

June 5, 2008
Attn: Assignment Editor

For Immediate Release

Supervisor's Recommendation for Undemocratic Hospital Board Gratuitous and Unacceptable: Health Coalition

Midland/Penetanguishene – The Southern Georgian Bay Health Coalition is responding to yesterday's public release of the Supervisor's report regarding the future of the local hospitals with this media update on the issues and the upcoming action plan to ensure democratic governance.

"When we met with Supervisor Kevin Smith last November, he told us that he personally does not believe in elected hospital boards. In response to our disagreement, he assured us, in that meeting, that he would not be changing the hospital's by laws to eliminate the elected hospital board. To date, to our knowledge, he has not changed the by laws, so it is extremely questionable that the hospital is refusing to renew memberships as they come due," noted Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition director.

"Replacing Huronia District Hospital's elected hospital board with an appointed board – if it is adopted by the provincial government – could only be accomplished by the Health Minister wiping out more than 2,000 community members' voting rights, and a hundred year history of a democratic hospital. This is completely unacceptable and we strongly urge the Health Minister to ensure that the provisions regarding an elected community board in the current by laws continue as they are and the hospital immediately reinstate regular renewals of people's memberships."

"Supervisor Kevin Smith's recommendation to axe the democratically elected hospital board is gratuitous and based on his personal ideology. There is no evidence that it is either necessary nor is it part of any deal that has been made regarding the merger," added Vern Edwards, Southern Georgian Bay Coalition Co Chair.

"In fact, the experience in our community to date is that our hospital democracy worked in the public interest and that community vigilance ensured the protection of access to reproductive and end-of-life health services."

"In addition to the democracy issue, we have raised several questions regarding the changes of ownership and control over the various hospitals," he added.

"We are seeking assurance that there will be no losses of service at any hospital sites – including both community hospitals and the mental health and forensic mental health beds and including access to reproductive options in the mental health facility. We expect the government to provide clear assurances – for which they can be held accountable - to the community on these issues."

The action plan:

- The health coalition, working with the Citizens for a Secular Huronia District Hospital and others, are building towards a major town hall meeting next Wednesday, June 11 at 7 pm at the North Simcoe Recreation Centre.
- The coalition is seeking a legal opinion on these matters and will have the report for that meeting.
- The coalition will hold a media conference at Queen's Park in Toronto on Monday.
- MPP Garfield Dunlop will present the first raft of petitions in the legislature on Monday morning. Community members are encouraged to please get the petitions signed and in as soon as possible. Copies are available at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

For more information: Natalie Mehra 416-230-6402 or Vern Edwards 416-578-4258

