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# Smitherman to announce funding plan in fall

• from HHS on page A1  
 work for HHS. On Hill & Knowlton's website, he's listed as a contact for health, energy and procurement files.  
 As infrastructure minister,

Smitherman is expected to make the final call on which hospital capital projects will get the go-ahead when he announces the Province's updated 10-year infrastructure funding plan this fall.

"That's a vital step for Milton (hospital)," said Oliver. "We have to be on that list. As far as we know, the Milton hospital is not yet on a hospital capital list."

is an outdated facility.  
 If the government focuses funding on hospitals based on emergency room wait times, Milton's hospital may be at a disadvantage.

## Region's rain barrel sales hot; thousands purchased

Almost 6,200 rain barrels were sold by Halton Region at its five sales events this spring, more than double what staff had expected.

According to the memo, 18 per cent of the rain barrels were sold in Milton while 35 per cent were sold in Burlington, 31 per cent in Oakville and 16 per cent in Halton Hills.

The Health Ministry has said it's prioritizing requests for capital funding from 58 hospitals, though it hasn't released the list of which hospitals want money.

The smaller community hospital continues to have shorter wait times for complex patient cases than the provincial average and far better wait times than the major hospitals in Mississauga, Oakville and Burlington, according to the most recent statistics on [www.ontariowaittimes.com](http://www.ontariowaittimes.com).

Full use of the water-capturing devices has the potential to reduce water consumption by more than 1.2 million litres each time they're used, according to a staff memo presented to regional council's public works committee recently.

The Region sold the barrels at the wholesale cost of \$45, about half of what would be charged for them at a retail store.

HHS is far from the only hospital corporation to have used lobbyists to assist in campaigns for provincial funding.

While Grier advises HHS in the background, the volunteer group Friends of Milton Hospital are public in their efforts for a hospital expansion.

"That's a fraction of what we use in a day," said Kiyoshi Oka, the Region's director of water services. "What we do gain the value from is an increased awareness (of water conservation)."

This winter, Regional staff plan to survey residents to evaluate frequency of use of the barrels. It will report back to council with recommendations on a future rain barrel sales program.

The provincial lobbyist registry (<http://lobbyist.oico.on.ca>) reveals numerous hospitals have secured public relations agencies to assist their efforts. That list includes Burlington's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, which is seeking provincial approval for its \$180 million capital expansion.

Tomorrow morning, the group plans to release the number of post-cards signed by local residents to be sent to the Minister of Health asking for capital expansion funding. The event will take place at the Milton Farmers' Market in the downtown core at 10 a.m.

Tim Foran can be reached at [tforan@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:tforan@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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