

Health system shakeup yields 'new era of collaboration' says Headwaters Health CEO



Written By **JAMES MATTHEWS**

Dufferin County has gotten behind local health service providers in their efforts to work toward an Ontario Health team that will reflect the region's needs.

Stacey Daub, President and CEO at Headwaters Health Care Centre, updated Dufferin County council during its meeting April 11 about how the province's centralized Ontario Health agency, to be established next year, will impact health service delivery in the area.

Health Minister Christine Elliott announced in February that health care administration would be consolidated with the creation of a super agency to be called Ontario Health. As many as 22 provincial agencies, including the 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), will be folded into Ontario Health.

Ms. Daub said Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, will bring about the biggest change in more than 50 years to health care delivery in Ontario.

'No previous government in the years that I can remember has put forth such substantive reform propositions,' she said. 'And we expect that agency (Ontario Health) to progress very quickly. The hope is that will streamline and really align the direction of the health service agencies across the province.'

The provincial ministry's hope is to advance locally-driven and developed systems of health care toward four goals: Improving health outcomes and population health in a community; improving the patient experience in the system; improving the care provider's experience; and to maximize value and efficiency within the system.

'What we have in Dufferin is very different to what you have in downtown Toronto, to what you have in Wawa,' Ms. Daub said. 'So there is a real local element to the delivery of health care. The intent is to get local leaders to work together.'

The province hopes to have Health Ontario up and running by next year. Locally, Ms. Daub said many Dufferin County leaders have gotten together with an eye toward figuring out how to best ferry the health care community into those changes.

?It is an opportunity for us to partner together to build a locally-developed and locally-delivered health care system,? she said.

The new Health Ontario also marks the devolution of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, she said.

?They expect about 80 percent of the ministry itself will be devolved into this agency with the intent to getting the ministry back to perhaps its rightful place in doing policy and strategy,? she said, ?and not getting into the business of mucking around with health organizations across the province.?

The second part of the legislation's reform initiatives may be disruptive to Ontario's health delivery. But, Ms. Daub said, they're not new to other parts of the world.

?Most other jurisdictions around the globe have moved to more integrated health care delivery systems,? she said. ?In Ontario, we still have a very siloed system.?

She added, ?(And) sometimes the system can be quite challenging to make your way through because there are separate organizations who are supporting patients and citizens.?