

Fort Erie Healthcare SOS



SAVE OUR HOSPITAL
DOUGLAS MEMORIAL

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Dear Recipient

Re: Opinion Piece for Media Release

We are asked why we are fighting to SAVE OUR HOSPITAL here in Fort Erie. That it is a done deal and there is nothing we can do.

Fort Erie Healthcare SOS has been pushing back against this agenda of the Niagara Health System. Town Council through resolution has adopted a similar program to help save the services currently available at Douglas Memorial and the Niagara Region has supported them. They are appealing with Niagara Health to simply transfer the monies already allocated to run Douglas and allow the Town to manage the daily activities to keep our services available to our residents here in Fort Erie and surrounding areas.

“It takes a village” is a proverb often attributed to raising a child; but let’s consider that as we age, we often return to that childlike state and even more reason to review the way we consider a person’s life from start to end. One of the attributes that have kept Canadians apart from other countries is our ability to consider not just our needs but the needs of others in Canada. We decided a long time ago that healthcare was a given and that the health of a nation depended on the health of its citizens.

At each stage of our life, we require care for one reason or another and that is where our Doctors come in. They diagnose and evaluate and prescribe care to make us well or to get us to our next stage of life as comfortably as possible. So, in simple terms the Doctor prescribes a course of treatment and sends us home to follow the orders. Most of the time the person can do this for themselves or for the family member that has a condition. There are times when the person’s illness is not evident and may require more than a quick diagnosis and medication. Times where the person cannot care for themselves and does not have a support system at home that allows them to stay in their home.

Here is the crux even if everyone had their own personal physician to tend to their needs the Doctor and their patient still require the help and support from a team, which is available 24/7. First to help diagnose and set out a course of treatment, second to follow that course of treatment and alter where needed, third to assist the patient to reach stability and fourth to assist in any ongoing therapy or physio or counselling, as needed.

Cures are not always available, but we learn to adapt to move on with our lives. This takes help, support, and assistance.



There is no one size that fits all. “Each patient is unique and brings their own strengths and weaknesses.” Each patient has a unique family circumstance: some are close, some not so much, some have replaced family with friends, some have decided to live on their own and some have families of their own that they must take care of.

So, for every reason that the hospital system is saying people want to be taken care of at home, there are others that NEED to be cared for “by the village.”

A hospital was once that village – it was not made to house people permanently, but it allows the patient to be treated with dignity and respect while the Doctors, nurses, technicians, and specialist created a plan for our future selves.

We realize how hard the nurses, PSW’s and all support staff have been working to provide 4 hours of care for each patient. They have had this as part of their mandate for quite some time. They still have not achieved this request. That 4 hours of time is feeding, bathing, toileting, providing medicine, and movement and all of it is also often being a sounding board for the patient that very often cannot express gratitude because of their own fearfulness about their future they are angry, and they lash out at anyone within earshot.

Doctors come and go to check on the patient to see if there is a change, nurses report the rounds they have tried to make and if the patient is very lucky, they may have a family member or a friend willing to help dress, toilet and feed them, because the patient is not able to care for themselves. Family that is close to the hospital can make quick trips, if they must travel too far it is then left up entirely to the hospital staff.

When hospitals say you are as good as we can get you, now you need to go home. Home care helps us look at our houses or apartments to make recommendations on how we can safely move within our own home, often this can be an expense the person has not prepared for. Other issues arise when we return to our homes as well, like how do I get to my Doctors appointments if I no longer drive and what happens if I have a relapse. Then the patient must also consider if they need long term care to address ongoing issues or care needs.

Hospitals, long-term care, nursing staff, support workers, technicians, diagnostic specialists, therapy, counselling and all ongoing support required, they become a necessity of a life respected from beginning to end. Our community in Fort Erie deserves no less, our people deserve to have our urgent care restored and our little hospital of fifty-five beds to remain open and available when the need arises. Hospitals were built to meet the needs of the people not to have a steady stream. Our hospital’s success is measured in quality patient care and funding should be a priority for our healthcare system.

Reopen the space currently available at Douglas and hire back the staff from private clinics and agencies, treat our staff with decency and respect, remember they are just trying to get to their next stage of life too. Put the public care back into the system; “we know it takes a village.”

Save Our Hospital SOS is a group of local volunteers that will continue to make sure that our community voices are heard, and we will continue to promote Douglas Memorial as one of the answers to the problems experienced by our current health care system here in Niagara. We can be an example for other small rural hospitals that are losing their funding; we need to be the light.

Heather Kelley
Fort Erie Healthcare SOS

