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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

MHA Hospitals end the year in the black

The Middlesex Hospital Alliance Board accepted an invitation from the new Seasons Strathroy Retirement Community to hold the regular May meeting at the new facility. The Board was given a tour of the beautiful retirement residence and learned about the service and accommodation provided. In addition to the regular Hospital Board Meeting Agenda, Board Members took time out to sample the excellent cuisine provided by the new facility. Board Chair Cheryl Waters told Season's representative Mary Jane Fletcher that the MHA is very proud to have the 120 unit facility join the healthcare services available in Strathroy-Caradoc.

Under its regular business agenda the Board heard a report that a small surplus of about two per cent is being shown for both hospitals under the MHA umbrella.

The MHA Board of Directors approved the draft audited financial statements during their May 25 meeting.

The audit shows that Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH) has a surplus of \$615,315 and the hospital has a budget of approximately \$35 million. Four Counties Health Services has a surplus of \$270,864, with a budget of approximately \$11 million.

According to MHA CEO Mike Mazza, surpluses are required if the MHA hospitals are to continue moving forward. "Surpluses are necessary for satisfactory cash flow management, debt repayment, patient and staff safety initiatives, and equipment replenishment," explained Mazza.

The MHA Board also heard that at SMGH, the ambulatory care/emergency addition and renovations asbestos abatement loan was paid in full. This was accomplished in partnership with the SMGH Foundation which made significant contributions annually to help the SMGH site pay down this debt.

MHA Board Chair Cheryl Waters indicated how grateful the board is for community support. "The past community support now puts the hospital in a better financial place to address future service needs," said Waters. "At this time, the board continues to focus on emergency, general surgery and internal medicine physician recruitment as one of the corner stones of the hospital strategic plan." In an ongoing effort to improve hospital services, the board continues to invest capital dollars in new operating room and diagnostic equipment, as well as electronic health record and information management infrastructure. The new general surgeon, Dr. Vipin Jain,

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who is scheduled to start at SMGH later this summer will require some new equipment to provide “minimally invasive surgery” techniques with a focus on cancer surgeries.

A staff wage freeze for non-union employees at both hospital sites, as well as salary variances reflected through unfilled vacant positions and workload variances, also attributed to the hospitals surpluses. SMGH medical and surgical supplies were over budget as an additional 42 hip and knee replacements were completed. These were over and above the 200-wait time funded surgical cases approved by the South West Local Health Integrated Network (SW LHIN).

Over the past 12 months, overall emergency room visits and ambulatory care saw an increase at both hospital sites. In Strathroy, emergency visits were up one per cent and ambulatory care increased by 10 per cent. This reflects the hospital’s ongoing commitment for excellent orthopedic surgery. At the Four Counties site, emergency visits were up six per cent, and ambulatory care increased by eight per cent, due largely in part to the expansion of the dermatology and respirology clinics.

In 2010-11, approximately the same numbers of patients were admitted to SMGH, but the actual number of days per stay was reduced by 13 per cent. A shift from inpatient to outpatient activity at Four Counties is reflected in the 12 per cent decline in patient admissions; days per stay also declined by seven per cent.

Moving into the new fiscal year, the Board is required to produce a balanced budget and enter into a hospital service accountability agreement.

Even though non-union employees’ salaries remain frozen, the union salary settlements are continuing through negotiations and arbitration.

Hospital financial statements are audited annually as required by the Public Hospital Act and will be available on the hospital’s website at www.mhalliance.on.ca by mid June, following the Annual General Meeting.