Speaking Notes for January 18 Public Meeting

1 I am speaking tonight on behalf of the Wellington Rotary Club Health and Wellness Committee. The club formed the committee of club members several months ago to address many issues related Health and Wellness in the County.

2 We are fortunate to have a remarkable body of experience and expertise in our committee membership and I would like to briefly describe their backgrounds. All are county residents.

Yvonne Buys is a professor in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Toronto. She is a recognized leader in her speciality and has published extensively in healthcare delivery.

Chris Compeau is both a general surgeon and a thoracic surgeon with extensive practice and administrative experience at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Toronto.

Dawn Cutler is Manager of the Dialysis Clinic at Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital. She is a leader in Ontario nursing and operated a nursing home earlier in her career. Dawn is a charter member of our club and was its first female President.

Ken Robertson is our club President and a former Chief of Police in Hamilton. He had a long association with the Hamilton Health Sciences Center, a major teaching hospital.

David Smith is a long-standing member of the club. He led the club’s fundraising for the new local hospital which generated $400,000!

I served as President of the Ontario Hospital Association, a member of the Governing Council of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons and as Chair of both Quinte Health and West Park Hospital in Toronto. West Park operates a large nursing home and hosts a family health team in addition to providing core hospital services.

3 I would like to start my presentation with comments by former Finance Minister Bill Morneau because they are so important. He observed that:

“We are the proverbial frog in the pot of water heating on the stove where funding for our health care system is concerned. We need to recognize that steadily rising costs are unsustainable….one of the core problems is the belief that our current method of delivering health care is somehow sacrosanct. It is not.”

4 Our committee took these observations to heart. We felt that we needed to balance improved service with cost effectiveness. We produced a proposal to establish a satellite nurse practitioner clinic in Wellington associated with the Belleville Nurse Practitioner Clinic.

5 This seemed to us to be the most creative and innovative way to proceed, especially when we learned that additional nurse practitioners would likely be available if they could be guaranteed stable positions in appropriate workplace environments.

6 The committee considered joining in or initiating new activities to recruit more family physicians for the county. We were dissuaded by the intense competition everywhere for these physicians as well as the short supply of them.

7 We also felt that the club could not afford incentives of the magnitude that would encourage physicians to move here. We are not sure that even if we had the resources that we could attract new doctors in time for them to be deployed soon enough to affect our situation in a substantial way over the next year or two.

8 Our proposal is possible because the practice patterns of nurse practitioners overlap with those of family physicians. Many of the activities of each can be done equally well by the other group.

9 Experience in this province and elsewhere shows that nurse practitioners are very cost effective. The Prince Edward County Family Health Teams has demonstrated this because it currently employs four nurse practitioners.

10 We have had initial discussions with the Family Health Team, the Belleville Nurse Practitioner Clinic and the owners of the medical clinic now operating in Wellington.

11 I am pleased to report that these have been positive discussions and that additional nurse practitioners could be housed in the existing facility.

12 Dr. Compeau has also talked with the Sudbury Nurse Practitioner Clinic because it operates several satellite clinics in smaller communities around that city. It would be a good model for us which is important because learning from them means that we do not have to begin from scratch here.

13 We have presented our initial thinking on this project to the Minister of Health and to Todd Smith, our MPP. In our submission to them we have stressed that our proposal is based on broad concepts and that we have more work to do to flesh it out.

14 I should also stress that time is of the essence in moving forward because people in other regions of Ontario are recognizing that more nurse practitioners is likely to be among the practical solutions to the current crisis in primary care. To access the funding needed, we need to be at or near the front of the line.

15 In its deliberations, the committee has focused on access to primary care, but we recognize that efforts to improve wellness are equally important because there are many things that each of us can do to reduce demand on the health care system. The reports of the County Foundation have pointed to some of these, and we will be turning our attention to these possibilities as soon as possible.

16 I would like each of you to consider another quote from Mr. Morneau:

“Unfortunately, for far too long, our approach to solving our health care crisis has consisted of shutting our eyes, pointing our fingers, applying Band-Aids and generally assuming that things will work out somehow”

I and my committee colleagues hope that our proposal, if we pursue it with vigor, will help avoid this kind of thinking in the county. We think that things will only work out if we avoid kicking the can down the road by implementing innovative approaches to primary care in the county such as our proposed satellite nurse practitioner clinic.

17 If implemented – and we have a long way to go to put it in place- the satellite clinic we are proposing should position the county for a new world in Canadian health care as well as stabilizing primary care

Anyone who doubts that we need to plan for a different future should read the editorial in today’s Globe and Mail.

18 Thank you Diane and Joanna for the opportunity to speak this evening. I and my colleagues would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

January 15, 2023