

# Minister of Health finally agrees to meet with Halton Region

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After a month and three requests, minister of health and long-term care, Eric Hoskins, will meet with Halton Region chair Gary Carr to discuss longstanding healthcare issues facing the region.

A representative from Hoskin's office confirmed on Tuesday (Nov. 21) a meeting has been set after Wellington-Halton Hills MPP, Ted Arnott, accused the minister of ignoring the region's requests to meet.

Carr first called for the meeting to address a number of long-standing issues surrounding the delivery of health care in the region in October.

Chief among the concerns the region would like to address with Hoskins are an approximately \$10 million per year shortfall in health care funding, as well as a proposed realignment of the provinces Local Integrated Health Networks.

While these issues have been a concern for some time, it was a recent report by an expert panel commissioned by the minister

which brought the discussion bubbling back to the surface again.

"On Oct. 3, the health and social services committee discussed the expert panel's findings on public health. The panel suggested condensing the existing 36 boards of health into 14, which would split the region into two different boards," said Arnott in a release.

In February 2017, the region threatened to ignore provincially mandated growth targets if funding gaps were not addressed.

"Halton Region continues to experience funding shortfalls in public health programs, including paramedic services. In total, this represents a funding shortfall of \$9.7 million in 2017," said the region in a release in February.

"Municipalities do not have the adequate revenue tools to satisfy the 'growth pays for growth' principle. As a result of these limitations, there is an estimated funding gap of \$14.1 million per year and combined, there exists a tax impact of 10 per cent on the regional portion



Graeme Frisque/Metroland

**Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott says Minister of Health and Long-term Care, Eric Hoskins, is ignoring Halton Region's request for a meeting regarding longstanding concerns over inadequate funding and healthcare delivery across the region.**

of property taxes to the residents of Halton," it added.

According to Arnott, Carr's October meeting request was ignored by Hoskins and the ministry.

The inaction prompted Ar-

not to bring the request forward in the legislature on Nov. 15. He says he spoke to Hoskins again during an emergency sitting of the house on Saturday (Nov. 18) and reiterated the request - to no avail.

"Halton Regional Council is expressing serious concerns about the report of the Minister's Expert Panel on Public Health, which is entitled Public Health Within An Integrated Health System," said Arnott in the House. "What's more, they are speaking up about the fact that this government continues to shortchange the Region of Halton for public health - to the tune of almost \$10 million a year."

"I approached the Minister in the Legislature on Saturday during the emergency sitting of the Legislature and reminded him again that he needs to meet with the Regional Chair and Regional representatives," added Arnott in an email response to The IFP. "He has yet to agree to this meeting."

In response to Arnott's questions in the legislature on Nov 15, Hoskins acknowledged the meeting request but was non-committal in addressing it.

"I know there is a request in from the Regional Chair of Halton, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to have a look at that," replied Hoskins.

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