

Agency pleads for funds to keep therapists on staff

By LINDSAY KINES
Times Colonist staff

A Victoria agency that helps children recover from sexual abuse faces laying off three therapists and forcing young victims to wait months for treatment, the program's executive director says.

Fred Ford says the Mary Manning Centre needs an extra \$170,000 a year from the provincial government to keep the therapists on staff and its waitlist from expanding.

"We're definitely facing an imminent crisis in Victoria in access to services for children and youth who experience sexual abuse and need treatment," Ford said in an interview.

The non-profit agency, which receives from 150 to 200 referrals a year, fears a

return to the "intolerable situation" two years ago when children waited six to nine months for treatment, Ford said. The delay meant that children's problems became more complex, while the likelihood increased that young people would reject treatment altogether, because they had already "moved on" in their minds.

"But what we've found in doing this work for the last 20 years, is that they don't move on," Ford said. "Those problems usually come back to roost in some other way."

The agency warns that untreated sexual abuse puts children at increased risk of re-abuse, relationship problems, substance abuse, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, depression and suicide.

The B.C. government temporarily fixed the wait list problem two years ago

by providing one-time grant of \$150,000 — most of which was used over the past year. Now, children usually get assigned to a therapist within a week or two, Ford said.

"It's been a huge difference to be able to have a family come in for an orientation to find out what our services are ... and then be told: 'And your therapist will be so and so, and here they are, and you get to meet them and you start your counselling next week.'"

The Ministry of Children and Family Development said it has yet to receive a formal request for more money from the Mary Manning Centre, but minister Tom Christensen said he's willing to meet with the agency any time to discuss the issue.

"The centre is actually financed at the highest rate of any centre of its kind across



Fred Ford, executive director of the Mary Manning Centre, says young sexual abuse victims will have to wait months for treatment if therapists are laid off.

John McKay/Times Colonist

the province," he said. "They're doing good work and we're supportive of that."

He noted the agency will receive an extra \$25,000 for children's mental-health issues. But Ford said that moderate boost will only delay the impending layoffs until the end of May.

He said that while provincial funding

for children's mental health has nearly tripled in five years, the funding for sexual-abuse intervention programs like those at the Mary Manning Centre has remained relatively static for almost two decades.

"We've actually drastically lost capacity to see these kids in the province," he said.

THE ABCS OF ENVIRONMENT



Six-year-old Julian Foreman, a student at Sir James Douglas Elementary School, helps Dr. Wiggles (Maurita Prato) make compost. The students were taught about connections between composting and climate change with activities put on by the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre as it launched its new Black Gold Rush program.

Darren Stone/Times Colonist

Dockside Green's developer cries foul over rising city costs

By CAROLYN HEIMAN
Times Colonist staff

Victoria's eco-friendly developer is crying foul over the city's plan to jack up development cost charges this fall.

Joe Van Belleghem of Windmill Developments wants Victoria to give him a break on an estimated \$1.7 million in development cost charges he and development partner VanCity will face over the eight years Dockside Green community is constructed.

The city "bargained in bad faith" when it sold the Inner Harbour land with tight conditions on how it would be developed and emphasizing that Victoria's development cost charges were among the lowest in the province, he said.

The city announced that in October it will hike development cost charges (DCCs), some by as much as 2,000 per cent. The increases are expected to generate \$17 million in revenue for the city over the next 20 years.

Van Belleghem, who has written city council with his view, doesn't know what his next step will be. "I'm in a wait-and-see mode. ... I believe that council to date has acted in good faith in a lot of other things. I hope they will propose something else."

The something else could include adjusting the price, creating a special zone with lower DCCs or offering Dockside additional density on the property, which will be developed over eight years.

As an example Victoria could adopt, he cited Surrey, where a special zone with lower DCCs was created in the Whalley area to encourage development.

But Rob Woodland, the city's corporate administrator, said staff and council members have spent a considerable time examining the arguments put forward by Dockside developers "and we were unable to find a mechanism to exempt the project." Grandfathering the project would be legally fraught, Woodland said.

As for the Surrey example, Woodland said the two municipalities couldn't be more different; with Surrey being the largest municipality in the province and Victoria almost the smallest.

In Surrey, there may be an argument to divide the municipality into different zones depending on how close the development is to existing infrastructure, Woodland said. "But we have a relatively built-out urban area. We are talking about increasing its capacity to accommodate growth."

Mayor Alan Lowe said Dockside will reap the benefits of lower costs on any services it doesn't use, such as sewage. Dockside is planning its own in-house treatment system and won't be hooking up to the city's sewer lines.



Dockside Green is to pay \$1.7 million in development cost charges. They're asking for relief.

TC

Van Belleghem added he has already paid for infrastructure costs by virtue of the original deal under a "no net loss" policy that had the city recovering all infrastructure costs. "They didn't want to sell it at less than the costs of servicing. ... And now they reap the benefits because we have added amenities."

Development cost charges are used to offset the cost of expanded transportation and utility infrastructure arising from a new building. There are limits on how the money can be used. It cannot, for example, be used to pay for libraries, firehall, parks or recreation buildings.

"We never told them that we would be freezing DCCs," Lowe said. "We never bargained saying we would keep our DCCs at a low rate, and I've been on record as saying that our DCCs they were low."

Dockside Green, expected to come in around \$500 million, is one of the biggest construction projects in the region, following Bear Mountain in Langford and Bayview's project in Vic West. The latter will be similarly affected by the new DCC fee structure.

Van Belleghem said his project's low environmental footprint deserves special consideration from the city. Last week, Dockside announced it is vying to be one of 120 communities participating in the in the LEED Neighbourhood pilot program being set up by the U.S. Green Building Council.

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Such certification is becoming increasingly common for individual buildings, but Dockside's application would signify the first time an entire neighbourhood would be rated by a third party for its sustainability.

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