



## Niagara-on-the-Lake healthcare update

SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

Today marks the beginning of a new approach to developing healthcare services for Niagara-On-The-Lake residents. Niagara Health System (NHS) and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Health Services Steering Committee are announcing a commitment to work together to plan a better model of care with enhanced services, while also determining the future of the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site.

This move occurs as the committee evolves into a steering committee with representatives from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Family Health Team, Niagara Region & Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital Foundation, the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), and importantly a local resident representative as well as the Lord Mayor of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Dave Eke. The Committee's mandate is evolving to consider the future of the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site, the future configuration of the family health team, and residents continued access to Primary and Ambulatory care.

Dr. Suzanne Johnston, President of the NHS noted that Niagara-on-the-Lake residents deserve high-quality, accessible care. 'We are committed to putting the right healthcare model in place, working with the community and consulting extensively. Our planning for our existing site needs to be finalized in a way that is respectful to staff, and creates a new vision with those we serve.'

Ms. Maria Bau-Coote, Committee Chair and Executive Director of the Family Health Team, noted the Committee's commitment to engaging residents: 'It is so critical that our future model of care delivery reflects residents' needs, and we are doing that in a proactive and ground-breaking way. We are looking now at hospital services, services for seniors and the chronically ill, and at palliative care needs. This committee was launched to get ahead of changes like the planned closure of the hospital site. Through partnerships, hearing from people that live in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and through careful planning we can take the lead and achieve improved health and access here in the Town.'

Suzanne acknowledged the need for careful planning around existing services at the hospital's local site. 'In keeping with our agreements with our unions, we did let our staff at the site know last week there were planned changes taking effect by April 2015, specifically closure of the beds at the site. This action is part of the overall health system plan for the Niagara region as outlined in Dr. Kevin Smith's

report. But before anything changes, we want to make sure we are creative with solutions, and work with the community and partners like the Region, as well as community consultation sessions to ensure feedback from the public. As we develop the options the hospital remains open with services intact. Our focus is and continues to be on the care of the people we serve.'

Dr. Karen Berti, a member of the family health team, noted residents should feel more at ease in light of the collaboration dealing with changes at the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site. 'We know the bed closures have been coming for some time. In essence, only half of the beds at Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital are ever occupied by Niagara-on-the-Lake residents. These beds are mostly for slow-paced recovery or palliative care needs. As a member of the committee, we are working on finding alternative solutions like partnerships with existing health care providers and long-term care facilities in the area to help meet this need. Outside of the hospital bed issues, the future of medical care services for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will not only be unchanged but likely improved as we work to develop a collaborative model of care, delivered from family doctor's offices, that would include a team of health care professionals. It is important to remember that the majority of health care is delivered outside of a hospital setting. I am optimistic that the future changes to health care delivery for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will be positive.'

'Today's announcement represents an exciting development in healthcare in Niagara-on-the-Lake,' said Dr. Barry Wright, NHS Board Chair. 'It is important to our Board that the community know NHS is very much committed to working to improve access to services for residents, while we look to determine the future of the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site. We have a significant opportunity to do something special, working with all our partners on imagining an ideal system for local residents.'

## **KEY COMPONENTS OF TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

- NHS leaders are joining a committee of regional leaders looking at the future of healthcare for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents
- The Committee will consider the future of the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site, the future configuration of the family health team, and residents continued access to Primary and Ambulatory Care
- NHS will work with community providers to ensure access to healthcare for residents does not change
- NHS will work cooperatively with unions to keep as many affected staff working for the NHS as possible, consistent with the terms of our collective agreements; NHS has advised staff in keeping with its agreements that the beds at the site are scheduled to close by April 2015
- The Committee is beginning a Community Engagement on Residents aspirations and concerns about the future of healthcare

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:**

**PATIENT INTERVIEWS** are being conducted until the end of the month at Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, starting today.

### **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE SESSIONS**

Residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake are invited to participate in an exercise to hear community members' concerns and hopes about the future of healthcare for residents of Niagara-On-The-Lake. Sessions are occurring at 6 separate times to try to ensure that all who are interested can participate.

