

Fact Checking the Town of Fort Erie Press Conference

Updated: June 11, 2025

Niagara Health appreciates and understands the Fort Erie and Port Colborne Mayors' jobs are to advocate for their communities. Hospital leadership's job is to deliver hospital care, including emergency and acute care services, to the entire region. The more we can work together, the better the outcome will be for the people of Fort Erie, Port Colborne and the entire Niagara region.

We are disappointed when misinformation is shared by elected local officials in their zeal to build support for their campaigns. The oversimplification of the complexity of running a regional hospital system is a disservice to the 7,000 physicians and employees who work tirelessly each day at Niagara Health, plus it is undermining the policies and processes critical to ensure patient safety. Further, Niagara Health is working tirelessly to recruit more physicians to the region and it's disingenuous to minimize the incredible challenge of physician recruitment in the face of a province-wide doctor shortage.

The facts are, and remain as follows:

- This is a last resort. The closures are the direct result of a critical, ongoing shortage of emergency-trained physicians.
- Even after the reduction of hours at UCCs, we are facing 111 unfilled shifts across our sites.
- Emergency care must come first. More than half of these gaps are at the Marotta Family ED in St. Catharines — one of the busiest in Ontario — with the remaining gaps in Niagara Falls.
- This is not about funding — it's about staffing. NH is short 10 to 15 emergency-trained physicians to meet our needs. We are onboarding five new ED physicians this summer, and we will continue to focus on recruitment
- UCCs are not Emergency Departments. They are not equipped for life-threatening conditions and cannot operate safely without an on-site physician.

Niagara Health is:

- Aggressively recruiting emergency-trained physicians across Canada and the U.S.
- Offering incentives such as relocation support.
- Working with the local primary care network to encourage primary care physicians to upskill in emergency medicine
- Engaging in direct outreach to local and international physicians.
- Marketing Niagara as a desirable place to live and practice.

What's Been Done:

- Port Colborne: A team-based primary care model is on the table. NH and local physicians are still awaiting council's decision.

- Fort Erie: Despite invitations to do so, Fort Erie has yet to bring forward a primary care proposal for the UCC. Provincial primary care funding went unapplied for in 2023. NH's recruitment campaign has not been promoted locally.

What We've Offered Municipal Leaders

- Support to transform UCCs into community walk-in or family practice hubs.
- Help identifying partners, developing proposals, and navigating funding.
- Active collaboration to secure sustainable models that meet community needs.

Niagara Health and the President and CEO have had repetitive, continuous communications with both Mayor Redekop and Mayor Steele and their teams:

- May 15, 2025 – Email from NH: Noting physicians shortage, request for support on physician recruitment campaign and request for meeting
- May 22, 2025 – Meeting: Chief of Staff of NH and Mayors noting physician shortages and challenges filling shifts across EDs and UCCs
- May 23, 2025 – Email: Email from Mayor Redekop thanking NH President and CEO for meeting
- May 26, 2025 – Email from NH: Request to Fort Erie Healthcare Coordinator for meeting dates with Chief of Staff of NH, Fort Erie Staff and Fort Erie Primary Care Providers
- May 26, 2025 – Email: Confirmation from Town of Fort Erie Staff on scope of meeting with Chief of Staff of NH
- June 4, 2025 – Email: Confirmation from the Town of Fort Erie on two separate meetings with staff and one with Fort Erie Primary Care Providers
- June 6, 2025 – Email: Suggestion of dates to meet from the Town of Fort Erie
- June 9, 2025 – Email from NH: Clarification on discussion of physician recruitment
- June 10, 2025 – Email from NH: Further clarification on UCC shifts unfilled
- June 10, 2025 – Phone call between President and CEO and Mayor Redekop
- June 11, 2025 – Email from NH: Process for Primary Care physician credentialing
- June 11, 2025 – Email from NH: Information on training for emergency physicians