

Dignitaries break ground on 'flagship' Meadows of Aurora building



By Brock Weir

The sound of construction filled the air as dignitaries gathered near Leslie and Wellington on Friday morning to break ground on what promises to be the 'flagship' phase of the Meadows of Aurora senior living complex.

Helping to turn the sod on the new building, which will boast 60 assisted living units, 20 residential units in memory care, and 110 independent living suites ranging in size from 950 to 1,420 square feet were Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson, MPP Christine Elliott, Mayor Geoff Dawe, Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor, and a number of board members from York Region Christian Seniors Homes, Inc., the parent non-profit of Meadows of Aurora.

Targeted for completion in the winter of 2021, the completed residential complex will include a multipurpose wellness centre complete with doctor, dental and hearing care, an adult day program area, 135 seat restaurant overlooking the pond already in place, a 245 seat auditorium, a bistro and a hair salon.

'The vision for this facility for seniors over 65 is to allow them to have a place to age in place, using what we call a continuum of care,' said York Region Christian Seniors Home Board Member Simon Frankruyter, drawing this to the attention of Ms. Elliott, who also serves as Ontario's Minister of Health and Long Term Care. 'This concept started way back in 2004 with a small group of visionaries from various parts of York Region who formed a non-profit organization called York Region Christian Seniors Home Inc, which founded this home under the name of Meadows of Aurora. We acquired this beautiful 25 acre parcel of land, half of which is natural heritage.'

The land in question was purchased in 2006 and then, as part of the 2C Landowners group, they moved forward on Phase 1A and 1B. Construction began in 2014 with 1B completed in June of 2016, and 1A following suit this past March.

'Now, our aim is to create a true community of supportive and caring residents that will support each other through the aging process,' Mr. Frankruyter continued. 'That is very important to us. We have been truly blessed to experience this wonderful supportive community at work, as they deal with times of a lot of joyfulness here but also a lot of pain at times as they deal with various health issues in particular such as dementia, cancer and, of course, death.'

'We have also encouraged our residents to engage with the larger community and we have up to 26 people in this residence of the 200-odd that live here who work at the Mission Store in Newmarket and a number of them are also involved at Southlake, the food bank, homeless shelter, and the Seniors' Centre. There is a lot of volunteerism; we don't want anyone to have the mentality that we're just here for ourselves, like a cloistering or a monastery, we want them to stay engaged in a larger community.'

Once the next phase in the Meadows of Aurora journey is complete, they hope to continue building. Two additional phases are planned, being built out to front Leslie Street and, when all is said and done, the complex will provide housing 'often in life leases' to 750 residents while supporting over 300 employees in the care sector.