

Marjorie Hankins
 509 Morning Sideroad, R.R. #2,
 Newmarket, ON L3Y 4V9
 905-895-8438
mandf.hankins@sympatico.ca



September 3, 2004.

Hon. George Smitherman,
 Minister of Health and Long Term Care,
 80 Grosvenor Street,
 11th Floor, Hepburn Block,
 Toronto, Ontario, M7A 2C4

REGION OF YORK
 CLERK'S OFFICE

FILE No. - 102

Dear Mr. Smitherman,

I am the leader of the Newmarket Diabetic Support Group. Last year we were concerned to hear that a Newmarket man had to undergo amputation of both legs as the result of diabetic ulcers. The operation was successful, but afterwards, the wounds would not heal. There was no further help to be had from conventional medicine, but on his own, the patient researched the internet and found that Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy had proven very successful in healing this type of wound. He discovered a clinic in Toronto who could take him for treatment, and after several weeks the tissues healed completely.

While this was a happy result, it raised a disturbing question – "Why is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy not readily available?"

In Ontario there are only three hospitals who have Hyperbaric Chambers - one in Ottawa, one in Hamilton, and Toronto General - and they all have long waiting lists.

Diabetic ulcers are not the only beneficiaries of this treatment. The University Health Network website lists some of the most general uses:

Toxicology Problems: carbon monoxide poisoning; smoke inhalation; cerebral arterial gas embolism.

Ear, Nose, Throat, Orthopedic and Plastic Surgery Problems – including crush injury, soft tissue and bony radiation injury, problem wounds, and grafts.

Infectious Diseases – including necrotizing infection*, gas gangrene, and infection in the bone.

*Flesh-eating disease, and SARS.

Recently, the chamber at Toronto General closed it's doors to stretcher cases because the unit they purchased was not capable of handling them because of it's design.

The Lake divers used by the police and coast guard have now been left without a facility closer than Hamilton or Buffalo. Even with immediate air lifts – and available space at these hospitals – it is very worrying to these men that help may come too late if they run into trouble. It is also very expensive to transport.

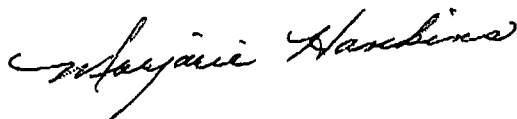
2.

While the cost of a Multichamber is not small, the end costs to the Health System should be a lot less. A double amputation for a diabetic can run between \$74,000 and \$78,000, but the cost of thirteen treatments in the chamber was \$2000. Diabetes has risen to epidemic proportions, but if Hyperbaric treatment could be more easily obtained, considerable numbers of gangrenous ulcers could be treated successfully before they reach the stage of amputation. Think of the savings in hospital beds, as well as the associated costs of prosthetics, wheel chairs, home care, etc.

I live in York Region, and would suggest that Southlake Regional Health Centre would be an excellent place for such a Multichamber since not only does Southlake draw patients from a very large area, but it is also close enough to Toronto to handle the stretcher cases that they can no longer accommodate. As well, Southlake has an excellent cardiac unit where it would be of immense benefit in case of arterial gas embolism. A new Cancer unit is being planned with three radiation bunkers - and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy is used extensively for radiation burns. Southlake is the hub hospital of the Region and a very large surrounding area, because of its location and its focus on highly specialized and complex services.

I feel sure you will consider the points I have presented, and in these times of SARS epidemics, the very real possibility of terrorist attacks, and the increased disease of an aging population, you must appreciate the necessity of having as many tools available as possible to handle the crises.

I look forward to hearing from you,



Copies to:

Julia Munro, MPP, York North

Frank Klees, MPP, Oakridges.

Michael Klejman, Regional Director, Central East Region, Ministry of Health & Long Term Care.

Robin Tidd, Board Chair, Southlake Regional Health Centre.

D.P. Carriere, President, Southlake Regional Health Centre

Belinda Stronach, M.P., Newmarket-Aurora

K. Bone, Deputy Chief, Central York Firefighters.

Denis Kelly, Clerk, Regional Municipality of York

Mayor & Council, Town of Newmarket.

Tracy Kibble, Editor, Era-Banner.