

## No reduction planned in palliative care services at NHH— service will be there for you and your loved ones

An article published in *Northumberland Today* earlier this week, “Doctor discouraged by NHH restructuring plan,” February 1, 2016, has left some local residents and their loved ones fearing for the future of palliative care services at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH).

As CEO and Board Chair of NHH, we want to correct this misinformation and confirm: **there is no reduction in palliative care beds planned at NHH, nor is there any plan to reduce the quality of the service our community has come to know and count on today.**

Are there changes required to the way services are delivered, both in NHH’s palliative care unit and other areas of the hospital? Yes. Will there be an impact in the form of NHH staffing changes and the approach to service delivery we practice today? Yes.

But we believe strongly that this is, however difficult, a better outcome than the other alternative: local service reduction.

After multiple years of operating budget shortfalls, two independent external reviews, analysis of our peers’ performance against our own, consultation with staff, physicians and community, and many, many meetings with our funder, the Central East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), NHH is now implementing a multi-year Hospital Improvement Plan. This Plan, possible with LHIN and Ministry of Health funding and support, will help preserve ALL of NHH’s current services, including palliative care, but also intensive care, emergency care, inpatient and outpatient medical care, cancer care, mental health care, maternal/child care, diagnostics and rehabilitation—all services which we know are required by almost every family in this community—today and in the future.

We say “help preserve” because even with the \$5 million in annualized savings this Hospital Improvement Plan seeks to find, it is still not enough.

Our health system is going through a period of significant transformation, at the same time demands are increasing. We are aging, as a province and a country. As we do, we need our hospital and surrounding health system more. In a changing funding environment, hospitals across the province are under enormous pressure to do more with less. As taxpayers we expect efficiency in

our public institutions, but it is a challenge, for sure, as we must adapt to using the tools we have at our disposal to balance efficiency with quality, including new staffing models, new opportunities with technology, new partnerships and creative ideas for revenue generation.

NHH’s focus, for the immediate future, is on the implementation of a very detailed Plan that, with no net bed reduction and no service reduction, requires us to make a number of changes. This includes combining staff on smaller units, such as our six-bed palliative care unit, to form larger staff teams and achieve better efficiency. It also allows us to retain our first-floor hospital-based palliative care service, where it is located today, as our community told us clearly they wanted us to do. As well—and this is an important point—the changes will permit NHH, through additional investments in staff training and education, to further build palliative care expertise beyond today’s six-bed unit into our restorative care service.

Change is difficult, but it should not be impossible, and it should not be feared.

We will work with our team to develop the necessary transition plan to ensure quality of care is maintained and we will monitor results as we move forward, to ensure we are meeting our commitment to you, exceptional patient care. We are hopeful that everyone, including Dr. David Moorsom, who serves NHH’s palliative care patients and their families tirelessly, and who participated in a number of the difficult discussions leading up to our Plan, will appreciate our commitment to balance services for all we serve while meeting our financial obligations.

Please take the time to read the facts about your hospital. Information about NHH’s Hospital Improvement Plan is on our website, [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca), in summary form and detail. Public information meetings will begin later this month, and we welcome your time and your questions there as well. See [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca) for details. At any time, please contact us directly at 905-372-6811, ext. 4004 or [info@nhh.ca](mailto:info@nhh.ca). Thank you for your continued support of NHH.

Sincerely,  
**Linda Davis, President and CEO**  
**Jack Russell, Chair (volunteer), NHH Board of Directors**