

## **Letter from Rob Payne re Hamilton Health Sciences' Proposal to Close McMaster's Emergency Department and In-Patient Beds**

*The letter below was forwarded to AWWCA members Sept. 21, 2008. It is from the AWWCA's past president, Rob Payne, who is the communications contact for the Access to Best Care committee of the AWWCA. He sent copies of the letter to the Ontario Ministry of Health, MPP Ted McMeekin, and Councillors McHattie and Powers. Rob sent the letter as an individual and he gave the AWWCA permission to disseminate it. You can view the Access to Best Care Interim report referred to in point 1 of the letter at <http://awwca.ca/articles/2008/07/08/access-best-care-interim-report/>*

September 21, 2008

To: Ms Juanita Gledhill, Chair  
Local Health Integration Network

Re. Hamilton Health Sciences' Proposal to Close McMaster's Emergency Department and In-Patient Beds

Dear Ms. Gledhill:

I am writing to express my disappointment in the current LHIN decision-making process followed when addressing issues that impact the health care of our community.

The abrupt decision made in early 2008 by Hamilton Health Sciences to close the McMaster Emergency Department to adult care caught our community by surprise, as it was inconsistent with the criteria that were used to provide provincial funding (see Appendix 1 attached) as well as the internal planning of HHS (see Appendix 2 attached).

The community reacted quickly to this, developing a number of groups in order to gather the information necessary to more fully understand the changes proposed. Many meetings were undertaken, including a meeting with the LHIN on June 16 organized by our local city councillors.

During this meeting you brought up a number of points that addressed the decision-making process the LHIN would follow, as well as steps the public would need to take to participate in this process. The main points requiring action by the community were as follows:

### **1. The concerns of the community would need to be articulated and substantiated.**

I believe that the report submitted to you in July 2008 by the Access to Best Care subcommittee of the Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association of Resident Homeowners Inc. clearly meets this concern.

The ABC committee was comprised of a mix of active and retired physicians and

professors, as well as other health care providers and interested community members. The report has been widely distributed and is attached to this e-mail. This report was submitted to the LHIN previously as part of the initial distribution.

**2. The HHS board of directors is the organization that is directly responsible to the community, and is the point of first contact to express our concerns.**

The HHS working group formed by our city councillors made repeated attempts to meet with the HHS board of directors as a result of your directions. Unfortunately, there was apparently no time for the HHS board to meet with our group, prior to the decision to approve the HHS Access to the Best Care plan.

The community has spent significant time and effort to better understand both the pros and cons of the HHS proposals, as well as to meet the criteria you outlined regarding the correct process for addressing concerns.

Despite this, the decision to close the adult emergency and in-patient beds at McMaster is able to proceed with no public input, and with no response to address the many concerns raised by the ABC report.

I am one of a number of people that have put in much time and effort to more fully understand the HHS proposal. I have attended a large number of meetings with HHS leadership, and while they have gone out of their way to make themselves available, I must say that I am no further along in understanding the reason for the abrupt shift in plans nor am I gaining any further answers to the many concerns outlined in the ABC report.

I fully understand that the LHIN structure in Ontario is still relatively new, but surely a system that is designed to decentralize health-care resource-allocation decisions to our regional LHINs, "**in consultation with and based on the needs of people and providers in the communities,**" has not functioned as it was intended.

I am disappointed that the public is forced to using a rally to have our voices heard. I view this as a failure of the system, but nevertheless will join the rally, as unfortunately this is the only avenue left open to us. I believe that given enough time for review by the public these decisions could be more fully optimized to truly produce "Access to the Best Care." For example, I enclose a recent news article from Ottawa, where their experiences may point to looking at a different path than currently proposed by HHS in order not to repeat the same mistakes (see Appendix 3 attached).

I fully support our local city councillors' request "that decisions regarding this plan be delayed 60 days to provide local MPPs, Councillors and the general public time to review HHS's responses to our concerns."

Sincerely,

Rob Payne