

## **Welland Long-Term Care Home (Extended Care Unit)**

Niagara Health will not be renewing the operating licence for the long-term care home at the Welland Site. The licence expires in June 2026, which means the home will close once all residents have safely transitioned to new homes.

The Welland long-term care home has served Niagara seniors for more than 50 years and has been home to generations of residents, families and staff. While care will continue until the final resident has moved, the building no longer meets modern long-term care safety and accessibility standards.

**Any questions or concerns related to resident placement, managing applications and admissions to a new long-term care home, please contact Vanessa Mako, your Ontario Health atHome Care Coordinator.**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: Why are you closing our home?**

**A:** The home will close because the building does not meet today's long-term care fire, safety and accessibility standards. Bringing it up to today's requirements would require full sprinkler coverage and major structural changes. Given the age of the building, renovations are not feasible.

**Q: What do you mean when you say the building no longer meets modern long-term care safety and accessibility standards?**

**A:** The Welland long-term care home was built in 1972 and is classified as a Class C facility. Due to the age and design of the building, the underlying mechanical infrastructure does not support the installation of required modern life-safety systems, including a sprinkler system. As a result, the home does not meet current fire safety requirements established by the Province.

In addition, the building does not meet accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), nor does it align with current infection prevention and control expectations for modern long-term care environments.

Together, these limitations mean the building cannot be feasibly upgraded to meet today's regulatory, safety, and accessibility standards, and has therefore been deemed unsafe to continue operating as a long-term care home.

**Q: What fire safety and fire suppression measures are currently in place at the home?**

A: Due to the age and design of the building, there is no built-in fire suppression system, such as sprinklers. To mitigate this risk, the home has a comprehensive evacuation plan in place. Staff receive regular training and participate in drills in partnership with the local fire department to ensure residents can be safely evacuated in the event of a fire.

**Q: Is this decision about cost cutting?**

A: No. This is about the condition of the building and the inability to meet current long-term care standards. Care quality and resident safety are the primary considerations.

**Q: Given the June 2026 licence expiry, what mechanism allows Niagara Health to continue operating the long-term care home should residents remain in the home beyond that date?**

A: The Ministry of Long-Term Care has granted Niagara Health a short-term exemption to continue operating the home to ensure continuity of care while residents are safely transitioned.

**Q: Why didn't Niagara Health fix this years ago?**

A: This is not about a single upgrade. Long-term care standards have evolved significantly. Meeting today's requirements would require full sprinkler coverage and major structural changes. Given the age of the building, those changes are not feasible through renovation.

**Q: How long have you known this was going to happen?**

A: Over the past four years, Niagara Health has worked closely with Niagara Region to assess whether the Region had the capacity and capability to build a new long-term care home on the Welland site. The Region's assessment confirmed there is not. We also explored interest from non-profit and private-sector operators, to develop a long-term care home on the site. After exhausting

all available options, no viable path forward emerged, leaving Niagara Health with no alternative but to proceed with this decision.

**Q: I heard there was funds put aside to rebuild or redevelop Niagara Health's Long-Term Care home?**

**A:** Very few hospitals in Ontario are able to afford building long-term care home. That government does not provide upfront funds to build or renovate long-term care home. Niagara Health has never received approval to build a long-term care home nor has it ever been funded to do so. Building a new home would require taking on debt that Niagara Health cannot afford.

**Q: What did Niagara Health do with the funding it received to redevelop the home?**

**A:** Niagara Health has never received funding or approval to redevelop the home. In 2018, Niagara Health applied to the Ministry of Long-Term Care to redevelop the home, but it was never approved.

**Q: What have you done to prevent this from happening?**

**A:** An application was submitted to the Ministry of Long-Term Care to renovate the home and was not approved by the government given the age of the building and the safety and accessibility access.

Over the past four years, Niagara Health has worked closely with Niagara Region to assess whether there was the capacity and capability to build a new long-term care home on the Welland site. Their assessment confirmed there is not. We also explored interest from non-profit and private-sector operators, to develop a long-term care home on the site. After exhausting all available options, no viable path forward emerged, leaving Niagara Health with no alternative but to proceed with this decision.

**Q: There are currently some renovations underway at the long-term care home. Why is Niagara Health doing renovations to the home if it is closing?**

**A:** Where there is an issue of safety that is able to be addressed, Niagara Health will continue to make those improvements in the best interest of our residents.

**Q: Why are we hearing this now?**

**A:** The license expires in June 2026. Sharing this information now allows time for a structured, supported transition rather than rushed decisions later.

**Q: I just moved in recently. Why was I allowed to move in if the home was going to close?**

**A:** We understand how frustrating this may feel. Under provincial legislation, the placement process belongs to Ontario Health atHome and they are not permitted to notify residents or families until formal approval is received from the Ministry of Long-Term Care. They are required to follow the government's approval and notification process, and communication occurred as soon as authorization was received.

