



Press Release

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, September 26th, 2018

Concerns Remain on Eastern Health Clinic in Portugal Cove – St. Philip's
Residents Encouraged to Attend Eastern Health Board AGM on September 27th

The Town Council of Portugal Cove – St. Philip's was advised in July that the Eastern Health Clinic located in our community was being closed and services would be relocated to Major's Path by the end of September. This decision was made without consultation or engagement with the residents of our community. As a result, Council was quick to react, asking for the opportunity to explore alternative solutions to ensure that health services would remain in our community. Residents expressed their concerns, with thousands signing a petition against the planned closure. Since then, we have had discussions with Eastern Health and although there was an effort on both sides to collaborate, an acceptable solution has not been found. The solution announced by Eastern Health on September 25th, to keep some services in the community, does not have the support of Council. Although it is a move in a positive direction, services will be impacted and it still lacks sincere public engagement on the part of Eastern Health.

The Town Council was aware of this proposed plan prior to the announcement and advised Eastern Health on September 19th that concerns remained. In the absence of an acceptable solution, Council advocated for the services to remain status quo while we continued to collaborate. Eastern Health did not share in this spirit of collaboration. MHA Brazil planned a meeting to discuss the issue with residents and community groups on September 25th and Council agreed to take part after communications with Eastern Health stalled. Eastern Health was made aware of this meeting and our expectation was that critical information obtained by these residents and community groups could help inform them, especially considering their lack of public engagement. Instead of waiting to hear the results of the meeting, Eastern Health announced their revised plans hours before it, causing confusion in the community.

Council is worried that further changes to our health services may be symptomatic of a bigger issue, as mental health services were removed from this community three years ago and recently there were plans to close the clinic entirely, further reducing our direct health services. We appreciate the efforts made to solve some of our concerns in terms of potential service loss; however, there are still services that will be removed, such as preschool health checks, in their current plan. As well, the level of care will be reduced greatly with nurses now operating out of Majors Path, with a much smaller presence in our community. Council cannot support any reduction in services being provided directly in our community, as it may be an indication of continual and incremental downgrading of services within Portugal Cove – St. Philip's, despite our demographics suggesting we will need to increase them in the future.

Furthermore, the previous removal of mental health services was done with no consultation within the community and is concerning to Council, especially considering the mental health emergencies our first responders' experience. Currently, in the region there are direct mental health resources being provided to Torbay and Bell Island; yet, although PCSP is the largest of these communities,



this service was eliminated from the town. The removal of this service is hard to reconcile with the high priority that this Council has made for addressing mental health issues. We are currently bringing forward a resolution to Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to create a taskforce to address these issues in NL communities. Council looks to play a leadership role in the establishment of this taskforce and would feel it hypocritical to support the proposed Eastern Health plan that does not address mental health services locally.

The Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s Council will continue to advocate for a solution that will keep existing services in the community and see more direct support for mental health, as was previously provided. We still wish to work collaboratively with Eastern Health to find a solution that works for all. However, as the deadline for the closure of the current clinic nears, Council are encouraging residents to express their concerns and tell their stories at the Eastern Health Board AGM. The location and date of the meeting are as follows:

Thursday, September 27, 2018 at 10:00 am
Pleasant View Towers
West Residence Entrance, Multi-Purpose Room (1W026)
65 Newfoundland Drive, St. John’s, NL

Residents are advised that if you require transportation or cannot attend but wish to send a statement please contact Jeff Lawlor at jeff.lawlor@pcsp.ca or 895-8000 ext 222.

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