

July 27, 2008

Norm Gamble, Chair  
South West Local Health Integration Network  
201 Queens Avenue, Suite 700  
London, ON N6A 1J1

Dear Mr. Gamble,

I am writing to ask you to order the South Bruce Grey Health Centre to reverse its decision to replace its Physiotherapy department at the Kincardine site with a private company PT Health. Because of the hospital's decision, patients who normally receive outpatient physiotherapy free, as mandated by the Canada Health Act, will now have to pay for it. Either that, or they will have to travel 45 minutes to the next closest hospital sites in Chesley or Walkerton to get the service for free. PT Health will also be staffing the inpatient service, only for fewer hours per week, by staff who are paid less than the hospital staff.

There is no financial reason for the hospital to take this decision, as it is not in a deficit situation. And even if it were, this would be the wrong way for it to save money.

This decision runs counter to, and makes a mockery of, the vision expressed by the SW LHIN. For example, the South West LHIN Integrated Health Service Plan lists five provincial strategic directions. The first is "Renewing community engagement" and "(e)nsuring active participation in local community planning processes." There was no community consultation on this decision.

The second is "(i)mproving the health status of Ontarians." This decision may actually undermine the health of outpatients and contribute to longer waiting lists and higher-staff turnover for inpatient care.

The third is "(e)nsuring equitable access to health care" and "(e)liminating barriers to access." How is it equitable if some get it for free and some have to either pay for it or drive 45 minutes to get it covered by the Canada Health Act provisions.

The fourth is "Improving the quality of health outcomes" and placing the consumer at the centre of planning and coordination of health services. Well, believe me, the people who need these services did not ask for these changes.

The fifth and final strategic direction is establishing a framework for a sustainable health system, including basing planning and decision-making on evidence. I ask you, what evidence do you have that decisions such as this result in better care. On the contrary, the

evidence is insurmountable that private, for profit health care provides substandard care. It has no place in our publicly funded hospital system.

And finally, I must remind you of the statement in your Health Human Resources document: “The government is undertaking several initiatives to strengthen the workforce, with a focus on six inter-related themes,” including “improving access to doctors nurses, allied health professionals and other health care workers” and “supporting health care professionals and workers in the workplace.” Instead of supporting these important goals, the hospital has insulted them with this decision.

The hospital’s decision constitutes a voluntary transfer of service. You have the power, under S. 27 of the Local Health System Integration Act, to order the Hospital not to proceed with the integration.

Please, do the right thing, live up to your LHIN’s stated goals and reverse this terrible decision.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia L. Rout". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Patty Rout