

Funding should help balance hospital budget

HHS to get \$1.8 million more from Province

Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) will receive an additional \$1.8 million in transitional funding from the Province — money that recognizes the efficiency of HHS, says President and CEO John Oliver.

The money will also assist in balancing the budget for the 2004/05 fiscal year that ended March 31.

"Given the current financial forecast, we are optimistic that we will be completing this fiscal year in a balanced position but must await the completion of our year-end processes to confirm the final balance," said Mr. Oliver.

In a letter to HHS Board Chair Shavak Madon, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman acknowledged initiatives undertaken by Ontario hospitals to identify savings in 2004/05 and commended HHS for its efforts toward achieving a balanced budget by March 31, 2006.

The minister continued in his letter saying, "I know this has been a difficult task and your demonstrated commitment toward operating in a sustainable and efficient manner is recognized."

"HHS is a very efficient hospital. It is rewarding that this has been acknowledged by the government," said Mr. Oliver.

"The minister's comments are truly appreciated and will be shared throughout the hospital. However, if we are to continue to provide our current level of service and grow to accommodate the increasing demand from our communities without a deficit, it will be necessary to obtain funding increases greater than those currently planned and communicated by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care."

In addition to this latest Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding, HHS has received \$4.6 million in ongoing operating funding during the past year, which included \$1 million to operate two additional intensive care beds. These beds, temporarily located on the fourth floor, have assisted HHS in addressing the need for additional capacity in the Intensive

Care Unit.

HHS has also benefited from \$8 million in one-time grants and directed capital purchases, which has allowed for stabilization and some focused growth within specific hospital programs through the provincial Wait Time Strategy Initiative.

HHS has risen to the challenges of financially strained budgets in years past by voluntarily initiating clinical efficiency and operational reviews, said Mr. Oliver.

"In September 2004, we initiated our third operational efficiency review in as many years," continued Mr. Oliver.

"Our management team worked diligent-

ly to achieve all possible efficiencies. However, the savings were not sufficient enough to allow HHS to continue providing the current level of patient services while balancing our budget — and it certainly did not allow for the expansion of any services. We are committed to making every effort to reduce costs and find savings without putting patient services at risk. Obviously, we were facing a very daunting challenge."

Mr. Smitherman acknowledged these efforts stating, "By finding opportunities through revenue generation strategies, administrative efficiencies, moving some non-acute services into the community and other initiatives, you have collectively

made a positive contribution to the sustainability of our health-care system."

Mr. Oliver said HHS continues to face the challenge of providing health care to the rapidly growing communities it serves "within facilities that are stretched to the limit."

"We look forward to working with the Ministry as we pursue our redevelopment programs," Mr. Oliver added.

"The expansion of the Milton site and relocation of the Oakville site will ensure that our hospitals will have the capacity to assist with the government's health-care agenda and provide us with the required flexibility to grow with the communities in the future."

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