

**OUR VISION:** OUTSTANDING CARE - NO EXCEPTIONS!

**OUR MISSION:** DELIVER AN OUTSTANDING PATIENT CARE EXPERIENCE BY A PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

## Media Release

January 5, 2021

For Immediate Release

# WRH TO BEGIN TRANSFERRING PATIENTS TO CHATHAM, SARNIA DUE TO LACK OF AVAILABLE BEDS

**WINDSOR, ON.** – A high volume of patients who are positive with COVID-19 and required admission to hospital have forced Windsor Regional Hospital to begin transferring some patients to other southwestern Ontario hospitals in order to create bed capacity at our two Windsor campuses.

As of Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, WRH has 74 in-patients admitted to hospital who have tested positive for COVID-19 – much higher than the peak volume of confirmed COVID-19 patients seen on any single day during the first wave last May (27 patients). About 15 to as high as 20 of these patients require treatment in our critical care units, which have reached capacity with many non-COVID-19 patients. Internally, we have maximized our acute care bed capacity between our two campuses taking into account all these factors as part of our surge capacity and pandemic planning. However, despite these additional beds, we continue to see capacity pressures and a lack of bed space to treat patients safely with the staffing resources and physical space available. Therefore, we anticipate as many as 20 patients may require transfer this week to our partners at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance (CKHA) and Bluewater Health in Sarnia.

Hospital capacity is constrained by high volumes of COVID-19 patients because these individuals need to be isolated and therefore cannot safely share rooms with non-COVID patients in hospital. Guidance provided by Ontario Health last June called for hospitals to “maximize the number of private and semi-private rooms with dedicated washrooms, using four-bed ward rooms as semi-private rooms when possible, ensuring a two-meter distance between patient beds and the use of alternative spaces for beds in current hospital facilities.” These guidance measures are unattainable at current patient volumes given that only 29% of all inpatient beds at Met Campus and 16% of all inpatient beds at Ouellette Campus are in private rooms. Also, in the vast majority of our semi-private or ward rooms, a two meter distance between beds in our aging facilities is not possible.

As indicated in an internal assessment conducted in July, 2020

([https://www.wrh.on.ca/uploads/MEMO\\_OH\\_Recommendations\\_Bed\\_Inventory\\_July\\_23\\_2020.pdf](https://www.wrh.on.ca/uploads/MEMO_OH_Recommendations_Bed_Inventory_July_23_2020.pdf)), when the Ontario Health recommendations for in-patient placement are applied at WRH, our overall bed capacity is reduced by 21% (118 beds). Also, on any given day we have 150 patients in isolation or private rooms that once were semi or ward rooms.

A video showing the impact COVID-19 has had on our care for our patients can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/oMRszyqyIUE>.

“Our aging infrastructure cannot accommodate safe, quality care for all of our patients given the recent surge in COVID-19 patients requiring admission to hospital and requiring isolation protocols,” said Karen Riddell, WRH Chief Nursing Executive and Chief Operating Officer. “We know transferring patients out of Windsor-Essex is not ideal and we understand this places challenges on patients and their loved ones. We hope to keep these transfers to a minimum. However, we need to prioritize the safety of our patients and the ability of our regional hospital system to provide adequate treatment and care.”

Windsor Regional Hospital will be working with our partners at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance and Bluewater Health on determining the most appropriate acute care patients to transfer, notify families and work with Essex-Windsor EMS on safely transport. At the same time, Windsor Regional Hospital continues to work with Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare (HDGH) on transferring appropriate patients requiring non-acute care. The patients who will be transferred to Bluewater Health, CKHA and HDGH are not appropriate for care at the field hospital.

On Thursday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, Erie Shores Healthcare began to transfer patients to Chatham and HDGH due to their own capacity constraints. Issues facing Windsor-Essex hospitals, and anticipated pressures to come, necessitates these actions and we will continually assess our needs as we proceed through the difficult next few months of COVID-19.

“It is unfortunate that our local COVID-19 positive numbers and eventual predicted hospitalization has resulted in the need to make these transfers. However, with the age of our facilities and lack of 21st century infrastructure including 80% plus private rooms, we have no choice based on the safety of our community and the need to ensure WRH can continue to provide tertiary care to the region. WRH truly appreciates its healthcare partners - Chatham Kent Health Alliance, Bluewater Health, and Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare - for supporting WRH and Erie Shores Healthcare as we struggle through this wave of COVID-19.”

The new measures announced today follow a decision last month to postpone ALL non-urgent, pre-scheduled elective surgeries for an indefinite period, effective January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, due to a potentially critical shortage of available acute care beds, including critical care beds.

For more information on how WRH is working to protect the public from COVID-19, including COVID-19 Assessment Centre and visitor restrictions, please visit [www.wrh.on.ca/coronavirus](http://www.wrh.on.ca/coronavirus).

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