

# Ontario Health Coalition

## Public Consultation on Saving our Local Hospitals

### Backgrounder

May 14, 2024

#### Unprecedented and Worsening Closures of Local Hospital Services

In Ontario, vital hospital services, such as emergency departments, maternity and obstetrics, outpatient laboratories and intensive care units, have been subject to repeated closures in the last three years. These closures are unprecedented and they are worsening. The duration of closures is getting longer. Multiple towns across regions are closing vital services at the same time. Public notice is often last minute. Remote communities in the north are experiencing long term closures of vital services such as labour and delivery and outpatient laboratories, and repeated emergency department closures or threats of closures. Rural communities across mid-Ontario and the south are particularly hard hit, but we are also seeing closures of vital services in the largest cities of the province. Emergency departments in particular are being repeatedly closed down in the daytime, overnight, on weekends, or for days to weeks.

The Ontario Health Coalition released a [report](#) tracking closures at the beginning of December 2023. The rates of closure are staggering. From January 1 to November 24, 2023, there had been at least:

- 868 emergency department closures;
- 316 urgent care centre closures;
- two outpatient laboratory closures;
- eleven obstetrics unit closures;
- one ICU closure, and;
- one labour and delivery unit closure (long-term).

In total, there were 1,199 closures of vital health care services from January 1 to November 24. In other words, these services in Ontario have either temporarily or permanently closed in 1,199 instances this year so far. Consequently, 30,155 hours of care (equivalent to 3.44 years) have been lost to local communities this year so far.

A growing number of local hospitals are at risk of permanently losing services. As a result, the Ontario Health Coalition is working with local communities and coalitions across the province to conduct public hearings on saving local hospitals. The goal is to come out with a report and recommendations to save our local hospitals and their services at minimum, and also to restore stability, revitalize them, improve access, quality, equity and responsiveness of hospital care in our communities. We will then work our hardest to get the recommendations adopted and implemented to save and revitalize our local hospitals.