

Acute Care Planning in the West Kootenay and Boundary Regions:
A Strategic Initiative

November 15, 2013

Introduction

It is a reasonable question to ask, “Why should there be a strategic plan for acute care planning in the West Kootenay and Boundary areas, and why now?”

A strategic plan defines a process, clarifies future steps to be followed and outlines priorities. Such a plan is used for informed decision making in the interests of all stakeholders. A strategic plan is an important and controversial project for all residents of the West Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital District (WKBRHD).

The City of Castlegar wishes to introduce to local government WKBRHD partners a draft strategic plan regarding the future of investment in acute care planning for the region. The reasons for a plan and dialogue are as follows:

- Local governments may choose to document their interests at the outset of this strategic plan
- Improvements in acute care facilities will require a plan for the large capital debt that will follow
- Interior Health (IH) has identified that a major planning process will be introduced to the region in the coming years, and that process will involve a set of multi-year studies. The forecasted cost of these studies is estimated at \$1.5 million
- Local governments should be informed participants prior to the planning process

For these reasons, a strategic plan is an investment for the future.

The Current Environment

The WKBRHD and member communities have a great attachment to their acute care system, and there is strong evidence that the connection is as strong today as it was a decade ago, when approximately one third of the acute care beds in the region were eliminated. During the past decade the Hospital Board and its local government partners have been attempting to ensure health and safety improvements are completed, technology upgrades are implemented, efficient mechanical systems are installed, and new equipment acquired. Other high value projects in areas such as emergency care and maternity have been successfully completed. Improvements have been made in the past decade, but the future regional service delivery model has yet to be assessed and determined.

Interior Health acknowledges that this region does need to plan for investments in acute care improvements. Investments of this magnitude require substantial planning, economic analysis, as well as consideration of the medical needs of the region.

The partners to the financing of acute care improvements include the Hospital Board, Interior Health/Provincial Government and Foundations. These jurisdictions each have areas of responsibility and each share a role in the delivery of capital projects. This strategic plan is not intended to be definitive, rather, it is intended to be flexible and strategic for the partners and to promote regional ownership of the issues.

Vision

The strategic plan will provide documentation that will provide a constructive vision for facilitating investment in the acute care system in both the West Kootenays and the Boundary regions.

Mission

The core purpose of local governments is to provide services to the residents of the community in a manner that adds to the quality of life, is sustainable and is economically and environmentally responsible.

The mission of this strategic plan is to advance the discussion of acute care services and infrastructure amongst local governments within the hospital region and create a document that gives this region ownership and a strong voice, one that reflects the 40% contribution that regional taxpayers contribute to capital financing.

Values

Values to be pursued by this strategic plan are:

- economic responsibility
- long term sustainability
- fair accessibility for all residents within the hospital district.

The strategic plan will recognize and attempt to incorporate the sensitivity of the issues that will emerge during the development stages. The contents of the strategic plan will not determine what or where investments are necessary. Decisions of this nature will require far greater analysis than is the intent of this strategic plan. It is anticipated that questions arising from further analysis will be asked and answered in the coming years once a joint IH-WKBRHD consultative study is in place.

Strategic Direction #1 - Information Sharing

Current Situation

Regional hospital districts across the Province are not responsible for planning for acute care capital acquisitions nor priority capital spending. Health authorities, rather than hospital districts, are given this responsibility by the Province of British Columbia. The WKBRHD annually receives capital spending requests from IH. Annually, hospital districts across the province are asked to contribute up to 40% of the cost of capital projects, for example: equipment purchases, building modifications, new buildings, health and safety improvements, technological upgrades, studies, land acquisitions or other capital replacement/infrastructure renewal projects.

Strategic Goal - Information Sharing

Equitable and universal access to information obtained in the writing of the strategic plan will be made available to all local government jurisdictions within WKBRHD.

Key Objectives

- to distribute, share and discuss individually the proposed strategic plan with the 30 local government partners of the WKBRHD
- to collect and record information from local government partners in the region and appendix the information to the strategic plan

Strategies / Outcomes

- Create a strategic plan with input from each jurisdiction of the WKBRHD
- Arrange individual meetings with local governments and electoral areas in the Fall of 2013 and winter of 2014
- Present the draft strategic plan to WKBRHD and IH in 2014
- Circulate the draft strategic plan to the media

Strategic Direction #2 - Building Capacity within the Region

Current Situation

The affairs of WKBRHD are well known to the members of the hospital board, but rarely do municipal councils or advisory planning commissions spend much time debating the responsibilities of a hospital board. That debate will most likely occur only if there are extreme situations such as closures, large tax increases, service adjustments or controversial new policy introduced by the health authority.

Interior Health has identified, as one of their future capital spending priorities, a need to study acute care facilities and the medical needs within this region. Having a strategic plan in place prior to the start of an expensive and time consuming study will help to build capacity and knowledge of the local governments within the region.

A detailed report from the Province of British Columbia on the condition of IH's structures is anticipated to be released in the Fall of 2013. IH notes that this region has a poor rating regarding condition of buildings, largely because of age of the structures.

Strategic Goal - Building Capacity within the Region

- to create a strategic plan which will energize local governments and create a base document that provides partners with financial, procedural and strategic information prior to the start of a large study of acute care planning of the region

Key Objectives

- to work in partnership with other local governments and local advisory planning commissions
- to build a strategic plan that will guide future discussions about WKBRHD acute care planning
- to develop an awareness within communities to assist the WKBRHD with the major decisions that will be debated at the board table in the coming years

Strategies / Outcomes

- Attempt to consolidate opinions, facts and recommendations regarding this region's investment in modern and efficient medical facilities.
- Motivate other partners in acute care development to consider:
 - strengthening co-operation amongst the partners,
 - changing the perception that there is no co-operation when it comes to acute care planning in this hospital district.

Strategic Direction #3 - Strengthening Relationships

Current Situation

The region's acute care facilities are in need of renewal. What exactly that renewal involves is a hotly debated question. Previous attempts to address regional acute care matters have been controversial and dropped due to lack of resources, lack of clarity of authority and division between communities. The future IH multi-year study will create a plan and direct the investment decisions that will follow the consultant's report. Informed collaboration of all the communities within the region now will result in a more effective report later. As a 40% partner in the investments, it is important that local governments are prepared to monitor their investments.

It is acknowledged that local governments are not united on this subject. Given the complexities of our communities, the geography of the region and the financial capacity of all partners, the need to build and strengthen relationships is paramount.

Strategic Goal - Strengthening Relationships

- to build and distribute a reliable base document that will strengthen the relationships of local governments within the WKBRHD

Key Objectives

- to increase awareness, within local government across the region, of the issues that will be studied in the coming years
- to ensure local governments are proactive at the outset of the IH study in 2014/2015

Strategies / Outcomes

- Prepare a draft strategic plan that represents the interests of the partner communities in acute care planning
- Appendix to the strategic plan, a one page summary of concerns regarding acute care from each of the 30 partners

Strategic Direction #4 - Implementation and Performance

Current Situation

As reported earlier, regional hospital districts do not actively participate in major acute care planning or facility development. Interior Health must concentrate its efforts on liaising with WKBRHD and not individual local governments. The WKBRHD is the jurisdiction that has the authority to commit the region to a plan and a long term debt. Planning now will improve chances of developing a successful program for acute care renewal in this region.

Strategic Goal - Strategic Implementation and Performance

- to finalize the strategic plan by September, 2014 and submit the document to the WKBRHD, IH and the Province of British Columbia in the fall of 2014
- to request approval of funding from IH, for the consultants' studies in 2015

Strategies / Outcomes

Measure performance by:

- WKBRHD's signature to the strategic plan
- Interior Health's approval to draft terms of reference for studies by consultants in 2014/2015
- Consultants' start of community consultation work in 2015

Remarks

A strategic plan NOW will help to shape future decisions. As a 40% stakeholder in the capital costs, it is timely to think strategically and document local government opinions and recommendations. A made in the West Kootenays and Boundary list of strategic recommendations and suggested directions to IH and the Province will prove to be useful for all concerned, including West Kootenay and Boundary local governments.

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