

Hamilton Coalition for Quality Home Care
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**Hamilton Coalition Calls for Moratorium and Public Review of
Province's Competitive Bidding Process for Home Care Nursing**

Media Release

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Hamilton Coalition for Quality Home Care, a network of professional organizations, researchers, academics and concerned citizens has formed to express to the province this community's grave concern over the local Community Care Access Centre/CCAC decision to terminate the visiting nursing contracts of the VON and St. Joe's Home Care as of April 1, 2008. Together these charitable agencies now provide 80% of all visiting nursing in Hamilton. The Coalition is calling on the Provincial Government to:

1. stop the request for proposal/RFP process that is unfolding in Hamilton immediately;
2. place a moratorium on posting competitive bidding process across the province, and;
3. strike an independent commission to recommend how to measure quality based on valid and reliable tools that need to be piloted with the results published and communicated to the public before further implementation of the competitive bidding process

While agreeing with the position of the provincial government and the CCAC that this community deserves high quality home care, the Coalition is very confident that the VON and St. Joe's Home Care provide such quality care, and has concluded that the problem lies with the province's controversial competitive bidding process and the evaluation criteria, newly introduced for the first time in Hamilton.

The Coalition believes that the province's bidding process is fundamentally flawed and does not objectively measure quality as is claimed. The methodology is unpiloted, not based on peer-reviewed definitions of quality, therefore not tested for validity and reliability. The key recommendations made in the province's 2005 Caplan Report that would have addressed this situation have not been implemented.

It is difficult to accept that the CCAC could disqualify these two Hamilton agencies which are so widely recognized for their excellence and innovation throughout the health, social service and academic networks.

Margaret Denton, Director of McMaster's Centre for Gerontology states, that "based on the research, we believe that this community will lose about half of its community nursing capacity with the elimination of these two agencies. This will have a serious ripple effect on hospitals and long-term care that will likely lead to the cancellation of surgeries, back-up in emergency rooms, and longer wait lists for long-term care. People will simply not get the level of service they need if there are not enough nurses."

Speaking out of concern for the clients receiving care, Myrtle Greve of Hamilton Cares questions the devastating effects of the magnitude of the turnover of skilled nurses in this community that will sever long-standing relationships and adversely affect client care. "None of the agencies on the shortlist to replace VON and St Joe's Home Care are rooted in Hamilton. They have no volunteers here. They do not sit on any of the committees that bridge health and social care. The disruption of the community agency relationships will negatively impact the safety net that serves our poor and marginalized populations." Ms Greve points out.

The Coalition organizers have asked for meetings by the end of the week with Hon George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-term Care; Ted McMeekin, Minister of Government and Consumer Services & MPP for Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough Westdale; Gary Ostofi, Chair of the CCAC Board for Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant; and Juanita Gledhill, Chair of the Board for the HNHB Local Health Integration Network.

For more information please contact: Myrtle Greve, Hamilton Cares, 905-512-3228.