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REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 02, 2025

SUBJECT **Research Report on Options for Regional Community Safety and Wellbeing Planning**

ISSUE SUMMARY

Regional Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) planning, and report on the roles the Capital Regional District (CRD) could play in this work.

BACKGROUND

On April 12, 2023, the CRD Board received a presentation titled *Towards a Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and Council for the Capital Region*. The presenters recommended taking a social determinants of justice approach to CSWB planning in the region.

At the June 7, 2023, Hospitals and Housing Committee, the Committee approved the following motion:

“That staff be directed to include \$50,000 in funding in the 2024 Provisional budget to support work towards establishing a Regional Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and Council.”

In 2024, the CRD contracted the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities (CCFSC) to conduct a literature review, environmental scan and local survey and interviews to report on best practices and local needs related to CSWB planning.

In their final report (Appendix A), CCFSC identified three recommendations. That the CRD:

1. Adopt a flexible, reflective regional CSWB planning model
2. Define its role as a regional facilitator and allocate resources to provide support
3. Establish a permanent, action-oriented service line that centres diverse community voices

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Capital Regional District maintains status quo and revisits the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities report recommendations in the 2027 service planning process.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Hospitals and Housing Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

The CCFSC's report identified challenges associated with community safety and wellbeing planning being conducted at a regional level. These challenges include difficulty in reconciling regional and local priorities, structures and timelines, concern around equitable distribution of resources, risk of plans prioritizing urban needs, and difficulty maintaining buy-in.

In 2023, the City of Victoria began consultations in the development of their own CSWB Plan. Their plan was made public at their June 19, 2025 council meeting. Their plan emphasizes the need to prioritize upstream and primary prevention by investing in resources to build resilience. They have identified 99 recommendations within eight sectors. Those eight sectors are: housing, healthcare, service delivery, downtown, residents, commerce, policing and justice, and the city's community safety and wellbeing services.

The City of Victoria's plan identifies recommendations for themselves, the Victoria Police, the CRD, other local governments, the provincial government and the federal government. The recommendations explicitly identified for the CRD include:

1. Work with other partners to create a regional approach to housing
2. Create and implement a regional homelessness strategy
3. Regularly contribute funds through the budget process for the Greater Victoria Rent Bank
4. Address homelessness and service provision for vulnerable individuals in their own communities

In addition to the recommendations that explicitly mention the CRD as a lead, many of the recommendations that fall under the "service delivery" sector align with the work of the CRD's Community Health Network. In particular, the Community Health Network already convenes social service providers and could work with the City to expand these opportunities for connection.

The plan recommends the adoption of its recommendations in stages and directs staff to report back to Council in 2026 on the budget implications, required policy changes and key performance indicators associated with implementing the recommendations.

Financial Implications

In 2025, the CRD has entered a climate of fiscal restraint including a pause on the creation of new full-time equivalents (FTE) for 2026 unless directed by the CRD Board. Community safety and wellbeing planning within the CRD would require additional resources for implementation and this may be revisited through the 2027 service planning process.

Implementation of the CCFSC's recommendations would require the allocation of new financial resources. Options presented by CCFSC include hiring an external consultant to develop a regional CSWB plan or hiring internal staff to develop and implement a regional CSWB plan. Hiring an external consultant to develop a regional CSWB plan is estimated to cost \$150,000 which would not include future implementation costs. Hiring an internal coordinator to develop and implement the plan would cost an estimated \$175,000 per year in salary and associated costs as well as an estimated \$50,000 per year to support engagement meetings, consultant fees and honoraria.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

In response to the motion adopted by the CRD Board at its September 11, 2024 meeting, CRD staff plan to undertake a regional engagement in 2025 to assess the CRD's potential role in advancing regional supportive housing and sheltering objectives with the intention of bringing this report to the Hospitals and Housing Committee in December 2025.

Given the identified challenges with regional CSWB planning, limited regional buy-in, the current economic climate and on-going work focused on supportive housing and sheltering, CRD capacity to play a coordinating role in CSWB at this time is limited without additional resources.

CONCLUSION

The CCFSC's research and partner engagement identified the potential for the CRD to play a coordinating role in regional CSWB planning. The report also identified challenges with a regional approach. Given the current economic climate of constraint regional CSWB planning should be revisited through the 2027 service planning process. CSWB planning will be revisited following the completion of the research focused on the CRD's role in regional supportive housing and sheltering.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Capital Regional District maintains status quo and revisits the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities report recommendations in the 2027 service planning process.

Submitted by:	Michael Barnes, MPP, Senior Manager, Health and Capital Planning Strategies
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Regional CSWB Planning Research Project Final Report