



**NORTHUMBERLAND
POVERTY REDUCTION
ACTION COMMITTEE**

Reach Out. Change Lives.

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May 26, 2010

Foster Loucks
Chair, Central East LHIN
Harwood Plaza
314 Harwood Avenue South
Suite 204A
Ajax, ON L1S 2J1

Dear Sir:

RE: Loss of Rehabilitation Services in Northumberland County

The Northumberland Poverty Reduction Action Committee (NPRAC) is vitally concerned about the level of poverty in our rural county. NPRAC is a broad-based coalition of community agencies and individuals who agree that by taking collective action, in multiple sectors and by multiple methods, poverty will be reduced in our county. We believe that the poor need action now, if poverty is ever to be reduced. The list of NPRAC members is attached.

According to Statistics Canada, Northumberland scores well below the median income levels compared to the provincial averages. 7.9% of our population is below the Low-Income (before tax) Cut-Off, translating to nearly one in every 12 people in our county. The depth of this poverty must not be overlooked. The compounding effect of this poverty existing in a rural setting, with fewer community resources and a lack of affordable transportation to settings outside the county, are also facts that can not be overlooked.

Because lack of health care is so closely tied to poverty, NPRAC wants to be sure that Poverty Reduction forms part of any discussion surrounding health care in this County. It is vital that the problems that low-income and rural residents

face in dealing with health issues are properly addressed in any decision that is made about health care resources in Northumberland.

The Board of the Northumberland Hills Hospital recently presented a draft budget to the Central East LHIN, in which essential services were to be cut in an effort to balance the budget by 2011/2012. One of the key services cut was the Outpatient Rehabilitation Service. As you are aware, the Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) had the only publicly funded, OHIP-covered, rehabilitation service in all of Northumberland County. We understand that the LHIN unanimously approved the proposed hospital budget, thus leaving Northumberland without an OHIP-funded rehabilitation service.

While Northumberland County does have privately owned and operated physiotherapy and occupational therapy services available, the loss of the OHIP-funded service means that the impact of this cut will be felt most deeply by low-income residents of this County, including seniors, children, individuals on social assistance and the disabled. Those who cannot afford to pay for private physiotherapy will have to choose to defer or delay essential treatment, or forego treatment altogether because of cost constraints.

Furthermore it is no answer to say that low-income residents of Northumberland can get these services by travelling elsewhere. The time and expense of travelling out-of-district to receive OHIP-funded care is not a viable answer for low-income residents. There are no public transportation services available anywhere between Northumberland County and the cities that offer outpatient services, such as Oshawa, Peterborough and Belleville, the next closest centres with this service. Transportation and all related costs would need to be paid directly by the patients in order to get them to and from appointments. For those low-income residents of Northumberland, this may very well mean that resident would have to choose between paying for food and rent, or paying for basic health care such as physiotherapy. Furthermore, even if travel was not an issue for low-income residents, the other sites providing this service would then have to have more staff in order to deal with the increased volume of patients, otherwise wait times would increase even more substantially.

We ask that the LHIN immediately provide incremental funding for an OHIP-funded outpatient rehabilitation facility in this County. Providing funding for such a local service would be a direct example of a supportive and sustainable environment that addresses the social determinants of health. To fail to do so is to deny Northumberland residents timely and equitable access to care, and will undermine the health of our community's residents. These principles are listed on the Central East LHIN website, along with others such as accountability, responsiveness and respect. Will the LHIN live up to these principles by restoring Northumberland's OHIP-funded rehabilitation services?

We look forward to hearing your answer. We would also ask that you meet with NPRAC to discuss how the LHIN can incorporate Poverty Reduction into its work.

Yours truly,

Lois Cromarty
Chair, NPRAC

- Cc: Lou Rinaldi, MPP Northumberland-Quinte West
Cc: Don Ford, Chair, Community Care Access Centre
Cc: John Hudson, Chair, Northumberland Hills Hospital
Cc: The Honourable Deb Mathews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Cc: Northumberland Today
Cc: Northumberland News
Cc: NPRAC Members:
- o Northumberland Community Legal Centre
 - o Northumberland United Way
 - o Northumberland County Community and Social Services
 - o Northumberland Child Development Centre
 - o Northumberland Coalition Against Poverty
 - o The Help Centre
 - o Northumberland Community Futures Development Corporation
 - o Northumberland Labour Council
 - o Fleming College, Cobourg Campus, Academic Upgrading
 - o Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit
 - o Habitat for Humanity Northumberland
 - o St. Vincent de Paul
 - o Port Hope Community Health Centre
 - o Ministry of Community and Social Services (Ontario Disability Support Program)
 - o Northumberland Transportation Initiative
 - o H.E.A.R.T. (Helping Everyone Access Recreation Together)
 - o F.A.N. (Food Access Northumberland)
 - o Affordable Housing Action Committee (Northumberland)
 - o Beginnings Pregnancy Care
 - o Durham College, Port Hope
 - o The Honourable Christine Stewart, P.C.
 - o Carolyn Rienstra
 - o Doug Bates
 - o Rev. Phyllis Dietrich
 - o Gerald Gray
 - o Stephanie Escott
 - o Marilyn MacIntosh