

Bloomington land offered for long-term care residence: Province

Surplus land owned by the Province near the northwest corner of Bloomington and Yonge could be the site of a future 128-bed long-term care home.

Last week, the Province announced its intentions to put the land on the market for the construction of a new seniors' residence.

"We are delivering on our commitment to transition our seniors from waitlists to modern long-term care homes, providing a warm and safe environment with the quality of care they deserve," said Minister of Long-Term Care Dr. Merrilee Fullerton in a statement. "This new home will allow our loved ones to enter long-term care homes sooner and ease hallway health care in local hospitals."

The announcement was also heralded by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, who said, "This is an exciting announcement that will bring additional long-term care beds to our community. The additional beds will provide the care that our seniors need and deserve."

The land in question has long been eyed by the Town of Aurora.

For nearly a decade, the Town has lobbied to secure the acreage from the Province for recreational use. These ideas have ranged from the development of several sports fields to address long-identified shortages within Aurora, to a new recreation centre to account for future growth, to a centre of sports excellence, to a possible location for a standalone aquatics facility, the latter of which was discussed further by Council last week.

Although Mayor Mrakas says the Town does not dispute the need for long-term care beds in the community, the Province's decision to leave the Town out of the loop on their plans was "concerning."

"Obviously, the need for long-term care facilities and an improvement in that area is welcome," he says. "The unfortunate part is these are lands the Town has expressed interest in for many years [for] recreational purposes. I think, truly, the unfortunate part is they have gone ahead and put forward a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) on the lands without any consultation with the Town."

"It seems the Province has basically sidestepped the public planning process and it is a little bit much. It is very concerning from a municipal standpoint. Planning and zoning changes need to be dealt with at the municipal level."

Since last week's announcement, Mayor Mrakas said his office has reached out to Aurora's two MPPs - Mr. Parsa and Deputy Premier Christine Elliott - on the matter and they have said putting the property on the market it is a matter of getting "feelers out there to see what's out there and what proposals would come back."

"At that point, they would come and sit down with myself and the Town, and while I appreciate that, I do feel that step has come one step too late," says Mayor Mrakas.

"I have always talked about the fact that we have our official plans, we have our zoning for our community, we have all that stuff in place for a purpose because we understand what the vision is for our community."

NEW MEASURES FOR AT HOME SUPPORTS

Local seniors will receive enhanced at-home supports to delay the need for long-term care.

York Region was named one of five Ontario communities that will be part of the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program, which, according to the Ontario Government, will "help seniors on long-term care waitlists stay safe in the comfort of their own homes and communities longer."

The program will rely on the skills of paramedicine practitioners to alleviate hallway healthcare and provide additional and appropriate care for seniors. This includes enhanced at-home supports.

The Community Paramedicine Program will be delivered by local paramedic services, including York Region EMS, to provide seniors with round-the-clock access to health services through in-home and remote methods, provide home visits and in-home testing procedures, ongoing monitoring of changing or escalating conditions to prevent or reduce emergency incidents, and provide connections for participants and their families to home care and community supports.

The announcement was lauded by Ms. Elliott and Mr. Parsa.

I am excited that York Region has been chosen as one of the first communities to participate in the paramedicine program, said Mr. Parsa. This 100 per cent provincially funded long-term care program will provide our seniors, their families and caregivers peace of mind while waiting for a long-term care bed.

Added Ms. Elliott: Our government is proud to support innovative models of care that help more patients access the care they need, when they need it. The new community paramedicine for long-term care program in York Region is a great example of innovative solutions that move us closer to our shared vision of building a modern and connected health care system, ending hallway health care and helping more seniors stay safe in the comfort of their own homes.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter