

\$15m boost for community care programs applauded

Aimed at easing pressure on hospitals caring for seniors

JOANNA FRKETICH
The Hamilton Spectator

Area community programs are getting \$15.1 million to keep residents out of hospital.

The provincial funding being announced Thursday is aimed at reducing emergency department visits and decreasing readmissions. It also focuses on getting seniors out of hospital who are waiting for other types of care in the community.

“We’ve made the right choice to invest our precious health care dollars where they are most needed — in home and community care,” Health Minister Deb Matthews told *The Spectator* in a statement. “This will allow more Ontarians to live independently at home, and reduce pressure on hospitals and long-

term care homes.”

The funding for community programs comes at a time when area hospitals are cutting \$24.7 million to balance the books because their budgets are frozen. In particular, they’ve struggled with 14 per cent or more of their beds being taken up by seniors waiting for other types of care in the community.

“It’s a terrific announcement and a great investment,” said Kevin Smith, CEO of St. Joseph’s Health System. “Hospitals have recognized we have to start to meet the economic reality and to do that we need alternatives in the community.”

Smith said many of the community programs being funded focus on mental health and addictions, improving primary care and getting seniors the support they need

to stay in their homes.

“We’re making it easier for people to get the level of care when they need it and in an appropriate facility or, ideally, at home, said Ted McMeekin MPP for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale.

“When all is said and done seniors want to be in a place where they’re surrounded by people who love them, and the dignity and respect that goes with them.”

McMeekin and Matthews will be at the North Hamilton Community Health Centre at 10 a.m. for the announcement by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network, which includes Burlington.

jfrketich@thespec.com
905-526-3349 | @Jfrketich