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Opinion

Guest Column: New Windsor-Essex hospitals system proposal is 'Building on our Strengths'

We are not just announcing the site for a new hospital; we are introducing a proposed plan to transform local health-care delivery.

City Desk

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The new mega-hospital plan calls for redevelopment at Windsor Regional Hospital's campuses on Ouellette Avenue and Tecumseh Road, shown, along with the erection of a four-storey, stand-alone emergency department on the former Grace Hospital site. (DAX MELMER/The Windsor Star)

By Dave Cooke, David Musyj, Bob Renaud, Janice Kaffer and Shari Cunningham

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“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”



This powerful quote by Helen Keller reflects upon something we have all come to appreciate over the past three years, as members of the boards of directors for Windsor Regional Hospital and Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, members of the steering committee overseeing the transformation of health-care services in our community – including the construction of a new state-of-the-art hospital – and members of the subcommittee responsible for recommending the best possible site for the new hospital.

July 16 we are not just announcing the site for a new hospital; we are introducing a proposed plan to transform local health-care delivery.

The new Windsor-Essex Hospitals System is a locally developed, collaborative plan for seamless, integrated and accessible health care.

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This plan, as submitted to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, is a reflection of a vocal and engaged community that has clearly articulated a need for change.

It was former finance minister Dwight Duncan who started the ball rolling on this project when he appointed a task force to examine the need for a new hospital.

The Windsor Hospitals Study Task Force picked it up from there. Teresa Piruzza, Tom Porter and Dave Cooke spoke to dozens of groups and hundreds of individuals before recommending that we move forward immediately with the planning of this project.

None of this would have been possible were it not for our two community-focused hospital boards of directors, who looked at the best interests of our community and fully supported the historic realignment of services between Windsor Regional Hospital and Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in 2013.

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From the beginning, the programs and services steering committee – with representation from all area

hospitals, the City of Windsor, County of Essex, the Erie St. Clair LHIN, the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre and Essex County Medical Society – insisted that the planning process be designed with integrity. At the heart of this open, fair and transparent process is an unparalleled level of community input.

We have made it our goal to include the voice of the community at every possible step. And every time we have asked, you – the residents of Windsor-Essex – have responded.

When we asked for individuals to sit on the site selection subcommittee, nearly 80 people volunteered for this unpaid, time-intensive task.

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The 10 volunteer members who ultimately formed the committee, spent a combined 1,500 volunteer hours on this project. Individually, each member of the committee evaluated and scored each of the more than 20 proposed properties, a task that was then repeated as a group, coming to a consensus on each of the 32 criteria before choosing the most suitable site.

The criteria that the subcommittee used to rank these properties were community driven. When we asked what matters most to you when making this decision, again, you responded. More than 600 people answered a survey and offered comments about the criteria. In addition, hundreds more reached out to us at our many presentations and open houses, called into our radio town hall broadcasts and submitted feedback through email and on our blog. Most told us without question, that accessibility needed to be a priority.

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Thanks to every one of you who took the time to add your voice to this important discussion.

To make sure the wishes of the community and the integrity of the process were respected, fairness adviser Glenn Ackerley was hired to monitor the decision making process. His mandate was to make sure the process set out by the steering committee was followed. He acted as another set of eyes and ears monitoring the process from a perspective of fairness and transparency.

Our logo for this project is Building on our Strengths: our strengths as health-care providers, the strengths of the exceptional teams of physicians and staff who provide outstanding care to patients, and most of all, the strengths of Windsor-Essex and the people who live here. You deserve nothing less than the very best in health care.

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We hope, when you see the results of our collaborative planning efforts, you recognize and support the work that has gone into the July 16 announcement and the integrity of the process used in the decision making.

A new, seamless, integrated and accessible hospital system is within reach. It is because of our commitment to this community – and the community's continued support – that we have come this far.

Please join us in this commitment to turn our vision into reality for the citizens of Windsor-Essex.
<https://windsorstar.com/opinion/guest-column-new-windsor-essex-hospitals-system-proposal-is-building-on-our-strengths>

PLEASE JOIN US IN THIS COMMITMENT TO TURN OUR VISION INTO REALITY FOR THE CITIZENS OF WINDSOR-ESSEX.

Dave Cooke is the program and services steering committee co-chair. David Musyj is Windsor Regional Hospital president and CEO and steering committee co-chair. Bob Renaud is Windsor Regional board chair and site selection subcommittee chair. Janice Kaffer is Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare president and CEO and steering committee member. Shari Cunningham is Hotel-Dieu Grace board chair

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