

# **SAVE & REBUILD**

## **West Lincoln Memorial Hospital**

November 13, 2018

**An Open Letter to Rob Maclsaac, President & CEO Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS)**

**From: Tony Joose, Co-Chair Save West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH)**

Dear Mr. Maclsaac:

The citizens of West Niagara have been watching events around West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH) unfold over the last few weeks. A series of announcements and emerging information has our residents concerned and leery of true motivations.

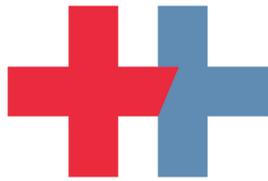
First off, let me say that WLMH values our relationship with HHS. We have had a long-standing management services agreement and extended that relationship to a full amalgamation in 2014. We are however, deeply opposed to the latest recommendation to relocate surgical and obstetrical services to other sites of HHS.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, HHS announced to WLMH staff that a consultant's report recommended upgrades to the surgical and endoscopy facilities at WLMH to meet new standards introduced by Accreditation Canada. That report suggested mostly weekend closures to allow for physical upgrades. The elapsed time for the renovations is 27 months at a cost of \$8.6M. HHS did not consult WLMH physicians about this report and instead announced it to them and neither sought their input nor engaged in a discussion of alternatives. Furthermore, HHS went further than the report's recommendations and announced that surgical and obstetrical services would be unnecessarily relocated for 27 months; a step that goes way beyond mostly weekend closures recommended by the report.

In the 48 hours following the announcement 1,700 West Niagara residents participated in an all citizens' meeting. In addition, within less than one week 18,000 citizens signed petitions and have been delivered to the Ontario Legislature.

What have we learned since the October 22<sup>nd</sup> announcement:

- a) WLMH physicians and other staff have been sent communications by HHS warning them that disciplinary action would occur if they speak with media about this issue or lead public engagement exercises.



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- b) The operating room is being starved of nurses. Open positions were not posted on the internal HHS website for many months.
- c) Rebecca Repa, previous Site Lead of WLMH, local Grimsby resident and stalwart supporter of our hospital was moved out of her position in September 2018.
- d) HHS removed colonoscopies and endoscopies from WLMH in the spring, and they have stopped some of the previous surgeons who used to operate at WLMH, whittling away service to make the OR unviable.
- e) HHS say patient safety is their concern, but the latest accreditation report says that WLMH earned the highest possible ranking of "exemplary", and all of the infection control rates look just as good or better than the other HHS sites.
- f) When asked if services would come back to WLMH following the renovation, you, Mr. Maclsaac, and other HHS officials have said that was the plan. However, no clear answers have been provided on how that would happen if all obstetricians, midwives and surgeons left the region to make a living.
- g) In a recent media interview, Aaron Levo, Vice President Communications and Public Affairs, re-positioned the October 22<sup>nd</sup> staff announcement as the beginning of a "planning process".

The above facts, developments and inconsistencies have the residents of West Niagara suspecting that HHS actions are a calculated way to hollow out WLMH, run it towards its' demise as a Community hospital or, worse yet, lead to the hospital's closure.

Mr. Maclsaac, we request an immediate and clear (no wiggle words) comment on the following:

- 1) **A "firm and public" commitment to find a solution that will not require surgical and obstetrical services to be "relocated".**
- 2) **Urgently shore up surgical nursing staff at WLMH. and post and fill open positions.**
- 3) **Confirm that HHS is fully committed to the redevelopment plan for WLMH (including all services) that has been submitted to the Ministry of Health for approval.**

For more information, please contact Tony Joosee [tonyjoossewlmh@gmail.com](mailto:tonyjoossewlmh@gmail.com)