

System failed baby, says MPP Sorbara

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

The health-care system has failed a Richmond Hill family whose extremely premature baby is being treated in a Buffalo hospital due to lack of space in Ontario neonatal facilities, accuses Vaughan-King-Aurora MPP

Greg Sorbara.

The Liberal MPP is furious the tiny infant had to be sent out of Canada for medical treatment, warning the situation points to a health-care system in crisis.

"I just think this is another tragic example of the sad state of our health-care system where we can no longer

look after our own population," he said.

But Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees lashed out at Mr. Sorbara and the baby's father, Sean Hopton, for criticizing the system, which he said has worked appropriately in difficult circumstances to preserve the infant's life.

On Feb. 15, Mr. Hopton's

wife, Suveera, gave birth at York Central Hospital through an emergency cesarean section to a boy, who weighed less than 2.5 pounds and measured 15 inches.

The as-yet unnamed baby has faced a number of medical challenges including bleeding on the brain, undeveloped lungs, a blood clot and low blood pressure.

Because the baby required more attention than York Central is designated to provide, he had to be transferred to a hospital that specializes in advanced neo-natal care for high-risk infants.

According to Mr. Hopton, his son was going to be transferred to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

But a shortage of space in

neo-natal wards for high-risk infants — caused when viral outbreaks at two Toronto hospitals closed some beds — meant the baby had to be sent to Buffalo Children's Hospital instead.

His parents, who also have a two-year-old son, have been driving back and forth from Richmond Hill to Buffalo every day to be with their baby.

The Hoptons' son is just one of at least three babies and seven women sent to Buffalo this month because of the bed shortage.

Mr. Sorbara said viral outbreaks are no excuse for sending high-risk patients south of the border for medical treatment.

He said the health-care

system has been the victim of one crisis after another in the past seven years, from ambulances being turned away from overcrowded emergency rooms to a severe shortage of doctors and nurses.

While Mr. Hopton said his family is concentrating on his son's health, he's disappointed the baby had to be sent to Buffalo.

But Mr. Klees condemned critics for denouncing the system. While he reserved most of his remarks for Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Klees said he found Mr. Hopton's comments "offensive".

He's sorry the situation has caused the Hopton family inconvenience, adding ideally the baby would have been treated at home.



Upcoming Events

• Understanding Depression:

February 26 and March 5, 2002, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., Outpatient Mental Health. To register, call 905-472-7011.

• **Board of Directors' Information Session:** Thursday, February 28, 2002 at 7:30 p.m. in the Hospital Auditorium.

• **Epilepsy "The Basics":** Tuesday, March 12, 2002 from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. MSH Auditorium.

• **Sleep Disorders**, April 2, 2002, 7-8pm MSH Auditorium, Speaker:

Dr. David Dancey, Respirologist, Sleep Specialist.

• Department of Paediatrics

Presents: Learning Disabilities, April 24, 2002, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Milliken Mills Community Library, 7600 Kennedy Road, Unit 1, Markham, Ontario.

• **Markham Stouffville Hospital Annual Gala:** April 5, 2002, Le Parc.

• **2002 Legacy 5K Run/Walk:** April 28, 2002, Legacy Community, 14th Avenue & 9th Line.

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