

February 3, 2025

The Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie
1 Municipal Centre Drive
Fort Erie, ON L2A 2S6

Attention: Mayor Wayne Redekop and members of Municipal Council

Re: The Town of Fort Erie (the “Town”) delegation to the Board of Directors of Niagara Health System (“Niagara Health”)

On behalf of the Niagara Health (NH) Board of Directors, we thank Mayor Redekop for his presentation at our Board meeting on January 28, 2025. We were also pleased to welcome Councillors Flagg, Christensen, Dubanow, Lewis, McDermott, Regional Councillor Tom Insinna, along with town staff including CAO, Chris McQueen and Alice Preston, Coordinator of Community Health.

As the hospital’s Board of Directors, and residents of Niagara region, we want to acknowledge both the Town’s commitment for Fort Erie residents to have access to health services and your ongoing advocacy to support funding for the South Niagara Hospital. After careful Board consideration, this letter will serve as our formal response to your proposed circulated resolution (attached).

The Niagara Health Board of Directors agrees that all residents in Niagara, including those in Fort Erie, should have access to primary health care. Primary health care is defined as, being “attached to”, or cared for by a team of professionals including a family doctor, nurse practitioner and their multi-disciplinary team members such as nurses, mental health workers, dieticians, etc. Designed to keep patients healthy, long-term relationships with these family health care teams can allow patients to be seen when they are sick on the same day or next day, including evenings and weekends with a consistent care provider.

As demonstrated by the significant number of meetings that have occurred between the Niagara Health team and the Town, Niagara Health’s ongoing collaboration on regional healthcare remains very important. We will support the re-engagement of Niagara Health leadership and staff with the Town of Fort Erie. It is our expectation that these engagements are respectful and conducted in a professional manner. As you would anticipate, we will monitor the value of such engagements to ensure NH resources are used effectively.

Niagara Health will continue to work with the Ministry of Health on the operational planning for the new South Niagara Hospital’s opening in 2028. The decision to close the UCC was made as part of a region-wide modernization of healthcare services. The Urgent Care Centre is not a hospital and is not equipped to provide 24-hour acute care. The facility is outdated, underutilized and the current operating model is not sustainable over the long-term.



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We are pleased that the Niagara Health team will continue to work with the Town, in good faith, to transition the operations of the UCC and diagnostic imaging. Further, as with other municipalities, the Town of Fort Erie will have the opportunity to purchase the building in exchange for local share for the new South Niagara Hospital.

Finally, as you recognize, it is outside of Niagara Health's mandate to advocate for chronic and palliative care beds outside of a hospital setting. However, as a member of the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Sante Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ÉSON), we have supported Hospice Niagara's request to the provincial government for additional hospice beds for the Niagara Region.

We are pleased that a follow-up meeting is scheduled between our President and CEO and your team. We remain confident in their ongoing leadership discussions with your Town's team and look forward to hearing about the progress of these discussions.

Sincerely,



Marylee O'Neill
Board Chair
Niagara Health

cc. Board of Directors, Niagara Health System
Lynn Guerriero, President and Chief Executive Officer, Niagara Health System



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Proposed Resolution for the Niagara Health Board of Directors

Whereas, the Town of Fort Erie has clearly stated its position that the community requires a primary health care “safety net”, currently provided at the Douglas Memorial Urgent Care Centre, that should responsibly continue operation in Fort Erie until a viable alternative is in place.

Now, therefore, be it resolved,

That the Niagara Health Board of Directors instruct Niagara Health representatives to re-engage with the Town of Fort Erie Health Services Committee to assist with local health and community service discussions; and

That Niagara Health commit to include the Town of Fort Erie Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, Community Health Services Coordinator and/or Director of Community Services in all discussions regarding local health services that impact the Town of Fort Erie; and

That the Niagara Health Board of Directors advocate to the Minister of Health to commit to the operational funding for all necessary services at the new South Niagara hospital without the removal or reallocation of operational funding from Douglas Memorial Urgent Care Centre (primary care services) to allow the continuation of the UCC and other current health services beyond 2028 or until a sustainable alternative is established; and

That the Niagara Health Board of Directors advocates to the Ministry of Health to direct all existing provincial funding for the operation of the Douglas Memorial UCC (primary care), chronic care beds and palliative care beds, and all diagnostic and associated services to remain in Fort Erie for use by Niagara Health as part of a revised hospital model for Niagara or an alternative model operated by a qualified designated health care services entity working in collaboration with the Town of Fort Erie should Niagara Health close Douglas Memorial as a hospital site, either before or following the completion and opening of the new South Niagara Hospital; and

That the Niagara Health Board notify the Town of Fort Erie of its decisions with respect to the above resolutions.