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Sacrificing the needs of many, for the wants of a few

Dear editor:

Members of Shelburne's Veterans' Association, and the aged and ailing in Dufferin currently receiving health care services from CCAC are outraged at the decision by the County Council to charge ahead with the destruction of our hospital and reconstruct it into accommodations for 25 people seeking subsidized rentals. This they describe as affordable housing, affordable because the local taxpayer is saddled with the excessive cost these councillors so blithely assume

That the greater numbers of Shelburne and district citizens have repeatedly expressed their wish to keep the hospital for its intended purpose, and for which they contributed their hard earned money at the outset is ignored by these politicians, leads us to ask why do the demands of the few (25) take precedence over the many? What is the driving motive?

It appears that free money from government, $850,000, might be the deciding factor that shifts democracy to the back burner, or it might be that Orangeville, with its weighted vote, wants to collect every penny that Headwaters can extract from the system. What ever the reasoning at county, it is wrong and undemocratic, and Shelburne should withdraw from County Council, if possible, and take charge of its affairs and priorities. Where is Shelburne's voice in this process?

Surely the care and treatment of the veterans who suffer the combat consequences of serving our nation and now carry the scars in the form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder should be recognized and given first priority, that is if the community at large gives a damn about these suffering Canadians. Certainly in any community there are people who need care and reasonable accommodations, providing they are not the authors of their own problems. It remains that those men and women who have suffered while serving our country should not be relegated to second place.

Unfortunately the $850,000 available from government for affordable housing captures the attention of politicians and affects their decision making capabilities, but why it has driven them to destroying our only hospital which is desperately needed by so many in this area is an enigma. Why destroy a perfectly good structure when other non-destructive options are available, options that would be less costly and offer far better living accommodations than those proposed for the hospital? Who with his or her brains intact would even consider tearing apart a perfectly good medical structure that could serve the healthcare requirements of a growing community and neighborhood? It boggles the mind!

The demand for affordable housing units is reported to be significantly greater than the 25 people registered for them now and if this is so it is recommended that negotiations with a builder be commenced to establish a construction plan to determine the shape and size of the needed homes, where they should be located and how to secure financial tax relief for the contractor.

Sherry Teeler, manager of the Mel Lloyd Centre, now called The Shelburne Centre of Health or some such name, has stated that new construction is necessary.

If that cannot work then consider the cheap route; subsidizing the rents in the places the applicants now live. That would shake a few of them out of their dependency and force them to find work.

We are unsure of our mayor's position regarding this game-changing issue but we consider that he should be fighting tooth and nail to stop the destruction of our hospital.

The Shelburne Veterans' Association.

K .Mesure John Flannery