



Melissa Minutes

By Melissa McCallum
GHHN Director

It's hard to put into words how bittersweet it feels to share that I'll be stepping down as Executive Director of the GHHN at the end of November. These past five years have been an incredible journey, one I never expected to take when I began my career as a nurse. It has truly been a wild, wonderful ride.

The heart of this role for me has always been the people. Working alongside our incredible partners, patients, physicians, board directors and community members, has been the greatest joy of my time here. Honestly, it's the staff who make this whole network go round, the thoughtful, behind-the-scenes work they do every day is

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SERENE Study

McMaster University is recruiting for a SERENE research project. Learn more [here](#).



HealthPathways

HealthPathways has launched additional pathways! Learn more, and register [here](#).

Melissa Minutes

...continued

where the real magic happens. Because of them, I leave knowing the GHHN is in extraordinary hands, and that the work will continue seamlessly long after I step away.

Five years ago, there wasn't even an Ontario Health Team. Look at what you've all built together since then, not because anyone told you to, but because you cared enough to show up and make things better for our community.

While I'm so sad to step away from this role, I'm comforted to know I'm not going far. I'm thrilled to be staying in this community and to continue working alongside you all in my new role as Chief of Business Strategy and Innovation at Thrive.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for welcoming me, having the tough conversations over the years, and for your kind words over these past few weeks. But most of all for the care and compassion you show every day to the people of the Greater Hamilton area.

With the deepest gratitude and many tears,

Melissa



Over 1,500 services available to primary care providers through HealthPathways

HealthPathways is a one-stop-shop platform and is already home to hundreds of services designed to help support primary care providers in Burlington.

The regional HealthPathways directories from Burlington, Greater Hamilton and Middlesex London have combined listings of over 1500 services, highlighting the wide range of services available.

- Middlesex London: 544 services
- Burlington: 441 services
- Greater Hamilton: 688 services

View the planned Pathways for Phase 2 in the HealthPathways September Newsletter [here](#).





GHHN Physician Recruitment Program in the News

September 4, 2025

The GHHN is excited to share about the recent news articles highlighting the amazing work happening in the GHHN Haldimand Physician Recruitment program.

When the rural municipality committed \$360,000 to physician recruitment last July, councillors hoped to bring in two or three new family doctors by the end of a three-year campaign.

After just one year, that goal has been met.

Two new family doctors have since set up their permanent practice in Haldimand — one in Dunnville and another in Caledonia.

Read the articles here:

[The Hamilton Spectator](#)

[Simcoe Reformer](#)

Ontario Connecting 2,400 More People to Primary Care in Greater Hamilton

August 12, 2025

As part of the province's \$2.1 billion [Primary Care Action Plan](#) to connect everyone in Ontario to a publicly funded family doctor or primary care team, the Ontario government is investing \$834,200 this year to connect 2,400 people with primary care services in Greater Hamilton. This investment is part of the government's plan to connect 300,000 more people to primary care this year.

The Greater Hamilton Health Network, in partnership with Primary Care Network Partners, are developing a strategy to connect local individuals without a primary care provider to a primary care team.

Learn more from MPP Neil Lumsden release [here](#), or in the Hamilton Hamilton Health Team's release [here](#).





SAVE THE DATE

Building Community Health Event

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2025
12:00PM-1:30PM
VIRTUAL



GHHN 5th Building Community Health Event

The GHHN is excited to announce our upcoming Building Community Health Event!

Please join us virtually Thursday November 27th from 12:00pm – 1:30pm, where we will be highlighting Primary Care, HealthPathways, and GHHN work ahead.

Email info@ghhn.ca for questions.

GHHN Women's Health Days and Updated Report

Megan Lynch, Senior Manager

The GHHN celebrated the 15th Women's Health Days at Willow's Place, Mission Services this past August. These low-barrier health and wellness events are hosted by local partners and showcase services and supports from over 25 organizations to women, trans, and gender-diverse individuals who may not access traditional healthcare. These events focus on building meaningful connections to those who are unhoused to prioritize proactive and preventative care, support, and with the intention to learn from participants. Our next event is November 18 and 19th, at Good Shepherd Women's Services. To find out more email Megan Lynch: megan.lynch@ghhn.ca

In August 2021, the GHHN had a unique opportunity to collaboratively offer drop-in and barrier-free health and wellness services to those who may not access traditional healthcare for the first time. The GHHN has continued to offer Health Days providing care to 1266 individuals since the start. To see a summary of the 15 Women's Health Days, visit: [WHD 2021-25 Health Day Report](#)





Health 811: Health advice made easy

Health811 is a free, confidential service in Ontario providing non-urgent health information, advice and referrals. Along with phone options, Health 811 is also available online.

