

Castlegar Community Wellness Assessment

Part 2 – Wellness Assessment

April 7th, 2006

This Community Wellness Assessment for Castlegar has been developed under the direction of the Castlegar District Social Planning Council. The wellness assessment is part of a process of promoting informed planning and collaboration on a broad range of community issues.

This report consists of two main sections:

Part 1: A Profile of the Castlegar area, including sections on:

- a) Population trends: general, age composition, ethnicity and labour force.
- b) Income and income security
- c) Health
- d) Castlegar's performance relative to the rest of the province: the BC Socio-Economic Index
- e) Building Activity and Real estate
- f) The Environment (to be developed in the future, though local information is scarce).

Part 2: The wellness assessment of Castlegar, based on seven determinants of community well-being:

1. Personal Health and Well-being
2. Personal and Family Security: Economic and Physical
3. Educational Skills and Learning Culture
4. Strong and Sustainable Local Economy
5. Environmental Health
6. Strong and Inclusive Identity
7. Community Capacity and Leadership

This report will be presented at a Community Wellness Forum on May 6th 2006, at which time community priorities and opportunities for collaboration will be determined. After this Community Forum, the Social Planning Council will provide staff resources to assist in developing and implementing collaborative action plans. Funding for staff resources will be available through the spring and fall of 2006.¹

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¹ Other documents and reports related to the Castlegar Community Wellness Assessment include:

- θ Castlegar Wellness Assessment Tool
- θ Community Survey: Detailed Responses
- θ Research Report on Community Wellness Initiatives in BC and North America

Castlegar Community Wellness Assessment

This is a draft document. In a couple of areas, information remains to be inserted. The final report will be amended after input from the Community Forum to be held on May 6th.

Summary Assessment: By most measures, the Castlegar community is well-off. The vast majority of its residents are physically healthy, enjoying satisfying lives, and able to meet more than just their basic needs. Many local residents are surprised to learn that using accepted indicators Castlegar compares well (usually above average) relative to other communities in BC, already one of Canada's healthiest and economically better off provinces.

However, there are areas of concern. Some of these relate to the current situation where aspects of the community are not in a "healthy" situation. Other concerns relate to issues that are visible on the horizon, issues that could become problems if they are not dealt with effectively.

Key Strengths: Residents are proud of the area's natural environment and its small town feel. Moreover, Castlegar rates above the provincial average on its health, family income, community safety, education, and clean environment. Castlegar is also notable for its lack of apparent community conflicts.

Key Challenges: Local residents are less confident about their own identity. They worry about growing property crime and jobs for young individuals and families. The statistics say they are right to be concerned. In addition, the area has a narrow and potentially vulnerable economic base that is stagnant. Recent trends indicate that the loss of children and young adults is accelerating dramatically. To this will be added the growth in the elderly population, though its large impact will start slowly and be more strongly felt 10 to 15 years from now.

While most residents are "well-off", there is a significant minority of 10 – 20% who suffer from a lack of resources in a variety of areas: for example, personal health, income, and basic services. And, while people generally like the area they live in, there is a high degree of dissatisfaction with the physical layout of the town.

As residents face the future with some optimism, many express a lack of knowledge or uncertainty about local leadership and organizations. Fortunately, this is usually expressed in neutral rather than negative terms.

Note: Information used in this assessment comes from either existing data sources or a survey of community members. Existing data usually comes from government sources and is also included in the Castlegar Community Profile. The information from the community survey was obtained through a survey of a non-random sample of 282 individuals, 75% of who participated in one of 35 discussion groups² prior to filling out their own form. For more details on data sources go to the Appendices (ed. to be part of the final report).

² The 35 discussion groups were lead by community researchers recruited from the community: Lara Neilson, Bev George, Lori Verigin, Rona Park, Roberta Hamilton, Suzanne Lehbauer, Sandi McCreight, Elaine Robinson, Bethany Fieber, Carol Nephin and Shannon Nichvolodoff, as well as Derek Murphy.

1. *Personal Health and Well-being*

a) **Physical Health**

- ♣ *BC Index of Health (2005): Potential years of life lost due to accidents, natural causes, suicide and homicide.*
The Castlegar Local Health Area has better than average performance on the province wide Index of Health. Castlegar's score is -.31 (where 1 is average; a minus score is better than average) and is ranked 60th out of 77 BC communities. (1 = worst; 77 = best).
- ♣ *Potential Years of Life Lost due to Suicide/homicide (average 2000 – 2004):*
One specific component of the Index of Health tracks deaths due to suicide and homicide. Castlegar's performance was 3.4 per 1000 population, compared to 5.4 for BC. This placed Castlegar 59th out of 78 BC communities.
- ♣ *Self Report Health*
A clear majority (85%) of respondents to the Community Survey Castlegar reported their own health as good or better. Only 15% of respondents reported fair to poor health. In Calgary, 90% of those 64 and younger reported their health as good or better.

