

Hospital Fight-back Reduces Cuts

Some communities' campaigns have worked to reduce proposed hospital downsizing and service cuts. But big cuts still underway in Niagara, proposed for Peterborough.

Small town ERs at renewed risk in Southwestern Ontario.

Community campaigns have led to the stall or roll-back of proposed hospital cuts in a number of communities in recent months. Cornwall's MPP Jim Brownell proudly announced a funding reprieve of \$5 million towards the hospital deficit and a recent announcement of new long term care beds. In Northumberland Hills, the local coalition has succeeded in overturning a LHIN decision to close dozens of hospital beds, but the diabetes education clinic and outpatient physiotherapy cuts have gone ahead. To date, the closure of the Wallaceburg Emergency Department has been stopped, along with the ER closure on St. Joseph Island. But these proposals can be revived at any time and we are cautioning our members to stay vigilant.

Large funding increases have been given to hospitals such as the Niagara Health System, Lakeridge Health, Brampton's William Osler Health Centre and others to offset deficits.

However, a number of serious new hospital cuts and ER closures are proposed. Here are some updates:

Peterborough

The new hospital CEO (transplanted from Chatham where he proposed the closure of the Wallaceburg hospital) has proposed a series of dramatic cuts to hospital staff and services. Plans include axing 182 staff, cutting beds and leaving an untold number of beds unstaffed, reducing diagnostic tests, forcing patients out of hospital more quickly (even though there is nowhere for them to go) and reducing housekeeping and dietary services. 1,000 lawn signs have been put up and another 500 are going out. 10,000 leaflets are being distributed by local volunteers. The local coalition has been in the media almost daily fighting back against the cuts. They are demanding that local Liberal MPP Jeff Leal step in and stand up for the local hospital.

St. Marys

This local hospital located in a beautiful small community north of London, is

Upcoming Event

Oakville Town Hall Meeting

To address community concerns over the proposed P3 hospital
Monday, September 20th, 7pm

Oakville Public Library

120 Navy Street

Hosted by: Oakville Health Coalition

part of an "alliance", dominated by the Stratford hospital. The hospital board is proposing to close most, if not all, of the acute care services in St. Marys including the emergency department and an untold number of acute care beds. The services they propose to move into St. Marys are the same services that are being closed down all across Ontario – physiotherapy and complex continuing care beds. The local fight-back committee has mounted a major campaign including hundreds of lawn signs, thousands of leaflets, hundreds of red t-shirts and media and public appearances. They are lobbying the local MPP to step in and protect their hospital.

Petrolia

The community has already faced down one proposal to close the emergency department at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart hospital. Now, the hospital (which is an amalgamation, dominated by Sarnia) is proposing to close it again. Like in St. Marys the hospital is citing an acute shortage of physicians as its excuse, but has done nothing to recruit physicians to provide coverage. The Sarnia Lambton Health Coalition is just gearing up. Thousands of leaflets are going out across Lambton County.

Ottawa

The Ottawa Hospital faced a 2010-2011 operating deficit of \$20-25 million, potentially forcing the elimination of 100 of its 1,200 beds and six to eight operating rooms. The hospital has identified about \$20 million in cuts next year, including: 70 nursing jobs, delisting 22 vacant positions and the layoff of 79 support-staff positions and the closure of 29 acute care beds.

Health Action Assembly and Conference on Health Care Funding and Sustainability

Saturday, November 6 & Sunday, November 7

The Bond Place Hotel, 55 Dundas St. E, Toronto M5B 2G8

Details on registration form on back.

Each year, the OHC invites our members and supporters to come together to plan strategy to deal with upcoming issues. Each local coalition is strongly encouraged to send one or two representatives at minimum. All our member groups and individual members are also encouraged to attend.

Regional Summits on Hospital Fee-for-Service Funding

Hamilton Tues, Sept 21, Legion, 435 Limeridge Rd E, 10am-3pm

Sault Ste. Marie Wed, Sept 22-3pm, Legion, 96 Great Northern Rd, 10am-3pm

London Thurs, Sept 23, CAW Hall Local 27, 606 First St, 10am-3pm

Sudbury Sat, September 25, Legion, 1553 Weller St, 10am-3pm

Ottawa Mon, Sept 27, Ottawa Public Library, 120 Metcalfe St 10am-3pm

Toronto Tues, Sept 28, Metro Central YMCA, 20 Grosvenor St, 10:30am-3:30pm

The provincial government is changing the way hospitals are funded, moving away from block grants (called hospital global budgets) to a type of fee-for-service funding. This system has already been tried in the UK where it resulted in serious financial instability for hospitals, privatization and major cuts. Details on the Summits are on the back of this page.

