

## Aylmer Health Co-op buys medical building

Lisa Joannis

A special meeting, December 10, allowed the Aylmer Health Co-operative to give its members a progress report, and make amendments to bylaws, said Co-op vice-president, Pierre Beaudry. "We've confirmed the partnership between the medical and professional staff at the Aylmer/Lucerne medical clinic and the Aylmer Health Co-op," said Mr Beaudry. "Effective January 1, 2004, we're starting operations." The building became the property of the Co-op on December 1.

The Co-op plans, with the help of members and community partnerships, to offer new equipment and services for patients at the clinic, both members and non-members. The first items on the list are equipment to monitor pulmonary and cardiac illnesses. Those registered in the co-op will have reduced costs for the new services, some of which are not covered by provincial health insurance. Mr Beaudry notes that offering these additional services will help recruit doctors to work at

the clinic.

"A lot of people ask if joining means they will get a family doctor," said the vice-president. "The answer is not yet, but as we recruit new doctors the number of those on a waiting list will diminish." So far, he said, the Co-op has started negotiations with an Ottawa physician who intends to move to Quebec and join the clinic, and an intern will join the staff in the new year. "He will be working particularly at the Monastery, and eventually the clinic," said Mr Beaudry. Another doctor from Quebec's north shore has shown interest, he said.

There are now close to 200 members in the Co-op. "We have about 20 to 30 new registrations each week, and we're not actively recruiting yet," said Mr Beaudry. "We will start more seriously in January." The hope, he said, is to have about 3,500 members by the end of

2004, most of which will be from the existing patient list. "That's the reason for the passive recruiting mode so far, to give these patients a chance to register," he explained.

The Co-op is also negotiating partnerships with local businesses. "We are looking at different ways to get dollars in the community for health services," he said. Since prevention is another aspect of health the Co-op is exploring, agreements have been made with Florida Fitness and Sol for member discounts.

The board of directors is also looking at financing from the local development agency (CLD) and the federal government. "We've met with MP Marcel Proulx, who showed a high level of interest in the project," said Mr Beaudry. Board members include president Jacques Coulombe, Pierre Joannis, secretary, François Juneau, treasurer, and Guy Benoit, interim director.

