



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alternative Level of Care strategy update – Northumberland Hills Hospital

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Wednesday, May 19, 2010 – A key component of Northumberland Hills Hospital's 2010/11 budget and service plan was a commitment from both the Central East Local Health Integration Network (Central East LHIN) and NHH to work together to address the growing number of Alternative Level of Care (ALC) patients.

ALC patients are those individuals who have completed their acute care treatment, but remain in hospital waiting for placement in community-based services.

On the assumption that additional community capacity for interim long-term care (iLTC) beds and convalescent care beds could be found by the Central East LHIN in the NHH catchment area, NHH had planned to close the following: 11 iLTC beds and 23 ALC beds. The ALC beds identified for closure were located in the acute inpatient units and the Complex Continuing Care unit. Eight (8) new restorative care beds were included in the plan to be opened at NHH. New community bed capacity was an essential condition for the implementation of this plan.

Despite Central East LHIN calls for proposals issued this spring, a preferred, well-defined and near-term option for operating iLTC beds and convalescent beds did not surface in the west Northumberland area.

At a meeting on Tuesday, May 18, the Board of the Central LHIN endorsed a motion that will see the Central East LHIN and NHH begin a dialogue on retaining the current iLTC beds and adding new restorative care beds as part of the NHH's revised ALC strategy. New one-time funding will be provided to NHH through the CE LHIN's Aging at Home program.

Implementation of other components of NHH's comprehensive ALC strategy aimed at supporting seniors in the community and reducing ED wait times will proceed. Examples including: the Wrap-Around initiative, which focuses on supporting patients in their discharge to home; the Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP), an innovative model of care that assists in maintaining the mental and physical function of older adults at high risk of decline during hospital stays; and the opening of new restorative care beds, focused on returning individuals to their highest level of independence in the community.

Other service realignments included in the NHH plan are unaffected, namely the Diabetes Education Clinic, Outpatient Rehabilitation service and the integration of Fast Track into the Emergency Department.

NHH and the CE LHIN will now begin planning and discussions to develop alternative ALC strategies in order to continue to meet patients' and community needs, balance the operating budget and achieve the Hospital's obligations in the Hospital Service Accountability Agreement.

Said NHH President and CEO Robert Biron: "NHH remains committed to its original objective of addressing the ALC challenge. NHH must ensure that our acute care beds remain available for their intended purpose, and not have them overtaken by a growing ALC problem.

"That said, our Board has always said that in the event that the Central East LHIN is not successful in finding alternative bed capacity in the community, NHH would revisit its plan. While the finer details of the revised ALC strategy and funding must still be agreed to by the parties, today's announcement is an effective bridge until a longer term solution can be put in place in the community by the Central East LHIN."

For more information, please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca or Katie Cronin-Wood at 1-866-804-5446, ext. 218 or Katie.croninwood@lhins.on.ca.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto. The 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.