

# The Pulse

Newsletter

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## OHC Holds Democratic Public Hearings On Future of Small, Rural and Northern Hospitals

Eminent panel to travel across Ontario on listening tour

The decision by the McGuinty government to fund global hospital budgets at a rate less than inflation has spawned a major round of hospital cuts. For the first time since the unprecedented Harris government cuts of the mid-1990s, small and rural hospitals are under threat of closure, emergency rooms are being closed, services are being privatized and thousands of layoffs have been announced.

In response to a protest of more than 1,000 people at the Ontario Legislature in April 2009, the government announced a Minister's Panel on Rural and Northern Health Care. But when the mandate of the panel was finally released last fall, it did not even contain the word "hospital". The Ministry of Health refused to

have the panel conduct public consultations. Groups such as local citizen's groups, patient advocates, the Ontario Health Coalition, the unions and health professionals, and municipalities have not been consulted by the panel. Requests for meetings have been refused. Panelists have informed local groups that they are required to sign confidentiality agreements.

We have tried to engage with the government in a positive way since the beginning of the hospital cuts but we have been stymied at every turn. We have lost faith in this process.

So we decided to create an expert panel of well-regarded citizens to hold our own democratic hearings. Please see the next page for a list of hearings across Ontario,

## Upcoming Events

### Cambridge: Save Our Hospital Town Hall Meeting!

Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1pm  
Cambridge Newfoundland Club  
1500 Dunbar Road  
with Waterloo Regional Health Coalition  
Chair- Orville Thacker  
Ontario Nurses Association-Brenda Pugh  
OHC Director- Natalie Mehra  
hosted by the Cambridge Health Coalition

### St. Mary's Save Our Hospital Town Hall Meeting!

Monday, March 1, 7 pm  
Friendship Centre, Multipurpose Room  
317 James St. South  
with Mayor Jamie Hahn  
OHC Director Natalie Mehra

biographies of the panelists, and how you can make a submission or presentation. Please spread the word far and wide. Let's make this something that the government cannot ignore.

## Updates

### Lifetime Achievement Award for Dr. Gordon Guyatt: Call to Vote Now!

We are writing to ask you to take 15 seconds of your time to vote for Gordon Guyatt as the recipient of the British Medical Journal's 2010 "lifetime achievement award" (<http://www.bmj.com/> half way down right side of page). For 30 years, Dr. Guyatt has been a leading advocate for universal, publicly funded health care. He has worked side by side with the Ontario Health Coalition, providing continual support and collaboration. Dr. Guyatt is also a leading academic. You can find a brief summary of his contributions at the BMJ website ([http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/339/dec29\\_2/b5546](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/339/dec29_2/b5546)). We are asking you to vote for Gordon because we think he deserves the award, and as an expression of solidarity with a physician who has dedicated huge amounts of time, energy, and commitment to causes that are central to the Ontario Health Coalition's mission to protect our public health care system. Thanks for considering this request.

### Kingston Rideaucrest Home Funding Saved

On November 17th 2009, Ontario Health Coalition Director, Natalie Mehra presented at Kingston City Council, at the request of several councillors, with an analysis of a consultant's report and the city supervisor's report recommending a cut of \$1.5-1.7million at Rideaucrest Home. The result of this and advocacy by local seniors' groups and the union at the home was a council vote to stop the cuts, maintain services - without lay offs - and look into the complaints of staff at the home.

### Thoughts on the Closure of a Local Hospital: Burk's Falls by Kathleen A. Tod

*December 2009 saw the closure of the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre. Burk's Falls Health Coalition member and retired hospital administrator, Kay Tod, had this to say of the hospital's demise.*

The silence is heart-rending. Rooms that once offered sanctuary to the sick and halls that once resounded to the echo of busy feet are now filled with overflowing boxes and sundry equipment. The venerable Burk's Falls and District Health Centre is dead! Sixty-one years of history, care and healing is now "headed south". Literally.

Without much in the way of public consultation, close to 7,000 residents of the surrounding communities were informed by the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare Services (Huntsville and Bracebridge Hospitals) that all lost local services could be "easily obtained" at three area hospitals --- one situated 45 minutes south,

*continued on flip side.....*