



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Citizens' Advisory Panel to conclude their meetings this Saturday, December 5 –

Report to go to the NHH Board in January, for consideration in the development of a new Strategic Plan and Service Plan needed to position the Hospital for long-term success

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Wednesday, December 2, 2009 – This Saturday marks the last of five full-day meetings for the community members who stepped forward to participate in NHH's first Citizens' Advisory Panel (CAP).

The CAP is a group of dedicated men and women from across west Northumberland who were randomly selected through a civic lottery process. Members committed five Saturdays this fall to learn about the issues facing NHH and provide advice to the Hospital's Board regarding the core services NHH can afford to deliver. Their report will be submitted to the Board in January, for consideration alongside input from other stakeholders.

The CAP is one of numerous steps in the Hospital's *Shared Challenge, Shared Solution* collaborative budget strategy announced in December 2008 to address the third consecutive year (2009/10) of operating deficits. Despite the \$1.4 million in efficiencies found through internal efforts since that time, NHH is still forecasting a fourth year of operating deficit (approximately \$1.8 million) for 2010/11. Operating costs continue to rise, the demand for services continues to grow and revenues are not keeping pace with inflation.

Said Board Chair John Hudson, when explaining the purpose behind the *Shared Challenge, Shared Solution* initiative: "The status quo is not sustainable. We simply cannot spend more money than we receive. For the long-term viability of our Hospital, we need to look at new ways to deliver services to our community."

The provincial government, facing a \$25 billion deficit of its own, has been clear in its directive: hospitals must fund their operations with the existing resources and they cannot run a deficit. A "Framework for Making Choices" has been provided by the Local Health Integration Networks to help hospitals achieve this expectation. That Framework requires:

- Realigning or removing health services not consistent with LHIN/Ministry priorities;
- Realigning or removing health services not consistent with the hospital strategic plan;
- Transferring services more appropriately delivered in the community;
- Identifying and evaluating integration opportunities; and,

- Realigning or removing low demand health services.

“The Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, requires health service providers to ‘engage the community of diverse persons and entities in the area where it provides health services when developing plans and setting priorities for the delivery of health services,’” said Robert Biron, President and CEO.

“Regardless of the requirements of the Act, our Board believes strongly that there is significant value in engaging our community when making these types of decisions. While these are difficult times that require difficult choices, the best outcome will be achieved by having a two-way dialogue with our community.”

Aiming to maintain local control over our Hospital’s future, and better position NHH for long-term stability, the NHH Board—itsself made up of volunteer members of the community—approved a plan to engage both internal stakeholders and the community before decisions about services were made. The Citizens’ Advisory Panel is the latest step in this iterative, inclusive process unique to NHH.

“To the best of our knowledge, while many other hospitals are in a similar financial situation, no other Hospital in the province has approached the choices before them in this particular way,” said Biron.

The Board will review the CAP’s advice in January, combine it with advice gathered from other stakeholders, and determine the Hospital’s future direction. In the weeks and months that follow, a new Strategic Plan and a Service Plan that identify NHH’s core services will emerge. Any changes in services must be approved by the Central East LHIN (www.centraleastlhin.on.ca). NHH has been working closely with the LHIN throughout this process.

To read more about the CAP process, please go to the Hospital’s website at www.nhh.ca. In addition to the website, NHH’s community newsletter *In Touch* contains regular updates. Distributed monthly to 25,000 households via the Northumberland News, the newsletter is also available by direct email. To subscribe, go to www.nhh.ca and look for the Stay *In Touch* With NHH window. For further information please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – 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.