Call 811 for health advice or information.

Saying Goodbye to Ceara as she begins a New Role

While it's certainly bittersweet to see Ceara move on from the GHHN family, we are sharing she has begun a new position as Program Manager for the Epic Community Connect Program at St Joseph's. It's a fantastic opportunity and a testament to her talent, leadership, and dedication to advancing digital health in our region. Ceara's contributions to the GHHN have been nothing short of exceptional. She brought clarity, energy, and vision to every initiative she touched—from Secretariat meetings to provincial working groups to joint funding proposals. She helped shape the digital health landscape in ways that will continue to benefit our GHHN community.

The GHHN PMO wishes Ceara all the best and hope we'll continue to cross paths in this ever-evolving digital health space.





Juravinski Research Institute Integrated Residential Care Initiative

The GHHN is happy to be a partner in the Juravinski Integrated Residential Care Initiative, a three-year collaborative research project, funded by the Juravinski Research Institute. The initiative aims to improve equitable access to coordinated health and social care for residents of subsidized residential care facilities (RCFs) through the production of new knowledge generated through extensive research, and the design and implementation of impact activities that aim to influence change at the frontline, legislative, and policy level.

We are excited to share that the research team at the Juravinski Integrated Residential Care Initiative has recently launched a report to share insights from their research, and present evidence-informed recommendations to modernize Residential Care Facilities in Hamilton. This report translates key insights from our research into six actionable recommendations that can be used to inform decision-making, policy reform, and long-term planning to improve conditions for people supporting, living, and working in RCFs. [Recommendations Report — Juravinski Integrated Residential Care Initiative](#)

2025 Coat Drive

The Social Navigator Program and Rapid Intervention and Support Team

The Social Navigator Program and Rapid Intervention and Support Team are hosting the 13th annual coat drive. Over the last 3 years over 1790 coats have been distributed to those most in need. In 2024, 527 coats were distributed. We are asking for your help by sharing this initiative with your networks in order to meet the increasing demand for winter wear. We are looking for adult warm winter coats, hats, scarves, and boots. Donations can be left in the bins at any of the three police stations.

Items needed:

- Adult Men and Women's Winter Coats
- Adult Gloves, Hats, and Scarves
- Adult Winter Boots

Drop off locations:

- Central Station 155 King William St
- East End Station 2825 King St E
- Mountain Station 400 Rymal Rd

Drop off dates:

October 6 2025 to Nov 30 2025



Ethics Corner

Sun Drews

Ethics Fellow, Hamilton Health Sciences

Who Speaks When You Can't?: Understanding the Role of Substitute Decision Makers (SDMs) in Community Healthcare

Mrs. G, a retired teacher receiving home care, is showing signs of advancing dementia. As her needs grow – missed medications, personal care challenges, and rising anxiety – her two children are asked to make decisions about increasing support and possibly transitioning to long-term care.

This is a familiar scenario in community healthcare. When someone can't make capable decisions about their care, a Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) steps in – not to choose when they think is best, but to represent the person's values, wishes, and best interests. In Ontario, the Health Care Consent Act (HCCA) outlines who can act as an SDM – starting with a court-appointed guardian, then moving down a hierarchy that includes spouses, children, parents, and siblings. If no one is available, the Public Guardian and Trustee may be appointed. Being an SDM isn't just about having legal authority – it's about being capable, willing, and available to participate in decision-making.

What does capable, willing, and available actually look like in a community care setting?

- Capable: Mrs. G's children understand their mom's diagnosis and relevant medical information with support from the care team. They ask questions, take notes, and make informed decisions based on their mom's values.