Comment: Castlegar is above average in its overall health, as measured by the BC Provincial Index. It will be worth tracking Castlegar's performance to see if this rating is improving or not. One area of concern that came up during group discussions was the area of high-risk youth, either due to the perceived increased use of drugs or because of poor nutrition habits that cause obesity or poor health. Drinking and driving also came up in discussion groups, which may reflect the fact that motor vehicle accidents and alcohol related deaths were two areas where Castlegar scores significantly worse than the provincial norm (see Community Profile).

b) **Happiness**

- ♣ *How happy are people with their lives?*
83.9% said they were very happy or satisfied with their quality of life. Only 2.2% said they were not happy, with another 14% saying they were somewhat satisfied with their quality of life.
- ♣ *How much stress is there in your workplace or home?*
25.8% reported a lot of stress in work place, with 50.5% reporting some or average stress in the workplace. In contrast, only 11.2% reported a lot of stress at home. Clearly the work place is a more stressful environment for most people. For comparison, in Revelstoke, 42.6% of respondents in a poll of over 500 residents reported that they had trouble coping with stress.
- ♣ *How fulfilling is your spiritual life?*
52.4% of those who answered this question said that their spiritual life was very fulfilling. 37.6% said it was somewhat fulfilling and 10% said it was not very fulfilling. 25.5% of all respondents chose not to answer this question.

Comment: The vast majority of people seem generally satisfied and fulfilled. Further analysis of data will be made later this spring (2006) to see if there is a correlation between people's self reported well-being and their economic well-being.

c) Activity

♣ *How much physical and social activity do you engage in?*

Physical: 67.2% reported engaging in an average of 3 or more hours per week of exercise. 7.5% reported engaging in less than an hour per week. The recommended average is 4 hours per week.

Social: People reported similar levels of social activity (66.8% socialized for 3 or more hours per week). 6.8% reported socializing for less than one hour per week. Social connections are an important factor in coping with a range of personal issues.

♣ *Participation in Recreation Centre programs*

Public Swim: 2002 to 2005 = relatively consistent: no real trends; inconsistent annual fluctuations

Public Skating: 2002 to 2005 = relatively consistent: no real trends; inconsistent annual fluctuations

Comment: Physical activity is closely tied to a person's health. It would seem that a significant number of local residents could improve their activities levels and by implication their health. It is difficult to rate how well Castlegar scores in this area. If the same questions are asked in the future, we will be able to assess whether Castlegar is making any progress or is regressing on this important determinant of well-being.

Overall Assessment for Personal Health and Well-being:

There have been different suggestions for the best way to capture the assessment of each of the seven determinants of Castlegar's well being. Some have suggested "school" marks, such as "A", "B", "C" etc. Others prefer a simpler choice between: Very Well; Satisfactory; and Poor. Others suggest that other techniques be used to convey Castlegar's position. The authors of this report invite you to help us choose the best way of describing an assessment for each of the seven determinants.

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar's Personal Health and Well-Being?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar's future Personal Health and Well-Being?

recreation are often sacrificed when funds are short. Over 25% of respondents said they could not afford or could only sometimes afford dental care. This issue was also reflected in the focus groups.

Overall Assessment for Personal and Family Security:

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar's Personal and Family Security?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar's future Personal and Family Security?

Who participated in the survey of community residents?

Here is brief portrait of the 282 individuals who filled out the survey questionnaire:

Where did they live: Castlegar = 63.1%;
 Rural areas = 36.9%

What were their ages? 12 to 18 = 11.7%
 19 to 42 = 7.8%
 25 to 54 = 45.2%
 55 to 64 = 19.6%
 65 to 69 = 13.5%
 80 + = 2.1%

What was the gender breakdown?
 Female = 69.4%
 Male = 30.6%

How long had they lived in Castlegar?
 Less than two years = 10.1%
 2 to 8 years = 15.9%
 9 – 20 years = 31%
 More than 20 years = 43%

What was the ethnic background?
 European = 62.3%
 Russian = 15.4%
 Asian = 4.5%
 First Nations = 2.7%
 Other = 15.1% (in response to this question, many people gave
 answers such as Scottish, German, Canadian)

The total exceeds 100% due to some people giving multiple answers)

3. Educational Skills and Learning Culture

a) Academic Achievement

BC Education Index: which consists of % of population 25-54 without post-secondary completion; percentage of 18 years olds who did not graduate; grade 12 provincial math exam not completed; grade 12 provincial English exam not completed, % of grade 4 students below standard.

