

TAB 1

***Port Colborne-Wainfleet Community Response
To the NHS Hospital Improvement Plan***

October 6, 2008

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Executive Summary

The report is based on extensive research undertaken by a number of committees and working groups comprised of the citizens of Port Colborne and Wainfleet. These citizens are anxious to work with the NHS and the NHNB LHIN to ensure that access to health services is improved in their community and that a more cost effective and efficient health system is developed in the Niagara Region. The communities recognize the need for change in the health care system. However, these changes must ensure that timely access to health services is maintained and that the proposed changes are sustainable through the effective and efficient use of health human resources.

The communities of Port Colborne and Wainfleet expect that the NHS and the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN) will give serious consideration to the recommendations that are set out in this report and engage the community further to ensure appropriate changes in service and a smooth transition to a new model of health care for Port Colborne and Wainfleet.

The Port Colborne General Hospital has a long history in meeting the health care needs of the communities of Port Colborne, Wainfleet and adjacent rural communities. In 2006, the population in **Port Colborne** was 18,599 and the population of **Wainfleet** was 6,601. In addition, there are approximately 10,000 residents of Sherkston Shores and another 4,000 seasonal residents who rely on the services of the Port Colborne General Hospital.

Many residents of Port Colborne and Wainfleet are currently traveling outside of these communities to receive care because of the acute shortage of family physicians in the area. Demographic data indicates that Port Colborne:

- Has the highest percentage of the population over the age of 75.
- Low percentage of the population with a university education.
- Median income level of \$24,444 versus \$25,832 in the rest of Niagara.
- 17% of the population receive social assistance compared with 13% in the rest of Niagara.
- Unemployment is at 7.4% in Port Colborne versus 6.1% in Niagara.

Research has indicated that these determinants of health indicate that there are higher needs for health care services among the residents of these communities. Many residents of the community are considered to be high risk for cancer, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and other chronic illnesses. These determinants of health clearly indicate that there is a higher incidence and prevalence of disease among the residents of Port Colborne and Wainfleet.