

January 25, 2010

Joe McReynolds, Chair
Central West LHIN
8 Nelson Street West, Suite 300
Brampton, ON L6X 4J2

Dear Mr. McReynolds:

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union represents professional staff at Headwaters Health Care Centre.

We are very disappointed by the decision made by the board of HHCC to effectively close the Shelburne District Hospital. We consider this to be a broken promise by Premier McGuinty, who vowed no hospitals would close under his watch.

Faced with imminent service cuts, both the Central East LHIN and the Champlain LHIN have found new funding to reduce deficits and protect services at both Lakeridge Health and Cornwall Community Hospital.

Given the severity of the impact of these cuts on Shelburne, we would ask the LHIN to postpone any decision on this integration and instead explore similar funding options with the Ministry of Health.

We believe the Central West LHIN has a strong argument for additional funding given per capita spending is among the lowest of the 14 provincial LHINs.

Further, the HHCC has made this decision based on a funding freeze – one of three scenarios the health ministry is exploring. Further, the Minister of Health and Long Term Care has gone on the public record stating not only has no decision been made regarding funding levels, but all options remain open, including funding greater than two per cent threshold.

Dr. Ron Murphy, the lone dissenting member on the HHCC board, has warned that such cuts would lead to longer wait times and potential clogging of the emergency room – two priorities for which the government has already committed considerable resources.

The provincial government has constituted a panel on rural and northern health. This panel is expected to report back at the end of this winter. Any findings of that panel may be germane to any decision regarding the future of the Shelburne hospital.

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Given this decision was made January 19, there has been little time for the public to absorb the content of the HHCC board decision and have meaningful input.

Given all these factors, any decision about the future of the Shelburne District Hospital would appear to be premature.

At the very minimum, we would urge the CW LHIN to turn down the integration decision and give all stakeholders 30 days to respond to the HHCC's proposals.

We would expect the CW LHIN to make every effort with Queen's Park to secure funding to avoid any deterioration of health care services within its mandate.

In the interim, any layoffs or changes to service at Shelburne should be suspended until this issue can be fully resolved.

Yours truly,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

WT:rj

c: Board, Central West LHIN
The Honourable Deborah Matthews, Minister of Health and Long Term Care
France Gelin, NDP Health Critic
Christine Elliott, PC Health Critic