

Background Notes from the Mayor's Desk - March 31, 2016

What has been happening with regard to the planned closure of 15 Long Term Care beds at the Sundre Hospital?

During the week of March 7-11, patients and families in Long Term Care (LTC) at the Sundre Hospital received a registered letter from Alberta Health Services (AHS) indicating the LTC beds would be closing and that there would be meetings to discuss what that would mean to each patient. Here is a timeline of what's happened since then.

Monday, March 14th: Meetings with doctors, nurses, other front line staff, patients and families, the Mayor, and members of the Attraction and Retention Committee were held to outline the AHS decision to close 15 Long Term Care beds at the Hospital. There were many questions without answers. There was tremendous anxiety among patients, families and all those who provide care. Our MLA, Jason Nixon had received so many calls, he asked the Health Minister questions in the Legislature about the decision but received no real answers.

Tuesday, March 15th: At Mr. Nixon's request, 8 members of the community went to Edmonton, were introduced in the Legislature as concerned citizens wishing a meeting with the Health Minister, and were granted that meeting. The Minister assured the group that all current Long Term Care patients would not have to leave the community for care and she made other assurances that the hospital would not be closing and that the closure of beds would see some repurposing. She also made some assurances with regard to keeping staff employed.

Monday, March 21st: Our MLA, Mr. Nixon hosted a Town Hall meeting, which was attended by several hundred local and regional residents. Mr. Nixon outlined the Health Minister's commitments while representatives from AHS were available to answer questions.

Tuesday, March 22nd: I wrote a letter to Health Minister Hoffman outlining what I believed to be the community sentiment expressed during that Town Hall meeting and asked her to reverse the decision to close the 15 Long Term Care beds at the Sundre Hospital. I also told her that the community was furious with the decision and that a community group would be meeting Thursday March 24th to examine, and find, local solutions to meet the future health care needs of our region without waiting for AHS to finally host "a community consultation process".

Thursday, March 24th: The Hospital Futures Committee met with the goal to ensure that "no member of our community should have to leave Sundre to receive care that can be delivered by our rural doctors, nurses, health care aides and allied health providers at the existing Sundre Hospital and Care Centre". They came up with solutions reflecting the changing needs of our hospital that will also meet the future requirements of our region.

Tuesday, March 29th: A representative from the Hospital Futures Committee met with Town Council and presented the draft confidential proposal to ask for Council feedback and assistance in getting a second meeting with Health Minister Hoffman to present these community recommendations for the future of our hospital. More than 35 people have provided input to these recommendations so far.

Wednesday, March 30th: After contacting the Issues Manager in the Premier's Office, a meeting date with the Health Minister has been set for 11:00 AM Tuesday, April 5th. Representatives from the Hospital Futures Committee, Town Council, Mountain View Seniors Housing, and our MLA will attend that meeting to present the Hospital Futures Committee Proposal for soon-to-be vacant space at the Sundre Hospital and Care Centre.

Thank you to everyone who has helped put the Hospital Futures Committee recommendations together to deliver to the Minister. Thank you to everyone who took the time to attend the Town Hall meeting hosted by our MLA, Jason Nixon. Most importantly, thank you to everyone who has provided the care and support to those patients, families and staff affected by this decision.

As always, please call me at home (403-638-3535) if you have questions or comments.

Terry Leslie - Mayor, Town of Sundre