



To: Our Community
From: Veronica Nelson and Team
Date: September 8, 2023
RE: HHHS Town Hall Series Q&A

HHHS Community Town Hall Q&A

Dear Community,

Thank you for participating in our HHHS Town Halls this Summer. Although the past several months have been challenging, I have been inspired by the interactions, discussions, and private conversations I have had with you, and the resiliency each of you have shown along the way.

Please see below for an overview of our Town Hall questions and answers. As you can imagine, we received hundreds of questions over the past few months. In addition to responding to some of you directly, on stage at each Town Hall, in person or over the phone, the following questions are the inquiries that we received the most since the consolidation. Please also refer to the consolidated slide deck which contains data from the first quarter.

Thank you again for your feedback, questions, engagement, and care. I look forward to continuing the conversation and working with you to build the future of healthcare in the Highlands together.

My best,
Veronica Nelson
Interim President & CEO HHHS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

MINDEN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Will you commit to stopping the closure the Minden hospital site?

The Minden site of Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) continues to play an important role in delivering health care to our community and will remain open. Our priority is to provide safe and quality care to our community, with the staff available to deliver it. Like many communities across Ontario, HHHS has and continues to face significant staffing challenges despite best efforts to grow the workforce. HHHS does not have adequate staff to safely operate two emergency departments.

Why won't you commit to stopping the Emergency Department closure? HHHS does not have adequate staff to safely operate two emergency departments. Like many communities across Ontario, HHHS has and continues to face significant staffing challenges despite best efforts to grow the workforce. We are doing what we can to best use our health care resources and staff to provide safe

and quality care to our community. This includes ensuring the Haliburton Emergency Room can remain open 24/7, 52 weeks a year.

Why has the decision been made?

Like many communities across Ontario, HHHS has and continues to face significant staffing challenges. HHHS does not have adequate staff to safely operate two emergency departments. As the Haliburton emergency department is physically connected to the inpatient unit where patients would be transferred for ongoing care as needed, it is in the best interest of our patients to consolidate our skilled health care workers at this location and keep the Haliburton emergency department open.

What do you have to say to the people who say that their health care is at risk with this closure?

EMS services are not changing. When you call 9-1-1 the same procedures will apply. The decision to close the emergency department in Minden is in the best interest of our patients as the connection between ED and the inpatient unit is vital. Our community deserves to know that if/when they need emergency care, that service will be there and ready for them with the support and services they need and deserve. The best thing we can do for our patients is ensure that if they are in an emergency situation, they have access to the best local care possible – equipped with the healthcare team required to care for them.

Why should we trust or listen to you?

Having close ties to the community for 20+ years and having advocated for services to be brought to Haliburton Highlands Health Services I can tell you I care for this community, the staff and our patients. My heart has always been in this community, and I have a long track record of delivering health solutions to the region. As the co-lead of Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Ontario Health Team, I know the great things that can be accomplished when our community comes together with a common goal of providing access to safe, reliable and quality care. I am committed to working with this community to ensure you get access to the care you need and deserve.

Why did you not seek public consultation earlier?

I can't speak to previous decisions made by previous leadership. However, I agree that the community needs to be a part of health care decision making for this community. Community input is the most valuable — and I want those insights, perspectives and ideas. Going forward, engagement with the public will continue to be a priority.

Has funding played a role in the lack of staff and this decision?

The staffing challenges we continue to face and increasing expenses associated with providing health care services in this environment are interconnected. Recruitment has been a significant issue for decades and HHHS has done what they can to attempt to recruit and retain more staff. HHHS has needed to significantly rely on agency staff over the last years, which has come with significant costs. The decision to make service changes at Minden and to consolidate the ED is not about funding and investment alone will not resolve this issue. Simply put, we do not have the staff to resource the emergency department.

How did it go from no closures to permanent closures? Why did this decision happen so quickly? Why so urgent you didn't even consult with stakeholders you were obliged to consult?



I can't speak to the previous leadership or their decision making. What I can say is that we were — and are — facing an acute staffing crisis. We did not and do not have the resources to staff an emergency department in Minden. In the best interest of our patients and community, quick action was taken to best utilize the resources we do have to ensure 24/7 coverage in Haliburton County and the continuation and addition of important services like long term care, diagnostic care and a new urgent care clinic in Minden. As we continue to plan for the future, I am committed to hearing your thoughts and collaborating in shaping the future of health care in our community together.

What can Minden and the community do to reopen Minden ER? Will the Minden ER open if HHHS is able to recruit sufficient staff?

Our goal is always to recruit qualified staff to provide care for our community. Despite this, we did not and do not have the resources to staff an emergency department in Minden. If we are able to recruit and retain a significant number of staff and physicians, we will explore all options to ensure patients receive the best care possible. We encourage our community to tell their family, friends, co-workers to apply to our open postings and what a great community this is to live in!

How can residents who live far away from Haliburton be assured that ambulances will be available should the need arise?

EMS services are not changing. If you call 9-1-1 the same procedures will apply. We are working hand in glove with our emergency services, including paramedics, to ensure that patients are able to access the care they need, when they need it. Paramedics are highly skilled and are able to provide lifesaving care to patients before they are transferred to a hospital.

Can you please explain the reporting/communication process from HHHS to Ontario Health including frequency of reports/communications, who HHHS is accountable to, and where we can access these communications?

We are actively working with Ontario Health and are in touch with them on a regular basis as we shape the future of health care in our community together. This Summer, we worked with Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health to announce the new urgent care clinic (UCC) the Kawartha North Family Health Team has opened at the HHHS Minden site. The Minden UCC is staffed by nurse practitioners who provide routine and urgent care to the people of our community.

Are there concerns with the Haliburton ER being overwhelmed with the current numbers in Minden being added to Haliburton?

As the Haliburton emergency department is physically connected to the inpatient unit where patients are transferred for ongoing care if needed, it is in the best interest of our patients to consolidate our skilled health care workers at this location and keep the Haliburton emergency department open. We are continuously monitoring volumes at Haliburton to ensure our community has timely access to care. So far, we have not seen a drastic increase in volumes and our teams have been able to manage these cases.

Are there any plans for HHHS to become an arm of Ross Memorial Hospital?

No, not at this time. HHHS continues to play an important role in this community including operating an acute care site, outpatient services, long-term care, end-of-life care and mental health and addictions services.

What advocacy are you doing to increase funding for rural hospitals?

We are working closely with the Ontario government, Ministry of Health and Ontario Health. We will continue to work closely with the government to ensure our community gets the resources it needs to care for our entire community.

Can we get a supervisor appointed to take over?

Appointing a supervisor is at the sole discretion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Health. Our clinical team continues to provide quality care to our patients – in the ED, on the inpatient unit, in our long-term care homes, and in our many community and outpatient services. Our staff and physicians are doing great work, and I can't commend them enough.

Why can the Kawartha North Family Health Team provide staff and an urgent care clinic in Minden when HHHS can't?

Urgent care clinics and emergency departments are operated by different types of staff. The urgent care clinic that is being operated by the Kawartha North Family Health Team is staffed by registered practical nurses and nurse practitioners. Emergency departments need to be staffed by ED trained registered nurses and emergency doctors.

Did all of the directors agree with the decision to consolidate the ED?

Yes, the Board unanimously agreed with the decision to consolidate the Minden Emergency Department based on the information provided by hospital leadership.