



Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association
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November 26, 2008

Mr. André Marin
Ombudsman Ontario
Bell Trinity Square
483 Bay Street
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Dear Mr. Marin:

This letter is a follow up to my letter to you of Nov. 13.

The Sept. 29 decision by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network regarding Hamilton Health Sciences' proposal entitled Access to the Best Care (ABC) has highlighted deficiencies in the local LHIN as well as the whole LHIN process.

While the following is by no means a complete list, the points will serve to illustrate some of the concerns.

1. Lack of Decision-making Process:

At the same board meeting when the ABC proposal was considered, one of the main agenda items was the consideration of various methods of making decisions in order to define a process for the board. It therefore appears that, in considering and ruling on the ABC proposal, the board was not using any approved methodology. This was also apparent from comments and questions by board members, some of which verged on the absurd. Two members of the AWWCA—past-president Rob Payne and Dr. Ken Ockenden, former Chief of Emergency Medicine at Hamilton's Civic Hospitals—attended the meeting and can provide more detail.

2. Lack of Evidence for the Decision:

It appeared that the LHIN board uncritically accepted the comments and beliefs outlined in the ABC proposal without trying to determine if these were backed up by evidence and statistics. In the proposal many of the "statistics" were confusing or suspect. In the only case where a study

had been undertaken (Emergency Medical Services, see below), the negative conclusions were glossed over.

In fact, the most qualified board member in health policy and statistics, Stephen Birch, Ph.D., resigned after the decision, in protest against the flawed process.

3. Lack of Public Engagement and Input:

From the outset, the ABC proposal was presented to public and private meetings essentially unchanged despite many expressed concerns. The LHIN continued this process by holding no general public discussions, failing to ensure the HHS had engaged the many stakeholders (both lay and professional), and ignoring the 30 public submissions expressing concerns about the proposal, including a resolution by Hamilton City Council.

4. Lack of Consideration of the Effect on Emergency Medical Services:

The ABC proposal presumes a major realignment of the ambulance and paramedic services in the Hamilton area to adequately service adult and pediatric patients. There is no evidence that this was considered carefully by either HHS or the LHIN. Indeed, a cursory assessment of the proposal by Hamilton's EMS director suggested that, conservatively, an annual incremental cost to Hamilton taxpayers would be \$1,400,000 and that ambulance off-load times would increase. Emergency Medical Services are funded by the city, not out of HHS' budget. This essential component of the ABC plan was not considered by the LHIN.

It seems inappropriate for an organization charged with overseeing a region's health care to add costs and delays to accessibility without considering and/or monitoring the issues.

5. Lack of Recourse:

As it stands, the public who finance and use the health care system have no means of appealing the LHIN's decisions. Thus major decisions affecting the care of hundreds of thousands of people can be made by a few individuals and a process that makes a mockery of the consultative and democratic processes.

The AWWCA has about 600 dues-paying members, many of whom are very concerned about how the changes will affect health care in West Hamilton. It is our hope that these concerns, which appear to be present in other proposals and other LHIN's, will prompt you to examine the LHIN concept and to propose changes for improvement.

Sincerely yours,

John Wigle, President
Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association of Resident Homeowners Inc.

P.S. If you respond to this letter, please contact me at my place of work:
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