



GORM LARSEN THE TIMES

# 300 grill panel on hospital closing

By CONNIE RAE  
Times staff writer

Over 300 people packed the smoke-filled auditorium at the Port Credit Legion last week to press for answers on the closing of Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital in Etobicoke.

Hospital workers, concerned citizens, social planners, political aspirants and councillors and aldermen from Mississauga, Etobicoke and Toronto grilled the panel, which included mayors Hazel McCallion of Mississauga and Dennis Flynn of Etobicoke, councillor Harold Kennedy (also chairman of the Board of Health), Sean O'Flynn, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Liberal health critic Sean Conway, Pat Lawlor, NDP member of parliament for Lakeshore, and Dr. Gerry Cooper, chief of psychiatry at York-Finch General Hospital.

Panel members spent a great deal of time sympathizing with Mississauga South MPP Doug Kennedy, who was constantly asked by the audience how he voted on the issue.

Kennedy maintained that the decision was announced at a news conference held by Health Minister Dennis Timbrell.

Mayor Flynn said that transferring the detoxification unit for alcoholics to Streetsville would cause "serious problems."

Dr. Cooper called the situation "tragic" and claimed the previous decisions to focus on "community psychiatry" were being abandoned. He said we're "going backwards in mental health care." He referred to Queen

Street as a "monolithic structure," and warned that as it gets fuller, the length of time allowed for treatment will get shorter. He criticized other psychiatrists for not speaking out.

O'Flynn warned that demand for bed space in the Lakeshore area would increase 37 per cent by 1987 and suggested the hospital closing may "cripple the people in this community." He called for a public inquiry into the closing.

Lawlor recommended a phasing out program in lieu of an abrupt closure.

During the question period the audience was just as opinionated.

A representative from Meadowvale West Homeowners Association said there were 47 suicides in Peel last year and Distress Line Mississauga was already swamped with thousands of calls annually, many from outpatients who have nowhere else to turn.

George Niemi asked, "If Lakeshore closes, what will happen to the land? Will it go to one of Premier Davis's millionaire friends?"

Mayor McCallion, who criticized the Ministry for not making concrete plans for patients care before announcing the closing of Lakeshore, said it would "seriously affect Mississauga."

"The decision was made without adequate communication and the City of Mississauga was never officially informed of the closing," she said.

Mayor McCallion put forward a resolution to ask the health ministry to delay the closing until all the alternatives were looked at.

George Niemi and 300 others wanted answers

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