

## Headwaters board votes to explore area health services partnerships

The Headwaters Health Care Centre's board of directors voted Tuesday night to explore the possibility of new partnerships in the field of area health services.

Cara Francis, regional director of public relations for the Central West Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), said Wednesday the board voted to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will outline how we will begin to further explore our partnership with the Central West CCAC and William Osler Health System through community engagement, stakeholder consultation and due diligence.

This process of engagement, consultation and due diligence would begin in the coming months and staff, physicians, volunteers, Foundation partners, the community, health care partners, government leaders and many others would be involved over a number of months' time.

Headwaters CEO Liz Ruegg stressed that at present no decision has been made, and that in the end the decision will be to do nothing.

However, she noted that Headwaters already has partnerships with Osler that have led to cancer patients getting chemotherapy and kidney patients dialysis supervised by specialists based at Osler's Brampton Civic Hospital.

Ruegg said one possibility that will be explored is creation of a new corporation to embrace health services in Dufferin and Caledon, but stressed that this would not interfere with the hospital's independence.

She said the whole purpose of the move is patient-centred, designed to ensure that health care in the community is creative and innovative.

The plan is to engage the community and exercise due diligence.

This is all about the patient, she added. Our aim is to inspire and deliver improved services.

Recently, a fake Facebook account began posting on local Q&A groups under the name Con Citi about an alleged secret merger between Headwaters, the CCAC and William Osler Health System. According to the account, and their subsequent Facebook Page, the Headwaters board has been meeting in secret for nearly a year working on the deal.

Describing the Facebook page as not accurate, Ruegg said the page has been talking incorrectly about the future of our hospital. You don't have to worry; there's nothing to save. Headwaters is here to stay.

She added that so far, staff at the hospital as well as the Headwaters Health Care Foundation Board have no idea what spurred the campaign or who is behind it.

With the timing, we are celebrating a one-year anniversary with the move we made with our partners to integrate our back office, she said. We've developed a joint IT department and worked together to develop an annual business plan. The integration with our partners have provided us with more access to specialists that we never had access to before.

The hospital is currently preparing to break ground on an 8,200-square-foot addition, as well as focusing on the redevelopment of some space and departments to improve service.

Although there had been discussions with the partners, those had been surrounding more ways they can improve and provide further care to the local community.

Headwaters Health Care Centre has been working in an official partnership with both William Osler and the CCAC since last year, when the announcement was made of the upcoming integrations that were designed to help make the hospital more efficient and centred more around patient-first care.

As leaders, as the hospital, we need to be open and look at new and bold things to ensure our community has the health services available for now and the future, she said. The boards are continuing to work together, but any decisions we would ever make (of that calibre) we would never make without engaging our community, physicians, staff and other local health service providers.

Board Chair Rob Hamilton added that they are always looking for community input, and are diligent in looking into ideas that may be presented.

We as a Board have a responsibility to investigate ongoing opportunities to improve service, Hamilton said. We need to continue to move forward in terms of looking for better ways to provide more equal access to services. We also have a responsibility to vet all options that are presented so that we can thoroughly investigate them before we bring it to the community for involvement. We would absolutely have a period of community involvement before making any decisions.

Both Hamilton and Ruegg were very clear that Headwaters hospital is not going anywhere.

We are here to stay, we are going to continue to grow, and continue to provide high quality service, Ruegg said.