LOCATION: Fire Hall - 2 Anderson Lane – Niagara-on-the-Lake

Please contact Karen Ediger, NOTL Family Health Team Administrative Assistant to register/RSVP. Karen can be reached at 905-468-2177 ext. 6 or email [karen@notlft.com](mailto:karen@notlft.com)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2

SESSION 1 – 9:00 am

SESSION 1 – 9:00 am

SESSION 2 – 1:00 pm

SESSION 2 – 1:00 pm

SESSION 3 – 7:00 pm

SESSION 3 – 7:00 pm

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

### ***What is today's announcement about?***

Today's announcement is really about bringing clarity to the public about how healthcare decision-making affecting Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will occur. Niagara Health System is joining a group of committed local leaders on a local healthcare steering committee, and together this group is announcing a series of community dialogue sessions so that the group can begin by hearing the aspirations and concerns of engaged citizens.

### ***What is the mandate of the Health Services Steering Committee for Niagara-on-the-Lake?***

The Committee's mandate is evolving to consider the future of the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site, the future configuration of the family health team, and residents continued access to Primary and Ambulatory care.

***How will this change affect local residents and their access to services?***

The intention is that local access to services will not be affected as planning takes place.

***What will happen to the existing Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site?***

NHS is currently considering all options related to the site including re-purposing, and/or closing and selling. The goal of NHS is to collaborate with partners on the steering committee, the Region, and with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake in determining the future of the site. NHS has let staff know that changes are likely to occur by April 2015, and the Committee will analyze these plans and work to improve the coordination and alignment of the health system and access for residents.

***How will the changes impact patients currently in the beds?***

As it will be some time for the changes to take effect, patients will not be moved/removed from these beds, but that beds will close incrementally as patients currently in beds move to the next stages in their care – for example, either by being discharged home, or moving on to another setting like long-term care.

***How will these changes affect the other services and clinics in the site?***

At this time the other activities in the site will continue unchanged. The changes to the beds are not slated to take full effect until April 2015. Again, because we are working with patients and our families we need to ensure transition plans are in place.

***How will this change affect local residents and their access to services?***

The intention is that local access to complex care and acute beds will not be affected. There is capacity in the system at other partner organizations and other sites of NHS. As the Niagara-on-the-Lake site does not have emergency or urgent care services, we anticipate the change will have very little effect on local residents. There will be no difference in access to hospital beds as a result of the Niagara-on-the-Lake bed closure. Beds for long-term and complex-care are all managed through our local LHIN. The NHS will continue to have complex care beds at other sites, and will be able to take care of those patients requiring that type of a bed. Most importantly, NHS will continue to ensure that patients receive necessary care and the most appropriate hospital care to meet their care needs.

***How will this change affect staff? How many staff will lose their jobs?***

Niagara Health System's successes are the result of the amazing people on our teams across our sites, and we will work cooperatively with unions to keep as

many affected staff working for the NHS as possible, consistent with the terms of our collective agreements.

***Will access to emergency care change?***

The Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site does not provide emergency care. Patients will still have access to three full service EDs and two UCCs in the region. In the event of an emergency, EMS will continue to follow the Destination and Determination Guidelines and necessary protocols.

***What services does the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site currently offer to its patients?***

NHS offers the following:

- 22 hospital beds
- A walk-in clinic staffed by a nurse practitioner
- A low volume X-Ray and ultrasound service
- Physiotherapy

Non-NHS operated services:

- The NOTL Family Health Team - separately governed and operated
- Out-patient laboratory operated by Lifelabs
- An Internal Medicine physician who leases office space
- An out-patient audiology service offered once a month by the Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre
- Two occupants in the former nurses residence: massage therapist and NOTL Community Palliative Care

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Brady Wood, Chief Communications & External Relations Officer**

[Brady.Wood@niagarahealth.on.ca](mailto:Brady.Wood@niagarahealth.on.ca)

W: 905-378-4647 x43111 | C: 905-380-0884

1200 Fourth Ave, St. Catharines, ON L2S 0A9