

## Province gives boost to long-term care, senior health in Aurora

Local long-term care residences Chartwell Aurora and Willows Estate have received a boost from the Provincial Government.

Last week, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa announced Chartwell Aurora (formerly Resthaven) will receive up to \$1.535 million for additional staffing this year to increase the number of direct care hours each resident receives. The Willows Estate, in Aurora's south end, will receive a further \$732,588 for the same purpose.

"This funding will allow homes in our community to hire and retain more staff so they can provide more care to residents, every day," said Parsa in a statement. "This is part of our government's plan to hire thousands of new staff to ensure those living in long-term care get the high-quality care they need and deserve."

The funding, according to the Provincial Government, is part of an Ontario-wide investment of up to \$673 million to increase staffing levels in long-term care.

A total of \$5,023,512 has been allocated to Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, with further dollars going to Richmond Hill's Elginwood and Mon Sheong Foundation.

"We know that more qualified staff means more daily care for residents," said Minister of Long-Term Care Paul Calandra in a statement. "Hiring more staff is part of our government's plan to fix long-term care and to improve the quality of care residents receive and the quality of life they experience."

"Seniors entering long-term care today are older and have more complex medical needs than they did just a decade ago," the Province added. "The level of care residents need has increased dramatically, but the amount of care they receive each day has not. In the nine years between 2009 and 2018, the amount of care each resident received, by all providers, per day increased by only 22 minutes. Our government, over the span of four years, will increase direct hours of care by 1 hour and 21 minutes."

This investment in long-term care residences is not the only investment made by the Province in recent weeks to benefit local seniors.

Last month, \$33,000 was awarded to the Town of Aurora and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) of York Region and South Simcoe through a Seniors Community Grant with a goal of helping seniors stay fit, active and healthy in their communities.

The CMHA's share of the grant, \$21,000, went to its Looking Forward Project which aims to promote health, safety and wellbeing for 40 older adults with mental health, complex care, and dementia-related concerns. Through the program, they will create social activities including digital literacy, crafts, recreation, and the fostering of a holistic health component that includes hydrotherapy, assistance with grocery shopping and more.

The Town's share, \$12,000, was allocated to support the Seniors' Centre and their Seniors Centre Without Walls wellness series which engages vulnerable and isolated seniors remotely and in person.

"With the goal of reducing seniors' isolation and loneliness, this grant for our first social prescribing initiative will enable the CMHA to help seniors in Newmarket better integrate into our community," said Rebecca Shields, CEO of the CMHA-YRSS. "Funds will support seniors' access to social supports through transportation, memberships to community programs, and the delivery of direct social activities to strengthen their mental health and sense of belonging."

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: "The Town of Aurora's Seniors' Centre Without Walls is a critical program to support seniors and adults with physical disabilities in Aurora. While always important, the pandemic has amplified the need for programs like this. We are grateful to the Ontario Government for supporting the Wellness Series, which will focus on health education and fitness to keep

seniors engaged and active in our community.?

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