

March 1, 2007

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The Honourable George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long Term Care
Hepburn Blk, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Smitherman,

Re: Current Status of the Healthcare System - City of Greater Sudbury

Accessible and effective healthcare is vital to every citizen and every community in Ontario. Greater Sudbury is Northern Ontario's largest city and the main medical referral centre for the Northeast. These factors, combined with the large distance to other centres, make our community's healthcare system a top priority for our citizens and our City Council.

Since taking office in December of 2006, I have committed myself to the task of understanding the intricate network of our healthcare system and its impact on our citizens. Over the past few months, I have met with and listened to a number of healthcare professionals – each sharing their concerns and solutions. The underlying message I have heard from professionals, citizens, physicians, planners and care givers is the ***need for a systemic review of community-based services and of the patient flow both inside and outside of the acute and community-based healthcare systems.***

I have seen first-hand the Emergency Department overcrowding, when the demand for emergency services exceeds the ability of our ED to provide quality care within appropriate time frames. This overcrowding has also impacted our city's Emergency Medical Services. Too often ambulances become backed up when our paramedics are unable to transfer care to ED staff in a timely fashion. This leaves our paramedics and their patients in a stressful situation and compromises our ability to serve other patients requiring emergency pre-hospital care throughout our City's large emergency response coverage area.

I have heard from professionals and ordinary citizens about the need to **accelerate the establishment of the 96 additional long-term care beds** announced by your government in January 2007. There are currently 72 interim beds that are being fully accessed and we were pleased to see the recent announcement of an additional 10 beds.

Long-term planning associated with bed availability is critical to ensure our aging society has sufficient range and availability of necessary healthcare services. The waiting list to long-term care facilities in the City of Greater Sudbury has always been lengthy. As of February 18, 2007, there were a total of 477 clients in the Sudbury Manitoulin area awaiting long-term care placement. This situation has become intolerable and I believe that **we need to maintain the 72 interim beds in addition to the development of the new 96 long-term care beds.**

On February 16, 2007, your Ministry announced that you would be investing money to improve access to community-based care. That funding and its objectives will certainly contribute to alleviating the problems being faced by the Sudbury Regional Hospital since it will **provide patients increased access to home care services as well as the support of geriatric emergency case management.**

I would like to also suggest an **increase in allocated funding for seniors supportive housing.** This is another important element that would allow seniors to access the necessary services to help them remain in the community longer, and reduce the pressures on our healthcare system.

I believe that it is time to **accelerate the City of Lakes Family Health Team initiative.** Given the number of unattached patients in the City of Greater Sudbury and the community's large geographical area, the City of Lakes Family Health Team can play an important role in enhancing our existing healthcare system. We remain committed to this model and this process and look to your Ministry for help in accelerating this initiative.

In the past, your government has listened and I am confident that you continue to recognize that integrated community partnerships make a difference. In the next few days, you will be meeting with senior officials from our city's hospital. **I want you to know that we are extremely supportive of our hospital and urge you to work together to develop a plan to move forward and bring expanded and improved services to our city.**

I recognize that there are a number of challenges, including funding, that must be addressed to bring improvements to this situation. I remain confident that this community will work together with the LHIN and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to ensure that citizens of the City of Greater Sudbury will have access to the best organized range of provincially-based healthcare services.

Mr. Minister, I appreciate your ongoing support and look forward to further developments. ***Rest assured that the City of Greater Sudbury is ready and willing to work with you to meet the healthcare needs of our citizens.***

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodriguez", written in a cursive style.

John Rodriguez
Mayor

c.c. City Council

The Honourable Rick Bartolucci
Minister of Northern Development & Mines

Shelley Martel, MPP

Chair Gisèle Chrétien and Board of Directors
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Dr. Dennis Reich
President of Sudbury and District Medical Society

Dr. Chris Bourdon

Dr. Jordi Cisa

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Catherine Matheson
General Manager of Community Development