



Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

#5-515 Dupplin Road Victoria BC V8Z 1C2
t. 250.595.0181 f. 250.595.0189 info@gvta.net gvta.net

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Greater Victoria Teachers' Association's presentation to the City of Victoria regarding School Police Liaison Officer programs

We understand that the City of Victoria passed a motion at the April 11 meeting to write a letter to the SD61 Board of Trustees requesting the reinstatement of School Police Liaison Programs.

The position on SPLOs by the GVTA, and subsequently by the Board of Trustees, was taken after a lengthy and challenging review process which included a review of research on SPLO programs, and voices from marginalized community members. It is the teachers' position that programs formerly provided by SPLOs are more appropriately provided by educators, social workers, and public health workers with extensive and specialized training for working with children and youth.

We recognize gangs and gang recruitment have been of significant public concern, although without historical data from the Victoria PD, it is impossible to determine whether there has genuinely been an increase in this activity in our schools, or if any increase has been related to the removal of SPLOs. The BC Government's Crime Prevention Document on Preventing Youth Involvement in Gangs lists research-based strategies to enhance protective factors to build resiliency in youth and prevent gang involvement. These include:

- Building strong family bonds, completing school, and having a positive peer group
- Creating and sustaining a positive social environment that surrounds the youth
- Promoting social, economic, and cultural policies and programs that support positive youth development

When the SPLO program was cancelled in the Victoria Police Budget in 2018 the approximate cost savings was \$400 000. The Greater Victoria Teachers' Association would like to provide input as to how the City can reallocate money formerly spent on SPLOs to programs that enhance protective factors for youth and community well being.

These could include:

- Enhancing grants to afterschool community programming administered through youth agencies such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Native Friendship Centre, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre
- Creating arts and sports grants to enable more youth to participate in afterschool activities
- Funding a District Based Teacher-Counsellor focused on enhancing youth resiliency

- Funding a District Based Public Health Nurse to provide resources and classroom presentations
- Enhancing funding for family counselling services through agencies such as Hulitan and Family Services of Greater Victoria

These are the kinds of programs that research shows are protective of vulnerable youth, without being accompanied by the documented harms that are associated with police liaison programs.

In closing I would like to request that if a matter comes before Council again that directly involves Victoria teachers and students, we be informed and consulted, in order to provide important feedback in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



Ilda Turcotte

President
Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

cc: GVTA Executive Committee