Castlegar Score = -0.44 (Zero is average and less than average is better than average: therefore, Castlegar scores very well)

Ranking: 61 out of 77 (higher is better: Castlegar is in the top third of communities)

Comment: Castlegar rates well, especially given its position as a “blue collar” town.

b) Adult Learning Culture and Opportunities

- *Do you take an active role in your child’s education*
52.6% of respondents reported taking a very active role in their child’s education. Only 6.9% said they were not very involved.
- *Are opportunities for adult education sufficient to meet the needs of resident*
26.4% felt that adult education opportunities were not sufficient, a sizable minority.

Comment: It is hard to rate this issue based on the information at hand. The library and Selkirk College did receive a number of positive mentions in focus groups and written comments in the survey questionnaire.

Overall Education Assessment

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar’s Educational Status?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar’s future Educational Status?

4. *Strong and Sustainable Local Economy*

a) **Business Vitality**

- θ *Summary from the Castlegar Business Vitality Index:* An assessment undertaken in 2003 concluded that Castlegar was above average in business vitality. Based on the opinions of 17 key informants, Castlegar scored above average in Communication and Connectivity; Education and Training; Innovation; Infrastructure; and Leadership and Teamwork. Castlegar scored below average on Capital and Funding; Marketing; Opportunities and Attitudes; and Quality of Life.

- θ *Has the amount of money your household spends in Castlegar increased or decreased in the last 5 years?*
48.2 % increased their spending in Castlegar by a lot or a little. 33.5% reported that their spending patterns had not changed significantly. 18.4% reported a reduction in local spending.

Comment: The ability of local businesses to capture the spending of local residents is a key indicator of a vital local economy. It would appear that most residents have either increased or maintained their local shopping levels. However, the lack of local shopping opportunities was the second most frequently cited characteristic that people *disliked* about Castlegar and the most frequently cited characteristic that they would like to see changed. This may indicate a weak retail sector that has little ability to attract its own residents (and possibly new retail outlets).

- θ *Building Activity:*
 - New Residential Construction (2002 – 05):
 - Change in number of permits granted = +45.9%
 - Change in value of work under permit = +108.5%

 - Residential Renovations (2002 – 05):
 - Change in number of permits granted = +6.3%
 - Change in value of work under permit = +61.8%

 - Commercial (2002 – 05):
 - Change in number of permits granted = +61.8%
 - Change in value of work under permit = -2.3%

Comment: This is an indicator of people's willingness to invest in the region. Residential construction and renovation activity have been steadily growing over the last four years. Commercial construction has been more erratic. These figures do not include work on the dams. (See community profile for more details)

b) **Resource Dependency and Creation of Quality Jobs**

- θ *Dependency on resource sector*
Castlegar generates 33% of local income from the resource sector, in comparison to 16.9% for the Southern Interior = 16.9% and 10% for BC.

- θ *Average wage of new jobs created in Castlegar* (to determine the extent to which Castlegar is creating opportunities for advancement to good paying jobs.
No information – need to explore how this information could be collected.

- θ *Percentage of jobs paying health benefits*
No information. Need to examine how this information could be collected.

Comment: While healthy in terms of having good jobs and wages, there is vulnerability around the projected decline or stagnation of the economic activities associated with the forestry sector (due to substitution of capital equipment for human labour). There is also concern that when dam construction is completed, a major source of well paying jobs will be lost. If the proposal to upgrade Waneta receives approval, this would only delay the impact of job losses in this area. In addition, there is no sense of any other sector that is emerging to become a growth sector for the local economy. For a healthy local economy and for creation of new jobs, especially for young workers, new sources of jobs needs to be developed, together with a more diverse economy. Without new job creation, younger workers and their families will choose to live elsewhere, a pattern already visible in the labour market. There is a belief that Castlegar is well situated to become a retail and services centre for the West Kootenays, but there is no evidence of that potential actually coming to fruition. Castlegar also has a relatively low number of self-employed entrepreneurs, which is a major source of economic development in the new economy.

