

CMHA celebrates new signage ?Leading the Way? to future Mental Health Centre



Supporters of the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe are set to descend on Aurora on May 28 as the organization hosts its Lead the Way gala, supporting the future York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre.

Billed as a first-of-its-kind 24/7 hub for mental health and addictions care in the communities of York Region and south Simcoe County, The Centre marked a milestone on its anticipated road to welcoming its first clients in 2027 with the dedication of new signage on Friday.

Located on Yonge Street in Newmarket, directly opposite the headquarters of the Regional Municipality of York, the future site of the Centre welcomed Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor and members of the CMHA-YRSS team for the occasion.

?Just putting the sign up doesn't really change anything, we're already doing this work, we already know the direction, but it is a milestone ? [it shows] that it's there and it demonstrates the commitment of our funders ? the Ministry of Health and York Region ? to build The Centre,? says Frances Reinholdt, Interim CEO of the CMHA-YRSS. ?We're on target for moving through the next steps for approval, moving to the RFP? and getting shovels in the ground so that we can have clients through the door in 2027. There's a little bit of fluidity in terms of what the timelines will look like because these are complicated steps, they're sequential ? we'll get them done, but they are complicated.?

Community consultation on how The Centre will ultimately serve the communities in its catchment area continue, and these conversations extend to all the partners that have come together to make the facility a reality.

?The work that we're doing is really bringing people in house to walk through and get their advice and get them to guide and help us develop that,? says Reinholdt. ?I think when you're doing anything innovative, it's incumbent upon you to reach out and understand what people are hearing and thinking about, and then really trying to work with that both in terms of how you message and help people understand what is the value for the community? What's the value for this Centre, and what will it provide for people here and their families?

?I'm a neighbour of the Centre, so it's personal for me that we get this right.?

The Centre has taken on extra resonance for Reinholdt as she steps up to temporarily fill the leadership role left by former CEO Rebecca Shields, who departed the organization earlier this spring to head up Kids Help Phone. Reinholdt has been with the CMHA-YRSS for more than five years, most recently serving as Vice President of Clinical Operations.

'The draw for me to come to CMHA in the first place back in 2021 was, one, it's an organization that does incredible work in the community and, two, the vision to open a community-based 24-7 mental health centre,' she says. 'My background is in hospitals. I'm a nurse, I'm a hospital person' and I have been in 'community' before, but just this opportunity to develop a community-based centre of access for people with mental health and addictions was such an incredible opportunity. I appreciate the vision of the CMHA, our funders, and all of the partners in the system that said, 'This is what we want to try.'

'For me, it's continuing to build on the work already done. Moving into the CEO role right now is an exciting time. We get to celebrate next steps and anticipate getting closer to being able to build in the near future.'

The next celebration will take place at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Industrial Parkway South when it provides the backdrop for the May 28 gala.

Organizers say the gala 'offers a memorable experience with something for everyone.'

'Every ticket, sponsorship, and donation moves us closer to opening a warm, welcoming, and dignified space where people can access the right supports, at the right time, in one central location.'

For more information on how you can support the Gala and the efforts to make The Centre a reality, visit: cmha-yr.on.ca/cmha-signature-events/lead-the-way-gala.

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