

A Letter to the Community from the Brant Community Healthcare System (BCHS)

A recent consultant's report prepared for the BCHS to deal with significant operational pressures recommended a complete assessment of the impact of closing the Willett facility in Paris. The report did not recommend ceasing urgent care for residents of the County. Unfortunately, initial interpretation of the recommendation led many to believe differently. The Willett is an aging facility that is in need of major upgrades and has been underused for more than a decade, in spite of our best efforts to attract tenants. We believe in healthcare for the communities we serve: County of Brant, City of Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River and surrounding communities but we believe there is a better way and place to deliver healthcare in the future. We also appreciate the fear and anxiety that change brings.

At a recent meeting convened by MPP Dave Levac with a number of key community members and healthcare providers, the consultant's recommendation was considered. We agreed on the need to involve and engage other stakeholders and the broader communities in understanding the health and healthcare needs of the population, where these services might be located and who would be best to deliver them. We will continue to meet and in the future provide opportunities for public input.

Residents of Brant County currently receive healthcare services from a number of different providers. The way healthcare is being delivered in Ontario is undergoing change and that has implications for all partners in the system to find better ways going forward. As we mobilize to act on the recommendation we need to ensure the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN) and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MoHLTC) are involved, that municipal and provincial representatives are involved, and that key community stakeholders and primary care partners are involved.

As we begin the financial and operational assessment, we will consider many possible options that might reasonably include: offers from others to purchase and refurbish the Willett and offer a range of services, a possible new build with partners or moving an urgent care service into an existing space. BCHS may no longer be landlords or owners of this site and may lease space for an urgent care centre. Over the past year, there have been a number of unsolicited expressions of interest from interested parties and there may be others forthcoming for consideration, all with an aim to provide the healthcare services people need and expect.

We have just recently received the report and at this point no decisions have been made and no timelines have been developed. We do not expect changes to happen fast, given a number of unknown issues that may arise from a sale or divestment of The Willett. Staff may be impacted and if so, we will transition through those changes with the expected care and fulfilment of the requirements under the provisions of collective agreements and other legal obligations. We also have tenants that we would collaborate with. We are not in any position to

offer any notices at this point. We rely on our dedicated staff, physicians and volunteers and will seek ways to include them in the process as it unfolds.

Decisions will be made following consultations and a thorough assessment of the needs of the community along with the financial and operational implications on the acute care services we provide. Communities across Ontario and elsewhere are already planning ahead as they develop community and primary care 'health hubs' and greater opportunities for partnerships that create and expand access to healthcare services.

We recognize the importance of healthcare to all residents and appreciate the concerns you have. Please take the time to read the full report on our website (www.bchsys.org) and when we begin our consultation process, feel free to share your concerns with us. Again, we re-state: this will be an open process and there have been no decisions made to date.

We thank you for your patience while we work through this process.

