

TAB 10



**CITY OF PORT COLBORNE
TOWNSHIP OF WAINFLEET
HEALTHCARE SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**LETTERS RECEIVED
FROM RESIDENTS
DURING AND AFTER
PUBLIC MEETING OF
OCTOBER 15, 2008**



PORT COLBORNE

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Vance M. Badawey

Opening Comments:

Good Evening.

First may I welcome all of you here this evening.

I appreciate the time each and every one of you has taken to participate in this evening's public meeting.

This is an opportunity for you, members of the public, to pass on your thoughts in relation to the Niagara Health System's attempt at preparing a Hospital Improvement Plan.

More importantly, it is an opportunity for you to contribute to Port Colborne and Wainfleet's response to the NHS HIP.

I stand before you this evening not only as the Mayor of the City of Port Colborne, but also as a father, a neighbour, a friend, a resident of this community – who is truly concerned about the NHS plans for our Community Hospital.

I have served as a member of Council since 1994 and in that time, served as a member of the PCGH Board of Directors and have fought shoulder to shoulder with my community for many years to protect the future of the Port Colborne General Hospital and the services it provides to the families of Port Colborne and Wainfleet.

I will focus my comments tonight in the brief time I have on 3 points.

- 1) The perception and belief in my community that this public consultation is a waste of time. That the deal is already done and that this is just to satisfy the requirement to say that there was consultation with the Community before the NHS HIP is approved.

- 2) That the Niagara Health System and its leaders are to be trusted without question and to question them is simply playing politics trying to scare the public and we should be still and let those in authority decide for us, what is best for us.

- 3) That the NHS HIP is not so much about either creating Centres of Excellence or solving an \$18 million budget deficit (6% of the NHS operating budget) 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 Fort Erie and Port Colborne Hospitals and the transfer of their staff to these sites.

Let me briefly speak to each point.

Point (1) is this consultation process real?

There has been a great deal of concern expressed in our community about whether your team will fairly consider the issues identified by our Community Based submission and those issues you will hear about from our Citizens who will speak to you this evening.

This is in part based upon press coverage, such as the editorial in the August 28, Welland Tribune which stated,

“Kitts told reporters his review team has no intentions of assessing options put forth by Municipalities.”

It is also based upon a longer term distrust of the NHS which has developed over the past 8 years in particular.

May I reiterate for the record tonight that I have received your personal assurance that your team will listen and give an unbiased consideration to the concerns raised by our community and for that may I express my appreciation to you and your team.

We believe that within our response to you, we have demonstrated that the NHS HIP is extremely flawed and in need of improvement. Our Community Based response to the HIP speaks for itself and therefore, this evening I will not go into specifics that are contained within our submission. We will however, be anxiously awaiting your review of our submission and your recommendations to the LHIN Board to correct those flaws.

Point 2: Anyone who questions the NHS and its plans are either misguided or playing politics with a serious health issue and should stop.

You may note a serious level of concern in my opening comments and that would be fair comment, for the NHS has established a pattern of broken promises which is based in either a culture of deliberate double speak or a very poor understanding of our health care future.

In a 2002 letter to myself, Mr. Paul Leon, then Chair of the Niagara Health System Board of Trustees stated,

“First let me assure you, the Port Colborne Council, and the people of Port Colborne that there will always be a hospital in Port Colborne.

The Board of the Niagara Health System is fully committed to serving your communities health care needs and ensuring access to quality hospital services care available in Port Colborne.

Again let me stress, we remain committed to emergency and inpatient Care.”

Again as late as June of 2007, in a letter addressed to the City of Port Colborne, Ms. Debbie Sevenpifer, President and CEO of the NHS wrote the following,

“The NHS remains fully committed to the Port Colborne Hospital Site as an inpatient hospital supported by a 24 hour/7day a week emergency department.

Our commitment to rejuvenate the Port Colborne emergency department demonstrates a long term investment in the site that is in keeping with local community needs.”

In a Dec 12, 2007 Ministry of Health press release that reported a \$400,000 renovation grant for the Emergency Department at the Port Colborne General Hospital site, NHS President and CEO Debbie Sevenpifer is quoted as saying,

“We’re excited to be moving forward with this important upgrade of our emergency department at the Port Colborne Site.

A modernized ER will be a better functioning ER to serve the needs of our patients.”