- Willing: Mrs. G's children are prepared to take on the role—even when decisions are tough. They're committed to honouring her wishes, even if they differ from their own.
- Available: Mrs. G's son who lives nearby and regularly checks in is more accessible than her daughter. He can attend care planning meetings, respond to urgent calls, and stay engaged with the evolving care needs.

Not everyone who's in the SDM hierarchy is capable, willing, or available to act as SDM. That's why early conversations and clear documentation matter.

Tips for Healthcare Providers:

- Be patient and listen actively. SDMs may need time to process.
- Be neutral and supportive. SDMs may feel surprised or overwhelmed.
- Use plain language. Avoid medical jargon.
- Validate emotions. Acknowledge how difficult being an SDM can be.
- Clarify roles. Emphasize that the SDM is to be the voice of the client, not for themselves.
- Be curious. Explore client's cultural and religious values. Use an interpreter when needed.
- Document clearly. Note who is acting as SDM, their understanding, decisions, and any concerns.
- Ask for support. Consult with your team and leadership when you are unable to reach an SDM, when you feel that they are not making decisions in the client's best interests, or when there is a conflict or disagreement with or amongst SDMs.

We meet the second Wednesday of every month. Email officeofethics@hhsc.ca for the Microsoft Teams link. We look forward to seeing you!



Marijke Ljogar

Project Manager, Environmental Sustainability

The Climate Crisis is a Health Crisis: An Open Letter to the Federal Government

As healthcare professionals and organizations serving Hamilton, Haldimand, and Niagara Northwest, we are already seeing how environmental changes are affecting the health and well-being of our communities. From worsening air quality and rising heat waves to water advisories and infrastructure challenges, it's clear that the environment is not just a backdrop to our work – it's a determinant of health.

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), along with healthcare professionals across the country, has issued a National Call to Action on Planetary Health and Health Systems Sustainability and Resilience. As part of Canada's first National Day of Action on Planetary Health this October, CAPE is inviting both individuals and healthcare organizations to sign an open letter to the federal government demanding bold, coordinated action to protect our environment and strengthen our healthcare systems.

What This Means for Our Region

The issues raised in the letter are not abstract or distant. Here in Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest:

- Air quality concerns are ongoing, particularly in industrial areas where residents face higher risks of respiratory illness.
- Heat events are increasing in both frequency and severity, posing serious risks to seniors, children, and people with chronic conditions.

GHHN Environmental Sustainability Corner



- Rural and Indigenous communities in Haldimand and Niagara Northwest often face greater challenges in accessing clean water, healthcare, and emergency services during extreme weather.
- Our aging healthcare infrastructure – including hospitals and long-term care facilities – was not built to withstand the climate-related pressures we're now seeing regularly.

What the Letter Calls For

CAPE's open letter outlines three urgent actions:

1. Strengthen the Climate and Health Secretariat at Health Canada.
2. Create a National Education Centre for Planetary Health.
3. Address the Health and Economic Costs of Pollution.

Add Your Voice

Whether you work in a hospital, long-term care home, primary care clinic, or community health setting, your voice matters and this letter is a great opportunity to join collective action. Visit www.planetaryhealthday.ca to read and sign the letter.

Together, we can help shape a healthcare system that not only treats illness but also champions the health of our planet – because our environment is our most foundational form of care.



Haldimand Corner

Barbara Klassen, Co-Chair

The Haldimand Health Council (formally the Haldimand Stakeholder Council) has had a name change. The Council has made the decision to remove “stakeholder” from our name. Haldimand is neighbour to the Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississagas of the Credit First Nation, and many Indigenous people live and access health and social services in Haldimand. The Haldimand Health Council is looking to deepen relationships with these First Nations and Indigenous communities who are not simply stakeholders, but inherent rights holders. We hope this small step fosters meaningful reconciliation and deeper cooperation as we continue to build community health together.

We say good-bye to Bill Helmeczi, former CEO of Southcoast Wellness and co-chair of the Haldimand Health Council. Bill has changed jobs to work closer to home. We wish Bill all the best in his new role. The HHC will be looking for a new co-chair in the coming weeks. We look forward to new energy and vision for an ever-growing Haldimand region.

**Stay
Connected!**



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