

**From:** "Levitt, Karen" <karen.levitt@vancouver.ca>  
**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"  
**Date:** 3/13/2023 9:23:11 AM  
**Subject:** Letter from PLEA Community Services of BC  
**Attachments:** Letter to Mayor and Councillors.pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

You recently received the attached correspondence from PLEA noting reduced City funding for two of their programs over recent years. Given the query is in relation to the upcoming grants report, staff are sending this response through email versus the weekly Q&A.

As discussed during the recent grants briefing, with a finite grants budget and increasing priorities, the grants committee must make difficult decisions between very worthy applications. With increases to priorities such as women's safety, reconciliation, and equity, the team has had to consider additional criteria to manage limited granting resources. Decreases to this children and youth focused organization has been a result of an assessment of the organizations' financial reserves, fundraising capacity and access to senior funding sources. In PLEA's case, there were significant and increasing reserves noted in their financial statements that far exceeded the amount of the grant dollars requested.

Please note that PLEA has also been invited to participate in the Building Safer Communities Program, including discussions related to shaping its direction and granting opportunities.

Please let me or Sandra Singh know if you would like any further information.

Best,  
Karen

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**Karen Levitt**, Deputy City Manager (she/her)  
karen.levitt@vancouver.ca

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵ'əyəm/Musqueam, Skwxwú7mesh/Squamish and səliłwətał/Tsleil-Waututh nations

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**From:** Klassen, Mike <Mike.Klassen@vancouver.ca>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 7:43 PM  
**To:** Singh, Sandra <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from PLEA Community Services of BC

Hi Sandra.

This correspondence from PLEA caught my attention. Can you please share some background on the city's relationship and granting process specific to their requests? I ask as I only see the areas of work they do around vulnerable populations including children seems to be important.

Thank you.

**Mike Klassen** he/him  
Councillor – City of Vancouver  
453 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4  
e: [Mike.Klassen@vancouver.ca](mailto:Mike.Klassen@vancouver.ca)  
t: 604-873-7240  
<https://about.me/mikeklassen>

**Assistant**  
Sarah Basi  
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I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)), Skwx̱wú7mesh ([Squamish](#)) and səłílwətaʔ / səł íl wítulh ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Nations.

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**From:** Ethan Clow <[eclow@plea.bc.ca](mailto:eclow@plea.bc.ca)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 1:22 PM  
**To:** Klassen, Mike <[Mike.Klassen@vancouver.ca](mailto:Mike.Klassen@vancouver.ca)>  
**Subject:** [EXT] Letter from PLEA Community Services of BC

**City of Vancouver security warning:** Do not click on links or open attachments unless you were expecting the email and know the content is safe.

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Dear Councillor Klassen,

Please see the attached letter from Tim Veresh of PLEA Community Services of BC.

Ethan Clow  
Fund Development Specialist

PLEA Community Services  
3894 Commercial Street, Vancouver, BC, V5N 4G2  
T: 604.364.3076 | F: 604.871.0408  
[eclow@plea.bc.ca](mailto:eclow@plea.bc.ca)

We acknowledge that we work, live and play on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səłílwətaʔ/Selilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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see what's possible...

February 2, 2023

Mayor Sim and Vancouver City Councillors  
City Hall  
453 West 12th Ave  
Vancouver, BC  
V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Sim and Vancouver City Councillors,

I am writing to you as the Chief Executive Officer of PLEA Community Services of BC in relation to its two prevention programs, KidStart 6-12s and Children of the Street, and in follow-up to my letter sent August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

For many years, the City of Vancouver was one of the biggest funders of these two programs, which rely on grants and donations from the community to operate. Funding was regularly provided under the City's Core Support grant stream. In 2021, the City of Vancouver provided \$27,088 to KidStart and \$15,200 to Children of the Street. However, in July 2022 the City decided to cut funding to both programs by 50% and to entirely discontinue its support in future years.

I would like Council to reconsider this decision. While I understand funds are limited, and difficult decisions must be made, the need for these programs is at an all-time high. The timing of this policy shift presents a challenge to our operations.

### **The case for KidStart 6-12s**

According to research by the Ministry of Public Safety, Canada has over 430 youth gangs, situated across urban and rural areas<sup>1</sup>. The youth who get involved typically join around the age of 13 and usually face multiple risk factors that contribute to their joining, including:

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- Negative influences in their life
- Low attachment to community
- Low attachment to cultural identity
- Anti-social peer group
- Low parental supervision or victimization by guardians

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<sup>1</sup> National Crime Prevention Centre. (2022). Youth gangs in Canada: What do we know?

