



**Minutes of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee meeting held
Thursday September 26, 2024, CRD Boardroom, 6th floor, 625 Fisgard Street, Victoria BC**

PRESENT: Municipal Representatives: Marie-Térèse Little (Metchosin); Jeff Bateman (Sooke); Krista Loughton (Victoria); Kimberley Guiry (Langford); Marcie McLean (Highlands); Esther Paterson (Oak Bay); Sara Duncan (Sidney) (EP); Cynthia Day (Colwood) Micayla Hayes (Saanich); Mena Westhaver (Saanich) (EP)

School District Representatives: Karin Kwan (School District 61 Trustee) (EP); Teri Vanwell (School District 63 Trustee).

Capital Regional District (CRD) Representatives: Cheryl Chaytors (EP); Samantha Rappaport (EP)

Resource Agencies: Gord Magee, Mobile Youth Services Team's Constable, Victoria Police Dept.; Mia Golden, Youth Counsellor, Pacific Centre Family Services Association; Kisae Petersen, Operations Manager, Victoria Youth Empowerment Society

Guests: Damian Kowalewich, Saanich Police Department Inspector; Jamie McRae, Victoria/Esquimalt Police Department, Deputy Chief Constable

CRD Staff: Sharon Orr, (Senior Committee Clerk; CRD); Steve Carey (CRD) and Marnie Essery, (Secretary & Recorder) (EP)

Regrets: Rose Stanton (Highlands-Alternate); Bill McElroy (CRAT); Ron Mattson (View Royal); Darlene Rotchford (Esquimalt); Jim Rondeau (Central Saanich); Jack McClintock (North Saanich); Andrew Holeyton (CRD Appointee); Nicole Duncan, (School District 61 Board Chair).

EP - Electronic Participation

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 am.

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

Chair Little provided the Territorial Acknowledgement.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Little welcomed everyone in attendance.

3. Approval of the Agenda

MOVED by E. Paterson, **SECONDED** by C. Day,

That the agenda for Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee meeting of September 26, 2024 be approved as amended.

CARRIED

4. Adoption of Minutes

4.1. Adoption of the June 27, 2024 Minutes

MOVED by K. Guiry, **SECONDED** by C. Day

That the minutes of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee meeting of June 27, 2024 be adopted.

CARRIED

4.2. Receipt of the Steering Committee meeting notes of September 12, 2024

MOVED by J. Bateman, **SECONDED** by K. Guiry, That the meeting notes of the Steering Committee of September 12, 2024 be received.

CARRIED

5. Chair Remarks

It is a time to recognize foster caregivers throughout the province who provide nurturing, safety, inclusive and understanding homes for children and youth who need them. We thank foster families for their commitment. [BC Foster Parents Association – Another branch of the family tree.](#)

6. Presentations/Delegations

6.1. Resource Agencies

Resource Agencies were in attendance will be given an opportunity to ask any questions after the panel presentation.

6.2 Panel Discussion

Chair Little welcomed our guests and thanked them for being here today.

J. Bateman introduced Members of the Panel who are:

- Damian Kowalewich Saanich Police Department Inspector
- Jamie McRae Victoria/Esquimalt Police Departments Deputy Chief Constable
- Mia Golden Youth Counsellor , Pacific Centre Family Services Association
- Gord Magee Constable , Victoria P.D.

Together, there are 97 years of collective experience around the table today. The purpose of our committee is to educate and to advocate. Chair of School District 61, Nicole Duncan, has sent her regrets and best wishes.

Damian Kowalewich, Saanich Police Department Inspector

This is a timely discussion based on what is happening today in the CRD. I commend your committee for all that you do to help vulnerable youth.

There are major issues with gangs and sextortion. There is significant increase in gang activity. With the decrease in School District 61 police liaison officers there are real and perceived threats in the community.

The approach has shifted to be reactive instead of proactive. We want to continue to collaborate. Inspector Kowalewich offered to share his speaking notes (attached) and a link to the recommended study titled [Assessing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of School Liaison Officers in British Columbia: A Qualitative Study](#) (University of the Fraser Valley Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Research).

Jamie McRae, Victoria/Esquimalt Police Department's Deputy Chief Constable

The recent University of Fraser Valley study linked above has valuable information.

Our community has changed. Individuals sending nude pictures to strangers is now an everyday reality and sextortion has become a major issue impacting youth. Perpetrators are often outside of Canada.

