



## RVHS Mental Health Care Contemptible; RVHS laments “If only we had been told”

# Duplicitous Deflection

The bathroom of the “expert mental health care” facility into which Wendy Holliday’s husband Gord had been admitted was full of mould, and insects could be seen crawling in and out of cracks in the wall beside his bed. The floors and walls were filthy. A few weeks earlier, two nurses had been violently assaulted by one of the patients for whom those nurses had no PICU (Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit) to administer proper care, so patients were more routinely being put in restraints, and Gord, “inappropriately, intrusively and unnecessarily,” was one of them.

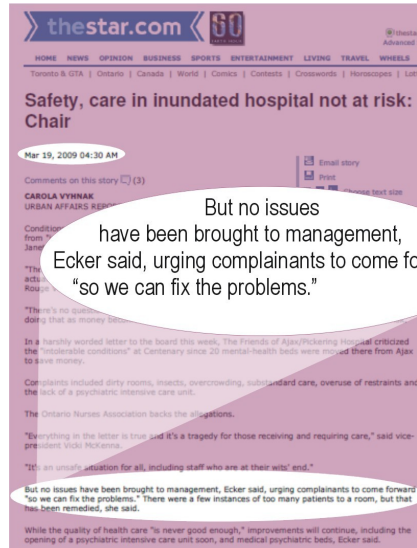
A clinic in backwoods Missouri? Perhaps a scene from a sequel to “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”?

No. Sadly, these were the conditions that confronted Wendy and Gord at the 10 West mental health ward at **Rouge Valley Centenary** — the “Centre of Excellence” whose “mental health care improvements” justified the closure of the 3 West ward at Ajax Pickering, despite 3 West’s existing PICU and new PICU just constructed.

The Friends responded with a letter to Janet Ecker and the Rouge Valley Health System board demanding an explanation and in particular, demanding audits of the Scarborough facilities that would publicly “ensure basic, if not proper hygiene for patient care areas”.

The letter (posted on the Friends’ website at [www.friendsofaph.ca](http://www.friendsofaph.ca)) outlined the deplorable conditions Wendy and Gord experienced and referenced an article in the [Scarborough Mirror](#). We sent copies of the letter to major and local media outlets.

The [Toronto Star](#) ran two stories on the situation, the first describing our concerns, the second carrying Janet Ecker’s reply. Did Ms. Ecker express concern over the problems? Did she provide details of independent audits?



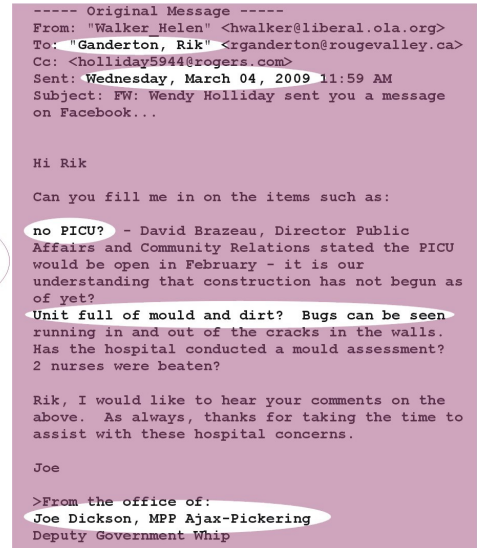
### March 19: Janet Ecker’s comments to the Toronto Star regarding the Friends’ Letter Demanding Explanation of Filthy Conditions in RVHS Scarborough’s Mental Health Ward

No, Ms. Ecker retreated to the position that “no issues have been brought to management”, urging complainants to come forward “so we can fix the problems.”

### How could Ms. Ecker be unaware of these problems when MPP Joe Dickson, sent them in an email to her president, Rik Ganderton two weeks earlier?

The email, sent by Joe Dickson’s office to Mr. Ganderton (shown, above right), is dated March 4: two weeks before Ms. Ecker’s interview with the Star (shown, above left). Wendy Holliday also describes detailed exchanges with Cheryl Williams (director of mental health and emergency services) over the conditions and Gord’s mistreatment.

