

Hospital parking to become more affordable this fall

By Brock Weir

It will soon be more affordable to park at hospitals like Southlake Regional Health Centre thanks to some intervention from the Ontario Government.

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard announced the changes Monday morning at Markham Stouffville Hospital which will see, come October, hospitals in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) charging more than \$10 a day for parking be required to provide 5, 10 and 30 day passes that are discounted by 50 per cent off the daily rate, transferrable between patients and caregivers, and good for a whole year.

?With today's announcement, patients and their and their families in Central Region will benefit from savings on hospital parking fees,? said Mr. Ballard. ?Our government is following through on our commitment to help ensure that high parking fees will not be a barrier for patients and their loved ones who have to access the hospital often. It's part of our commitment to put patients first and to make our health care system more accessible to all.?

According to information released following this week's announcement, the decision was made in consultation with patients, patient advocacy groups, hospitals and the Ontario Hospital Association ?to find a fair plan that reduces the financial burden on parking fees for patients and their visitors.?

By October 1, hospitals will need to work with their Patient and Family Advisory Councils to roll out the new policy to ensure it is easy to understand, and visible.

Approximately 900,000 patients and visitors, including 135,000 seniors, are expected to benefit from reduced parking fees each year.

?We are thrilled that our concerns around the high cost of hospital parking have been addressed in a meaningful way that will help defray the cost of hospital parking for families of children with cancer in Ontario,? said Susan Kuczynski of Ontario Parents Advocating for Children with Cancer.

?You heard our voices, included us in consultation, and have come up with a plan that reflects that in a positive way.?