

*Editorial*

# WOHC doesn't get it

Two busloads of Halton Hills residents, including Mayor Rick Bonnette, delivered an impassioned plea to the William Osler Health Centre's board of directors Thursday afternoon: Please rethink your plan to close Georgetown Hospital's obstetrics/pediatrics ward July 5.

The WOHC board, through its chair Bryan Held, delivered an equally strong message: Get lost.

While Held didn't use those exact words, there was no mistaking the message behind his "lip service" rebuttal to Bonnette and the 120 local residents who climbed aboard two buses to attend the meeting in Etobicoke.

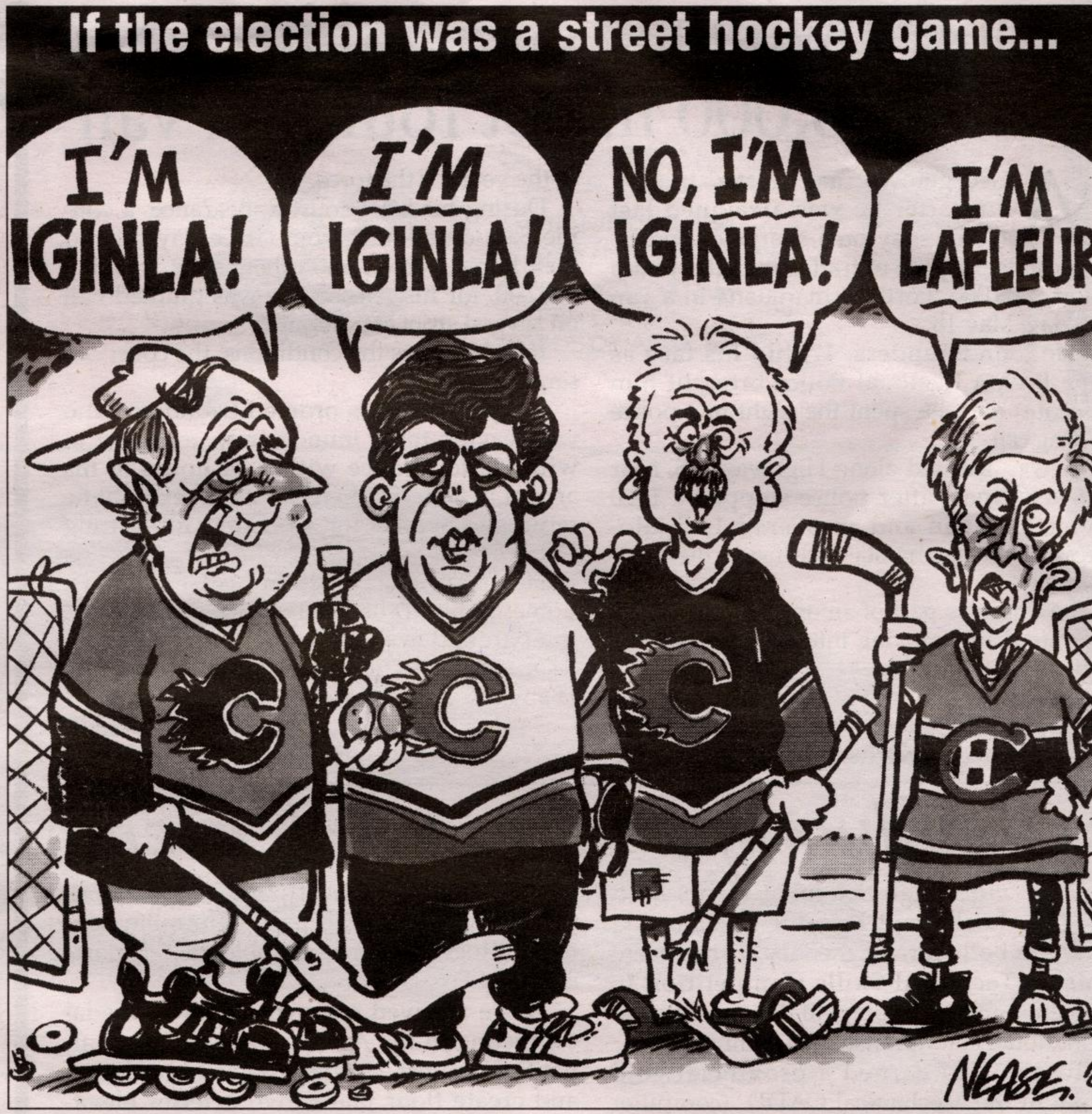
The board has made its decision to close the OB ward in an effort to save \$800,000 (CEO Bob Bell's numbers). Those savings are needed to help pare down the \$27-million operating deficit WOHC has allowed to get out of hand in recent years.

