

Plan to Close St. Petersburg Hospital Sparks Outrage

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A plan to close a public hospital in St. Petersburg to make way for a clinic for officials has sparked outrage among city residents, a news report said Monday.

Under the details of the presidential administration's proposal, Hospital No. 31, one of the city's largest hospitals and home to a unique children's oncology ward, would be replaced by a clinic for judges and other officials moving to the city along with two of the nation's highest courts, Kommersant reported.

In November, President Vladimir Putin approved a proposal to move the Supreme Court and the Supreme Arbitration Court from Moscow to St. Petersburg at a cost of more than 50 billion rubles (\$1.5 billion). The process could take between 24 and 30 months, a senior official said at the time.

Opposition city deputies sent a letter to Putin asking him to save the hospital, which is on the

elite Krestovsky Island, and activists have staged daily one-person protests. A rally against the plan is scheduled for Wednesday.

The hospital's medical staff and a significant portion of its unique equipment cannot be dismantled and moved elsewhere, Kommersant reported.

A Health and Social Development Ministry spokeswoman told the newspaper that a decision to liquidate or move Hospital No. 31 had not been made, and a city health official said Kremlin officials would visit St. Petersburg in the near future to study alternatives.

St. Petersburg residents have thwarted high-profile construction projects in the past. A development by state-owned Gazprom that included a steel-and-glass skyscraper in the city's historic center was scrapped in the face of public pressure in late 2010.

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