

Care will suffer at hospital, says union

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in the black." Part-time staff will also have their hours reduced as a result of the merger, he said.

Early retirement packages, which have been accepted by 10 employees, and cuts to departmental budgets will make up the remainder of the loss, Mr. Brady said.

The layoffs have aroused concerns among the nurses' union that the quality of patient care will suffer.

Sheila Richardson, president of local 135 of the Ontario Nurses Association,

called the news a "bitter pill to swallow. I'm quite concerned about the staffing levels. I think it will mean a decrease in patient care," she said.

"The staff feels the amount that is being decreased is too great."

The bed closures mean stretchers may have to be used in the emergency department to accommodate patients when the hospital is busy, according to Ms Richardson.

She said the union members have approached Mr. Brady with their con-

cerns and will continue to do so. "We have already expressed our concerns (verbally) and now we're going to put it in writing," she said.

Mr. Brady learned from the Ministry of Health in late February that the Derry Road hospital's \$12.8 million budget would be slashed by 4 per cent in the government's first round of funding cuts.

Further cuts of \$600,000 expected next year and \$700,000 anticipated in the 1998-99 fiscal year may mean more layoffs, Mr. Brady said.

Crossing guard can't help little old ladies

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Despite being paid by the Town of Milton, crossing guards cannot help just anyone across the street.

Crossing guards are only responsible for students. The strange rule came to the attention of separate school Trustee Mary Lou Loughlin, during a recent conversation with some guards.

According to Helen Lisi in the clerk's department at Town Hall, crossing guards are paid by the municipality and operate under the Highway Traffic Act. Any changes in crossing guard rules would probably have to come through legislation, she said.

The reason is liability insurance. A non-student injured while crossing the street under the supervision of a crossing guard would not be covered by municipal liability insurance.

Ms Loughlin said that some crossing guards are upset that they are not allowed to help elderly or handicapped people who ask for assistance. She said it doesn't make sense that the guards not help out, and has taken the issue up with Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh through her involvement with Milton's Good Neighbours Committee.

"Quite frankly it's not a high priority with me," said Mr.



Mary Lou Loughlin

Chudleigh, adding the legislative calendar is full. "A more practical approach is adjusting the crossing lights to stay on longer."

Mr. Chudleigh said it might be possible for the Town of Milton to simply purchase more liability insurance. However, he acknowledged with very tight municipal budgets, finding extra money would be difficult. He also questioned its value, given the amount of time crossing guards are on the job.

"Often times the crossing guards will allow mothers with babies or seniors to cross with the students, that's how they get around it," Ms Loughlin said.

She added she doesn't want the crossing guards to be on duty any more hours than they already are, but would like them to serve anyone who requires assistance.

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