

# Georgetown hospital OB closure... the readers speak out

The proposed closure of the William Osler Health Centre Georgetown hospital campus's obstetrics and pediatrics wards has sparked dozens of responses by *Independent & Free Press* readers.

In an effort to try and ensure all voices are heard, we are publishing

excerpts of letters to the editor we have received on this issue.

Some letters were sent to hospital CEO Bob Bell and various other health care officials. Copies were made available to *The Independent & Free Press* for publication.

The purpose of this letter is to voice my anger at the closure of the obstetrics and pediatric ward at the Georgetown campus of the WOHC.

Both of my children were born there and it saddens me that if we ever have a third, we would be shipped out of town to a facility where, I am sure, the care would not compare to that we received at Georgetown. We had the most wonderful birthing experience with our first-born.

When I was expecting my second child in the fall of 2002, the obstetrics ward was temporarily closed due to a shortage of staff. I cannot begin to express the sense of relief when we found out we would be able to deliver in Georgetown. I can only hope that the expectant Georgetown families get to feel that same sense of relief, if CEO Bob Bell comes to his senses and revokes the decision.

Do NOT take away this service from our families!!

**Christine Coleman, Georgetown**

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Mr. Bell, you may not be from this area, but let me remind you what Halton Hills was like when it didn't have a hospital.

During the 1940s and '50s, my in-laws from Georgetown had to travel to Hamilton and Guelph for the births of their children.

During this time, my father-in-law and a group of other dedicated Halton Hills people worked hard to establish a local hospital. The town was growing rapidly then, although I don't believe that they could have imagined how large Georgetown would become!

Their perseverance paid off and my in-laws were blessed with the birth of two healthy sons in 1961 and 1965 in their very own Georgetown Hospital. From that time forward, they always felt that the care of the doctors and health professionals here was second to none. Despite a modest income, they continued to donate generously to the hospital as their family grew.

My father-in-law died last year and I know that he would be very disappointed to think that local pregnant women would find themselves in the same predicament as 50 years ago, when they had to travel out of town to deliver their babies. My husband and I have these very concerns as we await the birth of our third child in August.

We are truly moving backwards. I, like my father-in-law in the 1950s, look forward to the day when I may deliver a baby in its hometown, surrounded by health care professionals who will continue to follow him or her through life. If that were the case, perhaps he or she could grow up to be a healthy, wise and caring CEO of a large hospital.

**Marie McMenemy, Georgetown**

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As a patient and mother, I am very con-

cerned about the effect this decision will have on the quality and availability of health care for my family.

As a citizen of Georgetown, I also worry about the negative impact these closures will have on the community at large. I have no doubt that the elimination of these services will cause reductions and closures in other departments of the hospital as well. How successful will we be in recruiting and retaining family physicians to service our growing population? How can we hope to solicit new businesses to a town which cannot offer a full service hospital or enough doctors?

Additionally, I am appalled by the way in which this decision was thrust upon the doctors, nurses and residents of Georgetown without any warning or opportunity for discussion. This may have seemed an easy answer for WOHC management and directors, whose personal family health care would not be affected by closing these services. However, for residents of Georgetown, the decision is simply unacceptable.

**Sherri Bennett, Georgetown**

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Although I am not personally planning to extend my family, I have spoken with many other women who are. I know of many people in the community who have also shared in my disbelief that a town growing as quickly as that of Georgetown will not have a place to extend their families or to be able to choose the place that brings them comfort and being able to be with their physician, families and friends only minutes away.

I was very fortunate to have such a warm and personable experience; it disturbs me that many other women now have no opportunity to share these experiences.

**Diane Quinton, Georgetown**

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How can this possibly be a wise business decision?

If you were the president and CEO of a manufacturing company, would you stop production of a product as the demand for that product was on the rise?

Considering the continued housing growth in Georgetown and nearby Acton, your proposal suggests that you would.

Georgetown and Acton are trying to attract young, growing families. Closing the OB ward in Georgetown might be enough to make those families look elsewhere. Very shrewd!

**Gary Latimer, Georgetown**

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Did they ever take into account the number of maternity patients who were Georgetown residents who were forced to go to Peel Memorial because the only obstetrician was not available on weekends at the Georgetown Campus? There were quite a few, I'm sure.

**Joyce Mackee, Georgetown**

*'The piecemeal erosion of our hospital with the planned closing of (the OB ward) is a disgusting display of arrogance... to the citizens of this community'*

My husband and I used to live in Mississauga (close to Credit Valley Hospital). Three years ago we decided that in the following few years we would like to start a family and relocate to a smaller community.

