



## NEWS LOCAL

# Plans shelved for creating satellite branch of Residential Hospice in southern Bruce County



By Denis Langlois, Sun Times, Owen Sound  
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Chapman House, operated by the Residential Hospice of Grey Bruce Inc., in Owen Sound. A proposal to create a satellite branch of the hospice has been shelved. DENIS LANGLOIS/THE SUN TIMES

A plan to operate a satellite hospice in southern Bruce County has been indefinitely shelved, according to the organizations behind the proposal.

Representatives of the Residential Hospice of Grey Bruce and Southern Bruce Grey Hospice Committee say at least \$400,000 in community donations would have to be raised annually to cover the total operating costs for a hospice with four beds; the number the province has agreed to provide funding for in Grey-Bruce.

“We've looked at our budgets and projections, we've studied the costs from other hospices, especially Owen Sound which has hard numbers of what a hospice costs, and what we've found is no matter how we did it, it was going to cost us an exorbitant amount of money with the present funding formula,” Ken Brown, co-chair of the Southern Bruce Grey Hospice Committee, said Tuesday.

“To burden this rural region with over \$400,000 every year is something that we just, in all good conscience, can't do.”

Residential Hospice of Grey Bruce board chair Rob Cordell said operating a four-bed satellite hospice is an inefficient, unsustainable model due to the “flawed” provincial funding allocation for palliative care beds, which he added is especially punitive to rural areas.

He said the required community donations would drop by about \$100,000 annually if the province approved funding for six hospice beds due to the efficiencies that would be gained by having more beds. That amount could be sustainable, he said.

“We have articulated with the powers that be for over a year now that, while we appreciate the approved funding allocation of an additional four beds for the area, we would be unable to support this on a long-term basis and risk the community losing the resources of Chapman House itself due to the financial hardship it would create under the current provincial funding formula,” he said.

The Southern Bruce committee, made up of residents of Brockton, Hanover and South Bruce, have been working with the Residential Hospice, which opened Chapman House in May 2017, for about two years to establish a satellite of the Owen Sound-based facility in southern Bruce.

The goal is to eventually have residential hospice care available within a 45-minute drive of all Grey-Bruce residents.

The Residential Hospice was to oversee the daily operations of the satellite facility and offer training and other expertise.

The plan was to operate the hospice temporarily at the Hanover & District Hospital and build a permanent facility in southern Bruce by 2020.

In July, the South West Local Health Integration Network received confirmation from the Ministry of Health & Long-term Care that no funding would be available starting in 2017-18 for four new hospice beds in Grey-Bruce, in addition to the eight beds it funds at Chapman House.

Cordell said the province's funding allocation only pays nursing and personal support worker costs for each hospice bed, about \$105,000 a year.

That money, he said, covers about 60 per cent of the total costs for a hospice bed. The other 40 per cent, for things like food, utilities, cleaning supplies and administrative support, must be raised by the community.

The Residential Hospice has raised an average of \$575,000 annually to operate its hospice in Owen Sound since it began providing end-of-life care in May 2013; initially at Seasons Retirement Community.

Cordell said requiring another \$400,000 to \$500,000 in annual donations to support a satellite hospice would not be sustainable.

“Trying to operate and meet the requirements that the province has in terms of nursing 24/7 and so on, it makes it very, very challenging at anything less than six beds,” he said.

Cordell noted the demand for hospice care in the region is more than enough to warrant six additional beds at a satellite facility. Chapman House, which serves people from across Grey-Bruce, has a waiting list of about 40 people each month.


Cordell said the Residential Hospice would “absolutely revisit” the satellite hospice proposal if the South West LHIN is able to access more funds for palliative care.

So far, he said, the province has refused to even meet with the organization to hear its pitch for funding for a six-bed facility.

Brown said the Southern Bruce committee remains hopeful the province will come through with a solution that will allow the satellite hospice to be built.


“We're keen, we're motivated, we're enthusiastic. We're ready to move on it immediately, but we've come up against this brick wall and we don't know what to do about the next step.”

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