



# NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

## NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NHH and CE LHIN announce comprehensive ALC strategy - New funding protects acute care services and introduces new restorative care program**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, August 31, 2010** – Implementation of an innovative and comprehensive ALC strategy has commenced at NHH following agreement on additional funding from the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE LHIN) and approval of the strategy by the NHH Board on Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.

Alternative Level of Care (ALC) patients are those individuals who have completed their acute care treatment, but remain in hospital waiting for placement in community-based services. Currently 25% of all acute patient days at NHH are attributed to ALC patients.

If left unaddressed, the ALC issue could potentially compromise the viability of the Hospital's acute care services. ALC patients occupy beds that would otherwise be available for Emergency Department patients waiting to be admitted or available for surgical patients, hence reducing access to and increasing wait times for acute care services.

### **Background**

In March 2010, the NHH Board and the CE LHIN had approved an operating plan for NHH that included the net closure of 26 beds as a key component of a community-based ALC strategy. The CE LHIN committed to finding alternative providers in the community for interim long-term care and restorative care beds. In May the CE LHIN announced that they had been unsuccessful in finding alternative providers for the community-based beds, and that it would enter into discussions with NHH to explore other options.

The CE LHIN and NHH spent the summer months preparing a revised ALC strategy aimed at reducing rising ALC days by reconfiguring ALC beds in a restorative care model at NHH. In addition, the CE LHIN is enhancing community-based services to support individuals to return safely home from their hospital stay.

On August 26<sup>th</sup>, the NHH Board approved acceptance of the revised ALC strategy, acknowledging the CE LHIN for their commitment to NHH through funding necessary to implement the plan. In addition, the ALC strategy also achieves NHH's requirement to balance its operating budget and repay its debt as required under its Hospital Service Accountability Agreement with the Central East LHIN.

## Details of the ALC strategy

Much of the investment at NHH will focus on staffing changes that increase inpatient therapeutic supports essential to minimizing physical and cognitive declines associated with prolonged hospital stays. The following are the key NHH components of the ALC strategy:

- Realignment of beds including the introduction of 16 restorative care beds and the closure of ALC beds that will no longer be required;
- Introduction of NHH's first Nurse Practitioner and Recreational Therapist to support the restorative and rehabilitation programs; and,
- Additional coverage for allied health professional to provide services over weekends.

NHH's interim long-term care beds will be maintained at NHH until an alternative provider is identified within the community by the CE LHIN.

Other investments and strategies previously announced remain part of the overall NHH ALC strategy, including:

- Geriatric Emergency Mental (GEM) Health nurse in the Emergency Department;
- implementation of the Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP), including a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Gerontology; and,
- Hospital to Home program for patients that require additional supports to return home safely.

In addition to the NHH components of the ALC strategy, the CE LHIN is investing in new community-based support and services through the province's Aging at Home program. These include the establishment of the province-wide Home First initiative and Geriatric Assessment and Intervention Network.

From a staffing perspective, the new ALC strategy will result in a loss of 1.0 full-time equivalent, though the number of layoff notices into which this will translate has not yet been determined. In cooperation with its union partners, NHH will work through redeployment processes, including offers of early retirement and other initiatives, to minimize the number of individuals who leave the Hospital involuntarily.

When fully implemented, the comprehensive ALC strategy will:

- enhance care given to elderly patients at NHH through the addition of therapeutic services needed to restore them to the highest possible level of function and, ideally, return them to their home;
- refocus the model of care on the LHIN's new Home First philosophy that leverages new investments in community-based resources;
- reflect the local consensus that NHH must protect acute care services; and
- meet NHH's obligation to reduce its ALC numbers, balance its budget and reduce its debt load.

"The revised ALC strategy is the result of a concerted collaborative effort between the CE LHIN and the entire NHH team," said Robert Biron, President and CEO. "This plan will translate into real changes at the bedside that will enhance the care we deliver to our

patients and, in so doing, improve the flow throughout our entire system. We have two compelling reasons to make this work: it's better for our patients and it protects our acute care services.”

CE LHIN CEO Deborah Hammons agreed: “The Central East LHIN is making significant investments across the LHIN, to help individuals return home safely from their hospital stay. These investments and new services will support NHH’s ALC strategy and ensure patients receive the care and support they need in the most appropriate setting.”

Speaking directly to the role of the CE LHIN in making the new strategy possible, Board Chair John Hudson added: “With the ALC part of the puzzle resolved, we can complete the long process necessary to balance our budget and reduce our debt. This revised strategy would not be possible without the considerable investment the CE LHIN has made in NHH. We are appreciative of the faith they have shown in our Hospital and our team, as well as for their ongoing investment in community supports. This may well serve as a model for other community hospitals grappling with ALC challenges of their own.”

For more information please contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or [igillard@nhh.ca](mailto:igillard@nhh.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](http://www.nhh.ca).