



**DURHAM HOSPITAL
FACT SHEET
August 2024**

**Corporation of the
Municipality of West Grey**

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HISTORY

- Durham Memorial Hospital incorporated May 20, 1946
- 1976 – Order in Council of the Government of Ontario to close the Durham Hospital; the community mounted a legal challenge; the order was quashed and hospital care for the local community was maintained.
- Late 1990s – the Ontario health care ministry recommended closure of the Durham Memorial Hospital as well as the Chesley Hospital. As a result of this threatened closure, South Bruce Grey Health Centre (SBGHC) was established.
- April 1, 1998 – amalgamation of Durham Memorial Hospital, Chesley and District Memorial Hospital, Kincardine and District General Hospital, and the County of Bruce General Hospital in Walkerton as South Bruce Grey Health Centre. Intent of amalgamation was to ensure the strength and survival of rural, local healthcare across the area, under one hospital administration.
- June 28, 2024 – Municipality of West Grey issued a notice of application to the Ontario Divisional Court for a judicial review related to the decision to reduce emergency hours and remove inpatient beds from the Durham Hospital.

OPERATIONS

- Prior to June 3, 2024, Durham Hospital provided a 24/7 emergency department and 10 inpatient beds.
- Staffed by local doctors, locum doctors and a nursing team. One physician, working a 24-hour shift staffed both the emergency department and inpatient beds.
- Physicians from the Durham Medical Clinic cover approximately 40% of the shifts at the Durham Hospital. The remaining 60% of the shifts are covered by locum physicians from outside the community.
- The Durham Hospital Foundation has raised more than \$1.2 million since 2005 to purchase new medical and diagnostic equipment and help fund facility upgrades and repairs.
- The Durham Hospital emergency department provided 24-hour service through to the beginning of 2024.
- February 14, 2024 – SBGHC announced it would be restricting emergency department hours at the Durham Hospital to 7am to 5pm, effective March 10, 2024, citing a shortage of nurses (no prior notice was provided to the community by SBGHC prior to the announcement being made).
- April 24, 2024 – SBGHC announced it would be removing all 10 inpatient beds from the Durham Hospital effective June 3rd, 2024 (with the beds being relocated to Kincardine and Walkerton Hospitals). Nursing shortages were being cited for the reason for the removal of the inpatient beds.

BROADER HEALTH CARE CONSIDERATIONS

- Grey County's Rockwood Terrace 98-bed long term care facility is located in Durham and relies heavily on access to the Durham Hospital.
- The province and Grey County have recently broke ground on a new, 128-bed Rockwood Terrace long term care facility in Durham.
- The Durham Medical Clinic (open in 2005) is directly attached to the existing Durham Hospital. It serves 6,642 rostered patients, as well as the many unattached patients from the area who use the emergency department for both their primary care and emergency needs.
- The Durham Medical Clinic is supported by the family medicine practices of five physicians (with space to accommodate up to 8 physicians).

IMMEDIATE IMPACTS OF CHANGE TO OPERATIONS AT THE DURHAM HOSPITAL

Since the reduction of emergency room hours (March 10th, 2024), and the removal of the 10 inpatient beds (June 3rd, 2024), there have been immediate repercussions to broader healthcare delivery in West Grey:

- The Durham Medical Clinic had been in the final stages of recruiting two new family physicians from outside the area to move to Durham and set up their practices at the clinic; one of these physicians has now declined joining the Durham Medical Clinic, and the other is now uncertain about making the move. Both cite the changes to current operations at the Durham Hospital, and fears of pending closure of the Hospital as the reason for their decisions.
- One of the current physicians at the Clinic has announced their departure from the community by the end of 2024 due to the change of operations at the Durham Hospital, including the reduction of emergency department hours and the loss of inpatient beds.
- Two locum physicians, who have traditionally worked 8-10 days at the Hospital per month have refused to staff further shifts at the Hospital beyond their present commitment (end of September 2024), due to concerns about patient safety.
- With no inpatient beds, and emergency hours being reduced, it will be very difficult to attract locum doctors to work 12-hour shifts (rather than 24-hours shifts), when they are coming from so far away.
- Unless new doctors can be attracted to the Durham Medical Clinic, it is unlikely that the remaining four physicians will have the capacity to provide staffing for the emergency department.
- With the departure of one of the Clinic's five physicians, the financial viability of the Clinic is precarious – it requires a minimum of four physicians to cover the operating costs for the Clinic.
- Physician recruitment, a challenge across the entire province, will be even more difficult for the Durham Medical Clinic, without a thriving local hospital.
- Residents at Rockwood Terrace are attached to three of the physicians at the Medical Clinic, who regularly conduct rounds at the long-term care facility. When the Hospital was open 24/7, nurses at Rockwood Terrace could call the Hospital at anytime to speak to the on-call physician. Now there is no on-call physician at the Hospital between 7pm and 7am.
- In July 2024, SBGHC proposed that crews not take mental health cases to Durham Hospital ER after 3pm; for ambulances to bypass Durham Hospital when it's open would require formal agreements with area hospitals in Mount Forest, Markdale and Hanover that are not currently in place; transporting patients to other area hospitals also ties ups significant resources of paramedic, fire and police services.