

*Sylvia*  
**BISHOP**  
*and* **TEAM DELTA**

**Innovative ‘Action Plan on Health Care’ outlined by  
Bishop and Team Delta at campaign breakfast**

*Plan will utilize new casino revenues to attract physicians to Delta*

August 20, 2018 - Delta, B.C. – Mayoral candidate Sylvia Bishop and her Team Delta slate of municipal-council candidates today kicked off the final two-month sprint to Election Day on October 20 with a pledge to improve health-care services for all Delta residents.

“It is a well-documented fact that the City of Delta, along with other communities in the Fraser Health Authority region, has far-fewer family physicians than cities and towns elsewhere in British Columbia,” said Bishop, a two-term Delta councillor.

“Although we understand that both Fraser Health and the Province of B.C. are working diligently to recruit more doctors and other health-care providers, the truth is that Delta has a growing and aging population. As a consequence, our city faces a real need for more general-practitioner physicians.

“Team Delta and I believe the time is right, therefore, to show leadership on this issue by proposing an innovative solution intended to attract more GPs to our community.”

Speaking at an election-campaign breakfast at the Fishermen’s Hall in Ladner, Bishop said her proposal to entice family physicians to the City of Delta was the first component of a five-point ‘Action Plan on Health Care’ that she and her colleagues will unveil over the coming weeks.

Team Delta’s physician-recruitment proposal, she added, would utilize forecast revenues from a new \$70 million casino and hotel complex to be built by Gateway Casinos and Entertainment Ltd. at the site of the Delta Town & Country Inn.

Construction of the casino-hotel will begin this fall and when completed is expected to generate 700 new jobs for local residents, as well as \$1.5 to \$3.0 million annually in new revenues for the City of Delta.

“Our city is fortunate to have new casino-related revenues that will allow us to address pressing community needs,” said Bishop. “Our own research, combined with ongoing discussions with local residents, lead us to believe that health-care in Delta is a key challenge that must to be addressed.

“While many Delta residents believe that our existing Health services are generally adequate, they also have told us that considerable improvement is needed. In addition, our changing demographics signal that Delta soon is going to see a marked increase in the demand for GPs and other health-care providers.”

On July 11, Bishop and Team Delta announced that, if elected to council, they would establish the City’s first Economic Development Office. Bishop today said that the proposed Office will play a lead role in delivering Delta’s family-physician recruitment and retention efforts.

“Business people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century know that the variety and quality of services available to their employees is vital when it comes to decision-making as to where they should look to locate, re-locate or expand,” said Bishop.

“By increasing the number of family physicians who live and practice in our city, we believe that Delta will become even more attractive to investors and others seeking to do business with us.”

The activities Delta’s new Economic Development Office might undertake to recruit new general-practitioners to the city include:

- offering financial incentives (such as student loans, bursaries, etc.) to medical-school students who contract to practice in Delta upon graduation;
- attending medical-related job fairs to identify and attract physicians who are looking to re-locate;
- assisting medical students and graduates with recruitment-visit costs, such as air-fares, accommodation, meals and other incentives;
- providing financial incentives (such as low-interest or forgivable loans, free or low-cost community-membership fees, subsidized re-location expenses, etc.) to GPs who move to and open a practice in Delta; and
- providing practice-establishment support by assisting medical-school graduates and re-locating family-physicians with on-going business challenges, such as finding new nurses and office staff, arranging office and utility contracts, etc.

Bishop pointed out that many provinces and municipalities across Canada already have enacted a variety of physician-recruitment programs.

“According to studies undertaken by the Saskatchewan government over the last decade, the average incentive-package provided by regional-health authorities across Canada is \$20,000 for the first-year of service. For the average municipality, that first-year recruitment package averages about \$42,000.

“I do not believe that our physician-recruitment costs will be that high, but the fact is that our new casino revenues provide Delta with a special opportunity to examine how we can attract additional family-physicians to the city and improve the health-care services available to local residents.”

Bishop also acknowledged that the province’s GP for Me initiative, while falling short of meeting its goal to provide a family doctor to every person who needed one, resulted in the creation of numerous Divisions of Family Practice offices that are doing valuable work in communities across B.C., including in Delta.

However, the most-recent data from B.C.’s Ministry of Health clearly shows that comparatively-few general-practice physicians work in the Fraser Health Authority region, and in Delta specifically.

In 2016/17, the Vancouver Island Health Authority had 157.1 general-practitioner physicians per 100,000 population, while the numbers for the Interior and Vancouver Coastal health authorities were 141.2 and 136.8 GPs per 100,000 respectively. Close behind was the Interior Health Authority at 130.3 family physicians per 100,000 population.

“It’s distressing that the province’s numbers for Fraser Health – which has just 88.3 family physicians per 100,000 population – show us having only a little more than half of the proportion of GPs that work on Vancouver Island,” said Bishop.

“Looked at another way, across B.C. as a whole there is one GP looking after 801 people, but in Delta we have a single GP caring for an extraordinary 1,050 residents.

“The plain fact is that with our aging and growing population the City of Delta needs more, not fewer, family physicians than most other communities in B.C.,” Bishop said.

She concluded: “Delta’s 2018 local-government elections are a time for new leadership and new ideas. Together with my colleagues on Team Delta, I believe that we must look at new ways to provide better health-care for local residents, and the impending arrival of casino revenues gives us a special opportunity to attract new family doctors to our community.”

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