

Update on Hospital Operations Town Hall Meeting

February 26, 2016

A couple months ago we held a town hall to discuss how the health system funding reform formula impacted regions like Windsor-Essex across Ontario. In addition, yesterday the Province announced its proposed budget for this upcoming 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Before and after our announcement multiple hospitals announced their own staffing changes to address the impact of the HSFR on their operational budgets. As stated in January and as shown the last couple of months - we are not alone.

If you take a step back our province just announced that the province's operating deficit for 2015-16 will be \$5.7 billion. Their plan is to balance the operating deficit by the end of fiscal 17-18. Ten years of operating deficits has ballooned the accumulated debt of the province to over \$300 billion dollars.

You have to remember that the province's annual operating budget is about \$120 billion.

It has been stated that the province spends over \$11 billion a year – that is 10% of the annual budget - to just finance that debt. The only two programs that spend more of the budget than financing debt is education and health. Meaning financing of the debt is the 3rd highest spending category of the province of Ontario.

Now, when you have an operating deficit and accumulated debt to that magnitude you have no choice but to balance the operating budget.

To put this into greater perspective, we all had heard about the state of California's budget and debt issues. In 2014, the debt per capita, per person, in California was \$3,844, in Ontario \$20,166 per person.

Since healthcare in Ontario makes up over 40% of the provincial expenses the only way you are going to balance a budget is to decrease that expense, increase revenues or a combination of the two.

Needless to say, it is next to impossible to increase revenues, taxes, by at least 7.5 billion a year or about 8% of the provincial budget. It will take a combination of taxes plus reductions in healthcare spending.

Just yesterday it was announced there would be gas tax and tax to natural gas increases to limit carbon emissions.

There was some half decent news yesterday that awarded a 1% increase in base funding for hospitals. We have to remember we only get 30% of our funding for base. Therefore, it is 1% on that 30%. This is about \$1.4 million for Windsor Regional Hospital. Just to put this in perspective our utility costs went up by \$500,000 this past year for Windsor Regional alone.

Also, they are increasing the HBAM funding by 1%. This is the part of the funding that hurts us but at least the "pie" I talked about at the last town hall is increased by 1%.

Bringing all of this down to a local level. The funding announcements definitely help after five years of freezes and cuts.

We had no choice but to address our own operating issues as well and as a result of what is happening provincially.

When I became CEO in 2008 we had similar hospital operating issues. We had a run of ten out of the previous 12 years with operating deficits and built up debt. We made some tough decision and changes and had a run of over 6 years of balanced budgets or surplus budgets.

I hate the fact we got back into operating deficits but, as stated, we had a revenue reduction of some \$20 million in the last two budget years. What made it worse is we had those funding reductions confirmed very quickly in a very short period of time with the first happening in march of 2015 for the fiscal year that ended that same month and then 5 months later in august 2015 for the 15-16 fiscal year that ends the month of march 2016.

We are working with the impacted unions and staff on the changes that have been announced. Again, I am still hopeful, with the one time funding we received that if you want to continue to work at Windsor Regional Hospital you will be able to do so, as a result of retirements and normal attrition. We will be trying our best to accommodate our team members.

One thing we need to focus on is this.

The last thing we need to do is to turn on each other.

Please blame me not each other.

What I mean is we cannot have staff criticize each other. There have been some provincial comments from people who do not live in our community or work in our community that the changes we are making will cause deaths and injure patients. That is not true or accurate. This model exists everywhere across Ontario and the world for that matter.

How soon we forget in 2008 we had the highest standardized mortality ratio at the met campus. How soon we forget the number of HAIs we had at Windsor Regional Hospital. I can go on and on.

The last thing we need is people from the outside of our organization tell us what is and will happen internally then disappear and we never hear from them again but in the meantime they leave our team angry at one another.

The way we addressed these issues in the past is working together as a team. Not blaming each other or belittling what each other does.

I have always said – if you want a different job because of money or job functions then go get the education necessary and apply. You want to be a manager, director, vice president or CEO – apply.

I will not tolerate this type of conduct or comments. Neither should you. If you hear one of your colleagues talk this way stop them and tell them how inappropriate it is. If they do not stop call me.

If you cannot personally tolerate working as a team in our environment then please no one is forcing you to stay. I will help you with your resume.

Our patients deserve us to work as a team and could truly care less about our internal issues. They will not tolerate any of us blaming or criticizing each other when their loved one is sick needing our care and compassion.

I get calls from families who some staff have talked to our about changes and the families get upset but what happens is then on the call with me they start to criticize the staff who complained to them about the changes and I end up having to defend you folks.

Also I go out in the community and hear about some staff criticizing the hospital in the community. We are all professionals I can tell you the feedback I get from our community when that happens is that we are anything but being professional.

Again, our families do not deserve this and it truly accomplishes nothing but makes us all look silly to the families.

We need and will move forward as a team. That is what we did in 2008 and that is what we will do now. We have a great team and a great future.

Soon we will be announcing another London based physician coming to Windsor to run a clinic for our patients rather than have to travel to London. The London physician stated that one of the reasons he wants to start the clinic is because of our future - our future as an organization and the move to a new state of the art acute care facility. There is more to come just like this.

The world outside our doors sees that our future looks bright. We need to make sure we live up to what they see. That is our vision and also our responsibility. Our patients deserve nothing less. Our fellow team members deserve nothing less.

We can do this if we work together. We will continue moving forward together. I look forward to our future.