

St. Catharines and Welland Community Engagement Questions and Answers

Do you expect Emergency Department (ED) wait times to increase as you transition to a three-site hospital system?

We are building a brand-new hospital with a large Emergency Department (ED) that has more capacity than the current ED at the Niagara Falls hospital. This will allow for an additional 20,000 ED visits annually.

Our three-site hospital model will allow us to bring our ED trained staff together to deliver emergency services so we can see you faster.

We are also working together with our local health partners to create new ways for patients to access care in community settings, including through family doctors. By ensuring every patient has access to primary care, we will improve the overall health of residents in the region.

How will patients be transferred between the three sites?

Niagara Health already transfers patients between sites as this is a standard practice in multi-site hospital systems. All three hospitals will work together as part of a seamless system of care so people can go to any Niagara Health hospital and even if it doesn't offer the services they need, they will be quickly transferred to the site that does. This transfer is and will continue to be done by an internal service, at no cost to patients.

What are residents supposed to do if they cannot drive themselves to the hospital?

We understand the importance of transportation for all residents of Niagara as it impacts access to care. We stressed this importance during our presentation to Niagara Regional Council. We encourage residents to advocate to the Niagara Region, which is responsible for regional transportation. Patients experiencing a medical emergency should always call 911. We continue to work closely with our partners at Niagara EMS to ensure increased access to ambulances for those experiencing medical emergencies. This includes a number of innovative programs aimed at getting paramedics and ambulances back on the roads faster.

How will you ensure patients receive care in a hospital closest to their loved ones?

We recognize the critical role that loved ones play in a patient's hospital experience. Whenever possible, we work with our teams to transfer patients to the hospital closest to their loved ones where they can begin their recovery journey closer to home. At Niagara Health, we have the Essential Care Partner's program that equips loved ones with the tools to function as a care team member.

How did Niagara Health plan for the increase in population growth and increasing number of seniors moving to the region?

Our new hospital system will significantly increase capacity for the entire region. Planning for the South Niagara Hospital is based off Statistics Canada population census and was continuously updated until a planning document was submitted to the Ministry of Health in 2020.

Planning also took into account a study conducted by Niagara Region demonstrating the region's growth into the future up to 2041. Understanding that Niagara has a growing population, data was also pulled from up-to-date building permits across the region.

Based on project growth and age demographics, the South Niagara Hospital will feature a Wellness in Aging Centre of Excellence. The Centre of Excellence will include:

- Seniors' Wellness Follow-up Clinic
- Geriatric Rapid Assessment
- Geriatric Assessment Clinic
- Other Services: The program will continue to work with internal and external partners to host needed services, such as falls clinic and/or caregiver support programming, within available space.

What sort of medical procedures will not be offered at Niagara Health once the three-site model is in place?

As is current practice, residents may be transferred outside of Niagara if they require highly specialized care. Examples of that include transplants, open heart surgeries, spinal surgery, advanced cancer surgeries and complex pediatric care for ventilation. These out-of-region hospitals have highly specialized professional teams, specialized equipment and clinical expertise. Over time, depending on growth and volumes, we may be able to bring services to Niagara Health as we have done in the past with services and programs within the Walker Family Cancer Centre.

How are you changing the way you work?

At Niagara Health, we face several major challenges that require us to change the way we operate so we can meet the future needs of our communities. By focusing our limited resources, we will build seamless hospital care across Niagara with three cornerstone hospitals – The Marotta Family, South Niagara and Welland Hospitals. Transforming our hospitals and how we deliver care means patients will receive better access to hospital services and specialized care from the best clinical experts. We will use technology to enhance how we communicate across teams and with our patients, and have new models of care such as options to provide care virtually.

Will Niagara Health continue to operate the long-term care (LTC) home at the Welland Hospital?

We are incredibly proud of our long-term care home in Welland. The long-term care home, much like the Welland Hospital, is outdated and requires redevelopment to meet the future needs of patients. In March 2021, the Ontario Government announced that the 40 interim beds would become permanent and approved an additional 13 beds - bringing the total to 128 LTC beds. We are working very closely with the Ministry of Long-Term Care to determine how best to rebuild the LTC home and possibly add much needed, additional long-term care beds to the region.

What happens if funding doesn't come through for the Welland Hospital?

The Welland Hospital is, and will continue to be, a critical part of Niagara Health's plan to transform care. Niagara Health has a Master Plan that is approved by the Ministry of Health, inclusive of a Welland Hospital redevelopment. Ontario Health is fully aware of the need to redevelop our current Welland Hospital site and we are actively working with the provincial government towards securing necessary approvals. With a redeveloped Welland Hospital, patients will be able to access their care and emergency services in a renovated space that's new and modern.

When do you anticipate the Welland Hospital redevelopment will begin?

Plans are underway to modernize and redevelop the existing Welland Hospital site with a potential for expanded services. Engagement on the future of the Welland Hospital will occur to ensure it has the right mix of services for the community.

Why does it take so long to plan for a hospital build or redevelopment?

We are fortunate in Niagara to be in the process of building a brand-new hospital just 10 years after the opening of our hospital in St. Catharines. Building a hospital is a complex process. It begins with the hospital and the Ministry of Health working together to determine the size and scope of the project based on data and feedback.

Once the project scope and size are determined, the hospital and its team of specialized consultants develop the project specific output specifications, which involves hundreds of hours of staff and community engagement. During the request for proposal period, short-listed teams begin the design development based on the project-specific output specifications. At this stage, Infrastructure Ontario and Niagara Health evaluate the proposals against the project requirements. Once a team is selected and a final Project Agreement is negotiated and signed, the winning bidder is announced and construction begins.

