



PHOTO: TRISH FRY

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ANNAPOLIS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Q: Who makes the decision about keeping the Emergency Room open, Annapolis Valley Health (AVH) or the Department of Health (DoH)?

A: Ultimately, the Department of Health makes this decision because Emergency Rooms are their responsibility. However, the Annapolis Valley Health Authority (AVH) has stated that it has a good track record in influencing government policy.

Q: Who is Dr. John Ross?

A: Dr. Ross, an emergency medicine specialist, was hired by the government to review emergency services across the province. He has already visited ACHC. Ross has said publicly that big changes are coming. His recurring points: There are not enough doctors and nurses to fill health-care demands. Creating new health-care positions in place of a traditional workload could help solve this problem. He recommends expanding the scope of paramedic services. To allow for these steps Nova Scotia needs to change or amend current laws. "There are a lot of challenges we need to face and desperately clinging to the status quo isn't going to resolve them," he said in March. When he completes his review, Ross will recommend minimum standards to the DoH that community and regional hospitals must meet to provide safe care to patients.

Q: I've heard the decision to close our E/R has been made; that it's a done deal, isn't it?

A: Absolutely not. In 2007, the MacDonald government accepted the recommendations of a report detailing the future delivery of health care in the province. The report specified that only one E/R should remain open in the Annapolis Basin but it did not specify

which one. While the government has not announced future plans for our health centre, we need to convince AVH to support the facility with E/R capability. We know our E/R is in the present budget. The future remains uncertain; so it is important to act now!

Q: What is the alternative to 24/7 services at ACHC?

A: Some health professionals suggest that if services are cut, ACHC may function as a walk-in clinic so that people without doctors have access to primary care. This may sound like a good plan, but it doesn't provide doctors with the support of other health care providers like nurses, physio, and occupational therapists, dieticians and more. This reduces the quality of care making it harder to recruit new doctors to ACHC so the shortage may become worse and many in the community still won't have a doctor.

Q: Will we lose some of our doctors if our E/R is closed or services reduced?

A: Possibly. Some doctors have expressed their concerns about staying if services are reduced. This will also make recruiting new doctors difficult because it will limit their ability to build upon or maintain their clinical skills.

Q: Where are we supposed to go if there's an emergency? What about ambulance service?

A: If our E/R is closed, residents will need to go to the closest open E/R (Digby, Middleton, Kentville or Yarmouth). The current cost to you for home to hospital transport is \$134.52 + tax (the government covers the cost of ambulance transports between hospitals). This set-up is unfair to residents

who will be charged for ambulance fees when they have to travel to another facility because their local E/R is closed.

Q: Will we lose our Palliative Care if our E/R closes?

A: The Annapolis West Foundation covers most of the costs of Palliative Care services. However, the doctors and registered nursing staff of the E/R provide support, which is legally required to service these patients. Any proposal to cut our E/R threatens our Palliative Care services.

Q: Will there be a public meeting to discuss these issues?

A: AVH has stated that it plans to hold a public meeting some time in April to clarify the situation. To ensure that the community has a chance to express their concerns, a group of volunteers—Friends of ACHC—has forwarded constructive suggestions to AVH.

Q: What can the community do to help save our health centre?

A: Stay informed through local media and the website SaveACHC.com. Vote to save ACHC by mailing cards that have been distributed in an area between Bridgetown and Digby. Attend community meetings to ensure that AVH knows that the community supports the continuation of services at ACHC. Write or call your MLA, the Minister of Health or the Premier.

The Friends of ACHC is a concerned group of citizens working with the Annapolis West Health Foundation (AWHF), Annapolis Community Health Centre Auxiliary (ACHC Aux), Town of Annapolis Royal, Municipality of Annapolis County, and the Annapolis Community Health Board (ACHB).

For further information please visit: www.SaveACHC.com