

November 4, 2008

City Council and Mayoral Candidates
Terrace, BC
November 2008

Re: Social Sector Questions and Topics for All Candidates

Terrace Make Children First Network is pleased to present you with a set of questions and topics compiled in collaboration with organizations and non-profit agencies who provide services mainly for children, youth and families in our region: from Kitsumkalum to Gitau.

MAKE CHILDREN FIRST NETWORK focuses on community development that recognizes the importance of early child development. It values children, supports families so they in turn can raise their children to their full potential.

In Terrace, we have been hard hit with economic downturn that has been too long. Social services sector is the one that steps in when community's industry disappears. The sector struggles to maintain funding levels to be strong, responsive and being able to build trust and share resources. Many will protect small existing funds when faced with uncertainty and threats to employment. You can imagine that pressures on these services multiply during times of economic downturn – increased demands on food distribution services, affordable housing, lack of affordability of basic needs (telephone, clothing, dental care, etc.), mental health issues, increased crime, lack of free or affordable youth services, etc. We have seen the increased disparity between rich and poor neighbourhoods in our community.

Based on the latest results of the EDI (Early Development Instrument) in 2006, we have a neighbourhood with 50% of children vulnerable on one or more domains. The tool measures school readiness in five domains (*physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge*) of children in Kindergarten and maps the results across the community based on where children live. EDI is a very useful indicator of predicting how well children will do throughout their schooling years and later in life. It points again to the importance of the brain development in the early years and its impact on health and behaviours throughout one's life. One of the most important factor that impact the results are: family income and education levels of parents.

We are finding that the most vulnerable families are dealing with basic survival each day and even though they do care about their children, they can't focus on parenting, regularly reading to their child, providing them with healthy foods, etc. They are too stressed about being able to afford food, shelter, clothing; lack literacy, parenting and overall life skills, they lack confidence and support systems that provide them with healthy choices, often deal with domestic violence, etc.

Living healthy is often a luxury that many families can't afford – minimum wage or social assistance doesn't allow families to live in a clean and safe accommodation, be able to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, provide children with interesting and diverse experiences, feeling safe and included in the community to be engaged and heard.

#200-3219 Eby St.
Terrace, B.C.
V8G 4R3
www.terracechildren.org



Ph: (250) 635-8761
Ex: (250) 635-6319
info@terracechildren.org

Local governments know their own communities best. They can influence social cohesion, mixed neighbourhoods, free or affordable recreational opportunities, encourage partnerships and community involvement. Local governments can create opportunities for relationship building in neighbourhoods through planned use of public spaces. We would like to encourage you to focus on the inter-connectiveness of economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects of life.

A prosperous society is one in which:

- All citizens have the means to meet their basic needs, where there is social cohesion rather than social division, where the various segments of society cooperate for the common good, and where safe, attractive communities make it relatively easy to attract new citizens and new businesses.
- This type of society is associated with social stability as well as economic growth. Social stability and economic growth, in turn, provide willingness and resources to support child development.
- Children whose development has been supported and encouraged are more likely to be ready for school at age six. With strong school readiness, those children are most likely to develop a strong sense of self-respect and a concern for others, have good people, literacy, numerical skills and problem-solving skills, and an interest in life-long learning.
- Citizens with these skills provide an innovative and competitive workforce as well as a caring, supportive community.
- This in turn, encourages economic growth and social stability, both factors which increase prosperity of the society.

Source: Gillian Doherty, Zero to Six, The Basis for School Readiness, 1997

We would like to bring to your attention four areas and invite you to submit your position and plans to address these. This is not a comprehensive list of all that can be done in Terrace but addressing those issues will put us on a path to healthy prosperous community that is both welcoming and inclusive:

1. *Commitment To Early Child Development*
2. *Support In Transitions From Childhood To Youth And Adulthood*
3. *Increased Economic Equality*
4. *Safe And Caring Communities*

Questions were submitted from members of Terrace Make Children First Network, Terrace Inter-Agency, and Terrace - Kitimat Service Delivery Network.

Other Resources:

HELP's EDI: www.earlylearning.ubc.ca

SPARC BC: Municipality Votes!: www.sparc.bc.ca

First Call Municipal Election Kit: www.firstcallbc.org

Please submit your answers by November 10th to Make Children First Network:

info@terracechildren.org, fax: 250-635-6319 or mail: 100-3219 Eby St., Terrace, BC V8G 4R3.

Your answers will be posted on the Network's website: www.terracechildren.org.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to making Terrace a great community.

