

## **Chudleigh: it's time to get angry**

We have a sign. It's a nice sign. It's just north of Dundas Street at Third Line where the new Oakville hospital will be built. Apparently that sign is all we will have, for perhaps as long as five years, as hospital construction in Oakville has been delayed by the provincial government.

Ministry officials have confirmed to me that Oakville's new hospital will be delayed at least a year past the anticipated 2012 opening. With Oakville delayed, I fear expansion expected in Milton, will be delayed even longer.

Ministry officials are saying the problem is a lack of skilled labour available to take on the project, which they refer to as 'construction capacity'. This, as the lengthy building boom in Halton is beginning to slow down. Local construction people tell me that skilled labourers are going to Alberta.

We need medical facilities. When it comes to population growth, providing those facilities is the one responsibility of the provincial government. It was the current provincial government which forced the high pace of growth in Halton through their Places To Grow initiative.

They even added the Health Tax to help pay for their promises. Much of that money comes out of the pockets of Halton residents who have good jobs and a higher than average rate of employment.

And yet Halton residents are left waiting, waiting for health care improvements they have paid dearly to get.

With populations rising dramatically, it comes as no surprise that our current hospital facilities in Oakville and Milton are due for significant expansion. Milton hospital was built for a population of about 30,000 but Milton is now home to almost 70,000 people. No more facilities can be added to the current site of Oakville hospital but the population keeps growing and is now over 170,000 people.

I have been fighting for new facilities since before 2003 when I helped secure a land grant for a new hospital in Oakville. Now, with 70,000 more people in Oakville and Milton than those hospital facilities were built to accommodate, we are long past the time for action. I have been pushing hard for years. Now is the time for a new approach.

Make no mistake, once you get into our existing facilities the care you receive is excellent and will continue to be. The problem will be getting in. We simply do not have the capacity in these facilities that is necessary to handle our current population.

Imagine what it will be like in Halton in 2013 before the new Oakville hospital opens its doors and when Milton's expansion hasn't even begun. By then it is expected that at least another 70,000 people will call Halton home and hospital facilities built for 160,000 people will be handling a population of more than 300,000. Halton patients will be scattered among hospitals in other regions.

It's time for the community to get angry. It's time to bombard Premier McGuinty and the new Health Minister David Caplan with our demands that hospital construction be sped up not slowed down.

I have a petition in my office available to be signed. I have a template letter posted on my website at [www.tedchudleigh.com](http://www.tedchudleigh.com) which people can copy, sign and mail to the Premier. I encourage everyone in Halton riding to get involved. It is only the first step. A petition and letter writing campaign is one form of pressure and it worked in the Lord's Prayer debate. Maybe it will work again.

– Ted Chudleigh,  
MPP for Halton

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