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## Christmas wish list

Elementary students from the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf recently made their annual visit to Milton Mall to see Santa Claus, who knows sign language. Here, Jordan Dupuis, 9, tells Santa his wish list. See more photos on page B10.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Hospital layoffs unlikely as HHS finds alternatives; many retire, fill vacancies

By **FANNIE SUNSHINE**  
*The Champion*

Although still several months away from making it official, early signs indicate layoff notices won't be issued to Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) employees, said HHS president and CEO John Oliver.

"I don't believe we will have any layoffs," he told *The Champion*.

"So far people have accepted early retirement or have taken on other positions that were vacant. So

at this point I can say any layoffs would be highly unlikely."

In October, HHS announced it would be laying off the equivalent of 85 full-time positions by the end of March.

Layoff notices were issued to staff at Milton District and Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial hospitals. The employees were given a number of options, including early retirement packages and filling job vacancies.

Mr. Oliver blamed the possibility of any layoffs on an \$8.6 million shortfall in this year's budget.

To minimize the number of layoffs, HHS considered a combination of early retirement packages

and voluntary exit incentives and moved employees whose positions had become surplus to existing vacant positions.

The announcement came following a 10 per cent reduction of management and administrative staff in August and the completion of an intense review of all hospital operations.

HHS spokesperson Trish Carleton said the cutbacks won't jeopardize the \$75 million expansion plan for Milton District Hospital announced in May.

"The layoffs will not jeopardize the expansion project because the layoffs are immediate and the expansion project is still a number of years away."

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