



Keith Purchase,

Chair, Board of Directors, VCH

UBCM Health Forum - Monday, Sept. 22, 2003

Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre

Good morning.

I'm Keith Purchase, Chair of the Board of Directors at Vancouver Coastal Health. I would like to extend to you VCH's congratulations on your 100th AGM and we look forward to spending the week with you – sharing and listening.

As we all know, it's a time of great challenge in our health care system. Across our country- across the province- across our regions. In the communities and neighbourhoods where we live, we're all looking for much needed change in our health care system.

The urgent need for change in the delivery of health care is compelling both in human and financial terms.

An ageing population and changing demographics, higher patient, client and resident expectations, growing fiscal pressures and technological advances continue to shape our respective destinies, and increase demands on our health care system. As taxpayers, we want an efficient, accountable, and fiscally sustainable health care system.

Most of all - when we need health care - we want the system to be focused on us, the patient. Each of us makes one simple yet very complex request of our health system: we want to live our lives, for as long as possible, in the best possible health.

BC's health authorities recognized the need for change...to take action...to concentrate our focus on the patient. This transformation began when the BC government re-organized BC's 52 health regions into six health authorities in December of 2001.

That first vital step created fewer, more accountable health regions. It minimized the duplication of administrative services that added so much confusion and cost to health-care delivery in this province, and it created a foundation for change to renew the province's public health-care system.

In just under 18 months, we've taken a system that was driven more by acute care — or the hospitals — than by the needs of patients; where decisions about patient care were motivated by clinical preference, rather than patients' needs; and we're turning it around.

We're making the necessary tough decisions and taking decisive action to be able maintain quality services for our patients, manage resources effectively and create programs that are sustainable in the long haul. At VCH, we are implementing a strategy to eliminate our projected \$147 million deficit (out of a total budget of just over \$2 billion) by the end of this fiscal year. Last year we reduced our cost structure by over \$100 million with minimal impact on quality of service to our customers. We currently have more than 30 projects in progress that will help us reach our budget target. And while it has been challenging and continues to be so, our latest forecast indicates we still have a gap of about \$40 million.

However, in wrestling with our budget challenge, we must never lose sight of our commitment to protecting appropriate service levels and quality of care. We have not, nor will not let our service levels suffer. We simply do not want to consider service cuts if we can avoid them by any other means. We are working hard to capture savings and efficiencies across the VCH to protect service levels.

We have many dedicated people within the VCH system who are working hard to achieve savings. Their work will help us turn our system into one that is focused on the needs of the patient, instead of the needs of the system.

But, this really is more than simply a response to challenges. It is also a grand opportunity - the opportunity of our lifetime, to build a health care system that works.

As with most things in life, however, we can't do all this alone.

The only way we're going to be able to deliver an accessible, patient-focused, sustainable system of care is if we work together, in co-operation. It has to be more than just VCH. It has to be all of us — working together. Everyone in this room, everyone who is attending this convention.

Healthcare is about helping people to live healthy lives in their respective communities – a value shared by all of you in this room. You are passionate, committed and mandated with the job of ensuring sustainable and well communities.

It was last year when the Premier stood before the UBCM convention and said, “There is enormous potential across this province if we recognize what we can do by connecting ourselves to one another.” This convention is dedicated to just that proposition- *connecting communities*.

Connecting communities is more than just a thought or a theme, it is something that happens all the time through the work of UBCM, and it is a goal that must continue to shape all the actions we take to build stronger and healthier communities.

And it is happening at Vancouver Coastal Health.

We know some of our communities felt they had lost adequate connection with health regions. We understand health is often seen as a community responsibility requiring partnerships with local governments, school boards, First Nations and other community organizations.

To respond to that need, VCH began a series of community liaison initiatives to share information on VCH strategies and initiatives that affect local governments and communities.

These provide a forum to identify health issues and challenges, and allow us to examine existing and new inter-jurisdictional partnerships to address health at the local level.

