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Hospital expansion approved

Completion expected in late 2015 or early 2016

By Christina Commisso
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Hugs, high-fives and tears were aplenty Thursday morning, as Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews announced Milton's hospital has been given the long-awaited green light for a massive expansion.

Milton District Hospital (MDH) will triple in size following a 320,000 square-foot addition that should be completed by late 2015 or early 2016.

"The support is unanimous. We have people from all political parties who are here today saying yes, this is the right decision. I'm pleased that all of us together have gotten where we are today," said Matthews, as the room erupted in applause.

Pointing to an outpouring of community support that has surrounded the MDH expansion, the Liberal MPP said hospitals are the heart and soul of a community, "and no where is that more true than right here in Milton. You should change the town's motto to 'where we don't take no for an answer.'"

Matthews re-iterated that the expansion is poised to move full-steam ahead. "I want to be very clear this money has been allocated. It is in our fiscal plan. It has gone through our treasury board. All of the Is are dotted and Ts are crossed. This money is part of our infrastructure plan."

The expansion will include a new emergency department to accommodate 45,500 visits a year. Currently the department can



Members of citizens' group Friends of Milton Hospital, which led a campaign seeking approval for the hospital expansion, celebrate following the announcement by Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews (front centre). The group gathered 35,000 signatures in support of the expansion in 2009.

handle 30,000 visits. The addition of an MRI machine and chemotherapy services will more than triple the size of the hospital's diagnostic imaging department. A new maternal child-care ward will include 17 post-partum beds, up from the current eight, and the intensive care unit will see 10 beds, up from six.

Also in the plans are two new medical surgical in-patient units with capacity for 72 patients and expanded operating suites, and

a post-anesthetic care unit that will accommodate 8,400 surgeries a year — a 70 per cent increase over the department's current capacity.

Eighty per cent of the rooms will be single patient to enhance infection control.

Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) CEO John Oliver said construction should be complete by 2015/16, about a year after the new Oakville hospital is planned for completion.

"Both hospitals will be under construction at the same time and one will open right after the other. We're going to make up for lost time in Milton," said Oliver to an elated crowd.

He said detailed planning with hospital staff will begin immediately, along with discussions with the hospital foundation and the Town regarding the local share of the expansion — typically 10 per cent of the

• see COST on page A7



IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM EMILY!

Dear Emily, I'm a lovely, slightly over weight, Tabby Cat, and I am licking, scratching and chewing myself to bits. I apparently keep my humans awake at night with my chewing. Shame eh! Please can you offer me advice? Signed: Agnes (aka Precious).

Dear Agnes, I have similar problems. I have food and pollen allergies, and am now given special food, and when I get a flare up, I have to have tablets for a few days. I'm not sure of the cause of your problem, could be the same as me, but you should get your Humans to take you to your Vet, as you could make yourself really sore. Take care Sweetie.

IF ONLY PETS COULD SPEAK.

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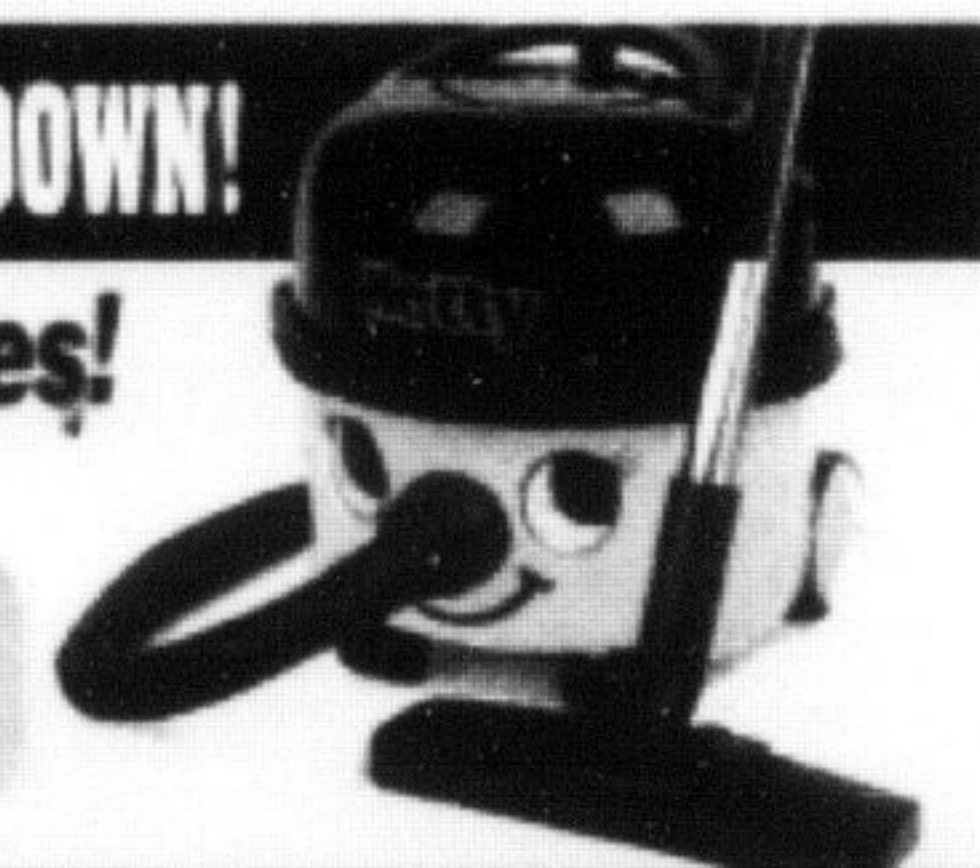
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