access to these services one day per week.

Surrey continues to experience significant growth in families with young children including a significant number of immigrant and refugee families. According to the most recent Stats Canada information, Surrey is home to 34,920 children between the ages of 0 and 5 years. *Success by Six* funding in 2011 funded the majority of prevention and early intervention programs for families with young children in Surrey.

The City provides a variety of pre-school programs and the School District has created 25 "Strong Start" programs in schools across the City. A number of agencies and partners provide pre-school and day care programs. The collective efforts of these partners are significant but do not fully meet the needs for the optimal development of healthy babies and toddlers in Surrey.

In efforts to continue serving families, agencies such as Options Surrey Community Services have kept their children's' programs operational in spite of the pressure it creates on their organizational budget, which has put other important community programs in jeopardy.

As community agencies lose their ability to provide programmed support to children and families, society will see increases in family isolation, increased vulnerability rates and a decline in school readiness in pre-school children, which will have long term impacts on those children becoming successful productive adults.

Success by Six funding is an investment in the future of our Province as children are our future. The *Success by Six* program aligns well with Premier's Families First Initiative and, as such, reducing funding to this program is inconsistent with Provincial policy.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The *Success by Six* program assists in achieving the objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter; more particularly, action item SC 16: Socio-cultural Infrastructure and Services, which states "*Social infrastructure and services are the primary responsibility of the federal and provincial orders of government. The impacts of failures in the system are, however, often most evident at the local level.*"

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion it is recommended that Council request that the Mayor forward a letter on behalf of City Council to the Minister of Children and Family Development, with a copy to each of the Premier and the Surrey Members of the Legislative Assembly, with a request that the Province immediately restore to the 2011 levels the funding provided to the *Success by Six* Program and that a copy of this report be included with the letter.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager,
Parks, Recreation and Culture

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