

**Community Virtual Webinar – Our Future
March 12, 2024
Q&A**

- 1. I'm excited to hear about how each hospital will focus on areas of specialization. Do you know what the focus will be of each hospital in a mature system?**

For services NOT falling within those areas of focus, will patient care be delivered by a hospital in another community? If so, which services would you anticipate be served outside of Niagara hospitals?

We are making significant progress on our plan to build a modern, three-site hospital system. Transforming our hospitals means patients will receive specialized care from the best clinical experts.

The Marotta Family Hospital already has Centres of Excellence in women and babies, cancer care, cardiac care and mental health and addictions. The South Niagara Hospital will have Centres of Excellence in complex care, stroke and wellness in aging. The Welland Hospital will have a Centre of Excellence for eye care.

The hospitals will offer many other acute care services. Services that are not acute nor emergent are offered by community-based health care providers – ensuring you continue getting care in Niagara.

Residents may be transferred outside of Niagara if they require highly specialized care only found in academic teaching hospitals. Examples of these include transplants, open heart surgeries, spinal surgery, brain surgery, advanced cancer surgeries, and complex pediatrics care for ventilation. These services require highly specialized professional teams, specialized equipment and clinical expertise.

- 2. What is the amount of funding that Niagara Health receives from the Province of Ontario per financial year for each site it operates?**

Niagara Health's total operating budget for 2022-2023 was approximately \$693 million. Hospital budgets are complicated and not site specific, rather they are based on services provided and staffing. Approximately 70% of total expenses are related to salaries, benefits and medical staff remuneration.

- 3. Do the Urgent Care Centres help to alleviate Emergency Department (ED) wait times?**

Our plan to build a three-site regional hospital system is the best way we can use our limited resources to ensure all residents of Niagara have access to high-quality hospital care, no matter where they live. With our three-site model, Niagara Health is actually increasing emergency department capacity for the region.

Urgent Care Centres in Fort Erie and Port Colborne have not had Emergency Departments since 2009 and are not places to receive emergency care.

If someone is experiencing a life-threatening medical emergency, they must call 9-1-1 or go to an Emergency Department in Welland, St. Catharines or Niagara Falls.

The UCCs have served as a stop gap for the communities given the lack of access to primary care providers. We are committed to do everything possible to work with municipalities and community partners to bring more primary care options to those communities. By ensuring every patient has access to primary care, we will improve the overall health of residents in the region.

4. Are the projected number of beds for the South Niagara Hospital based on the regional population when planning started, or has Niagara Health been planning for the future growth of the region?

Niagara Health is evolving to meet the needs of our growing and aging population. Our new hospital system will significantly increase capacity for the entire region.

Planning for the South Niagara Hospital is based off the latest population census from 2021 and data conducted by the Niagara Region demonstrating the region's growth in the future. Understanding that Niagara has a growing population, data was also pulled from up-to-date building permits across the region.

5. Do ambulance offloading challenges impact residents needing transportation to the nearest Emergency Department?

Patients experiencing an emergency should always call 911. Paramedics will provide lifesaving services on the spot and quickly transport you to the closest emergency department, that will be better equipped to provide emergency care to patients.

We are working closely with Niagara EMS to ensure ambulances can get back on the road as soon as possible. We have added more staff to emergency departments to get patients out of ambulances faster.

6. Will Niagara Health continue to operate the long-term care home at the Welland Hospital?

We are incredibly proud of our long-term care home in Welland. Currently, 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 and possibly add much needed, additional long-term care beds to the region.

7. Will the Welland Hospital be developed on the current site? Will there be dedicated Alternative Level of Care beds?

Preliminary planning continues for a new Welland hospital and we are excited about the opportunities this will bring for this community and the broader region. Our plan is to redevelop the Welland Hospital pending confirmation of a capital planning grant from the Ministry of Health. Our intention is that it will remain at the current location.

The Welland Hospital will include 24/7 emergency services, day surgeries, various outpatient programs, mental health and addiction services, complex care and a Centre of Excellence in eye care.

Engagement on the future of the Welland site will occur over the next few years of planning to ensure it has the right mix of services for the community.

8. During inclement weather, residents of Fort Erie often have transportation barriers to access an Emergency Department. How are you addressing this issue?

