

## **Health agency must stop bullying**

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Shame on our Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and its spokesman, Paul Huras.

What a divisive and damaging strategy it is to pit community health services against hospital services. It is insulting to say that if Kingston General Hospital does cut its services, the LHIN will have to cut community services. We need both. They complement each other, and what we want to do is build a comprehensive system that meets community needs.

Part of the problem is that we are simply expected to believe Huras because . . . because what? Because he works for the government? I suggest a better place to start is to give the community the facts. If these kinds of tradeoffs are needed, give us the information. Involve us in the discussion.

What is in the hospital accountability agreement? What are the costs of community services, and where is that money to be spent? How much money has the province allocated to the South East LHIN? What are the conditions placed on spending this money? Instead of threats and bullying, maybe a little constructive discussion and community development might help.

If, as seems likely, the problem at KGH and Hotel Dieu is structural underfunding, then the LHIN should be working with us to obtain more hospital money from the province. Relying on scare tactics makes us justifiably suspicious. Is the LHIN just acting as an arms-length hatchet organization for the provincial government? Maybe it only wants to cut our hospital services and get rid of two hospital boards that have stood up to the government.

Informed community discussion on essential services helps achieve accountability and strong communities. It is a shame that the LHIN has chosen to use bullying and scare tactics to force through health- care restructuring (the same approach used by the Mike Harris governments) and divide our community.

I would encourage all community members and organizations to come to a town hall meeting at 7 p.m. on Nov. 26 at City Hall on the threats to KGH and Hotel Dieu. Join the discussion on what we as a community can do to improve our hospital and our community health- care services.

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Chair

Kingston and District Health Coalition