So how does this work?

Let's take the North Shore/Coast Garibaldi health service delivery area of the VCH, with its 15 municipal and regional districts, and 14 First Nations' communities.

Earlier this year we established individual Local Governance Liaison Groups in Powell River, the Sunshine Coast, the Sea-to-Sky corridor, the North Shore communities and Richmond, all five holding their inaugural meetings last spring.

I can speak firsthand about these local governance liaison groups because we decided that each liaison group should include a VCH board member. I was part of the first meeting of the Powell River Group.

We met in May, at the Powell River General Hospital. Stewart Alsgard, the Mayor of Powell River attended. Colin Palmer and Frances Ladret of the Powell River Regional District were there. And Pauline Galinski, chair of the school district. And Leonard Bob and Laurette Bloomquist of the Tla' Amin Community Health Society. Dr. John Blatherwick, Chief Medical health officer of VCH, along with Ellen Pেকেles, Chief Operating Officer and our government relations advisor.

We had a thoughtful session, raising issues, exploring options, acknowledging progress and accomplishments - everything you do when you bring people together who care about their communities and the people they serve. I am pleased to say that our next series of meetings will be happening in October and November.

How else do we link with our communities? In part through many grassroots partnerships including extensive community consultations on programs and services, led by our consultation and partnership team.

If you go to our website, www.vch.ca - under the community involvement section, you will be able to find reports on some of the consultation we have done. The practice of posting this kind of information will continue.

Let's look at the City of Richmond, for the moment.

Richmond Health Services, working with MLA Linda Reid, is partnering with the Richmond Public Library to promote literacy for healthy children.

We have a partnership with the City, Richmond School District, the Richmond Alcohol & Drug Action Team, the Community Health Advisory Committee, the Richmond Youth Agency, and community volunteers to develop a strategy to address addiction.

Richmond Health Services, the City of Richmond, Richmond School District, and non-profit partners are working together on a Poverty Response Initiative to address poverty issues in the city.

There's a partnership with Richmond Health Services, C.H.I.M.O., the School District, and Canadian Mental Health to address depression screening in some of Richmond's high schools.

Then there's the East Richmond Healthy Community project, a partnership with the City, School District and Library, involving the local community centre association, community volunteers to

address a recognized need to bring relevant community services to the East Richmond neighbourhood.

Our initiatives in the City of Vancouver are equally numerous and encompass everything from: cooperative partnerships to operate our supervised injection site research pilot; to the involvement of our Vancouver Community staff in developing a Food Policy Task Force; to hearing from our Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee on how best to dialogue with members of our First Nations Communities.

We are looking forward to an upcoming visioning day in Pemberton, where local community leaders will have an opportunity to give us feedback and help us prioritize services at a planned Primary Health Access Centre. After working with community groups on the Sunshine Coast, our Home and Community Care office in Sechelt will staff a *One Stop Information Line*-providing info to seniors on transportation, housing, nutrition and safety.

When we're not partnering or working with local communities, we're communicating with them - letting them know what we're doing, listening to how we can do things better.

We also have a full-time Senior Community and Government Relations Advisor on staff. Her name is Lesley Wood Bernbaum, and she's available at 604-708-5325. Many of you will have connected with Lesley at one time or another. She's here today, and I know she has on-going and frequent meetings and briefings with mayors, chairs, city and municipal administrations.

Our communications with communities include emails, bulletins and newsletters to all our local governments and First Nations. All local governments and First Nations, all our MLAs and MPs, receive correspondence, briefings and updates from my office, from our CEO, Ida Goodreau and our Chief Communications Officer, Linda Morris.

Once again, congratulations on your 100th Celebration. I believe the theme of this year's UBCM convention is vital, not just to those who are UBCM members, but to all of us who can help maintain and improve community life and health in this province.

We look forward to seeing you at our health authority booth in the municipal marketplace and chatting with you throughout the convention.

Again, thank you.