

Oakville Today

One-on-one: CEO talks new hospital

Halton Healthcare Services President John Oliver brings community up to speed on new North Oakville hospital project

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A consortium will soon be selected to build the new Oakville hospital and shovels are likely to hit the ground by the summer, but curiosity still surrounds the finer points of the ongoing process.

North Oakville Today spoke with President and CEO of Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) John Oliver to get further insight into one of the most important projects ever undertaken by this community.

The new Oakville hospital, which is slated for a 50-acre site at the northwest corner of Third Line and Dundas Street, is expected to open its doors in early 2015.

“We’re building a hospital from scratch,” said Oliver. “We’re not doing a renovation, we’re not doing an add-on. We’re on a green field site and we have an opportunity to create a facility that in all aspects is modern and designed with the most recent thinking in hospital design.”

The project is being funded through the province’s Alternative Financing and Procurement (AFP) model.

Under the model, a private consortium of companies and investors will be responsible for the design, construction, financing and maintenance of the hospital.

The hospital is then paid for by the province and stakeholders over a 30-year period, similar to a mortgage.

According to Oliver, the AFP model transfers much of the construction risk to private sector partners.

The AFP model requires a local share contribution towards the cost of the hospital, which totals \$530 million: \$60 million from the Oakville Hospital Capital Campaign, \$270 from Halton Healthcare Services and up to \$200 million from the Town of Oakville.

In order to protect the competitive bidding process, an estimated total cost of the hospital has never been released.

With the February 25 request for proposal approval date fast approaching, Oliver said that the foremost factor being considered when selecting one of three bidding consortia is how closely the bids adhere to HHS’s building specifications.

“We have issued what are called project specific output specs,” said Oliver. “We are looking for the bids to be compliant and aligned with our desired project descriptors.”

Oliver said that cost issues are also being considered as well as construction management and building maintenance.

“We will have an agreement where for 30 years after we take occupancy, the building will be maintained [by the consortium],” he said.

According to Oliver, after the request for proposal close date, there will be a period of bid evaluations with Infrastructure Ontario ending in mid to late May. Only after that will the successful bidder be announced.

“Soon after the preferred proponent is named, we’ll probably begin early work on the site,” said Oliver. “There are things that have to get going with access roads and storm water management and all the grading and the developments needed to have the infrastructure to sustain a major capital project. There’ll be site work likely in late May, early June.”

Oliver said that at the same time the preliminary site work is taking place, HHS should be working towards commercial and financial close, which involves coming to a final agreement with the approved consortium. He said commercial and financial close is expected by mid-summer.

“Then the actual site construction work can begin immediately after that so we would anticipate that to be in late July or early August,” he said.

When the facility opens, patients will be transferred to the new Oakville hospital from Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. The number of beds at the new hospital will be increased over time to 457 beds with space to grow to 602 beds in the future.

Oliver said right now, HHS is working on being operational ready for 2015.

“It’s a mountain and you scale a mountain one day at a time,” he said, “and we’re starting four and a half years in advance and we will be very ready to deliver care when we open those doors.”

The transition into a new hospital seems like a daunting task but Oliver said that HHS is looking into other hospitals that have successfully made the move.

“Any lessons we can learn on being operational ready we are picking up from some very recent experiences locally,” he said.

Oliver said that the vision for the new Oakville hospital is meant to offer more than just additional rooms, newer equipment and more staff. It will also offer a comfortable environment in which to heal.

“There is a lot of evidence,” said Oliver, “that environments that are warm, supportive, that are reflective of the environment that you live in...are conducive to healing and much more supportive for families and for staff that are staying with patients as well. So that’s the kind of environment we’re after.

“Almost all areas are designed now to make sure that we have light wells and areas where people can feel connected to the landscape and connected to nature through the building.”

Oliver said that HHS will be more outspoken once the request for proposal analysis is completed in May. When the final design is approved shortly there after, Oakville will get its first glimpse into what the new hospital will actually look like when the doors open in 2015.

“This is a much-needed project for Oakville,” he said. “It’s very exciting.”

For information about the new Oakville hospital, visit www.newoakvillehospital.com.