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Thoughts on hospital plan echo through council chambers

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There certainly is no shortage of an effort to "Save Our Hospital" here in Fort Erie.

At Monday night's regular council meeting, there were several points made against the Niagara Health System (NHS)'s Hospital Improvement Plan (HIP). Stepping up to the podium were MPP Kim Craitor, and a handful of doctors from the Douglas Memorial Hospital. All of whom, scrutinized the plan and made many claims as to how the plan will actually cause more problems in the long run, and not "improve" medical care in the Niagara Region by any means, especially in Fort Erie.

The first person to speak at the council meeting was Niagara Falls- Fort Erie MPP Kim Craitor. Although it was Craitor who first suggested an operational review of the NHS during his 2007 election campaign, he feels it is not the right plan.

The HIP, the way it's laid out, is the wrong plan," said Craitor.

He said everyone is entitled to their own opinion on this issue, and that "doctors on both sides should be heard" but judging by his comments on Monday night, his sentiments are the same as the other delegates who followed.

"The NHS really is a sick puppy, and it needs a lot of help and advice," said Craitor.

Ward 3 Coun. Bob Steckley asked Craitor if this was the review he was hoping for, and Craitor said it was, although there are many flaws that need to be addressed.

Steckley then referred to the "improvement "plan as a "hospital destruction plan," before Craitor said everyone needs to stay positive and hope to move forward.

Former mayors Wayne Redekop and John Teal also addressed council and the dozens of people in the crowd. As well, both presented resolutions to the Town, which they feel should be exercised on this issue. Redekop's resolution suggests the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) or the provincial Ministry of Long Term Health and Care to abstain from the removal of any equipment or services until a final decision on the plan has been made.

Teal presented two resolutions. The first echoes the initiative of Welland MPP Peter Kormos to introduce a private members bill, calling for all hospital boards to be determined through an electoral process.

His next resolution petitions health minister David Caplan to give the DMH its Rural Hospital Designation

Redekop said the HIP is a "chilling message" that "defies logic." He strongly opposes the plan and feels "every resident of Fort Erie should be terrified of the HIP."

Former mayor Teal said everyone in Fort Erie needs to come out to the public rally, that will be held on Thurs. Oct. 2, from 7p.m. to 9p.m. at the Leisureplex.

"If you can walk and you can breathe, you need to show up."

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