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## Refurbish and Expand Alberta Hospital Edmonton Says New Research

EDMONTON – As Alberta Health Services prepares to release its 2010 capital plan, new research released today by the U of A’s Parkland Institute makes the case for refurbishing Alberta Hospital Edmonton and not closing any acute care mental health beds.

This morning the Institute released a fact sheet entitled “The Need to Redevelop Alberta Hospital” and a longer essay entitled “Living in Hope” by prominent Alberta author Curtis Gillespie. This is the first publication in Parkland's new Alberta Writers Series.

The fact sheet uses data from the Canadian Psychiatric Association to demonstrate that Alberta should actually be increasing acute mental health services rather than working to eliminate beds. “The research is clear,” said Parkland’s Research Director Diana Gibson. “Alberta is already well below recommended levels for psychiatric beds. Alberta Health Services is looking to take us in entirely the wrong direction.”

The essay released today examines examples from Australia and Vancouver, two jurisdictions where large numbers of acute psychiatric beds were closed in a short period of time. “Living in Hope” draws the following lessons from these examples: first, that there is a minimum number of acute care psychiatric beds required; second, complementary services such as therapy, dual diagnosis, rehabilitation and others, such as those offered by Alberta Hospital Edmonton, guarantee the best mental health outcomes; and last, and most significant, the closure of hospital beds without ensuring adequate community service and community beds is inviting human disaster.

“Mental illness is a deeply serious matter, a seriousness not reflected, to date, by the mediocre content and sloppy execution of mental health policy delivered by the Stelmach government,” says Gillespie.

His essay goes on to make a number of recommendations for how the Alberta government should move forward on mental health, including expanding mental health capacity both in the community and in acute care. It also recommends refurbishing Alberta Hospital Edmonton as a well-supported spoke in the wheel of mental health services, with community supports (for every level and type of mental illness) as the hub.

The Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta.

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Both the fact sheet, *The Need to Redevelop Alberta Hospital*, and the essay *Living in Hope* are available on the Parkland web site [www.parklandinstitute.ca](http://www.parklandinstitute.ca) or by calling 780-492-8558.

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