



Date: July 30, 2001

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Vancouver East District Sports Project

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

In 1998, staff identified a lack of sport participation and skill development opportunities for local children and youth living in various communities within the Vancouver East District.

DISCUSSION

In most areas of the city and lower mainland there is an extensive sport delivery system of Minor Leagues and Sports Clubs based on a large volunteer structure and supported by registration fees and fundraising. A combination of factors has limited similar opportunities being available and accessible to some communities within the East District. Barriers include the cost of programmes as well as a diverse range of social issues related to high risk communities. Without the economic base to support a volunteer structure, and with an adult population challenged by survival demands and lack of resources, it is very difficult to develop a traditional youth sport participation system, yet it is young people living in these environments who can benefit most significantly from the opportunities these type of sport systems provide.

A unique partnership strategy was developed to resource and deliver a Minor League After School Sport/Recreation System for 2,000 low-income children and youth living in the Eastside and inner city of Vancouver. The objectives of the programme are to:

- build community capacity towards sustaining youth sports leagues linked to existing provincial sport programs and structures
- link youth with each other and with community resources
- provide supervised, accessible recreation activities and exposure to various sports for children aged 7 - 16
- Introduce at-risk youth aged 14 - 24 to community centers by organizing tournaments and social activities
- Develop and strengthen new collaborative relationships among the agencies and organizations and bring in other partners and sponsors to achieve program objectives.

To date, the project has completed a very successful pilot phase of the programme which involved testing a basketball league in September of 2000 which involved 800 youth.

Many partners have committed to the project with staff and volunteer efforts and financial contributions estimated between \$60 - 70,000. The partners include:

- 11 Vancouver East District Park Board Community Centres and Center Associations
- Tradeworks Training Society
- Douglas College Sport Institute
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- Kiwassa
- Vancouver Foundation
- Human Resource Development Canada
- Kid Sport
- Vancouver Youth Soccer
- Kerrisdale Soccer
- National Crime Prevention Program
- Carnegie Center
- Aboriginal Friendship Center
- Self Help Resource Association of BC
- DTES Parents Coalition
- Strathcona Residents Group
- Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society
- Chinese Cultural Center
- DTES Safety Office
- 12 local Elementary Schools
- Community Directions
- City of Vancouver Social Planning Department

A major submission to Human Resource Development Canada for a grant of \$187,000 is being submitted by the partnership for 12 staff in 2001-02 to develop and implement the overall structure and the operational components. Additionally, the project will provide educational upgrading opportunities for these 12 at-risk young people for post secondary transfer credits. Future ongoing funding may be available in subsequent years.

Vancouver Foundation has indicated interest in the volunteer capacity building component and a submission will be forthcoming in September for funds.

CONCLUSION

This project is an important initiative which will provide equity to children and youth in Vancouver East District. Sport, team participation and recreational leagues are the kinds of opportunities needed in East Vancouver neighbourhoods to help children and youth overcome and mitigate personal and environmental challenges they face, as well as to facilitate the development of healthy lifestyles and community involvement patterns.

A unique structure and delivery model with key components and community capacity building activities supported by Park Board and a range of community partners will address the barriers that local children and youth experience in achieving the benefits of recreational sport opportunities.

Prepared by:

Vancouver East District
Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, B.C.