KidStart 6-12s aims to counter these risk factors by creating a series of protective factors around younger children to prevent them from getting involved in gangs. KidStart matches vulnerable children aged 6-12 with a caring adult mentor who meets with them once a week, engaging them in fun, character building activities. Since 2018, KidStart has mentored 253 children in Vancouver.

Mentorship programs, like KidStart, have valuable benefits for children. They reduce symptoms of depression and improve social relationships. Youth are therefore less likely to drop out of school or display criminal behaviour. When adults create safe environments for children, have high positive expectations for them, and provide opportunities where they can develop and demonstrate their own skills, they feel valued. They feel a sense of optimism, hope and belonging. Children who feel genuinely connected and safe at home, at school and in the community have better health, and are less likely to sustain risky behaviours. They also have higher educational aspirations<sup>2</sup>.

By creating protective factors for children, such as forming strong connections to their community and peers, helping with school, and finding self-affirming hobbies and interests, KidStart keeps these children from growing into youth who need PLEA's help in the future<sup>3</sup>.

To put a cash value on KidStart, it costs just over \$7,000 per year to provide a child with a volunteer mentor. In comparison, the cost of a youth accessing one of PLEA's other, more intensive programs, is around \$144,000 a year. Furthermore, the cost of a youth ending up in custody is upwards of \$215,000 a year<sup>4</sup>.

It is therefore less costly and more effective to provide a prevention program that is designed for children at risk of offending - especially at a point in their lives "when their socialization is still 'in progress'"<sup>5</sup>.

Prevention is one of the best ways of combating youth crime<sup>6</sup>. And given that 2022 saw alarming statistics reported by the Vancouver police<sup>7</sup> for youth criminal activity, the City's support of KidStart is vital.

### **The case for Children of the Street**

For more than 27 years, Children of the Street has provided free prevention workshops for children and youth designed to prevent the sex trafficking (forced prostitution) and sexual exploitation of children and youth.

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<sup>2</sup> Herrera, DuBois & Grossman. (2013). The Role of Risk: Mentoring Experiences for Youth with Varying Risk Profiles.

<sup>3</sup> McCreary Centre Society. (2020). Community-based mentoring programs.

<sup>4</sup> Representative for Children and Youth. (2011). Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2012). ON DRUGS AND CRIME Vienna Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders.

<sup>6</sup> National Crime Prevention Centre. (2022). Youth gangs in Canada: What do we know?

<sup>7</sup> Vancouver police raise alarm on 'troubling and violent' swarmings, robberies, attacks on teens. Global News, Oct 2022

Over the years, we have reached 45,479 children and youth in Vancouver through 1,115 free prevention workshops.

Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation is a serious crime in Canada (and world-wide) affecting primarily women and girls. From 2019 to 2020, while over-all crimes in Canada decreased, most provinces reported an increase in the number of child/youth sexual exploitation cases. Among census metropolitan areas, Vancouver saw the largest increase. Vancouver, Victoria, Winnipeg, and Montreal accounted for 75% of all reported cases in Canada<sup>8</sup>.

The need to educate all young people about sex trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation has never been more important. Some recent cases in BC:

- In October 2022, The Canadian Centre for Child Protection said that so far, that year, there had been a 150% increase in the number of online sextortion complaints.
- In July 2021, Vancouver police charged three people with trafficking a person under the age of 18 years and receiving material benefit resulting from trafficking a person under 18 years.
- In 2022, RCMP from a variety of BC communities issued media releases warning the public about an increase in child/youth online sextortion cases. They noted the need for increased prevention efforts and urged parents to talk to their children about being safe online.

### **In conclusion**

The City of Vancouver was the largest municipal funder for both KidStart and Children of the Street. You provided the funds we needed to reach young people in the city to equip them with information and practical tools to keep themselves safe from sexual exploitation, and to help guide children away from dangerous and anti-social behaviors. The loss of this revenue has had a significant impact on the financial stability of both programs. Rather than addressing the growing demand, we are instead sourcing funds to replenish those that have been lost.

Furthermore, without you as a funder, we have lost your public support and vote of confidence in our program, support and confidence that many foundations and corporations seek before providing a grant or donation of their own.

Both programs provide vital services to children and youth living in Vancouver and this loss in funding is and will continue to directly impact PLEA's ability to provide these supports in the future.

I therefore urge Mayor and Council to reconsider the decision to abandon the children and families who rely on our services, and to instead signal your willingness to receive grant

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<sup>8</sup> Police Reported Crime Statistics 2020 – Statistics Canada.

applications from both KidStart and Children of the Street when the City's 2023 Core Support grant cycle opens. I ask you to consider applications from us, for the previous levels of funding, and for the applications to be assessed on merit alongside the worthy causes of other organizations.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Veresh', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim Veresh  
Chief Executive Officer  
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