NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

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NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Outbreak conditions lifted at NHH – Norovirus (Norwalk) confirmed as culprit that forced closure of two units last week

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, March 26, 2009 – Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) announced today that an outbreak of a viral gastrointestinal illness is now over. Two patient units (In-Patient Rehabilitation and Complex Continuing Care) were temporarily closed to visitors, volunteers and new admissions on March 18, following the identification of a cluster of suspected cases.

The virus, confirmed on March 24 as norovirus, or Norwalk, affected 18 patients in total. Symptoms, which lasted for 24-48 hours, included nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Said Myonne Allan, Director of Infection Control and Laboratory Services at NHH: "While we remain vigilant, we are confident that last week's outbreak has run its cycle. Norwalk remains in the community, however, and we strongly encourage visitors to refrain from entering the hospital if they think they may be ill. Given the fact that we may carry a virus and not know it, all visitors are reminded of the extreme importance of using the hand sanitizer provided on entry, again on exit and during their visit as required."

Seasonal outbreaks of norovirus are not uncommon at this time of year, noted Helen Brenner, NHH's Vice President of Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive. "Norovirus is highly infectious. Staff members in the two units are to be commended for their efforts to keep this outbreak contained and for the extra attention required for the patients affected. Thanks too to the outstanding efforts of our housekeeping staff, for the additional infection control steps they needed to take to manage this outbreak, and the patience and understanding shown by our patients' families in respecting our need to restrict visits."

The affected units at NHH are once again accepting new admissions. Restrictions from patient transfers to and from other units have also been lifted.

For more information please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto. The 137-bed acute care hospital delivers a broad range of services, including emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, complex/long-term care, rehabilitation, palliative care and obstetrical care. A variety of ambulatory care clinics are also offered at NHH. In addition to these, NHH also sponsors a Community Mental Health Centre and an Assertive Community Treatment Team. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs close to 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East LHIN. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca.

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