**Q: Can my friend or family member and I be relocated to the same long-term care home so we can stay together?**

**A:** Where people currently live together, including spouses, family members or long-term partners, Ontario Health atHome will support reunification. There are specific criteria, and Care Coordinators will walk through those details with you. If you are hoping to move with a friend, we can discuss that as part of your planning. While it won't always be possible, there are ways to increase the chances of moving to the same home.

**Q: My spouse or family lives in Welland and doesn't drive. Will I be able to stay in town?**

**A:** Your Care Coordinator will work with you to open your application and talk through your preferences, including location. You'll be asked to choose homes you would genuinely consider living in. We encourage people to tour homes if possible and only select those they feel comfortable with. Preferences can be updated at any time.

**Q: Do I have a say in where I move?**

**A:** Yes. You always have a say. Ontario Health atHome's role is to support and guide you through your options, not to pressure you. As we get closer to the transition, Care Coordinators will reconnect to review choices, availability, and next steps, always keeping your preferences at the centre of the conversation.

**Q: Will I have the same type of room at the new home, or will I need to share?**

**A:** Room types depend on the home you move to. None of the homes we work with have more than two residents per room. Your Care Coordinator can help you understand room options and factor that into your choices.

**Q: What if I don't want to go to the home where I'm placed?**

**A:** You always have a choice. Placement decisions are made with you, not for you. Care Coordinators will provide counselling and support to help you choose a home that fits your needs and preferences.

**Q: Is there a wait list? Will I be moved up because this home is closing?**

**A:** Yes, you will be placed on wait lists like others in the system, but residents affected by a home closure are given priority. In some cases, residents with more complex needs may receive even higher priority. The home will remain open until the last resident has moved.

Care Coordinators spend a lot of time helping people choose homes they truly want to live in. As time goes on, your choices can be revisited, availability reviewed and options adjusted. This is a very individualized, patient-centred process that looks at each person's needs, preferences and situation.

**Q: Does Bill 7 apply to this situation? Can residents be forced to move?**

**A:** No. Bill 7 does not apply in the same way in this situation. Ontario Health atHome will work directly with residents and families to review available options and personal preferences, and to support informed choice throughout the process. Residents will not be moved without their consent.

**Q: Will I still have a doctor at the new home?**

**A:** Yes. You will have access to a physician at the long-term care home where you move.

**Q: Why can't residents just stay?**

**A:** Residents will remain in the home during the transition. The home will stay open and fully staffed until every resident has safely moved to a new home. Long term, residents are better served in facilities designed to meet today's standards for safety and care.

**Q: Are you forcing people out?**

**A:** No. Residents will not be moved without a placement. Moves will happen over time, guided by Care Coordinators, based on individual needs and available options.

**Q: Given the June 2026 license expiry, what mechanism allows Niagara Health to continue operating the long-term care home should residents remain in the home beyond that date?**

**A:** The Ministry of Long-Term Care has granted Niagara Health a short-term exemption to continue operating the home to ensure continuity of care while residents are safely transitioned.

**Q: Will my loved one have to leave Welland or Niagara?**

**A:** Placement depends on availability, care needs and individual preferences. Care Coordinators will work closely with families to explore options and advocate for preferences wherever possible.

**Q: What if my loved one is very fragile or doesn't handle change well?**

**A:** That is understood and taken seriously. Transitions will be planned carefully, with clinical input and individualized support to minimize disruption and risk.

**Q: Who will be responsible for the costs of moving residents to their new homes?**

**A:** Niagara Health will cover the costs associated with safely moving and transporting residents to their new homes.

**Q: If a resident moves to a new long-term care home partway through a month, how is the monthly payment handled?**

**A:** If a resident transitions to a new home mid-month, charges will be adjusted accordingly to ensure there is no overpayment. Upon discharge, the resident's

account will be reconciled, and any overpayment will be refunded. Refunds are typically issued within 30 days. Subsidized accommodation status will continue to be applied in accordance with Ministry guidelines at the new home.

**Q: Will subsidized rates be considered?**

A: Subsidized accommodation status will continue to be applied in accordance with Ministry guidelines at the new home.

**Q: Are jobs being eliminated?**

A: There are no immediate job changes as a result of this announcement. The home will remain open and fully staffed throughout the transition period to ensure safe care. Over time, staffing impacts are expected as the home transitions, and we are committed to managing those changes carefully and respectfully through collective agreements and available supports. Niagara Health is working with unions and has supports in place to help staff with next steps as the transition progresses.

**Q: As the home is closing, is there a risk that staff will leave for other positions?**

A: Staff working in the Welland long-term care home are part of the broader Niagara Health hospital workforce of more than 6,000 employees and are represented by unions. As part of a large organization, staff may have opportunities to work in the hospital, which provides flexibility and helps reduce the likelihood of staff leaving the organization.

As residents begin to transition, there may be periods where staffing levels exceed resident numbers, and this is appropriate to ensure continuity of care. Our priority is to do what is right for residents and to ensure they continue to receive the care and support they need throughout the transition.