What is a campus of care?

Campuses of care offer a wraparound of community support programs, health care services, housing options and LTC home beds in one location and are a proven means of supporting aging populations and improving health outcomes and quality of life for patients.

A creation of a health community hub or campus of care that integrates hospital care with a mix of community-based health and social services, better serves the community, especially given that Niagara has a high rate of chronic conditions.

What are emergency services and what do you mean by observation beds?

Emergency services at Welland will give patients 24/7 access to emergency-trained doctors, nurses and other staff. Niagara EMS will continue to bring patients to Welland when appropriate. We are planning for 8-10 observation beds for patients who may require stabilization before transferring to another site for overnight observation.

When a higher level of care or more specialized care is required, for example critical care or cardiac care, patients will be transferred to either the new South Niagara Hospital or the Marotta Family Hospital. Patients will have access to the full suite of hospital services and care available at Niagara Health regardless of what site they present to. There is no wrong door. We are one system that is designed around centres of excellence that care for patients.

What's the difference between an emergency department and 24/7 emergency services?

There is no wrong door for patients. Emergency services will give patients 24/7 access to emergency trained doctors, nurses and other staff. Patients will have access to diagnostics services. Niagara EMS will continue to bring patients to Welland when appropriate. The only difference will be that there will be no surgical and critical care at the Welland site. The EDs in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls will have the wrap around acute and critical care services. Patients will have access to the full suite of services and care available at Niagara Health regardless of the site where they present. We are one system that is designed around centres of excellence that care for patients.

Will there be surgeries at the Welland Hospital when the South Niagara Hospital opens?

Based on our limited resources and planning completed with the Marotta Family Hospital and the South Niagara Hospital, there are no plans to have surgical or critical care beds at the Welland Hospital.

We will be modernizing and redeveloping the existing Welland site with potential for expanded services. The hospital will provide 24/7 emergency services and have 30 complex care beds. The site will include a centre of excellence in eye care that will provide specialized services such as cataract surgeries. It will also feature outpatient programs, including dialysis, CT, X-Ray, ultrasound, Ontario Breast Screening program, stress testing, ECG, lab services and mental health and addictions services.

Our plans for the Welland Hospital have not been fully finalized. We are excited about engaging the community to help shape our planning and help determine what community-based services might also be available at our Welland campus.

Why is the Welland Hospital becoming an administration hub?

The Marotta Family Hospital and the South Niagara Hospital are designed to focus on clinical programs and services. While there are administration areas at all of our sites, Welland will become an administration hub for support services including human resources, technology, and scheduling departments to provide a collaborative space and environment for our teams.

Why is the South Niagara Hospital costing \$3.4 billion when two other larger hospitals (new builds) are expected to cost less?

Infrastructure Ontario published a Market Update that includes projects in procurement. The

Market Update provides *estimated* total capital costs of projects that haven't reached financial close. [Please click here to access Infrastructure Ontario's Market Update from December 2023.](#)

Niagara Health and Infrastructure Ontario awarded a fixed-price contract of approximately \$3.6 billion to design, build, finance, and maintain the South Niagara Hospital.

Why are you reducing the number of beds at the hospital?

The South Niagara Hospital will increase the number of hospital beds for the region by 156. Planning for the Welland Hospital site is still underway. We know that the Welland Hospital will have at a minimum 30 complex care beds.

How will you redevelop the Welland Site and provide care at the same time?

Our top priority is to provide safe and quality care. The changes in Welland will happen in phases and will provide plenty of opportunity for Niagara Health and the community to work together to reimagine the entire site, not just the hospital and long-term care home. Team members will continue to care for patients at the Welland Hospital during renovations.

Have you considered maternity care at the South Niagara Hospital or new redeveloped Welland Hospital site?

Our Women's and Babies' program was developed in consultation with world experts. By centralizing these services at the Marotta Family Hospital, we are making the best use of the latest technology and equipment, human resources and training, and in turn enhancing patient care, patient safety and quality of work life. It is a model that is attracting new physicians looking for communities in which to set up practices and serves as a medical teaching unit for both doctors and nurses.

Are the current outpatient clinics staying at the Welland Hospital post 2028?

We anticipate all outpatient clinics including Mental Health and Addictions Adult day services and Child and Adolescent day services, Eating Disorders Clinics, Hepatitis C Clinics, Geriatric Care Clinics, Orthopedics/Fracture Clinics, and Chronic Disease Management will remain at the Welland Hospital. Our plan also includes expanding clinics based on staff, community and partner engagement.

Will the footprint at the Welland Hospital change when redeveloped?

We anticipate several changes to occur at the Welland Hospital site, however we are still in the planning and development phase. Additional staff and community engagement is required to move forward.

Will Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre remain to provide the same care in the future?

Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre is a specialty hospital providing rehabilitation and complex care to patients across the Niagara region. Hotel Dieu Shaver is a separate organization and close partner of Niagara Health. Services will remain the same. In August of 2023, approval from the Ministry of Health was given, with a \$2.5-million capital grant, to proceed into Stage 2 of the Capital Build process to expand rehabilitation beds and update outdated infrastructure.

What are your plans to add more ambulances?

Niagara Health is not responsible for ambulance services. The Regional Municipality of Niagara is responsible for Niagara EMS. We continue to work closely with our partners at Niagara EMS to ensure access to ambulances for those experiencing medical emergencies. This includes a number of innovative programs aimed at getting paramedics and ambulances back on the roads faster.