The Star and the other media have moved on to other stories. Perhaps Ms. Ecker and the RVHS believe they have dodged a bullet here.



### March 4: MPP Joe Dickson’s Email to Rik Ganderton, Two weeks Earlier

The foundation of medicine is trust. The medical system lost a great deal of that trust during the SARS crisis only a few years ago. In the face of a swine flu pandemic, should dodging negative public opinion take precedence over real concerns for patients and proper medical care? Would you trust yourself or your loved ones to that kind of care?

## Call to Action

Want to help on this? Write the politicians listed next page and demand:

- An *independent* audit (i.e., done by parties with no conflict of interest in the outcome) of the conditions at 10 West;
- A full, *independent* accounting showing all costs required to close 3 West (RVAP) and bring 10 West (RVC) to the standard once enjoyed at 3 West.

## The Clinical Services Plan

# Our Incredible Shrinking Health Care

Politics is often the art of delivering nothing but good feelings and still getting credit for them. So it is with the Clinical Services Plan, the report purporting to outline how the Ontario government will consolidate Durham Region hospital services through its Central East Local Health Integration Network (CELHIN). The plan is available for download at the [CELHIN web site](#).

From a government that has been collecting a \$600+ health care “premium” for five years now, taxpayers paying for this Plan might have expected a concrete strategy reflecting a thorough understanding of the issues and challenges, and illustrating the ultimate benefits to be gained from immediate tradeoffs consolidation would require. Instead the Plan is a compendium of generalities, with vague references to “Centres of Excellence”, and even tables with incomplete data, as though the authors ran out of time. In other words, they’re making this up as they go. And we pay for it in loss of services clearly guided more by political criteria than by the needs of our community.

A recent rally organized by the Ontario Health Coalition featured Dr. John Lister, professor of health journalism at Coventry University in the U.K. and Director of London Health Emergency, a UK based health care watchdog organization. Dr. Lister explained that the same kind of consolidation has already failed with the UK’s National Health Service. As reported by Christina Blizzard of the Toronto Sun, “there is simply no evidence that ‘centres of excellence’ in healthcare provide any better patient care.” We concur.

The Friends compiled and sent a detailed response to the LHIN outlining key concerns, including:

- *Lack of involvement by the public*
- *Misleading use of data*
- *Accessibility and safety issues*
- *Deterioration of Durham hospital services*

- *Patient access — transportation, geographic distances*
- *An improper and accusatory interpretation of “how we got here”*
- *Reference to inconsistent and non-existent data*
- *That the experiment moving the mental health ward out of Ajax-Pickering Hospital needs to be undone and the hospital developed to provide all major services*

The response and our covering letter can be [read in full](#) on our web site (now at [www.friendsofaph.ca](http://www.friendsofaph.ca)).

If you look around communities across Canada, you see evidence of a time when citizens motivated by their faiths, humanity and altruism couldn’t build hospitals fast enough. Nobody ever complained there were too many, or that each hospital had similar services. Today we have only one health care system and the government that runs it says there are too many hospitals and too much distribution of services. They also say they have the expertise to “fix” all of that.

But as we’ve seen with Ajax-Pickering’s consolidation of Mental Health, that expertise is often absent and substituted with public relations exercises. The clumsiness evident in the LHIN’s Clinical Services Plan augurs more of the same. We need to change course — while there’s still time.

## **Call to Action**

Want to help on this? Write the politicians listed on this page and demand:

- *A detailed report identifying which hospitals will get which services;*
- *A complete accounting of how Durham region citizens will receive the local healthcare they pay for;*
- *Transparent, independently reviewed, public disclosure of all expenditures related to consolidations, showing savings and improvement measurements.*

## Changing Government Health Care Starts Here

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**The Friends of Ajax/Pickering Hospital** is a group of concerned citizens, doctors, nurses, other health care providers, business officials, and patients who support the continued presence of Ajax/Pickering Hospital as the major hospital to fully service all present and future health needs of rapidly growing West Durham region.