



# Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Fort Erie concerned with temporary closure of Douglas Memorial UCC

FORT ERIE (Jan. 5, 2022) The Town of Fort Erie is committed to doing what it needs to do to help us get through this pandemic. The strain COVID has put onto our healthcare system has revealed some vulnerabilities within that system, which remain outside our control at this moment.

While Fort Erie supports Niagara Health's continued effort to meet the demands of this ongoing, ever-changing pandemic, it does not support the decision to [temporarily close Fort Erie's Urgent Care Centre \(UCC\) due to staff shortages](#) without consulting Town representatives first.

"Fort Erie has a long history of being forced to fight for fair access to healthcare services in its community. Despite healthcare being primarily managed by the Province, Town Council has continuously invested in staff resources and financial incentives to enhance medical services in Fort Erie. These enhancements helped alleviate the number of people living in Fort Erie without a family physician as well as provided additional access to medical services, which would historically only be available outside Fort Erie," said Mayor Wayne Redekop.

Additional enhancements to healthcare services in Fort Erie initiated by the Town of Fort Erie include but are not limited to:

- aggressively recruiting new primary care physicians;
- supporting the creation of the first medical group in Fort Erie;
- forming a Health Services Committee, including representation from Primary Care, Niagara Health, Regional Physician Recruitment program, Hospice Niagara, Fort Erie residents and Council members;
- supporting the Primary Care Niagara opening (located on Garrison Road), which brought new three physicians and specialists to Fort Erie offering both walk-in and patient enrolment opportunities;
- working with local physicians to bring after hours and walk-in care services to Fort Erie as expressed by local residents in a Patient Experience Survey (completed in 2018);
- helping to keep our seniors in their homes longer by providing ongoing support for the Fort Erie Memory Clinic, which operates out of Douglas Memorial UCC;

- working with the Ridgeway Medical Clinic to bring much needed medical services to the west end of Fort Erie;
- supporting Ophthalmology services in the Town of Fort Erie, under the leadership of Dr. Patricia Teal, with new clinical equipment and ophthalmologists; and,
- ongoing relationship with the DeGroot School of Medicine and the Rural Ontario Medical Program to host medical students and residents.

Fort Erie is the fourth highest populated municipality in Niagara, with 25 per cent of its residents being 65 years or over and a growing number of young families. Access to emergency services is critical. Having to drive nearly 30 minutes when facing any medical emergency could be life or death.

“We have made ourselves clear with Niagara Health – we don’t support the temporary closure of our urgent care centre. We don’t support not being consulted before they made the decision. And, we expect Niagara Health and other provincial authorities to get our urgent care centre back up and running as soon as they are able to secure staffing levels in their emergency rooms,” said Mayor Wayne Redekop.

Despite major backlash from the Fort Erie community, the Douglas Memorial Hospital was forced into the Niagara Health System in 1998 and converted into an urgent care centre in 2009.