

# Health council re-organization will hurt Halton, says Chudleigh

*MPP believes change could further tighten Region's financial situation*

By LISA TALLYN  
Special to The Champion

The Liberal government's reorganization of district health councils into Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) will cheat Halton out of scarce health care dollars, says Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh.

The 14 networks across the province, to be up and running by April, will plan, coordinate and fund health care services. They are to do that locally along geographic boundaries that match the way patients currently seek health care.

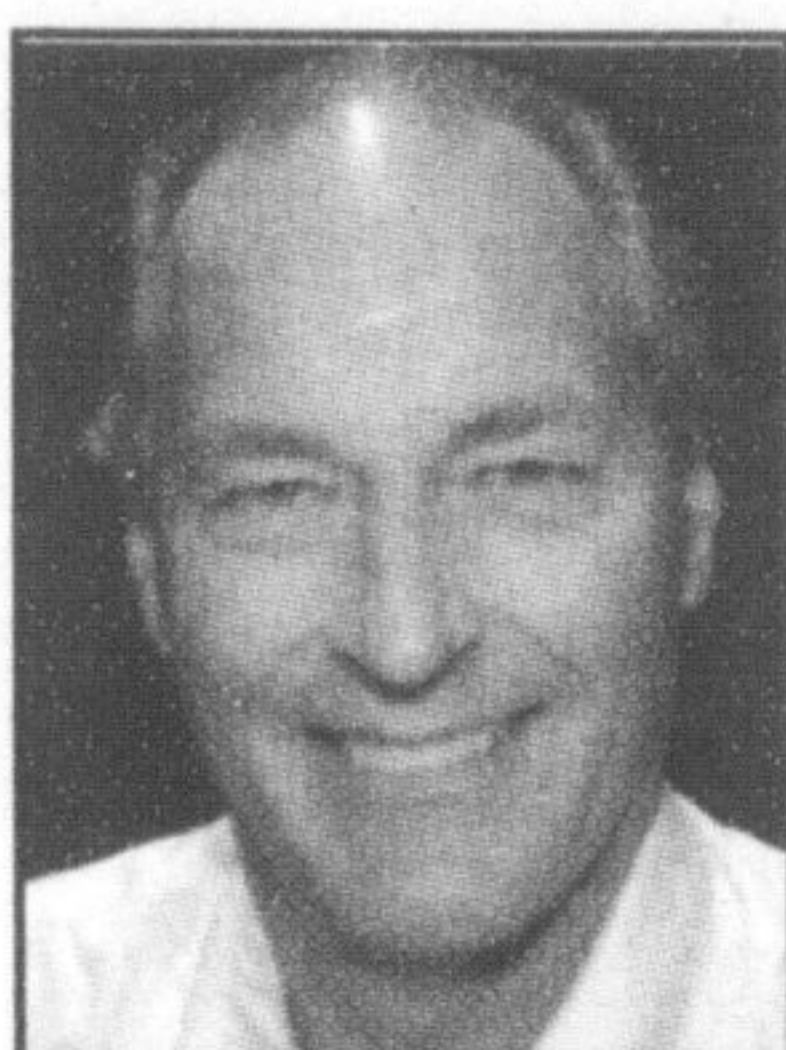
"Right now the Liberals want to split Halton three or four ways and put parts of Halton into funding and planning zones with neighbouring municipalities," said Mr. Chudleigh. "Not only would that take away our collective voice and make Halton residents junior partners in funding and planning for hospitals and Community Care Access services, but our high growth needs will be lost among those low growth areas that surround Halton."

Chudleigh said splitting up Halton will pose a problem for current service agencies, pushing up their administration costs as they would have to apply for three or more service areas for contracts.

"Halton should stand on its own, or at least be held together as a whole within a larger LHIN so its needs will be fully recognized. Halton's high growth must be recognized within a LHIN or under funding will cripple our local health care system," said Mr. Chudleigh.

David Jensen, a spokesperson with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, said, however, that the boundaries for the networks aren't final yet.

He said they are currently being reviewed and its not known yet when the



Ted Chudleigh

final boundaries will be set.

Under the province's current proposal, Milton and Oakville are to be included in the Mississauga Oakville Health Integration Network and Burlington is to be covered by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Network.

Mr. Jensen stressed that the idea behind LHINs, "is you're going to get the money where it's needed."

"They (the local networks) can respond more effectively," said Mr. Jensen.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman said last year when the government unveiled details of LHINs that they "will vastly improve our ability to respond to the health care needs of local communities."

"For the patient, this means better access to the care they need as close to home as possible," said Mr. Smitherman.

Steve Isaak, executive director of the Halton-Peel District Health Council, said there is "no question in my mind there are many positive strengths that Halton has been able to bring to co-ordinating and integrating health and social services within the current boundary."

He disagrees, however, with Mr. Chudleigh that Halton will be cheated out of dollars under the new system.

"I don't think the funding is at risk because the total funding pot will still exist," said Mr. Isaak.

"The vision for the networks is the right way to go. It's essentially going to allow the planning and funding allocation decisions to be made together based on local information," said Mr. Isaak.

# Lee to visit China for farming study

Wards 1 and 3 Councillor Barry Lee will soon be heading to China to take part in an agricultural study group.

Mr. Lee said he was approached to participate with a group that's exploring agricultural issues overseas, departing March 26 and returning April 9.

Regional council gave him the go ahead for the trip and approved \$5,000 from the councillor conference budget Wednesday for his venture.

"I believe my participation with this study group will enable me to bring back several models which will assist us all in developing a more comprehensive, well-planned agricultural policy for the Region," Mr. Lee said in a report on the trip.

He told council he's very excited about taking part in the group and said he thinks it will assist him in his work on various committees, like the Halton agricultural advisory committee. The itinerary for the trip can be viewed at [www.agritourscanada.com](http://www.agritourscanada.com).

# FOI request rating perfect for Region

Halton Region's clerk's department received top marks in 2004 for responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

A report from Halton Director of Legal Services Mark Meneray said 100 per cent of FOI requests received by the clerk's office were processed within the 30-day time limit.

The report also noted that about 74 per cent of requesters asked for general records, while 26 per cent asked for their own personal information.

The requests come under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which gives the public access to government-held records while imposing rules on municipalities, local boards and commissions regarding the protection of personal information.

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