

Another payout

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I had a discussion with a client about a year ago about the Chinese solution to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He was telling me how efficient the Chinese were as they had built an entire hospital in ten days to treat COVID patients, and how it would take years for the inefficient western system to get the same job done.

At the time, it did make news, and for some reason the media wrote stories of how impressive the Chinese could be by building an entire hospital in less than two weeks.

Impressive, until you saw the photos and video of the actual 'hospital.'

It wasn't a hospital, it was a bunch of steel shipping containers slapped together to create rooms. There was no infrastructure, no plumbing, crude electrical work, and no sanitation.

We could have done the same here by taking all COVID patients to a local arena, placing their beds on the floor, and turning out the lights.

A real hospital is an incredibly complex place, and by western standards, should have running water, a heating system, and well-designed floor layout.

Many people don't realize how hospitals are built and maintained in Ontario.

While the provincial health system pays for doctors and staff salary, when it comes the actual buildings and equipment, communities are on their own to raise the funds needed to keep a hospital current and updated.

When a local hospital foundation is asking for donations, they usually have a goal in mind. There is usually a campaign to raise funds for a certain need, whether it be a new piece of equipment or an entire wing to be added, that money comes from public and business donations.

It can be a real challenge to raise the money for needed equipment although the foundations in Ontario do an amazing job of stepping up and getting the job done.

You would think that in a country that has universal health care, that the government would allot funds to help create and support local hospitals when it comes to equipment and supplies.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford toured a couple of local hospitals recently, one of which is currently in the middle of a multi-million-dollar campaign to refurbish its aging facility. At the end of the tour, he simply thanked them for their efforts.

There was no mention of the province stepping up to help get the job done. Although in fairness, the province will be spending money on the hospital refurbishment, although the community has to raise around \$43 million on their own.

According to the province's website, the province is spending \$1 billion on its vaccination plan, \$2.6 billion to support 30,000 long-term care beds and upgrading nearly 16,000 spaces, and \$5.1 billion to support hospitals since the start of the pandemic. That's a lot of money for a province of 13.5 million people.

Hospitals should be considered the most important of all public facilities. If you can't take care of your own people, what else can

you do?

You may like your publicly supported library or museum, but you can't visit them if you've got a broken leg ? you need to get that fixed first.

The old saying 'charity begins at home' means it is smart to take care of your own family first.

In this case, our family is the Canadian public ? your family, friends, and neighbours.

The federal government has hundreds of millions of dollars put aside for foreign aid. Polls indicate that public support for foreign aid in Canada is actually pretty low.

While many people believe it is necessary to supply aid during an emergency or natural disaster, sending money to many developing countries means a good chunk of that money will be lost due to bribes, corruption, and other 'government' expenses.

Just ask any business person who deals with some countries, what it takes just to get your product unloaded from a ship.

Maybe it's time to take some of those funds, which we all contributed to, and place them back in our own communities.