



Helsinki hospitals crowded, emergency rooms full

Emergency rooms at hospitals across the capital region are becoming severely overcrowded with patients, the Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District (HUS) said. The backlog means that many patients face long waits before being admitted onto wards, or in some cases being sent home before receiving treatment.

"There are so many patients that we have difficulty finding a place for every one of the 150 new patients arriving daily," HUS' head of EMS services, Maaret Castrén, said. Emergency rooms are full to capacity at Töölö Hospital in Helsinki, Jorvi Hospital in Espoo, Peijas Hospital in Vantaa, and Hyvinkää Hospital. Non-urgent surgical procedures at Töölö Hospital have been cancelled for the remainder of this week, with HUS expecting to cancel more surgeries at other units.

"This is a very unfortunate situation for patients, and we cannot guarantee them the quality and best care we would like to give them in the emergency department," Castrén said. The situation is particularly acute at Jorvi Hospital in Espoo, where Castrén said no patients have been brought to the emergency department by ambulance for ten days because the unit has been chronically overcrowded.

She added that at one point the ER unit had 16 patients urgently waiting for an ambulance to transport them to other departments for treatment. The transferring of patients from one hospital to another is increasing the pressure on HUS resources, as ambulances transporting patients have to travel further and for longer due to the widespread overcrowding at the capital's other hospitals.

"The turnaround time should be 15 minutes, but now it has been up to an hour and a half," Castrén said. The purpose of the emergency services is to examine the patient, and then either begin the treatment programme and take them to a ward for further treatment, or send them home.

Due to the congestion at Helsinki hospitals, some patients are being sent home even though nurses know in advance that they will likely be back soon. However, Castrén said that efforts must be made to see if patients can cope at home, otherwise there will be no space for newly-arriving patients.

"For example, a few days ago, 24 of the 31 beds in the Jorvi emergency room were occupied by patients waiting for a ward. Those patients are waiting up to five days to be transferred to other wards for further treatment," she said, adding that waiting makes patients frustrated, which in turn puts a strain on medical staff.

OP: Housing prices falling, but plunge not expected

Finland's housing market has not yet changed for the better since cooling down in the autumn, and home prices are expected to fall by four to six percent next year, according to the OP Financial Group. The bank said it expects the price decline will be at its most severe at the end of this year and the beginning of 2023.

As other financial institutions have anticipated, OP said housing sales volumes will be lower than in recent years. It noted a 17 percent decline in sales of detached houses during Q3, compared to the same period a year ago. Apartment prices are also "clearly falling," a statement issued on Wednesday said, which added that the prices of owner-occupied

apartments went down by 1.7 percent in the third quarter, compared to Q2.

"Apartment prices have started declining all over Finland, however, the sharpest decline so far has been seen in larger cities, especially in Helsinki and in the prices of small apartments. In the third quarter of the year, the prices of one-room apartments in Finland declined by 3.2 percent on average, whereas the prices of three-room apartments or larger increased by one per cent compared to the previous year," OP economist Joonas Widgrén said in the statement.

The financial group said its economists anticipate housing prices would decline fastest in Finland's larger cities, with decrea-

ses of five to seven percent in the Helsinki region and by 3.5 to 5.5 percent in the rest of the country.

"The housing market has turned rapidly and its deterioration will continue at least during the first half of the year. It is possible that the outlook will stop deteriorating during the second half of the year if the uncertainty on interest rates will reduce and the employment outlook will remain good," Widgrén said. Following years of relatively low interest rates, recent rate hikes are eating up a larger proportion of mortgage-holders' discretionary spending.

"It will not, however, reach the peak levels experienced since Finland's adoption of the euro," the bank said.

Inflation up 9,1% in November

Prices went up by 9.1 percent in November, according to the latest numbers from Statistics Finland.

That is an increase from the rate recorded in October, which was 8.3 percent. Increases in mortgage interest rates and electricity prices are part of the reason for the gathering pace of price rises.

Food prices are up some 16 percent year-on-year, with fish and cheese up by



Food prices went up some 16% year-to-year in Finland.

a quarter on average. Pork has increased in price by

some 21 percent. Excluding energy and other fluctuating commodities, base inflation was calculated at 5.3 percent in November compared to one year earlier.

Finland has announced some support for households struggling with energy bills, and politicians are set to discuss the possibility of a price cap on electricity before Christmas.

