

Fall gala will help make new long-term care community in Aurora a reality

This fall, a gala at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Industrial Parkway South, will help a long-awaited long-term care development in Aurora a reality.

The second-annual Communauté du Trille blanc gala will be held on November 8 and will serve as the year's flagship fundraiser for a new community for francophone seniors.

The first annual gala, which took place at the same location last September, helped raise \$20,000 for the cause and organizers are hoping to take this year's fundraising efforts to the next level.

"Last year, we had 150 people participating and that was a huge success," says Lori-Ann Seward, Executive Director of Communauté du Trille blanc. "We want to fill the room with people - francophones or anglophones - in a bilingual evening."

"We're rallying everyone and we're going to start a capital campaign," she continues, noting they'll kick-start this next phase of the plan when they soon achieve charitable accreditation. "We understand this is a community issue. It's not that we're just depending on the government to give us all the funds we need, it's an investment in a lot of different areas."

The dream of a francophone seniors community in York Region has been long-held by the organization and it is full steam ahead now that they've identified a yet-to-be-disclosed location in Aurora for the long-term care centre.

They are now in the last phase of negotiation to secure this land for the first phase of the project, where long-term care is the emphasized component.

"We hope by the end of this year we will have secured that piece of land and construction for long-term care that would begin probably in the early new year, and that's very exciting," says Seward. "At this time, we probably need two pieces of land for the entire village, but this first piece of land would be for long-term care. We have applied for our license for 160 beds and we're assuming - as soon as we are successful in purchasing the land we'll receive our license for the start of construction."

A community centre and additional types of housing are envisioned for future phases.

There is an urgency for long-term care beds in Ontario, adds Seward, especially for francophone seniors.

"It's a known fact that there is one bed allocated for francophones for every 3,400 beds and anyone with dementia, for example, goes back to their native tongue and the first language they learned," she says. "For francophones who have dementia, who can't understand English, being in a long-term care setting where mostly English is spoken is extremely disheartening. There is definitely a need for francophone beds and long-term care is something that is needed at this time."

"We're also trying to find our francophone seniors to reach out to us so we will know where they are and we can engage them as well. Our Community Centre will be at the heart of the village, so we're building that community hub of engagement."

To learn more about the mission, how to become involved, and the fall gala, visit communautedutrilleblanc.ca/gala-2024.

By Brock Weir