Overall Assessment of Economic Well Being

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar's Economic Well Being?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar's future Educational Well Being?

5. *Environmental Health*

a) *Water Quality and Use*

θ *Water Quality*

Drinking Water: In the City of Castlegar, according to its 2005 Drinking Water Report, the municipal systems meets all the government standards and passed all 139 samples tested during 2005 (City Report). However, in the rural areas around the City, the quality of drinking water is largely unknown. (The next draft of this assessment will hopefully include any data on gastrointestinal illnesses reported by rural residents.)

River Water: Water quality monitoring has been undertaken for many years at Birchbank, between Castlegar and Trail. Overall water quality reported by the CRIEMP (Columbia River Integrated Environmental Monitoring Program) has been rated as good or excellent since the early 1990's. There is no known discharge of untreated wastewater into the local river system. Testing of river water demonstrates that it meets all provincial standards and has been improving over the last couple of decades.

θ *Water Usage*

In the City of Castlegar, usage is 262 Imperial Gallons per person per day in 2005, down 5% from 2004. The average in Canada is 141 Imperial Gallons per person per day.

b) *Air Quality*

General Particulates: Data pending

TSRs: Primarily aesthetic though some health concerns: Data pending

Comment: Written comments in the completed questionnaires as well as discussion in the focus groups highlighted a broad range of opinions on the topic of air and water quality. Many felt that good water and air quality was one of their favourite characteristics of Castlegar. However, there was also frequent mention of the bad smells from Celgar, which some also associate with poor air quality. There was also mention of poor water quality in Robson and more generally due to run-off from lawn fertilizer. In contrast, on accepted measures of community standards for air particulates and for water quality in the river and drinking water in urban areas, Castlegar rates very well. There remain the two outstanding concerns around the health and aesthetic impacts of emissions from Celgar and the quality of drinking water in rural areas.

c) *Personal Responsibility*

θ *On a scale of 1 to 5, with five representing the greatest effort, how much effort are you willing to make personally and/or financially to improve Castlegar's physical environment?*

Personal: 75.5% of residents stated that they were willing to spend more of their time to address environmental issues such as recycling and pollution.

Financial: 59.4% of respondents stated that they were not willing to contribute financially to address high priority environmental issues.

Comment: While our survey seems to show limited support for new taxpayer initiatives aimed at the environment, preliminary data from a recent municipal survey indicates support for a blue box recycling program in the City (together with increased taxes to pay for it). It is possible that people's willingness to financially support an initiative is based on having concrete proposals to assess.

θ *What do you value most in Castlegar's physical environment?*

When asked this question, the answers were overwhelmingly focused on the natural environment. Over 90% of answers mentioned rivers, lakes or mountains or mentioned opportunities provided by parks and trails (hiking, skiing, fishing). Very little positive mention was made of human made physical attributes, other than trails.

Overall Assessment for Environmental Health

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar's Environmental Health?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar's future Environmental Health?

6. *Strong and Inclusive Identity*

a) **Community Identity**

θ *Do you feel a sense of belonging in Castlegar?*

70.7% of respondents stated that they felt a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to Castlegar. This percentage increases to 75% when considering only residents of the City of Castlegar.

θ *To what extent do you feel that the increasingly diverse make up of our population is a positive or negative trend?*

64.2% of respondents thought that increased diversity of the area was either positive or very positive. 32.5% thought it was neutral. Only 3.3% thought it was negative and no one thought it was very negative.

Comment: With the likelihood of more in-migration of visible minorities throughout rural BC, the survey's generally positive or neutral attitudes towards increased diversity in the local population is a positive sign. However, it should be noted that a couple of the focus groups expressed concern over the current lack of cultural and ethnic diversity, with the result of existing or potential racism.

θ *What do you like most and least about Castlegar? What would you change?*

Like the most: The four things that people liked most about Castlegar are (in order of frequency): the environment (mountain, lakes); the people; the small town feel; and outdoor activities. All of these four characteristics were mentioned with far more frequency than any other characteristics.

Like the least: Two issues dominated the list of things that people like the least: physical layout which the answer of one out of four respondents; the lack of local shopping, mentioned by one out of five. The smells from Celgar and the lack of a local hospital were next in frequency.