Winter storm causes travel chaos in southern Finland

A powerful winter storm, with strong winds and heavy snow showers, hit southern parts of Finland. Rescue services in the Helsinki area and around the Kymenlaakso region have advised motorists against making any unnecessary journeys, as the combination of strong winds and heavy snow will lead to snow drifts, hindering visibility and making driving conditions especially difficult.

"Keeping a safe distance from the car in front as well as an appropriate speed for the situation are now essential in order to avoid unnecessary accidents," Sanna Piilinen, the manager of Fintraffic's road traffic centre, said in a press release.

The Finnish Meteorological Institute has also issued a warning about very poor driving conditions along the southern coast, and forecast that up to 20 centimetres of snow will have fallen in some areas by Monday evening.

The storm has caused widespread travel chaos, with bus and train routes being cancelled or reduced, and flights facing delays. Finnair warned passengers that flights might be delayed due to heavy snowfall at Helsinki airport.

FFN Chapter Members Visit Finntown, Brooklyn

The Finlandia Foundation National Chapter Meeting at the Scandinavia House in New York City on October 21-23, 2022. On Friday, the first day, a reception was held. The joint chapter meeting was held during the day on Saturday, followed by a reception that evening. On Sunday morning, a group of almost 50 members boarded a bus to drive to Brooklyn for the tour.

The purpose of the tour was not only to see the former Finntown, but to see some of the 27 plaques

that Finlandia Foundation National supported financially to have placed on the former Finn coops in the neighborhood once known as Finntown.

The plaques memorialize the Finnish immigrants in the early 1900s who built over 30 buildings surrounding Sunset Park. They were the first not-for-profit co-ops in the United States. Many of the buildings had nicknames in Finnish, such as Koyhaintalo (Poorhouse), Moskova (Moscow for left leaning residents), Hikipisara (Drop of sweat),

Kiusula (Tease), and those were noted on the plaques.

The bus met me at the former Gloria Dei Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Brooklyn, to begin the tour. The Church is now a Spanish Church. Pastor Colon graciously permitted the group to tour the spacious chapel on the main floor and the basement where in days of old, the Finns congregated for pulla and coffee. I explained based on personal knowledge that the physical layout of the building and Church had not changed!

It was a short walk from Gloria Dei Church to Alku 1 and Alku Toinen (Beginning one and two). The plaques on these two buildings confirmed that these were the first not-for-profit co-op buildings in the USA and accordingly received National and New York State historical designation as such!

The next stop was Imatra Hall where the group saw the plaque and congregated in the yard to hear me explain that except for the façade, the building was the same as it had been pri-



About 50 members of Finlandia Foundation made a tour to the Finntown and Sunset Park in Brooklyn (NY).

or to its sale to the Resurrection Church in the 1990s. It was a short walk to the Finlandia Street sign. I was instrumental in securing that sign and gave a speech at its dedication in 1991 when Imatra held its 100th celebration in 1991. I noted then that someday the Finns would be gone from the neighborhood, but that sign would live on.

The walking tour of the numerous co-ops surrounding Sunset Park then began. On seventh Avenue alone there are six buildings that were Finnish Co-ops and all had plaques. Riverview Homes, at the corner of 41st Street and 7th Avenue, had a Finnish flag present to welcome the group.

Proceeding towards 5th Avenue from 7th Avenue, there were a total of 7 plaques. We entered into the courtyard at the Finn co-op nicknamed Hikipisara (drop of sweat) and Pitkatalo (long house). Surrounding the inner courtyard are six buildings with four building entrances. All the Finn co-ops are four stories high with four apartments on each floor. The garden and scenery in the courtyard is typical of Finn co-op buildings in the neighborhood.

The group then entered into Sunset Park. The views of the NYC skyline were magnificent. While in the park, Arno Minkinen, a world-renowned photographer, spoke to the

group about a movie he is seeking funding for. It is called Verrazzano Crossing and takes place in Finntown and Wagner College in Staten Island. The tour then concluded with a visit to the four co-op buildings on 44th Street on the other side of the park.

These plaques are indeed a source of pride for all Americans of Finnish descent, and for Finns visiting from abroad. The Finns may be gone now, but the existence of the plaques presents an opportunity for all to be reminded of the contribution that they made upon their arrival.

Robert A. Saasto, Esq.
Brooklyn, NY



The tour guide to Finntown and article writer Robert Saasto with Ann-Marie Paster, President Finlandia Foundation National, and Ambassador Consul General Jarmo Sareva.