

FRIENDS OF PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES

January 2009 Newsletter

Friends' Message

A new year is always a time for renewal and we the Friends of Prince Edward County Health Services hope to renew our mission to keep our community informed about our healthcare system.

This site was designed to keep all recipients of our local healthcare services updated with facts and issues affecting the delivery of our local healthcare as well as a broader perspective of healthcare delivery throughout the province.

We have provided links to several key sites that will inform you about the trends across the province and we will also keep this site current with local healthcare news.

Although this newsletter is lengthy I encourage you to read it in its entirety - the information provided here will bring you up to date on what is happening, at our local hospital and at Quinte Health Care Corporation.

These are progressive times for health care in our community .The Prince Edward Family Health Team (PEFHT) is now in operation. Four Nurse Practitioners and 22 family doctors are now available to provide primary health care to our community. The FHT has been able to extend this primary care to 400 families at CFB Trenton as well.

This primary care level is the entry point to the health care system for a patient. Treatment may occur in the office or at the PEFHT Specialty Clinics where ongoing treatments, teaching and/or rehabilitation may be provided by highly educated nurse clinicians.

Perhaps the patient would benefit from homecare nursing services and that would be arranged by the healthcare practitioner by contacting the Southeast Community Care Access Center. Another option may require the patient to be admitted to acute hospital care at our local Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital (PECMH) or advanced care or a tertiary care center perhaps in Belleville or Kingston .

All of these interventions would be initiated at the Primary Care Level.

Community Care for Seniors is another Health Service Provider (HSP) located in our community offering support and information to our seniors as well as many programs such as foot care and meals on wheels.

PECMH providing our acute care core services and the PEFHT providing our primary care are the anchors of our growing health care campus, and with new technologies underway such as PACs and Digital X Ray , we believe the future must remain bright for our community. A new emergency is under construction and will be finished around May 2009 at a cost of approx 4 million dollars

Specialized Transit Service

For many years there was a real need to provide transit service for the elderly and handicapped in the County. Transportation was required for clinic, doctor, out-patient and other appointments. And it is being used! At the end of November/08, there were 448 individuals registered to use the service. The budget for 2009 calls for an expansion of the service from three days a week to four, Tuesday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm. The major initiative for getting this marvelous service going, as well as ongoing financial support, goes to the ladies of the P.E. District Women's Institute.

Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital

Our local hospital provides the core services that allow our doctors and healthcare practitioners to practice complete medicine. We must build on these core services in order to sustain this current level of care and continue to attract future doctors and practitioners who will deliver this care.

The PECMH Foundation, with the support of our generous community, has done marvelous fundraising to provide much needed equipment and structural renovations.

The Nurses

At the present time, PECMH has recruited more nurses to staff both the Medical Surgery Ward and the Emergency Department. However, as there is a shortage of nurses across Ontario, staffing will always be a challenge. We are fortunate that we have a very dedicated and experienced group of nursing personnel.

Emergency Department

New modern Emergency complete by May 2009

Laboratory

. We have been informed that "Point of Care" testing will take the place of our present Laboratory. "Point of Care" machines are used to test the patient blood that has been taken by a nurse. Details are still being worked out.

Radiology (X-ray Department)

A digital radiography unit has been installed at P.E.C.M.H. this year with funds provided by the Imagine Campaign to which PEC donated \$750,000.. New CAT scanners have been installed at B.G.H. and in Trenton. This has shortened the wait time for patients for CAT scans. In addition an M.R.I machine is now located at Quinte Healthcare Corp. (QHC) Belleville, however the significant shortage of radiologists in Ontario creates a real problem in reading response times for the imaging. Q.H.C. is presently attempting to recruit more radiologists and is meeting with some success.

Maternity

Obstetrics is alive and well at PECM ,however as the birth rate is approx 50 births this year the need is being reviewed in the current round of QHC cuts. We presently have 5 physicians out of 22 who deliver babies. There is a fear that if Maternity is closed, some of these Doctors may choose to practice elsewhere.

Clinics

There are many clinics at PECMH providing a variety of services with significant benefit to our citizens.

Diabetic Teaching (every Wed and Thurs and every other Friday) - staffed by a specially trained Registered Nurse and a Registered Dietician.

Cardiology (twice a month) - with a cardiologist from Kingston General Hospital.

Surgical (2 days /week) - with 2 surgeons from the Belleville site.

Urology (2-3 times a month) - with Urologist from Kingston General Hospital..

Pulmonary Function (weekly) - with Respiratory Technician from Belleville G. Hospital.

Breast Screening (twice monthly) – with Ontario Breast Screening Program involvement.

Ears Nose and Throat (every 1-2 months)

Arthritis (monthly)

Family Health Team

On December 1st,2007 the Prince Edward Family Health Team announced the hiring of its first executive director. Duff Sprague, who was director of Family Health Teams with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Primary Health Team.

This team has enhanced services by providing some specialty clinics at the primary level . Further details will be provided at a later date

We are reading in newspapers throughout Ontario that many small rural hospitals are under relentless pressure to consolidate and cut their services .

Fifty percent of Ontario hospitals cannot balance their budgets and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) has said they will not invest any more tax dollars into Ontario hospitals.

The MOHLTC, the Local Health Integration Networks(LHIN), the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) have united their strategic direction to eliminate future runaway hospital deficits. These three major powers agree the solution is to cut small rural hospital's services throughout the 14 Ontario regions and to consolidate services into larger centrally located facilities to reduce costs .

The Niagara Health System for example is proposing major service cuts at four of its sites(Fort Erie, Port Colbourne, Niagara on the Lake and Welland) and probably 2 hospital closures with completion of the new Public Private Partnership Hospital in St. Catharines scheduled to open in 2010.

In addition Healthcare Technology has constantly increased over the past 10 to 15 years and the purchase, maintenance, replacement and operational costs of medical and surgical equipment and devices, as well as labour costs have far exceeded the meager 2.1 % annual base funding increases.

Small rural hospitals cannot compete for the healthcare dollars that are directed to the urban centres for utilization and support of these cutting edge technologies.

The amalgamations of ten years ago did not save the healthcare system and the cost of managing 4 separate hospitals with inadequate funding is only a part of the problem . Multisite hospitals are not the culprit here. They are just another apparent easy fix for a broken system.

Residents have remained vigilant over the years, supporting their beloved PECMH with generous donations of money and volunteer hours. A Healthcare Advisory Committee continues to meet regularly reporting to our municipal council and a volunteer board of directors of the Friends of Prince Edward County Health Services (FPECHS) continues to meet monthly to stay in tune with all local healthcare issues.

Over the past three years it seemed the community was secure under the auspices of QHC and in order to support Local Foundation fund raising and Hospital Auxiliary volunteers, FPECHS focus was directed to the positive aspects of our local healthcare.

Reassurances from our MPP Leona Dombrowsky and former Minister of Health, George Smitherman, prior to the last provincial election led us to believe our Picton hospital “had a vibrant future” . We must hold these promises to account and support efforts to prevent any further cuts to our active treatment services at our local hospital .

Deep and widespread cuts and closures across large geographic areas will decimate our acute care system and remove timely access to the basic core services that all residents are entitled. Currently these core services are being provided by Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital .

Mr Ken Tremblay CEO and president of Chatham Kent Health Alliance appointed by the ministry, will review and critique the Hospital Improvement Plan developed by a QHC Management Team . He will begin his work at QHC on January 5 2009.

Be prepared to attend the “Community Engagement Sessions “ arranged by the Southeast Local Health Integration Network to announce to the public the decisions made that will reduce the deficit at QHC.

Those dates will be posted on this site.

Stay tuned