COUNCIL REPORT

Date: May 5, 2014
From: Arleta Beckett, Manager of Community Development, Youth and Families
Subject: North Shore Children's Charter

RECOMMENDED THAT:

1. The North Shore Children's Charter be endorsed by Council as a framework for guiding decisions related to child and family friendly programming in West Vancouver; and that

2. The endorsement be communicated to members of the Early Years and Middle Years Planning Tables.

Purpose

To provide Council with information about the North Shore Children's Charter and obtain Council's support of the Charter (Appendix A).

Executive Summary

N/A

1.0 Background

1.1 Prior Resolutions

N/A

1.2 History

In May, 2011, the District received the Child Care Award of Excellence from the Ministry of Children and Family Development in recognition of the valuable contribution made by West Vancouver in shaping the growth and development of West Vancouver's children. Later that year, in October, the North Shore Congress, of which the District is a member, signed the North Shore Charter for a Child and Family Friendly Community.

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2.0 Policy

2.1 Policy

The Blueprint for Social Responsibility and Change (2008) provides a framework for a social action plan and identifies strategies to strengthen community social support systems for long term planning and sustainability in West Vancouver.


The Child Care Plan (2010) addresses both the immediate and long term child care service needs of the community.

http://westvancouver.ca/sites/default/files/2010%20CHILD_CARE_PLAN_FINAL.pdf

The North Shore Child and Family Friendly Charter (2011) commits participating organizations to work and to expand community access to high quality programs and services that are culturally appropriate, accessible, and informed by research. The North Shore Child and Family Friendly Charter recognizes that children and their families are a vital part of the community.


2.2 Bylaw

N/A

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Discussion

Considerable research has indicated that a focus on child rights benefits a community in a number of ways. Children comprise a diverse population that mirrors the diversity of society in language, culture, religion, and economic status; they are infants, young children, and adolescents. Children are often the most vulnerable population, requiring specific attention to guarantee respect for their human rights.

Children need special rights because of their unique needs: they need additional protection that adults do not require. Efforts to protect children's rights promote a sense of community, encourage respect for the environment, support formal and informal education, and help individuals find their place in society. Children growing up in communities that support child rights are more likely to:

- Be resilient, self-confident and respectful of others;
- Do better in school; and
- Know their rights and respect the rights of others.
Communities that focus on child rights, and that support the well being of children, encourage policy-makers to develop plans and policies using a child-friendly lens.

On April 7, 2014, Council received a delegation from a representative of the Early and Middle Years Planning Tables who shared information on the 2013 Human Early Learning Partnership’s Early Development Instrument results in West Vancouver, the North Shore Children’s Charter, and celebrating children’s rights to play through the Play in the Park event at John Lawson Park on May 3.

3.2 Sustainability

The Early and Middle Years Planning Tables and their subcommittees have worked to align their planning, initiatives, and activities to focus on the reduction of child vulnerability, particularly in the areas of social and emotional development.

Three strategies have been selected that research indicates will have the greatest cost-effective impact on the reduction of child vulnerability on the North Shore:

- Initiating family hubs in isolated neighbourhoods and areas where child vulnerability exists;
- Supporting the Children’s Right to Play initiative;
- Endorsing the North Shore Children’s Charter; and

3.3 Consultation

The North Shore Children’s Charter has been developed through the leadership of the North Shore Early and Middle Years Planning Tables. Parents, children, agencies, organizations, and municipal staff have worked together to create a charter that has been extracted from the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child. The ten particular “Rights” that make up the North Shore Children’s Charter are written so they are understandable and relevant to children, parents, and the general North Shore community.

Up to now, over 50 organizations, including Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore Neighbourhood House, and many child care centres and family-strengthening organizations, are supporting the endorsement process by sharing and talking about how to make use of the proposed North Shore Children’s Charter with staff, board members, children, parents, and citizens.
3.4 Communications Process

If endorsed, the North Shore Children’s Charter will be shared with Parks and Community Services staff and the West Vancouver Community Centres Society, and will be posted on the municipal website. Several participating organizations in the West Vancouver Child and Family Hub participated in the development of the Charter.

4.0 Options

4.1 Council may:

- Direct staff to proceed with any or all of the recommendation in this report;
- Request further information; and/or
- Not approve the recommendations.

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Concurrence: Sue Ketler
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North Shore

Children's Charter

The right to healthy food and warm clothing
The right to make friends
The right to culture, language and beliefs
The right to protection and fair treatment
The right to an education
The right to a safe and caring home
The right to be included equally
The right to non-discrimination
The right to fresh air and clean water
The right to play

The North Shore Children's Charter is based on the 42 Articles listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They were developed through a collaborative process involving parents, children, community members and representatives from agencies and organizations providing programs and services to North Shore families.