What would you change: Not surprising, the top three issues that people wanted changed were: creating a central core; improve shopping; and , bring back the hospital (though some people referred more generally to health services).

b) **Social Interaction**

θ *Sense of isolation or connectedness*

69.4% of respondents stated that they felt either very or somewhat connected to other residents in the community. Only 5.5% felt very isolated, while 25.1% felt somewhat isolated.

c) **Community Supports**

θ *Do residents have access to the basic services that their families need? Access includes affordability and transportation. If not, which are missing?*

A small but significant minority of 12.1% felt that they could not obtain the basic services their family needed, and over half of respondents (48.5%) felt that that could only sometimes obtain these basic services. When asked what services were missing, the overwhelming answer was the lack of access to health services, expressed as a lack of a hospital, lack of other health services, access to specialists and to health practitioners.

d) Strong Social and Cultural Life

θ *There are adequate opportunities for local artists and crafts people to display and sell their work.*

68.1% felt that there were a lot opportunities or somewhat adequate opportunities. 32.1% felt that there were not many opportunities. A clear majority of participants (76%) in a recent (2006) Cultural Scan also felt that there has been moderate progress in developing arts and culture in Castlegar in last ten years. In the same cultural scan, a majority identified the need for a multi-use arts and culture facility.

θ *How many hours per month do you volunteer?*

63.7% of respondents said that they do volunteer work. This is slightly higher than the rate reported during a similar survey in Revelstoke where 61.7% reported volunteering, but far higher than the national average of 27%. The average number of hours volunteered per individual was 13.7 per month, almost identical to the Canadian rate for the year 2000. However, given the far higher percentage of people volunteering in Castlegar, the total number of hours volunteered in Castlegar is far greater than the Canadian norm.

Comments: In many of the focus groups, concern was expressed that Castlegar had a weak community identity and a tendency for different groups to stay separate. While Castlegar may not suffer from sharp divisions or conflicts, neither does Castlegar seem to have a strongly shared identity or tradition of collaborating across cultural or ethnic differences. On a more positive note, Castlegar seems to have a very strong culture or tradition of volunteerism, definitely a sign of community involvement and well-being.

Overall Rating for Strong and Inclusive Identity

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar's Community Identity?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar's future Community Identity?

7. *Community Capacity and Leadership*

a) **Civic Confidence**

- θ *Are people confident in local leadership's ability to guide Castlegar into the future?*
Over half of Castlegar residents are “somewhat” confident in the ability of local leadership. 21.9% expressed confidence, while only 10.8% stated that they were not confident. 16.2% stated that they didn't know.

Comment: There is not a high level of confidence in the abilities of local leadership, but neither is there much negativity. Instead there is a cautious or slightly ambivalent position towards the current community leadership.

- θ *Are you optimistic about the future of this community?*
47.3% are optimistic about Castlegar's future, with another 44.7% somewhat optimistic. Only 8% were pessimistic about Castlegar's future.

b) **Non-governmental organization capacity**

- θ *Can residents count on local community volunteer and service organizations to address community issues?*
43.6% of respondents said that they did not know if the community could count on its non-governmental organizations. Of those who did have an opinion, 78.6% expressed confidence and 21.4% indicated they lacked confidence.

c) **Civic Participation**

- θ *Voter turn out*
In 2005, 38.1% of voters turned out in the City of Castlegar elections. Previous turnouts were: 2002 = 48.4%; 1999 = 39.9%; 1996 = 33.8%.
In Area I, in 2005 and 2002, turnouts were 21% and 24.9% respectively.
In Area J, the election was uncontested in 2005 and in 2002 and 1999 turnouts were 44.5% and 64% respectively.

Comment: it is very hard to assess the level of civic engagement from the turnout rates. Turnout levels are highly dependent on such factors as the intensity of the mayoral race and the presence of an emotional referendum. As a point of comparison, the average voter turnout in 11 municipalities in the Lower Mainland in 2005 was 28%, down from a high of 35% in 2002 and 31% in 1999.

- θ *Do you believe that public input has influenced any major community decisions in the past year?*
40.6% said that they didn't know if public input had any effect on major community decisions. Of those who had opinions, 68.5% felt that public input had an impact, while 31.5% felt it did not. (In Revelstoke, the figures were 55.9% and 44.1%)

Comment: The answers seem to reflect the uncertainty that many feel to local leadership and civic involvement. But in comparison to other communities, Castlegar appears to have better than average civic involvement.

Overall Rating for Community Capacity and Leadership

Looking at the present situation and the information in the section above, how would you rate Castlegar's Community Capacity and Leadership?

Looking to the emerging or predicted trends, how would you rate Castlegar's future Community Capacity and Leadership?