Saša Loggin
Initiative Manager

Terrace Make Children First Initiative

100-3219 Eby St. Terrace B.C. V8G 4R3 ♦ Phone: (250) 635-8761 ♦ Fax: (250) 635-6319
info@terracechildren.org ♦ www.terracechildren.org

1. COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Municipalities are important partners in planning for and supporting Early Childhood Development services for families.
- Childcare is being listed as a number one condition for successful recruitment and retention of employees locally and from outside of Terrace.
- Municipalities are responsible for many administrative tasks, such as development zoning and registering new businesses, and can:
 - Require that child care spaces be included in new buildings;
 - Reduce administrative fees for new businesses that benefit young children and families;
 - Require and protect green spaces and child friendly spaces.

If you are elected to City Council, how will you:

- a. *Ensure that our community is child-friendly? Influence the city to make decisions using an early childhood development lens. In other words ask in all of city plans and decisions “Will this be good for our children?”*
- b. *How do you plan to provide attractive conditions for increasing the number of available quality childcare spaces to encourage full employment of parental workers and decrease stress for families?*
- c. *Encourage residential and commercial developers to investigate the inclusion of childcare and/or other ECD services in their plans?*
- d. *Support non-profit agencies providing ECD services to keep their services affordable.*
- e. *Develop protocols for subsidized use of recreational facilities by ECD services?*
- f. *Support low-income families to allow them to attend ECD programs? Transportation is often the number one barrier stopping families from accessing services.*
- g. *Be actively involved in working with other partners on collaborative community planning for ECD: health, education, social sector and business in coordinating efforts.*

Your response:

2. SUPPORT IN TRANSITIONS FROM CHILDHOOD TO YOUTH AND ADULTHOOD

- Civic leaders can emphasize youth-friendly spaces in areas such as parks, community centres, schools and libraries, and cities and towns can create more safe spaces for youth to congregate.
- Municipalities can create events that children and youth can help plan and be involved in, such as art shows, festivals, or performances.
- Cities can subsidize and increase accessibility to after-school programs offering sports and arts activities, homework clubs, and safe places to meet friends.

If you are elected to City Council, how will you:

- Support for universal access to affordable recreational facilities and activities throughout the city with well scheduled public transit?*
- Create a welcoming and inclusive environment for youth in our community where they will be actively involved in the affairs of their own community.*
- Create more public youth-friendly spaces?*

Your response:

3. INCREASED ECONOMIC EQUALITY

- Cities can pay their employees a living wage and can agree to only contract for services with companies that pay a living wage.
- Cities can support the development of affordable sustainable housing, provide incentives for landlords that do not exploit their tenants, and move towards discouraging of slum landlords.
- Municipal governments can advocate for reduced fare or free transit passes for low-income families.
- Municipalities can increase food security. Governments can ensure through zoning that neighbourhoods, particularly low-income areas have access to reasonably priced, quality fruits and vegetables. Cities can support community gardens and help develop and sustain local market. Municipalities can provide free or discounted recreational services and access to programs for low-income children, youth and families.
- Affordable Housing - universal issue facing most, if not all communities in BC Terrace is no exception. Here are some examples of suitable types of housing that Terrace would benefit from:
 - *Co-op housing* where the tenants can be trained and engaged right from planning phase to completion. These housing complexes would be open to diversity of tenants coming from different income levels, diversity of abilities, cultures, ages, types of families, etc. to create a model of vibrant community.
 - *Single occupancy housing attached to social services hub and employment opportunities* (eg. local recycling program, etc.).

If you are elected to City Council, how will you:

- a. *Work towards bridging the disparity between neighbourhoods ensuring that we move away from ghettoization of Terrace?*
- b. *Create conditions that attract development of more sustainable affordable housing, ensure that existing rental units are livable?*
- c. *The Federation of Canadian Municipalities was instrumental in getting the Campaign 2000 agenda to eliminate child poverty into the federal spotlight. What is this municipality going to do to ensure that child poverty is not ignored?*
- d. *Support food security and moving towards local production and markets; sustainability and growth of FoodShare Program, Good Food Box and community gardens.*
- e. *Would you support the development of a Regional Food Policy Council? What would you see as their most important task?*
- f. *What is your understanding of the homelessness issue? How would you go about solving it?*

Your response:

4. SAFE AND CARING COMMUNITIES

- Cities can encourage usage of their public spaces and parks by making them interesting, diverse and welcoming.
- Municipalities can support and promote free, low-cost and family-friendly festivals, celebrations, public performances and sports events.
- Cities can take action to promote neighbourhood safety by opening a community policing centre, adding improved lighting at night or taking traffic calming measures.
- Simple structures such as small walls, fountains, designs in the pavement, or water ways have a positive effect on children's lives and are relatively easy for cities to work into their design plans.
- Creating more bike routes and including them in new road structures will positively affect recreation, health and community cohesiveness, and increase bicycle safety.

If you are elected to City Council:

- a. What measures will you take to increase child and youth safety and active participation in our community?*
- b. What steps will you take to make Terrace a welcoming and inclusive community for all?*
- c. How will you ensure that the build environment is child-friendly?*

Your response: