



# Corporate Report

NO: R022

COUNCIL DATE: February 2,

2004

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: January 30, 2004  
 FROM: General Manager, Planning and Development FILE: 0460-01  
 SUBJECT: Closure of Saint Mary's Hospital

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## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize the Mayor to forward a letter to the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Fraser Health Authority inviting him to appear before Council at the earliest opportunity, in any case well in advance of any date that may be set for the closure of St. Mary's Hospital, to provide information regarding the pending closure of St. Mary's Hospital and about other changes (both implemented and pending) in the delivery of health services to the citizens of Surrey by the Fraser Health Authority; and
3. Authorize the Mayor to forward a copy of the letter to the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Fraser Health Authority, to the Minister of Health Services, Saint Mary's Hospital, the Sisters of Providence and the Save Saint Mary's Coalition.

## BACKGROUND

On November 3, 2003, the Province and the Fraser Health Authority ("FHA") announced that funding to St Mary's Hospital in New Westminister will be terminated and the services provided by the hospital redistributed to surrounding communities. The hospital is proposed to close by May 2004.

At the Council-in-Committee meeting on December 8, 2003, Council received a presentation from Ms. Betty Wynne, on behalf of the "Save Saint Mary's Coalition", regarding the potential closure of St. Mary's Hospital (St. Mary's Hospital is located in New Westminister). The presentation included an array of information about the services provided at the hospital and the potential impacts of its closure.

At the Regular Council – Public Hearing Meeting of January 12, 2004, Council received a letter dated December 9, 2003, from Mayor Derek R. Corrigan, City of Burnaby, regarding the status of Saint Mary's Hospital. A copy of this letter is attached as Appendix I.

Council will also have before it for consideration at its Regular meeting on February 2, 2004, a letter from Mayor Wayne Wright of the City of New Westminister, which contains a resolution from the City Council of New Westminister, regarding the closure of St. Mary's Hospital and which requests Council's comments and response.

## DISCUSSION

The delegation from the Save St. Mary's Coalition advised Council of the following:

- St. Mary's Hospital was founded in 1886 and is owned and operated by the Sisters of Providence as a Catholic Hospital;
- St. Mary's Hospital is rated as a 120 bed Acute Care facility with a maximum capacity of 144 beds. It is currently operating with 83 in-patient beds and a staff of 300. It provides a wide range of surgical services;
- St. Mary's Hospital has been integrated with the regional health care system since the 1970's and provides many services to Surrey residents;
- 11,000 operations took place at the hospital in 2003, of which 1,695 or 16%, were performed on Surrey residents;
- Approximately 40,000 out-patients were served of which 4,340 were Surrey residents;
- Currently there are 2,700 persons on the waiting list for surgery at the hospital of which 404 are Surrey residents;
- The hospital employs 139 Surrey residents; and
- St. Mary's Hospital has developed expertise in the form of centres of excellence in a number of surgical and medical areas. These are not readily transferable to other centres. These specialized teams/centres will be lost as jobs/positions are relocated to other health facilities in the FHA.

### **Fraser Health Authority – Transfer of Services**

Planning and Development Department staff have attempted to obtain information on the health service delivery plans being developed by the FHA and, particularly, the transitional plan for services currently being delivered through St. Mary's Hospital. FHA has provided some information, including a transitional plan. They have indicated that the transition plan, referred to as the Health Care Continuity Plan, is evolving and is provisional at best. The information provided by the FHA is attached as Appendix II to this report.

Based on the information provided by the FHA, it appears that some of the services and programs that were delivered through St. Mary's Hospital have already been relocated to other facilities in the region. The geriatric and related medical programs are being relocated to facilities in New Westminster. Some of the surgical programs are being redirected to Maple Ridge. Ophthalmology retinal surgery and paediatric ear, nose and throat procedures are being transferred to Surrey Memorial Hospital. Surrey Memorial Hospital may also be receiving the audiology program.

### **Some Issues Related To The Pending Closure And Transition Plans For Saint Mary's Hospital:**

Although the delivery of health services is an area of Provincial jurisdiction, municipalities are often faced with fielding inquiries and concerns when changes are made in this area of service delivery. On this basis it would be helpful to be aware of the changes and related reasons. The following are some of the issues that have been identified in relation to the closure of St. Mary's Hospital:

#### ***Lack Of Communication With Affected Communities***

The lack of consultation with, or the provision of information by the FHA to, residents and City Councils in potentially affected communities, regarding the closure of St. Mary's Hospital and other changes to the delivery of health services in the region, is a concern. Due to the lack of timely information, there is a growing fear that health services for residents of the region will be significantly less available.

#### ***Potential Increased Surgical Wait Lists For Surrey Residents***

Waiting lists in the region already include over 21,000 patients and, to date, 404 Surrey residents are awaiting surgeries at St. Mary's Hospital. There is a concern that wait lists for surgical procedures will be made longer by the closure of St. Mary's Hospital.

#### ***Reduced Access to Services***

Services and programs currently delivered through St. Mary's Hospital are being redistributed across the FHA. It is quite probable that some services will become less accessible to Surrey residents. This may particularly impact seniors who are presently, or would have in the future, accessed a wide variety of geriatric treatment and related surgeries at St. Mary's Hospital, which is relatively nearby. Programs and services being relocated to such places as Maple Ridge will make these services much less accessible, especially for those using public transit as their primary means of transportation.

### *Loss of Integrated Service Teams and Medical Services*

St. Mary's Hospital has apparently been successful in establishing a number of specialized and integrated medical and surgical teams who, through an interdisciplinary approach and expertise, bring efficiencies and effectiveness to surgical services that otherwise may not be possible. The relocation of services from St. Mary's Hospital to other hospitals and health facilities in the FHA may lead to the loss of these teams.

## **CONCLUSION**

Council has received information regarding the pending closure of St. Mary's Hospital from the Save St. Mary's Hospital Coalition and from the Cities of Burnaby and New Westminster. In view of the possible negative consequences to Surrey residents that could result from the closure of St. Mary's Hospital, it is recommended that Council seek further clarification on this closure by authorizing the Mayor to forward a letter to the President and Chief Executive Officer of the FHA, inviting him to appear before City Council at the earliest opportunity, in any case well in advance of any date that may be set for the closure of the hospital, to provide information:

- regarding the pending closure of St. Mary's Hospital including:
  - the types of services being provided by the hospital;
  - the patients being served by the hospital, identifying separately the number that reside in Surrey;
  - the reasons for the closure of the hospital;
  - the consequences that such a closure will have on those who are currently being served by St. Mary's Hospital (focussing particularly on Surrey residents);
  - the transitional plans that are being implemented in relation to the closure;
  - any other relevant information or consequences to the citizens of Surrey, related to the pending closure; and
- about other changes (both implemented and pending) in the delivery of health services to the citizens of Surrey by the FHA.

It is also recommended that the Mayor's letter be copied to the Minister of Health Services, Saint Mary's Hospital, the Sisters of Providence and the Save Saint Mary's Coalition.

Murray Dinwoodie  
General Manager  
Planning and Development

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### Attachments:

Appendix I letter from the City of Burnaby, dated December 9, 2003

Appendix II Information from the Fraser Health Authority

- "People are asking...", Newspaper advertisement
- Care Continuity Plan- Update Fraser North Transition, presentation material

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