

New bureaucracy concerns medical director

Prince George Regional Hospital's medical director is not impressed with the Health Ministry's decision to expand the boundaries of what used to be the Fraser-Fort George Regional Hospital District.

It will now be called "the Northern Interior Regional Hospital District" and will include portions of the Bulkley-Nechako and the Peace River Regional Districts.

Fr. Dr. David Montoya it equates to "more piggies at the trough, but no extra slop for them when they all get there."

Hospital districts are responsible for drawing up the capital budgets for hospitals within its boundaries, as well as providing equipment grants. Under the New Directions in Health Care plan, the Ministry of Health has re-drawn the boundaries of the Regional Hospital Districts across B.C. in order to make them compatible with the boundaries of the Regional Health Boards. It will add another 12 hospital districts to the 29 already in existence.

According to Health Minister Paul Ramsey, the changes will "allow each Regional Hospital District and Regional Health Board to work together on capital planning and financing."

Hence, the Hospital District will be responsible for the capital and equipment budgets, while the Regional Health Board will be responsible for policy, management and governance.

On paper, it's a viable plan. But, for some looking at the financial side of the deal, it's a rip-off.

"If the boundary changes were made in the Lower Mainland, no big deal. There are plenty of taxpayers there," says Dr. Montoya.

"But, we are now acquiring a portion of the Bulkley-Nechako

Regional District and a portion of the Peace River Regional District. These regions, particularly in the Peace, are rural and sparsely populated. Because the funding comes from the tax base, we are now expected to

service a larger area with little or no extra tax revenue to draw from. We'll be saddled with providing service that is disproportionate relative to the increase in tax revenue."

David Wilson, administrator for the Fraser-Fort

George Regional District, says there won't be much change except the Board dealing with budget matters will be larger as it will include members from the Bulkley-Nechako and Peace River districts.

"The costs for capital

projects in the hospitals are borne locally, with the province bearing 60 per cent of the debt service. That won't change.

"Really, the only thing to change is the size of the Board itself, and the area to service."

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