

"More than 1,100 attend public hearings..." continued

members attended and made a submission. In another community, the hospital CEO phoned in his submission.



OHC panelists Hon. Roger Gallaway, MPP France Gelinas, Kay Tod, Natalie Mehra, and Barb Proctor.

Wallaceburg – More than 150 people attended. We heard more than 38 presentations from regional mayors, faith leaders, agricultural leaders, nurses, patients, economic task force leaders, concerned community members, and others. There was terrific media coverage and the local coalition - "Save Our Sydenham" did a tremendous job of transcribing presentations and publicizing the event.

Shelburne – Just over 60 people attended including a number of municipal representatives. Here, the local hospital is slated for closure and the community suffers from a severe shortage of family doctors and poor access to primary care.

Kincardine – About 150 people attended this hearing on the shores of beautiful Lake Huron. Recent announcements of a new round of hospital cuts were top news, but presenters, including the Friends of the local hospital, the labour council, municipal leaders, a retired hospital executive, and concerned citizens raised concerns about long term changes that have been occurring. Thank you to the "Friends" group who worked hard to publicize the meeting in the community.

Welland – More than 200 people attended and dozens made presentations, including physicians, nurses, a mayor, many patients and concerned community members. Panelists were moved to tears by the presentation of Reilly Anzovino's family. Reilly is the teen who died after a Boxing Day car accident en route to the hospital in Welland since her local hospital emergency department had been closed.

Cobourg – More than 140 people attended this hearing just after the hospital announced major cuts to the local hospital. Staff, patients, concerned community members and local union representatives made presentations.

Port Perry – A small group of 28 people attended, including patients, local hospital advisory committee members and concerned citizens and shared their varied perspectives on care and services at their local hospital.

Minden – More than 140 people attended this packed hearing where concerned citizens raised their experiences and issues. Having already experienced severe hospital cuts, many residents raised their concerns about extreme shortages of family doctors and poor access to primary care.

Burk's Falls – Just over 80 people attended. From the mayor and municipal leaders to patients, people raised concerns about lack of access to care and where community donations have gone since the hospital has been closed down.'

Winchester/Chesterville – Twenty-four people attended this small but very interesting hearing. One physician raised his concern about the inhumanity of long travelling distances for dialysis patients. Others spoke of the vital role their hospital plays in their community.

Picton – More than 80 people attended and spoke about laboratory privatization, access to care and democratic governance of hospitals. The Friends of Prince Edward County group did a tremendous job publicizing the event around the community. Thank you!

St. Joseph Island/Desbarats – In this beautiful northern community, the panelists enjoyed sampling local maple syrup before the hearing. Sixty people attended and discussed the shortage of doctors and health professionals, access to care issues and the problems plaguing the Sault Area Hospitals.

New Liskeard – Just over 40 people attended this hearing to raise issues including improving local addictions and mental health services, improving access in areas with extreme shortages of doctors, and the range of services in the local hospital that has been achieved through visiting specialists and dedication to building the hospital's capacity.

Northumberland Hills Hospital Cuts and Fight-Back

Concerned about the closure of the diabetes education clinic, the end of all outpatient rehabilitation services and cuts to 26 hospital beds, concerned community members, Northumberland Hills hospital patients and hospital workers formed the Northumberland Hills Citizen Health Coalition, co-chaired by area residents Patty Park, and Peggy Smith. On Saturday, April 10th, the group rallied together outside of Victoria Hall in Cobourg, with protest signs and impassioned speeches by patients demanding a halt to the planned cuts. Despite the lack of support from local MPP Lou Rinaldi, the Northumberland Hills citizens managed to collect more than 5,000 signatures on their petition to stop the cuts to services and beds at NHH. On April 26th, coalition members travelled to Queen's Park and were recognized and greeted by Conservative MPP Christine Elliott and had their petition read into the legislature by NDP Health Critic/MPP France Gelinas. Unfortunately, as of April 30th, the NHH has closed the diabetes education clinic; however, the Northumberland Hills citizens are still fighting back with presentations to town council and an upcoming rally outside of Lou Rinaldi's constituency office on Thursday May 13th at 4:00pm.

Peterborough Hospital Peer Review Proposes Deep Cuts

A scathing peer review of the Peterborough hospital recommends the closure of 71 beds and 151.5 full time equivalent positions (mostly nurses). The hospital's planned number of beds was approximately 490, approved by the Ministry of Health. If these cuts are imposed, the hospital will have 341 beds. The community is outraged, city council has requested the hospital, MPP and LHIN appear before council and the community is getting organized to protect services. The LHIN will vote in June on the hospital's proposal in response to the peer review recommendations.

Ontario Government Introduces New Retirement Act: Bill 21

The Ontario government has just introduced a new piece of legislation regarding retirement homes. Currently, these homes are completely unregulated, though the government is using them to close down hospital beds and take hospital patients. The Ontario Health Coalition strongly objects to any attempt to turn retirement homes into another category of private, for-profit, often multinational chain-owned long term care homes with less regulation. While there is a place for retirement homes, they should not be used to take hospital patients.

Ontario Health Coalition will soon be adding to its website an analysis of the Retirement Homes Act (Bill 21). The Standing Committee on Social Policy plans to hold public hearings in Toronto.