

# Oakville Today

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Editorial  
January 21, 2010

## The big question

*Cartoon by Cartoon Bob Sherwood*

We've talked, written and read a lot about the new Oakville hospital in recent months. The proposal is for a magnificent new structure with advanced technology, comforts and programs.

Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, while it contains many memories and experiences, is old. It was built in the 1950's for a population nearly a quarter of what Oakville now boasts.

It's time to move on.

But there is a hitch. While the province had given the hospital land (they announced it several times) and money for the new building, a local share contribution will require a big donation from the municipality.

Halton Healthcare Services (HHS), who administrates the hospital, has requested \$200,000,000 from the Town of Oakville. That's a lot of money. Especially when, through provincial taxes and any billable usage of OTMH, we, as a community, have already given a fair bit.

It's important to note that we're not against giving money to the hospital. It's the way the system has worked for over a decade, as flawed as it may be. But we are expecting something in return.

Town staff initially prepared a report stating that the Town could afford \$140M, and the Mayor has an eye on the current hospital lands in South Oakville. Not bad for starters.

We're also wondering about the possibility of a stronger controlling interest on the Board of Directors. Having a stronger position at the top, either private residents or Town Councillors, will give us a better chance of ensuring Oakville residents get the treatment they deserve.

We've also considered something else. "Non-eligible construction costs" are part of the local share contribution. That includes parking facilities, retail space, and anything else the hospital can earn income on. If our money is going to this, than we'd expect a cut of the profits.

The Town has also been talking with the province in regards to interest rates. At 6.5 per cent, a lot of what we'd be paying would be interest. With a lower interest rate, we'd be able to pay more.

It's not that we're right or wrong, or that our opinion should sway any decision necessarily. But we do want to hear from you, Oakville. We've been running a survey, 'The \$200,000,000 Question' over recent weeks, asking for your thoughts on the big decision. Next week (January 28), we will be printing the responses along with opinion pieces from stakeholders and



community leaders. It's not too late to contribute. Even if you don't want to give us a full explanation with your name for printing, send us a simple yes or no.

After all, it is your money.

– Michael Howie