



West Lincoln Memorial Hospital Facility Upgrades

Questions and Answers

(as of November 26)

Key messages:

- Patient safety is not negotiable.
- We are not closing our West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH) site and we are committed to its future.
- Our WLMH facility needs upgrades to meet standards to operate all surgical services safely until the site is rebuilt.
- No decisions have been made on the date of the possible temporary move of some services from our WLMH site to our other sites.
- Should any services move temporarily during construction, they will move back to WLMH as soon it is safe to do so.

How can Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) not know that shutting down surgery and obstetrics for 27 months will essentially close the hospital?

No services are being shut down and no timing has been announced for any such measure. We want to rebuild our WLMH site. However, the facility will likely need renovations before a rebuild to maintain patient safety. Surgical and obstetric services will need to be relocated at least some of the time if and when this work occurs because the operating rooms will be under construction. We are still planning the best approach. Our doctors and staff are helping. The WLMH site emergency department, day clinics, inpatient beds, and medical imaging, would not move or be impacted.

Q: If services are moved during construction, will they come back?

Should any services move temporarily during construction, they will move back to WLMH as soon it is safe to do so.

Is HHS trying to manufacture a patient safety crisis to rationalize shutting down WLMH? Public reporting shows it is as safe as any site.

We want to maintain patient safety at our WLMH site. This is not negotiable. Clinical services provided at every HHS site are safe because we meet hospital accreditation standards for patient safety and quality of care. These standards are based on the best medical science available and are followed by 97% of Canadian hospitals.

Are the academic leaders at the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University being consulted and involved in the HHS plan for WLMH?

Leaders of the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University help design hospital accreditation standards for patient safety and quality of care. They are leaders in evidence-based medicine. In fact, our teaching agreement with McMaster University requires that HHS teaching facilities, including WLMH, meet accreditation standards for patient safety and quality care. It's part of our contract. Our teaching model would be at risk if we failed to observe these standards.

WLMH's past accreditation rating was similar or better than comparable hospitals in Ontario. Patient satisfaction was rated highly. What has changed?

Our WLMH site was last accredited in 2014, as a part of HHS. We have been working to address all the recommendations made by the surveyors during that process. This includes renovating operating rooms and other areas of the hospital to meet standards for patient safety and quality of care. The fantastic patient satisfaction ratings we receive at our WLMH site has a lot to do with the commitment and efforts of staff and physicians and with our track record of safety. We want to maintain that public confidence in our care.

When will HHS confirm to the community that WLMH offers exemplary care?

We are committed to maintaining the exemplary track record for patient safety at our WLMH site. We can confirm that we are planning to meet all standards for patient safety and quality of care. This is our commitment.

If HHS is really interested in saving its WLMH site, why are staff being told to look at other HHS sites for work or reassignment?

We have not told staff to look elsewhere for work. No announcements about job relocation have been made. If and when any of our services need to be moved temporarily to accommodate construction, the staff members who could be impacted will move with the services or be allowed to transfer to another job. We will work with our union partners and in accordance with the language of the collective agreements.

When will HHS ensure employees that their jobs are secure?

We have been very clear with employees on this matter. We will work with our union partners and in accordance with the language of the collective agreements. The very [first staff communique](#) on this issue reads:

“Our planning anticipates the physicians and staff from WLMH would follow our patients to the host sites, or exercise their options as per the collective agreement, with no expected job loss.”

Have staff members and physicians been told not to speak to media? Are they being muzzled by HHS?

Everyone who works at HHS follows the same rules for speaking to media about their job and about their employer. Nothing has changed.

Is HHS planning to close its WLMH site?

We are not planning to close our WLMH site. In fact, we are supporting a site rebuild of WLMH. However, we have to keep the current building safe while we wait for the government to approve this rebuild. Our planning includes:

- Site infrastructure – \$7-million infrastructure renewal project has been approved to upgrade electrical, pipes and air handling. We are waiting to receive funding from the provincial government for the work to proceed.
- Surgical facilities – an estimated \$8.6 million and 27 months are required for construction work on surgical facilities to meet standards set out by Accreditation Canada. An application for funding and approval was sent to the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC) for approval last week. Construction would only begin once funding and approval are received.
- Site rebuild – We continue to promote the rebuilding of our WLMH site with the provincial government.

Has HHS decided that obstetrics and surgical services will move to other sites in January?

No, we haven't. There is still much planning to be done in collaboration with HHS leaders, staff and physicians, including those at our WLMH site. However, no date has been decided upon for service changes. We have to wait for government funding and approval for any work to begin.

Can HHS use the money donated to rebuild WLMH for other purposes?

No, we can't. This money is held in trust by the WLMH Foundation for the redevelopment of the hospital and can only be used for that purpose. HHS does not control this trust.

Did HHS hide its plans for addressing infrastructure issues at WLMH?

We have been open and transparent with our staff and physicians. There is much planning to be done with the support of HHS leaders, staff and physicians, including those at our WLMH site. More meetings will take place. We will continue to engage in dialogue.

Will moving obstetrics and surgery require closure of the WLMH emergency department, because anesthesia support might be jeopardized?

No. We are committed to continuing to provide emergency department services at the site.

Are you implying that the WLMH site is not safe by saying HHS is planning these measures to meet safety and accreditation standards?

No, we aren't. Standards are always evolving and they become extremely difficult to meet in a facility built more than 70 years ago. We moved endoscopy services in May because we had been advised that spaces to store the equipment used in these procedures at the site did not meet Accreditation Canada standards. Safety standards are not optional. We must meet them to maintain the safety of care at our WLMH site.

Is HHS moving services without considering local options to keep them going at WLMH or in the community?

We are exploring all options that would allow us to meet the required standards for quality and safety. There is still much planning to be done with the support of HHS leaders, staff and physicians, including those based at our WLMH site.

I work at WLMH. What should I tell patients who are concerned about services being available after January?

No announcement to move services has been made formally. All patient care, except endoscopy services, is proceeding at normal times and locations at WLMH. If and when there are service changes required at WLMH, we will clearly communicate the timelines to our staff and physicians in writing, and

will make a public announcement. Unfortunately, a public event with no affiliation to HHS was held on October 24, where several of the event organizers made false and misleading statements in presentations, in writing and on social media, stating that services at WLMH will be moving in January. This is not true.

I work at WLMH. What should I tell the public about the renovations required at our hospital?

All the publicly available information about these renovations is posted [here](#). If you have further questions, you can speak to your HHS leader. Every HHS staff and physician are expected to follow HHS policies as it relates to communicating with the public and the media. These polices are available on the HHS Intranet, [here](#).