

August 15, 2025

Mayor Steele and Port Colborne City Council
The Corporation of the City of Port Colborne
66 Charlotte Street
Port Colborne, ON L3K 3C8

RE: Letter of support

Dear Mayor Steele and Port Colborne City Council,

On behalf of Niagara Health, thank you for the opportunity to present to the Healthcare Advisory Committee on Wednesday, August 6th.

While Niagara Health's mandate is to provide hospital-based care, we have spent the last two years working with and advocating to the provincial government for the importance of expanding primary care in Niagara, with the focus on the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie.

The evidence shows stronger interdisciplinary, team-based primary care will directly improve health outcomes for residents and help reduce pressure on Niagara Health's emergency departments (EDs). As Niagara Health progresses towards its three-site hospital model, the two Urgent Care Centres (UCCs) will close in 2028. We are committed to working with Ontario Health West, the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara, Niagara Practitioners Healthcare Alliance, and the municipality during this transition.

We support a proposal through the Ministry of Health's primary care envelope that includes the continuation of services that are currently offered at the UCC's, as highlighted below:

1. We support a primary care based solution that provides after hours and same-day access, including weekend hours for both rostered and unrostered patients.
2. We support a primary care model that includes the expansion of team-based care that includes allied health professionals such as physiotherapy, mental health, diabetes, and chiropractic care.
3. We also acknowledge the need for laboratory and diagnostic imaging services, such as ultrasound and x-ray, for the southern region. We believe there is an opportunity to work with the Ministry of Health to determine how best to ensure access to these services within the current provincial model.

Niagara Health sees approximately 17,000 patients at the Port Colborne UCC each year. Compared to more urban centres, Port Colborne residents face higher rates of chronic illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and respiratory conditions. Based on the population-to-physician ratio, the community is currently short five family physicians.



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Developing a timely, long-term strategy to improve primary care access will strengthen preventive care, enhance chronic disease management, and reduce pressure on hospital services—creating greater efficiency across the entire healthcare system.

In summary, Niagara Health is committed to working with our municipal partners and are confident a solution can be found through collaboration, open dialogue, and community engagement. We hope this letter, which highlights the urgent need for primary care in the under-served community of Port Colborne, will help strengthen the case for funding from the Ministry of Health.

Sincerely,



Lynn Guerriero
President and CEO, Niagara Health



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