



**CITY OF PORT COLBORNE**

**TOWNSHIP OF WAINFLEET**

**COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE**

**NIAGARA HEALTH SYSTEM**

**HOSPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**Submitted to the**  
**Board of Directors**  
**Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant**  
**Local Health Integration Network**  
**and**  
**The Honourable David Caplan**  
**Minister of Health and Long Term Care**  
**October 30, 2008**



## PORT COLBORNE

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October 30, 2008

Ms. Juanita Gledhill, Chair  
and Members of the Board  
Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant  
Local Health Integration Network  
264 Main Street East  
Grimsby, Ontario L3M 1P8

Dear Chair Gledhill and Members of the Board:

Please find enclosed the response of the citizens of the City of Port Colborne and the Township of Wainfleet to the Niagara Health System's Hospital Improvement Plan.

Our community has devoted considerable time to preparing a thoughtful and realistic response to the HIP, therefore, we trust that the LHIN will carefully consider our comments and suggestions for improving the proposals included in the HIP.

There are a number of critical issues that I would like to highlight for your consideration.

First, as you know, the HIP was prepared in response to a projected operating deficit of \$18 million at the NHS, representing approximately 6% of its operating budget. Dr. Kitts made it very clear in his presentation to you on October 28, 2008 that the NHS HIP will not achieve this. We are aware that similar organizations with similar operating deficits (most recently the Kingston General Hospital) were the subject of an "independent third party" operational review. I believe that a similar approach should have been taken at the NHS before a major transformational plan was developed without community consultation.

In our view the NHS HIP is not so much about either creating Centres of Excellence or solving an \$18 million budget deficit but is really about solving a HR crisis in staffing the Hospitals in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland by the effective closure of the Port Colborne and Fort Erie Hospitals and the transfer of their staff to these sites.

During his presentation to you, Dr. Kitts solidified the quality and need of the staff currently working at the Port Colborne and Fort Erie sites.

Over the course of the past several months, we have met with many stakeholders in Port Colborne, Welland, Pelham and Wainfleet to discuss the HIP. We were disappointed to learn that there has been NO consultation with the family physicians in Port Colborne, the Director of the Port Colborne Emergency Department, the Port Colborne Hospital Standing Committee, the Port Colborne Hospital Foundation, the Bridges Community Health Centre, the Region of Niagara EMS, Region of Niagara Transportation or the Port Colborne and Wainfleet Municipal Councils in the preparation of the HIP.

Although we appreciate the NHS had only six weeks to prepare this plan, this lack of engagement with key health care stakeholders is disappointing. It builds on the lack of trust and confidence that exists between the NHS and the citizens of our communities. An issue we think should be dealt with immediately – once again, solidified by the comments of Dr. Kitts in his presentation to you on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

The NHS has based its planning on a number of assumptions. The NHS HIP proposes the development of many new services such as a comprehensive range of primary care services in Port Colborne, improved emergency transportation services and improved non-urgent transportation services. Although the NHS acknowledges that the HIP plan cannot be implemented without these key enablers, once again, there was no consultation with these key enablers and there is no commitment for funding for these expanded services. The report assumes that the Ministry of Health, municipalities or Niagara Region might fund these services. We understand that there has been no discussion with the government about the potential for funding these services. The downloading of the costs of these new services to the citizens of Niagara, including Port Colborne and Wainfleet is not acceptable. This indicates a lack of sound planning in preparing the HIP.

As I mentioned to Dr. Kitts in my public presentation to him and his team on October 15, 2008, may I suggest the LHIN receive clarification and/or support from the Province's Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, et al. I would be very interested in their response to these particular deferrals to the property taxpayer, especially in light of the extra Health Tax imposed on those throughout the Province of Ontario.

Our response is the culmination of a very broad based community consultation process that sought information from across all segments of our communities, which was a public, open and transparent process. These include discussions with those excluded from the NHS HIP process as mentioned above. Over three months of community engagement resulted in a comprehensive, well organized, thoughtful and effective response to the NHS – Hospital Improvement Plan.

Mrs. Juanita Gledhill, Chair and Members of the Board  
Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network  
October 30, 2008

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Although the NHS - Hospital Improvement Plan was completed with very little to no public/stakeholder input within our communities, we felt it was imperative to lead by example, ensuring our process was inclusive. It is representative of 100% community and stakeholder input.

Upon listening to Dr. Kitts make presentation to your board on Tuesday, October 28, 2008, we were encouraged by the fact that he took the time to listen to the communities you represent. We were encouraged that he took the time to both peruse and recommend some recommendations as contained within our written response, solidifying our desire to discuss same with the NHS. And finally, we were encouraged by his comments that there is a need for us all to work together to ensure that access to healthcare services in Niagara are, in fact, strengthened.

We now look forward to working within an environment of trust and confidence and are looking at the LHIN to provide that environment.

With kind regards, we remain,

Yours truly,



Vance M. Badawey  
Mayor

cc: The Honourable David Caplan, Minister of Health & Long Term Care

encl.



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October 20, 2008

Dr. Jack Kitts  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Ottawa General Hospital  
501 Smyth Road  
Ottawa, ON K1H 8L6

Dear Dr. Kitts:

Please find enclosed the response of the citizens of the City of Port Colborne and the Township of Wainfleet to the Niagara Health System's Hospital Improvement Plan.

May I begin by taking this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for your attendance at our public meeting on Wednesday October 15, 2008. Our community has devoted considerable time to preparing a thoughtful and realistic response to the HIP and we trust that you and the LHIN will carefully consider our comments and suggestions for improving the proposals included in the HIP.

As per our discussion before the public meeting, I agree with your assessment that we are not far apart. You are correct in stating that we should sit down together to solidify enhanced health care opportunities for both our community and the overall Region of Niagara. I look forward to this opportunity.

There are a number of critical issues that I would like to highlight for your consideration. First, as you know, the HIP was prepared in response to a request from the LHIN due to a projected operating deficit of \$18 million at the NHS, representing approximately 6% of its operating budget. We are aware that similar organizations with similar operating deficits (most recently the Kingston General Hospital) were the subject of an "independent third party" operational review. I believe that a similar approach should have been taken at the NHS before a major transformational plan was developed without community consultation.

Over the past several weeks, we have met with many stakeholders in Port Colborne to discuss the HIP. We were disappointed to learn that there has been NO consultation with the family physicians in Port Colborne, the Director of the Port Colborne Emergency Department, the Port Colborne Hospital Standing Committee, the Port Colborne Hospital Foundation, the Bridges Community Health Centre, the Region of Niagara EMS or the Port Colborne and Wainfleet Municipal Councils in the preparation of the HIP.