



WHY WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE GOVERNANCE OF THE ROUGE VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM.

The Rouge Valley Health System is a Corporation of Ajax/Pickering Hospital, Scarborough Centenary Hospital, and three other Scarborough sites that offer specific mental health programs. This Corporation is governed and managed by a Board of Directors - 15 elected and 5 appointed. Its monthly meetings are currently open to the public. The Board's Governance rules are found in its 87 page By-Laws.

We were advised in an October 20, 2006 letter that "... the Board will undertake a review of its By-Laws and governance processes ..." and that any changes will be dealt with at the Annual General Meeting in June 2007.

In 1998, all Ontario hospitals were grouped into Corporations. Eventually, these Corporations began to make changes, usually for financial reasons, which angered many communities, who felt they had lost a voice in their hospital's "Governance". (Remember Dec. 2005 when APH's birthing programs were threatened.) We believe Boards of Directors (with the help of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care) will keep looking for ways to solidify their Corporate control against the threats of local communities, such as Alliston, Georgetown, Belleville, and most recently, Scarborough.

Replacing the Directors of the Rouge Valley Health System Board is done by a group of electors at the Annual General Meeting of the Board each June. Currently, those electors include all hospital volunteers, medical staff, and citizens who donate \$25 to the hospital. However, elsewhere, electors have been restricted to only the current Directors or, at most, to a very small number of people.

Who is eligible for election as a Director? Currently, a Committee of the Board interviews interested people and puts forward for "election" a slate of candidates that corresponds to the number of vacancies on the Board. Two years ago, the By-Laws were changed to eliminate anyone who is not Board approved from standing for election.

Qualifications needed to be selected. The criteria used to select the people put forward for "election" specifically forbid any representative of a community organization or municipality. A Director should be accountable only to the Corporation. Furthermore, of the recommended areas of expertise successful candidates should possess, only two have any connection to health care; all the rest are business/financial in nature. (See Hospital Governance and Accountability 2004, funded by the MoHaLTC)

Changing the By-Laws. Currently, the same electors that vote for new directors can express acceptance or rejection of By-Law changes at the Annual General Meeting. The trend towards reducing the number of electors makes it much simpler for the Board to make By-Law changes that exclude public participation in RVHS.

The RVHS Board meetings currently are open to the public, but other Boards close their meetings. Beginning this year, RVHS Board meetings have "in camera" (secret) times specified on each meeting's agenda, rather than adding them, as needed, which was the practise in the past.

We realise the RVHS Directors are volunteers who give much time to their roles. Many are sincerely dedicated to the hospitals they serve. But a corporate mindset is encouraged for Directors. Furthermore, we think the temptation to ignore community input as "outside interference" is gaining strength.

So, we believe the RVHS Directors could soon be able to...

1. appoint their successors; elections won't be necessary;
2. change their rules whenever they please, with no accountability to the communities they serve;
3. ignore communities and their concerned citizens as "special interest groups";
4. move hospital services to a different site without any community consultation; and
5. conduct their business and make their decisions in secret.

**WE MUST HAVE A STRONG VOICE IN OUR HEALTH CARE.
GOVERNANCE MATTERS !**

PLEASE MAIL, PHONE, or E-MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO US.