We acknowledge that Fort Erie is uniquely situated in Niagara and that in the event of a severe snowstorm, local travel is challenging. We presented to Niagara Regional Council during their consultation sessions about the importance of transportation for all residents of Niagara, as it impacts access to care.

Any resident experiencing a medical emergency should always call 9-1-1. Snowstorms often pose an issue with even local travel, and it is our understanding that during these extreme weather events, our partners at Niagara EMS take extra efforts to ensure increased access to ambulances for those experiencing medical emergencies.

9. Will there be a parking garage for patients and visitors at the new hospital?

There will be approximately 2,500 parking spaces at the South Niagara Hospital, including more than 100 accessible spaces.

10. What is the projected date for the South Niagara Hospital opening and what is the overlap, if any, with the closure of the current Niagara Falls Hospital?

We broke ground on the new South Niagara Hospital last summer (2023), which was a major milestone. The South Niagara Hospital will take approximately five years to build and is projected to be completed in 2028. Once opened, we will transition hospital programs and services from the Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Port Colborne sites to the South Niagara and Welland hospitals. A full transition plan is being developed and will be shared with the community over the coming years.

11. What happens to the current Niagara Falls Hospital once closed?

When the new South Niagara Hospital opens, the Niagara Falls site will be returned to the City of Niagara Falls. The city will determine the best use for the site to benefit the community.

12. What is Niagara Health doing to successfully recruit health care professionals to the region?

Building a new and modern hospital system will help to recruit and retain more expert doctors, nurses and staff, right here in Niagara. The South Niagara Hospital will be a big recruiting tool to attract top talent to Niagara.

There is a global shortage of health human resources. We are competing globally for talent and are aggressively recruiting. Our teams are doing everything possible to alleviate these pressures while also being mindful that long-term solutions are necessary to prevent burnout and workforce shortages that contribute to staffing shortages. Some steps we have taken include:

- Continuing to aggressively recruit locally, nationally and internationally for health human resources to Niagara Health.
- Working with community partners, including the Niagara Region, for an additional recruiter and promoting Niagara as a great place to live, work and play.
- Explored other models including the use of anesthesia assistants, supervised nurse sedation and GP anesthesia to expand our blended-care model.

13. Are comprehensive team-based models private for-profit practices?

Family Health Teams and physicians operating their own practice in the community are funded by the Ministry of Health and operate their own corporations.

14. I'm unable to find a family doctor due to the extreme shortage of primary care providers. How will Niagara Health help?

We are committed to doing everything possible to help the municipalities and community partners bring more primary care providers to our communities, including advocacy efforts aimed at securing government funding, helping promote Niagara as a great place to live and work and providing primary care providers with opportunities to work with the hospital.

When the new South Niagara Hospital opens, our vision is for the municipality to provide community-run services such as primary care at the Fort Erie and Port Colborne sites.

If you do not have a primary care provider, you can register with [Health Care Connect](#) for a nurse to help you search for a doctor or nurse practitioner who is accepting new patients in the community. Another option is to reach out to local healthcare providers directly, [see this list of doctors in the Niagara region](#) who are accepting new patients, posted by Niagara Region.

15. In the region, we also have the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital under construction under Hamilton Health Services. While it is not part of Niagara Health, it is within the region. Will it be part of the strategic planning for the health care needs of residents in the Niagara region? Will Niagara Health be able to coordinate with that facility, including the new digital record system or specialized services?

Niagara Health is implementing a new hospital information system which, for patients who receive care from different health systems, will allow for health information to be digitally shared between hospitals.

Currently, patients who receive care at Niagara Health and Hamilton Health Sciences can access their health records using ConnectMyHealth. Patients can share this information with clinicians at both hospital systems.

Niagara Health has strong partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences, especially West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, and works hand-in-hand to deliver exceptional health care services to all Niagara residents.

16. Is there a way to access the planning documents for the South Niagara Hospital? Specifically the plan of approach and master plan documents.

South Niagara Hospital planning documents, reports and project goals can be accessed on our website: <https://www.niagarahealth.on.ca/site/south-niagara-hospital-project>

17. Are the pain clinics in the region connected to Niagara Health?

Niagara Health operates outpatient pain clinics at The Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines. Patients are referred to these clinics by their primary care physician. There are several other pain clinics in the region that are run by community-based care providers.