



To: The Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

From: Anthony Panicia, Chair of the Board of Directors, Windsor Regional Hospital  
Brian Payne, Chair of the Board of Directors, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare  
Janice Kaffer, President and CEO, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare  
David Musyj, President and CEO, Windsor Regional Hospital

September 1, 2020

Dear Deputy Premier/Minister Elliott,

During a recent visit to the Windsor-Essex region, Premier Doug Ford publicly declared the Windsor-Essex Hospitals System project, including a new single-site acute care hospital, is a “number one priority.” Today, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Windsor Regional Hospital and Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, we are writing to request your support and funding for Stage 2 to move the project forward.

As you may be aware, planning for the project began in 2012 after a taskforce conducted exhaustive community consultation and concluded that there was overwhelming support for a new state of the art acute care hospital and recommended moving forward immediately. Since that time, the historic realignment of hospital healthcare services took place in Windsor and the Program and Services Steering Committee has completed Stage 1A and 1B of planning and has been working through the process with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Capital Planning Branch. In the April 2017 Ontario budget, the previous government committed to funding the project and in December 2017, former Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced a move to Stage 2. During the 2018 election campaign, your party not only supported the project, but made it clear that if anything, it should have happened sooner.

During his August 13 visit to this region, Premier Ford reaffirmed his commitment to the project after meeting with regional mayors from Windsor, LaSalle, Tecumseh, Essex, Kingsville, Amherstburg, Leamington and Chatham-Kent. After hearing that this is a number one priority for each of the mayors, Premier Ford said, “One way or another, we will find funding for this.”

Related news articles:

- Premier says he’ll be “800 pound gorilla fighting for new Windsor hospital

- New acute care hospital focus of discussion between mayors and premier

The new single-site acute care hospital will replace existing outdated hospital infrastructure that falls well below today's standards for hospital care that has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is part of a larger system transformation that includes a Centre of Mental Health Excellence offering a single-entry point to seamless mental health care at the Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, Tayfour Campus and additional services in Windsor's downtown core including a satellite emergency, outpatient mental health, dialysis, chronic disease management, ambulatory and outpatient surgical services.

It is imperative to highlight the mental health and addictions projects that are an essential part of the plan and that are the responsibility of Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare. First is a small capital project to relocate the only provincial residential problem gambling program from the temporary home in an unused nursing unit at the Tayfour campus. This project has been stalled for some time now and is an important first step to readying HDGH to receive the acute mental health beds from WRH Ouellette campus. This project, (not part of the Windsor Hospital System plan) with a 2017 funding letter of \$1.7M is ready for tendering and HDGH is waiting for the approval to proceed. Second is the program transfer of the mental health beds to the HDGH campus from WRH Ouellette. This project, which began as a new build with a dollar value of more than \$100M has been resubmitted to MOH as a renovation project that utilizes built up capacity on the campus and significantly reduces the capital expenditure to approximately half of the original estimate. Of note it incorporates an approved capital renovation of a nursing unit (\$8.3M estimate) that we are reusing for this new purpose. We know that across our province, the pandemic has made very clear that we need to invest in the mental well being of our citizens. In WE our current mental health and addictions "system" requires significant redesign and investment in order to meet the growing needs for services both in the hospital sector and in community. These two projects are major steps forward in achieving a more integrated and responsive system and will serve our community – and indeed the province - well for years to come.

We understand the exact scope of the project will continue to evolve throughout the next planning stages and we all remain committed to working with the Ministry in Stage 2 to identify more opportunities to reuse existing facilities at the Ouellette Campus for ambulatory services in the city's core.

Included at the end of this letter is a timeline outlining some of the major milestones. There you can see community engagement is embedded into every step including 70+ community town hall meetings and opportunities for community members to provide feedback and participate in the process.

Working closely with municipal leaders, we have done everything possible to remove obstacles and position the project for Stage 2. Both City and County Councils have been collecting the local share to pay for the project since 2016, proper zoning for the selected site was approved in 2018 and an appeal of that decision was recently rejected by the Divisional Court. The Premier heard in unison from all of the elected leaders in our community that this Windsor-Essex

hospital's project is their "number one priority" in an age of multiple priorities and will positively impact patients and communities even outside of Windsor-Essex.

The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the need to move forward quickly. We are currently providing care to patients in the hardest hit area of the province, in some of Ontario's oldest hospital infrastructure. With only approximately 20 percent private room accommodations, our Windsor acute care hospitals fall well below today's standard for a majority of private rooms leaving us unable to meet evidence-informed recommendations to reduce the use of ward rooms in existing facilities without impacting safe patient care and access to services.

WE ARE READY to move to the next stage in this important process. We are ready to work with the Ministry to transform healthcare in Windsor-Essex with modern infrastructure and integrated mental health care that reflects the unique challenges and increasing demands of today, and we encourage you to make this project – which is priority one for our region – a priority for your government by supporting it with Stage 2 funding.

Sincerely,



Anthony Paniccia,  
Chair of the Board of Directors  
Windsor Regional Hospital



Brian Payne,  
Chair of the Board of Directors  
Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare



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