



October 9, 2019  
For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

## **Health Coalition & Broad Array of Groups Launch Campaign to Build Mass “Stadium-filling” Event to Save Local Health Care Services**

Chatham/S/W Ontario – Groups from Chatham Kent and across Southwestern Ontario are coming together to build an event that cannot be ignored. Their goal is to save the local Public Health Units and ambulance services from closure and protect their local governance. The groups are also advocating to stop funding cuts to public health, local hospitals and long-term care homes. Under the banner “Save the Services that Save Us” the group is calling on the provincial government to halt their plans to close 25 out of 35 local Public Health Units and merge them down to 10; close 49 of 59 local ambulance/paramedic services and close 12 of 22 local ambulance/paramedic dispatch centres and merge them down to 10; eliminate two sets of funding for long-term care that result in a \$34 million dollar cut to these services; and cut real-dollar funding for hospitals and long-term care.

The groups are planning a major event, filling the John D. Bradley Convention Centre in Chatham on Saturday November 2 at 11 a.m. There will be music and speakers, hotdogs, hot chocolate and snacks. The goal is to show a huge outpouring of support to save our local health care services and stop the cuts and closures.

The Coalition is asking for volunteers and donations. It will open a volunteer office downtown in Chatham and will ask people to take flyers door-to-door and into their workplaces and community groups. People can volunteer by phoning Shirley Roebuck, co chair of the Chatham-Kent Health Coalition at 226-402-2724 or by messaging her on Facebook at the Chatham-Kent Health Coalition page.

“Public health services save lives, prevent illness and injury, keep people out of hospitals,” said Shirley Roebuck, who is a retired emergency department nurse and co-chair of the Chatham-Kent Health Coalition. “No one, whether they are Liberal or Conservative or NDP, ever voted to see our local Public Health Unit closed down and our local ambulance service closed down and sent down the highway to London. We need to stand together and insist that the government hear our call to stop these closures and save these vital local health care services.”

“There is no evidence to support the closure of local ambulance and dispatch services, nor the cuts to hospitals and long-term care. Experience from other provinces is that this type of restructuring leads to longer waits, problems finding patients, and will likely take millions of dollars away from care,” added Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition, which worked with the local communities in the region to save the hospital in Wallaceburg and stop cuts to Chatham’s hospital, among others. “We can win and save these services. There is virtually no support for the proposed cuts and closures anywhere. Already the Ford government is hearing the deep concerns of communities and is starting to roll back some of the cuts. If regular people from across the counties and in Chatham join in we can make a difference here, we are confident about that.”

**For more information:** Shirley Roebuck, co-chair Chatham-Kent Health Coalition 226-402-2724; Natalie Mehra executive director Ontario Health Coalition 416-230-6402.