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# Mega-jail won't burden local health care, according to hospital officials

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

The transformation of the Maplehurst correctional facility into a mega-jail won't have a mega impact on local health care.

That's the prediction delivered to the Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) board meeting held last Tuesday in Milton.

HHS runs the amalgamated Milton District and Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial hospitals. The launch of 24-hour, on-site health care at Maplehurst — including an infirmary with 17 male beds, 12 female beds and two crisis beds — will take the pressure off of Milton hospital (MDH), reported Cindy McDonell, chief operating officer of MDH.

"A great number of patients won't be here. They'll be treated at Maplehurst," she said. "Assuming they get staffing up to snuff as quickly as possible."

Built in 1974 to hold about 300 prisoners, Maplehurst was expanded to house another 240 in the early 1990s.

Today, the site is growing into a super-jail that should be in full swing next year. At that point it'll house about 1,550 inmates, including 350 female prisoners.

Currently, the facility offers 16 hours of on-site care, and ill prisoners are frequently taken to MDH for care.

They travel with three guards, who remain in the hospital corridors for the duration of the inmate's stay.

### Changes in the works

But all that is expected to change under the new system.

Despite the on-site jump in coverage to 24-hours, MDH will still be the hospital of choice for emergency care and other unsupplied services. That means use of the intensive care unit will likely triple, coinciding with the prison's population jump.

But use of other hospital services won't be as strained as initially feared, said Ms McDonell.

"The impact won't be as great as we thought," she said.

The renovation of an area set aside for inmates should keep the disruption of other hospital patients to an absolute minimum, said Ms McDonell.

Two rooms, one for female and the other for male inmates, will be built for Maplehurst use. The area will allow guards to do their duty without blocking public corridors.

"We'll get them out of the hall," said Ms McDonell. "The complaints we've had over the past few years have had more to do with the guards than the prisoners."

There will also be fewer guards in question, as better equipment will whittle the number accompanying prisoners down to two.

Also in the works is a negative pressure isolation room to be built in the emergency department for inmates who may be suffering from tuberculosis.

Because prisoners are a high-risk group, the recommendation is to treat all prisoners as if they have the disease until tests prove otherwise.

The renovations and isolation room should be paid for out of Ministry of Corrections coffers, said HHS CAO John Oliver. And operational costs will be slated into the next operating plan budget.

Overall, capital costs are expected to amount to about \$60,000. Operating costs come in at \$112,000, mostly for increased staffing in nursing, infection control, diagnostic and therapeutic departments.

# No deficit in hospital operations

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

For the first time in years, the operating plan of Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) should be fully paid for from Ministry of Health coffers.

"We're of the opinion that the operating plan is fully funded," said HHS President and CAO John Oliver. "At this point we're not expecting a deficit. We'll be rolling out our operating plan."

The news was warmly welcomed at a HHS board meeting, held at Milton District Hospital last Tuesday evening.

"It's excellent news," said Mr. Oliver. "It's the first time in four or five years that our operating plan has been met."

The result is that several projects put on hold until funding was in place are now good to go.

"When we approved the operating plan, we indicated there were a number of areas we have not yet implemented pending formal announcements," said Mr. Oliver. "We've met the official plan requirements this year, so we're marching on."

The total cost of the operating plan is about \$81.6 million.

Recent funding announcements included \$3 million in growth funding for HHS.

Of that, about \$700,000 is slated as ongoing emergency funding.

From the remaining \$2.3 million, about \$765,000 has been set aside for chronic care, and another \$311,000 for mental health.

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## Teacher talks continue

"Better rather than worse" was the description of the latest bargaining round involving Halton's public secondary teachers.

Union leader Larry Chud made the comment following contract talks earlier this week with Halton District School Board officials.

"We met for most of the day and went

over most of the numbers," said Mr. Chud, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation District 20 (Halton).

"The numbers were exchanged and we had questions about the funding model. It was a very informative day."

He has noted increasing numbers of secondary teacher contract settlements elsewhere will help the Halton situation.

"Hamilton secondary teachers have a tentative agreement and people are getting close all around us," said Mr. Chud. "We're hopeful things will pick up."

Two additional dates are being set in early December for contract talks, which affect between 1,000 to 1,100 teachers. The next bargaining date is November 22.

The board's bargaining chair, Michael Ellis, said figures requested by the union on grant amounts, expenditure allocations and staffing numbers were provided at this week's meeting.

"There were discussions on staff allocations and workload provisions and I believe there will be discussions on the monetary side soon," he said.

He said business services superintendent Wayne McNally was on hand to answer questions.

Halton's public secondary teachers have been advised to make teaching 6.5 classes the priority and decide themselves about participating in after-school activities.

## FUTURE SHOP

### CORRECTION NOTICE

In our November 8-21, 2000 flyer, the following error occurred:

- On page 34, the Sony PlayStation 2 ad should read "Limited quantities available, one per customer, no dealers, no rainchecks."
- On page 46 the Panasonic Deluxe Full Size Sensor Microwave NNS960W ad should read "\$279.99 Save \$20.00", not \$229.99.
- On page 48 the Hoover Bagless Wind Tunnel Upright Vacuum U5720 does not have a "Dirt Sensor".

In our November 9 - December 3, 2000 music flyer, the following error occurred:

- On page 20 the Sony PlayStation 2 ad should read "One per customer, limited quantities, no dealers, no rainchecks."

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.