

May 23, 2024

Community and union leaders announce legal action, demand Ford declare a moratorium to save the Durham hospital

Toronto, Grey Bruce – The Durham hospital, located in Grey County, [dates back to 1910](#). Its community supported its survival through two World Wars, the Great Depression, amalgamation, and many local hospital boards and provincial governments. Now, after more than a century, it is facing a potentially fatal blow with the imminent closure of all its inpatient beds. The closure is spearheaded by regional hospital executives without any democratic community input, and the Ford government is sitting on its hands letting it happen despite having the power to stop it, said community and health care leaders in a press conference at Queen’s Park today.

Echoing the strategy that was used to [close the Minden hospital last June](#), South Grey Bruce hospital executives “blindsided” the [regional municipalities](#) when they announced the closure and removal of the inpatient beds just weeks ago. The closure is slated for June 3. Hospital executives claim that the hospital “emergency department” and some diagnostics will remain open. However, their plan is to close and centralize all Durham’s remaining inpatient beds to Walkerton and Kincardine, and they have permanently closed the emergency department from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily.

Leaders and residents are [calling for both the hospital board to stop and for provincial government intervention](#). More than [700 local residents flooded a public meeting](#), hundreds joined a [community march and vigil on Tuesday](#), and petitions are underway. Today, the municipality of West Grey announced it has retained a well-known legal firm from downtown Toronto who will be filing action with the courts and the Ontario Health Coalition demanded that the Ford government declare a moratorium on local hospital cuts and closures. Union leaders representing health professionals, nurses and health care workers have joined in, issuing stern media rebukes and vowing a major fightback.

“The fight to save Durham hospital is about saving access to public health care for all Ontarians, no matter where they live. Residents of small and rural communities deserve high-quality public health care comparable to what’s available in large urban centres,” said Erin Ariss, RN, President, Ontario Nurses’ Association. “ONA is united with community members calling on the Ford government to stop local hospital closures immediately.”

“There are two levels of decision makers that are responsible and could stop the hospital closure if they chose: the hospital board and the Ford government,” noted Natalie Mehra, Ontario Health Coalition executive director. “Neither has any mandate. No one anywhere voted to close their local hospitals. Previous governments have intervened, found staffing and kept the local hospitals open. The Ford government can - and must - declare a moratorium on hospital closures effective immediately.”

“If these decisions are being made without concern for local impacts and needs, and without local input, then sadly we are left to deal with this situation through large urban lawyers,” said West Grey Mayor Kevin Eccles. “SBGHC seems to only listen to and take advice from large urban policy makers. So, one must fight fire with fire.”

“What’s happening at the Durham hospital is just the latest example of the Ford government ignoring the needs of local communities, just as they ignore the needs of workers,” concluded JP Hornick, President of OPSEU/SEFPO. “Let us be clear that it is a political choice to systematically undermine our public hospitals and patients and our communities will suffer the consequences.”