

Calls in community for two hospitals in Brampton at public meeting

By Bill Rea

The old Peel Memorial Hospital site in Brampton may have problems, but there are many in the community who want it left open as fully functioning facility.

That message came from many of the more than 200 people who were on hand for a community meeting in Brampton recently.

The session, held at the Pearson Convention centre on Steeles Avenue, was hosted by the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), and was aimed at gathering public input for a task force charged by LHIN to develop a plan for the future of the site. The old facility has been replaced by the new Brampton Civic Hospital,

which opened late last year.

LHIN reported the province has committed at least \$95 million in capital funds to revitalize the Peel Memorial campus.

But many at the meeting were adamant that the Brampton area needs two functioning hospitals.

Those who were registered at the meeting were divided into about a dozen groups to come up with what they wanted to see the old facility used for, and emergency care was high on the priority list for most of those groups.

"We need a second hospital," declared Heart Lake resident Roz Feldman. "One hospital is not enough."

She was angry that the new facility was provided as

a replacement to the old site, rather than as an accompaniment.

Feldman said this LHIN has more growth than any other in the province, but it ranks 14th in terms of funding.

"We can't get into the emergency room of our own hospital," she charged.

Peel Region Chairman Emil Kolb, who sits on the task force, pointed out this is strictly a provincial matter.

He said there have been 12 studies conducted since

1995 on the infrastructure of the hospital, and Price Waterhouse Coopers was hired to do a 13th. Kolb said they did a summary of the 12 previous studies, and found there was some credibility to the Kennedy wing of the hospital, built in 1984. As far as the rest of the facility was concerned, he said they found it would cost millions to bring up to Building Code standards.

Barbara Pitts, of Price Waterhouse Coopers, tried to explain the findings of the study, but she had a hard time getting the message out through the heckling to which she was subjected.

"Can we have one more study after this one?" one man asked sarcastically.

But Pitts maintained the structure is not up to the standards of the Building Code, adding there have been no major upgrades in the last 10 years. "The approach has been patch and maintain only," she remarked.

Joe McReynolds, board chair of the LHIN, told the



Heart Lake area resident Roz Feldman was passionate in her conviction that one hospital for the area is not enough.

audience this is a great opportunity, with a site that's currently not being used, but is available to provide some health services.

He added the goal is to have the task force complete its work by the end of February, with a plan in place for the Peel Memorial by the end of April.

He also pointed out the new Brampton Civic Hospital is state-of-the-art, although it's experiencing some difficulties in its early

days. The province has appointed a supervisor, and the hope is the answers will soon be found. "We'll be watching, and I'm sure you'll be watching," McReynolds remarked.

He also agreed a second hospital is needed, but stressed the first priority is to get the new one up and going.

"Let's not beat around the bush," one man called out from the audience. "We cannot live with one hospital."



Joe McReynolds, board chair of the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) addressed the audience at the recent meeting to discuss the future of Peel Memorial Hospital.

LHINs representatives update Peel councillors on their activities

By Bill Rea

The provision of health care has been a concern of late, especially to people in the Caledon and Brampton area.

But the people responsible for delivery at the local level are working to make sure the problems are ironed out.

There are two Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) serving Peel, and representatives of both recently provided updates for Regional council.

"We are maturing as an organization," commented Caledon resident Joe McReynolds, chair of the board of directors of the Central West LHIN.

He told councillors they have been busy building relationships within the community. And as of April, there are more responsibilities for integration, financing and monitoring these services. McReynolds assured councillors the LHIN staffers are learning and getting ready to start making some tough decisions.

During the last summer, he said the LHIN spent a lot of time monitoring the

building of the new Brampton Civic Hospital in the northern area of the city. There have been some problems reported with this new facility, and McReynolds observed the Province has appointed a supervisor, Ken White, to work on sorting things out.

He added the LHIN has seen new recent funding to help it respond to some of its priority areas, such as addiction programs.

Mimi Lowi-Young, CEO of the Central West LHIN and McReynolds both commented on an integrated health services plan that's being developed. She said it will serve as a foundation.

Lowi-Young commented that Health Minister George Smitherman and Premier Dalton McGuinty had asked them to look at what's needed in the area, with a

focus on putting the the campus of the old Peel Memorial Hospital to some use, including the possibility of providing acute care and other services in the community.

There have been about a dozen community engagement sessions, involving medical care providers, etc., aimed at gathering thoughts and ideas.

She added the plan will be looking toward developing services to be needed until 2019, as well as what is needed now.

Lowi-Young said the LHIN set up a task force to look into what should be done with the old Peel Memorial Hospital site. It should be issuing a preliminary report early in February, with a final report by the end of the month. The LHIN will be making its report in April, she said, adding there will be more opportunities for the community to have input.

The LHIN is also working on a provincial initiative dealing with the issue of aging at home. Lowi-Young said LHINs all over the province have been directed to look at increasing services needed to keep seniors living in their homes longer. This involves looking into such areas as local transportation, respite care, etc. She added they have received about 65

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