Gang recruitment is happening at a much younger age. Children and youth are getting involved in gangs when they don't even know what is happening.

Collaboration only works when everyone is at the table. Can't stress enough the importance of multi layered approach. Building those relationships is the only way to succeed.

We need to have the police officers back in schools. Traditional stereotypes no longer apply to modern officers. We are hiring officers who are committed and connected to the community. The inclusive and diverse backgrounds and skill sets of police officers are much different than 25 years ago.

M.Y.S.T. Reps have been attending VFCYJC meetings for 16 years. Issues are taking place at schools and M.Y.S.T. acts as a quarterback. Sextortion continues to be an ongoing issue. This is more alarming with the inception of artificial intelligence. The gang issue has morphed into middle schools and even elementary schools.

To say we are busy is an understatement. Education, advocacy and building relationships is key.

Constable Gord Magee, Victoria P.D.

Concern for me about lack of school liaison officers as this is contributing to more mental health challenges for children and youth.

The rates of depression are skyrocketing. Children don't have a sense of safety at school. They are not using the washroom because they don't want to get pepper sprayed, bullied or have someone brandish a knife.

Having a school liaison officer in schools allows safety for students and youths. Giving the message that police are villains creates harm and damage in the future.

Mia Golden, Youth Counsellor, Pacific Centre Family Services Association

Can't express enough the risks that children and youth face. Example: An alarming new acronym for child predators has been coined: M.A.P. (Minor Attracted Person). This minimalizes and normalizes criminal behaviour. Gangs and sextortion don't have borders.

Years later, observers and students helped are thanking school liaison officers for making a difference in their life. These people made an impact. We need to have more police mental health counsellor teams.

Greater Victoria's [Community-Led Crisis Response Team](#) (CLCR, pronounced 'clicker') pairs mental health professionals with persons with lived experience. It is proving extremely successful. More services of this kind are needed in future.

Congratulations to M.Y.S.T. for the award recognition they received from the International Conference in July 2024 for the Frederick Milton Thrasher Award.

J. Bateman stated that the committee is audio recording the panel discussion and the committee intends to prepare a report on the panel discussion in the near future.

Closing Statements: What can VFCYJC do?

Reducing M.Y.S.T. to 2 days a week is the opposite of what we need. Continued pressure is needed to ensure stable funding and expanded teams. All panellists again expressed thanks to VFCYJC for its steady and ongoing advocacy.

7. Sub-Committee Business

7.1. Priorities and Grants

7.1.1. Human Nature Counselling Society

MOVED by M. McLean, **SECONDED** by C. Day That the Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee support the Human Nature Counselling Society's grant request for the amount of \$5,500.00 for their 2024 New Roots program.
CARRIED

7.1.2. Umbrella Society

MOVED by M. McLean, **SECONDED** by K. Loughton
That Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee support the Umbrella Society's request of \$4,746.00 to be applied to their 2024 project titled: Umbrella 101-Navigating Substance Use and Mental Health for Students
CARRIED

8. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was circulated via email to the committee.
E. Paterson will prepare the 2025 budget for next month's meeting.

9. Election of Vice Chair

9.1. AGM (January 2025); Interest in Interim Vice-Chair

Chair Little called for nominations for Vice Chair.
J. Bateman nominated K. Guiry for Vice Chair.
K. Guiry accepted the nomination.
Chair Little called for nominations a second and a third time.
Hearing no further nominations K. Guiry was named Vice Chair by acclamation.
Chair M.T. Little thanked K. Guiry for putting her name forward.

10. New Business

MOVED by K. Loughton, **SECONDED** by K. Guiry
That the VFCYJC directs the Communications subcommittee to write an op ed for the Times Colonist regarding continued and sustained funding for M.Y.S.T.
CARRIED

11. Notice of Motion

There were no notices of motion.

12. Correspondence

- 12.1.** Mobile Youth Service Team Business Case Report was circulated with the meeting mail out.
- 12.2.** The CRD Staff Report from Steve Carey was circulated with the meeting mail out.
- 12.3.** The letter from Minister Farnworth was circulated with the meeting mail out.

13. Adjournment

MOVED by C. Day, **SECONDED** by K. Loughton
That the September 26, 2024 meeting of the Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee be adjourned at 1:30 p.m.
CARRIED