



March 4, 2024

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
College Park, 777 Bay St., 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria
Ministry of Transportation
5th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Ministry of Finance
Frost Building South
7th Floor, 7 Queen's Park Cres.
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

Re: *Help us Build the Hospital and First Trauma Centre in Durham Region*

Dear Minister Jones, Sarkaria, and Bethlenfalvy:

To support Durham Region's rapidly growing community and increasing healthcare demands, Lakeridge Health and many stakeholders established a Master Plan which includes the building of a Hospital and Trauma Centre in Whitby. Currently, those efforts hang on the approval for the 3-million-dollar planning grant from the Ontario Government. The Whitby Chamber of Commerce brings forth a resolution in support of the Lakeridge Health planning grant and the release of the proposed lands to Lakeridge Health for the construction of the new hospital.

Representing more than 650 businesses in Whitby and Durham Region, our organization wishes to highlight the desperate need for more healthcare services to support the community's growing population. The Whitby Chamber of Commerce (WCC) supports the Master Plan and the transfer of lands to allow for the Hospital and Durham's *first* trauma centre.

BACKGROUND

The development of a new hospital in Durham Region is a key component of Lakeridge Health's Master Plan, which provides a roadmap for the future of health-care delivery in Durham Region. This roadmap aims to provide inpatient bed growth of almost 1,000 beds to meet projected demand over the next 25 years.

In January 2022, Lakeridge Health's Board of Trustees accepted the Expert Panel's recommendation of the site in Whitby as the preferred location for a proposed future hospital. The Panel was made up of a diverse group of professionals who brought many years of leadership experience and expertise in health care and real estate development to this site selection process.

The preferred site is located on 50 acres of land south of Highway 407, west of Highway 412, east of Lake Ridge Road and north of Highway 7/Winchester Road (owned by the Province). The location is easily accessible given its proximity to existing major highways and roadways, as well as planned public transit projects. Its location in central Durham Region will help to efficiently serve residents across the region.

The panelists also had knowledge of the Region, grounding their final recommendations on fact and experience. The process of selecting the hospital site was independent, transparent, and understandably expensive.

Healthcare Demands in Durham

There is a dire and growing need for increased and improved health services in Durham. In 2023, it was estimated that 44 thousand Durham residents have no family physician. This number has risen by 11 thousand since 2021. With a lack of healthcare workers and sufficient resources, the Region's residents are forced to find medical services in neighboring Regions and are often transported to hospitals outside Durham; this adds undue loan on the Provincial healthcare system, increasing costs and pressures on the system that could be eased by the Regional Hospital. The significant population growth projected for Durham Region will only add greater pressure on the current services available. According to Statistics Canada, the population of Durham Region grew by 6.3% between 2016 and 2021, which is higher than the national average growth rate of 5.3%. Regional reports indicate that the Durham population is expected to rise from 723,200 in 2021 to 1.3 million by 2051, almost doubling, and becoming a more important economic hub in southern Ontario.

To illustrate the rapid changes, Durham Workforce Authority's 2023 Data Walk shows that between 2016 and 2021 (a mere five years) our region:

- Experienced 7.91% population growth;
- Is home to 4.9% of Ontario's residents; and
- Saw the percentage of residents who are 65 years or older increase 19.71%.

In parallel to the increasing demand, Durham's current hospital facilities are aging; according to Lakeridge Health, the average age of its facilities is 50 years, which is well above the recommended lifespan of most hospital buildings.

Despite being the second largest municipality in Ontario, Durham Region still has no trauma centre within our boundaries. This means that we must frequently engage the services of Ornge to evacuate critically injured or endangered patients to Toronto or Kingston, costing valuable treatment time, risking lives, and requiring more Provincial resources. The new hospital is also planned to provide acute care, which is not currently available in Durham Region. Neighbouring the Greater Toronto Area, Durham Region's proposed hospital will have a direct impact on the distribution of available resources and services in the GTA, which is facing its own strain on healthcare services.

Economic Impact and Timing

A new hospital is crucial for the success of our local businesses and organizations. By providing high quality healthcare services, we can ensure a healthier and more productive workforce, which in turn will drive economic growth and prosperity. Additionally, a new hospital will attract and retain new businesses, investors, and employees, ultimately contributing to the long-term sustainability and success of our community.

It could be as much as 10 years before this new hospital is open and the rate of growth across the entire region is too fast to continue to delay this process. Currently, our Chamber's advocacy surveys indicate that hiring skilled labour is a significant challenge to local businesses. Without strong infrastructure and community, Durham Region will continue to lose skilled talent to neighbouring regions that offer better support and services.

The hospital will also undoubtedly fuel and support local spin off industries, like sports and fitness, medicine, therapeutics, physio, private labs, and nurse practitioner services.

Ontario's success relies of the strength and sustainability of its regions, particularly along the Greater Horseshoe area. If one of the links is weak, it adds pressure on the rest, threatening the health and growth of Ontario's economy.

Strengthening our healthcare infrastructure in Durham gives Ontario another powerhouse for economic success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our messages are consistent; by standing idle on the findings and recommendations of healthcare experts, and by delaying healthcare investments, our community's efforts to prosper and maintain a healthy quality of life are hindered. Delay denies Durham Region rightful access to crucial healthcare that our families and workers desperately require.



We recommend that the Government of Ontario:

1. Approve Lakeridge Health's requested Planning Grant;
2. Release the proposed lands to Lakeridge health for the construction of the new hospital.

Thank you for giving attention to our letter. We hope your Ministries and Offices will be mindful of Durham's healthcare needs and take the necessary steps to support our healthy growth.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Scuse", is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

Andrew Scuse, President
Whitby Chamber of Commerce

FOOTNOTES

[Site Selection Process for a Proposed New Hospital - Lakeridge Health](#)

Data Walk – December 2023 - https://durhamworkforceauthority.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Data-Walk-December-2023_Posters_FINAL-Corrected-Posters-Dec-6-2023.pdf

Durham Community Foundation – Vital Signs –Health - 2023 - <https://durhamcommunityfoundation.ca/dcfwp/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/VitalSigns-Report-11-24-23.pdf>

CC:

MP Ryan Turnbull
Honourable Doug Ford, Premier
Lorne Coe, MPP Whitby
Todd J McCarthy, MPP Durham
Jennifer K French, MPP Oshawa
Patrice Barnes, MPP Ajax
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton Kawartha Lakes-Brock



John Henry, Durham Region Chair
Elizabeth Roy, Mayor Town of Whitby
Shaun Collier, Mayor, Town of Ajax
Adrian Foster, Mayor Municipality of Clarington
Dan Carter, Mayor City of Oshawa
Kevin Ashe, Mayor City of Pickering
Wilma Wotten, Mayor Township of Scugog
Walter Schummer, Mayor Township of Brock
Dave Barton, Mayor Township of Uxbridge
C Davis, President and CEO, Lakeridge Health