The people that I have met in our community have not had a bad word to say about Georgetown hospital and now that is all in jeopardy.

I don't want to go to Credit Valley and be another number. If I wanted to go to Milton, we would have bought in Milton where the houses and property are cheaper.

I know my community has deep concerns about this and they are voicing their opinions.

Please listen to your doctors, nurses, health staff and the community of Georgetown and do not close the OB ward.

**Heidi Noyes, Georgetown**

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The piecemeal erosion of our hospital with the planned closing of the above noted sections is a disgusting display of arrogance and disdain to the citizens of this community, who conceived, built and maintained this facility with hard-earned after-tax dollars and thousands of hours of volunteer work, and dedication by the many doctors, nurses and staff who have contributed their lives' work over many years so that we could have a facility that provides us with care and help in times of need.

Small communities such as ours take pride and comfort in the knowledge that such a facility is available for us in times of want. Our community is growing, not diminishing. That is why we have such a great response for donations and volunteers. Communities thrive through common pride and effort. Take this away and you destroy the essence of belonging.

To have this ripped from us under the pretense of a "better thing through amalgamation" is audacity at the highest level. Amalgamation has proven to be a folly in the grouping of regional areas, and there is no reason to believe this will not be the case for the combining of the Brampton, Georgetown and Etobicoke hospitals. We are willing to share our hospital, but not at the expense of reducing or worse, eliminating its potential. We nurtured this facility for our needs and a

desire to share and help our neighbors and friends when the time comes, not to have it dismantled by the political flavour of the day who think they have a better way.

If you believe we will stand passively by while you incise with crude manipulation, you have missed the meaning and the strength of the word "community" and what it stands for.

**Wm. M. Pomeroy, Norval**

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I really don't think you can put a price on such important details that a woman and her child(ren) need after such a traumatic and miraculous event. I find it almost discriminatory that the mostly male executives have decided to make this erroneous decision, not fully aware of the impact on the welfare of the residents of this community—women and children, in particular.

Further, this business-minded decision will have long-reaching effects on other services offered by the Georgetown hospital which must be considered. I know that there is a great demand for a balanced budget and lower taxes but when push comes to shove, we all expect our government to provide certain services to maintain a higher standard of living than is experienced elsewhere—we do not want our government run as a business if the "bottom line" is more important than the well-being of Ontario residents.

**Elizabeth Debowy, Georgetown**

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To Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman:

The birthing unit in a hospital is one that also provides the sense of hope and the continuation of life. To allow the closure of this integral part of the hospital would be a tragic mistake and one that would change my voting alliances.

The care provided by this wonderful facility is truly nurturing and valuable to Georgetown. My children have a right to be treated in a facility they know, by people they are comfortable with. That is the nature and heart of smaller communities.

I, along with many other parents, am truly enraged at the announcement of the closure of the Obstetrics and Pediatrics ward. What is your office going to do about it? My children deserve your aid.

**Amanda Wright, Georgetown**

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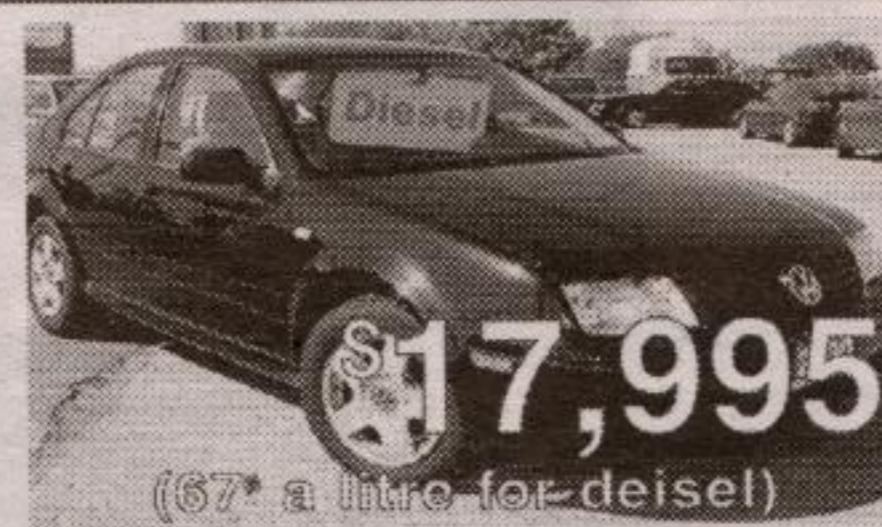
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