

Hospital Board Reviews Finances, Capital Funding and Emergency Coverage Issues

Three main topics consumed a significant portion of the Deep River Hospital Board Agenda time this past week: hospital finances, understanding the community's role in funding the purchase of replacement equipment, and the increasing challenges of ensuring 24-7 physician coverage in the Emergency Department. The Board was briefed of the continuing positive position of the Hospital's current year budget and the expectation that the Hospital will deliver a balanced operating budget for 2009-10 including meeting all of the financial obligations and commitments made to the Champlain LHIN. This positive budget position has been achieved through close attention to cost management and through significantly increased revenue flows associated with the use of the emergency department and the in-patient beds by out-of-province clients and military personnel. In a related review of the financial picture, the Board was reminded that the province does not provide any funding for the purchase of replacement capital equipment, either of an operational or medical delivery nature. The government assumes that every community hospital will use its financial reserves or community fund-raising to address such needs. With cash reserves diminishing due to required capital purchases over the past number of years, the Board was pleased to learn of the commitment of the Board of the Hospital Foundation to significantly ramp up fund-raising efforts in order to address the annual capital requirements of the Hospital going forward. The Board also reviewed the factors contributing to the increased challenges of securing physician coverage for the busy emergency department and the increased pressures that this is causing in the personal lives and medical practices of the community physicians. The Board expressed its appreciation to the local physicians for their recent examples of last-minute heroics to ensure ongoing coverage – and reviewed the efforts being undertaken by the Hospital Administration to increase the availability of other physicians to assist in this coverage.