

Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Engagement Questions and Answers

1. How has Niagara Health planned 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's 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 that work with internal and external partners to host needed services, such as falls clinic and/or caregiver support programming, within available space.

2. In what ways does Niagara Health collaborate with community healthcare teams?

In order to deliver seamless care, we must build strong partnerships with primary care providers and other healthcare professionals in the community.

Recently, Niagara Health hired a Chief of Primary Care whose role is to support enhanced communication and collaboration between the hospital and primary care providers, ensuring they feel fully supported when working in the hospital and within the community.

Niagara Health also partners with primary care providers through SCOPE Niagara, a program which connects family physicians and nurse practitioners to a dedicated team

of specialists from Niagara Health and from Home and Community Care. Primary care providers connect with SCOPE Niagara's nurse navigator, who directs them to the most appropriate service, providing support for complex and urgent patients in real-time.

3. How will the three-site hospital model ensure patients continue to have access to specialized services including cardiac care?

In order to provide the best care for our patients, we are focusing our limited resources and building seamless hospital care across Niagara with three cornerstone hospitals – the Marotta Family in St. Catharines, South Niagara and Welland. By doing this, we are bringing together our staff and expertise in three locations to give you the highest quality care.

In addition, the system will provide access to specialized care in mental health and addictions, cardiac, kidney, stroke, cancer, complex care, wellness in aging, eye care and maternity care. 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.

Residents may be transferred outside of Niagara if they require highly specialized care. Examples of that include transplants, open heart surgeries, spinal surgery, brain surgery, advanced cancer surgeries and complex pediatrics care for ventilation. These out-of-region hospitals have highly specialized professional teams, specialized equipment and clinical expertise.

4. What is Niagara Health doing to support community-run diagnostic imaging?

We are working with the municipalities to support community-run services such as primary care and community-based diagnostic imaging. While primary care is not the role of a hospital system, we are committed to working with the community to help make this a reality.

5. What do you have to say to patients who feel that their healthcare is at risk if they have to drive further to access services?

All three hospital sites are strategically located in Niagara's three largest cities, which make up 70 per cent of the region's population. The remaining 30 per cent of the region's population live within an 11 to 28 minute drive to a hospital site.

Ontario Health seeks to ensure that 90 per cent of residents in a community receive emergency services within 30 minutes' travel time from their home. It is critically important to us that everyone in our community has access to high-quality, lifesaving care when they need it.

We have studied the geography alongside planning experts and these locations will provide the best access to care for the people of the entire Niagara region.

These drive times are well within the Ontario standards for emergency access. We believe this plan will improve access to care, and the patient experience, when you arrive at our doors.

6. What is Niagara Health doing to recruit more health professionals?

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.

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, to promote Niagara as a great place to live, work and play.
- Exploring other models of care including the use of anesthesia assistants, supervised nurse sedation and GP anesthesia to expand our blended-care model.

7. What housing services will be available for seniors when the Welland Hospital is redeveloped?

It is exciting to imagine what the Welland Hospital will become when redeveloped. We have the opportunity to create something truly special together. An updated site could include preventative care by community health partners, doctor's offices or academic teaching campuses. Unused land could be developed by community partners for seniors supportive housing.

8. What does Niagara Health have to say to residents concerned about the privatization of healthcare?

Niagara Health is a public hospital and will continue to be. We are committed to delivering quality healthcare for our communities, where no one has to pay for services out of pocket. We are strongly advocating alongside municipal partners for publicly funded primary care.

9. 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.

10. How much does the community have to contribute to the South Niagara Hospital build?

In Ontario, hospitals are responsible for 10 per cent of the eligible construction costs and associated ancillary costs. Niagara Health is also responsible for 100 per cent of the costs associated with the purchase of everything inside the physical building, from bedding and furniture to diagnostic imaging equipment and surgical tools. We are grateful to the Niagara Health Foundation and the generosity of our community in supporting Niagara Health's vision for a healthier Niagara.

The Province of Ontario will fund the majority of the new hospital project, with the local community and Niagara Health responsible for the local share portion, approximately \$230 million.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. What happens now that the community engagement sessions are completed?

As we move forward towards our future vision, it is important to emphasize that this is an ongoing conversation. Moving forward, our next steps will include further engagement on the Welland Hospital redevelopment project, offering opportunities for you to stay informed and engaged as we reimagine what the future of this cornerstone site will look like. We will also continue to advocate alongside municipalities for improved comprehensive team-based primary care and community care services.

For updates on upcoming engagement and information about the three-site model, please visit NiagaraHealth.on.ca/Our-Future.