

Headwaters Health Care is planning large and long-term expansions

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Recognizing a growing need for services, Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) is planning a series of expansions over the next decade and beyond.

These expansions are intended to accommodate a growing population and an increasing number of hospital visits.

Kim Delahunt, president and CEO of Headwaters, delivered a presentation to Shelburne council on Nov. 24, outlining the hospital's long-term plan. She began with the most recent parts of the plan completed this year, focusing on two major projects.

"I wanted to just provide some updates about some of our big accomplishments from last year, before moving into what the hospital is focusing on this year and into the future," she said. "The first thing is the grand reopening of our updated and expanded dialysis unit."

"The other is the new MRI at Headwaters. I know everyone's been awaiting this for many, many years. It is fully running for seven days a week, and we're expecting 8,000 scans a year."

The MRI unit was an important project for the hospital, as Delahunt said their data showed that around 4,000 residents in the region had to leave to find MRIs elsewhere.

Looking into the future, the hospital expects a surge in demand for services over the coming decades.

Healthcare needs are anticipated to increase and become more specific, according to Delahunt.

"In Ontario, the aging population is rapidly growing, and it's already putting a lot of strain on our healthcare system," she said. "It's only going to increase that strain. By 2040, more than 3.1 million Ontarians will be living with one or more chronic illnesses. Healthcare needs are becoming more complex."

To address the projected demand, HHCC is planning a series of large expansions based on predictive data.

The current Emergency Department (ED) was built to accommodate 23,000 annual visits, but is now reporting more than 37,000 patients. Delahunt added that HHCC expects to see more than 50,000 ED patients each year within the next decade.

The highest priority items for the hospital to develop are: Emergency Department, Obstetrics, Complex Continuing Care, Diagnostic Imaging, Critical Care Unit/ICU, Medical Device Reprocessing Department, and Pharmacy.

In the relatively short term, the Emergency Department is planned to expand by 3,500 square feet, and Diagnostic Imaging will expand by 750 square feet. This is done with the goal of reducing wait times and improving the flow of patients. The overall expansion of HHCC is expected to be 239,000 square feet over a 10-year period, further expanding to 333,000 square feet over a 20-year period.

In terms of costs, the long-term expansion is estimated to cost \$391 million in the first phase, and the total cost over 20 years is projected to be \$714 million.

Despite the massive spending requirement, Delahunt said that HHCC remains financially responsible moving forward.

“At Headwaters, we remain fiscally prudent,” she said. “We are one of the few hospitals that are forecast to be balanced financially, while there’s a number of the majority that are facing large deficits.”

To meet the growing needs of the region and the local community, HHCC is planning to nearly double its size and double its number of employees. With goals of long-term care and faster wait times in mind, Delahunt and HHCC are looking to stay ahead of the curve going into the future, with more services and new technological integration.