Local residents are understandably upset by this plan and have legitimate concerns. Among them:

- Is this the first step in further local hospital cutbacks?
- How does this help Halton Hills— a provincially designated underserved area— recruit more doctors?
- Does this not hurt the town's ability to market itself as a growing community with necessary services?
- Why should residents in a growing community have to drive long distances to have their children delivered by physicians they may never have met?

Over the past nine days this community has let us be its voice. More than 3,500 ballots to our campaign to fight the closure were received along with several dozen letters to the editor, and hundreds of e-mails. Your belief in this hospital— a hospital built by local residents for local residents— and its great staff has been overwhelming.

We urge you to continue this fight, to not let WOHC officials continue their high-handed, dictatorial ways. Remind them of something they have forgotten: This is YOUR hospital!



## Letters to the editor...

### 'Will town be left without a hospital?'

Dear editor,

Three and a half years ago, I gave birth to my second child at the Georgetown campus of William

Osler Health Centre (WOHC). The night before my daughter was born, I attended a focus group session sponsored by the hospital, which was designed to gain the input of local area women into the obstetrics department in Halton Hills.

At that time, the hospital was interested in improving its services to pregnant/labouring women, and was consulting with the local community. Not one woman at that meeting suggested that the entire department should be closed, and that women should be forced to deliver their babies in Brampton.

I understand the WOHC is running a large deficit, and that cost-saving measures must be found. Every cut that is made is going to impact on the community in some way.

What saddens and angers me is that this key decision was made without the input of the citizens of Halton Hills. It cuts to the very core of the community, and alienates the many young families who live here, and who assume that our local hos-

pital will provide this basic level of service. We are left feeling the "poor cousins" of the Brampton and Etobicoke campuses.

If we cannot fill the quotas for other hospital departments, I assume that their closure will soon follow. Will we be left with a hospital at all in a few years time, or will we all be traveling to Brampton? What does it say about a thriving and growing community such as Halton Hills when we cannot even boast that our local hospital has facilities for women to deliver their babies?

As other writers have noted, our community already includes several young families. Had they been consulted, I am sure that many would have chosen to keep the local obstetrics department open.

I fear that it may be too late for the WOHC to reconsider its decision, and that the positive experiences of myself and other local women delivering in our own hospital will soon be but a distant memory.

Susan Detmers, Georgetown

### Closing ward 'unfair'

Dear editor,

Having just recently delivered my child at William Osler Health— Georgetown campus, I was very upset to learn that other families in Georgetown will not have the option of doing the same.

Having a child is stressful enough, not to add to it by having to do it out of town with strangers by your side. I was lucky enough to have a family doctor who delivers babies, who was with me through the whole nine months, every test, every check-up, to answer every question I had, and even though I ended up having to do a C-section, was there to administer the anesthesia and help through the added stress of surgery.

I think it is unfair that you will be taking that privilege away from other young mothers, not to mention the skilled physicians we have in town to provide this much-needed service.

I think it is also unfair that you recruited more family doctors to the area and then took this away from them as well. Is that not false advertising?

We really need to find an alternative to removing the obstetrics from Georgetown hospital

Stephanie Emmerton, Georgetown

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### Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be signed and include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

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