

## Southlake expansion plans get \$5 million boost from Province



Plans to build a new campus for Southlake Regional Health Centre and transform its current base in Newmarket received a significant shot in the arm last week.

On Friday afternoon, Health Minister Christine Elliott was joined by cabinet colleagues, Arden Krystal, President & CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre, and area mayors to announce the Province has committed \$5 million towards the hospital's expansion plan.

According to Ms. Krystal, due to significant growth in York Region and South Simcoe, Southlake is "one of Ontario's most overcrowded hospitals" and expansion is critically important.

"Today's announcement brings more than just a promise of a new state-of-the-art hospital and the redevelopment of our Davis Drive site; it brings hope - hope for the nearly 6,000 staff, physicians, volunteers and learners who, despite working in an aging and undersized facility, provide leading-edge care with compassion every day. [It brings] hope for patients, caregivers and families in the diverse communities that we serve. They have experienced hallway healthcare for far too long and today's announcement gives them assurance that a new Southlake is on the horizon.

"This news is especially important for Southlake's dedicated staff and physicians. In the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, they have continued to deliver a response to the pandemic that our communities will be proud of for generations to come. Today signals new beginnings and optimism for the future: a future where the environment for care can match the quality of care and the outstanding people providing it."

The "outstanding" people that have been providing healthcare within Southlake's walls were given special mention by Ms. Elliott, MPP for Newmarket-Aurora.

"For the last decade, this hospital has provided exceptional care to patients and families in York Region and Simcoe County, first as York County Hospital and now as Southlake," she said. "The dedication of healthcare workers, staff and volunteers has been truly inspiring both past and present. Long before any of us had heard of COVID-19, our government made a commitment to end hallway health care. The last two years have only reinforced how important it is to build a stronger, more resilient healthcare system. Our world-class healthcare workers need more help though to continue to provide high-quality health care to patients and to continue to build on Southlake's 100-year legacy.

That is why it [gives] me great pleasure to announce that our government is extending \$5 million to expand Southlake. This marks the first significant acute care expansion at the hospital since 2003, despite the fact it serves some of the fastest-growing communities in the entire Province. This investment will help Southlake plan its phased expansion to become a two-site hospital system that will meet the needs of patients and families now and for generations to come. This expansion plans to build a new state-of-the-art hospital and redevelopment of the existing site.

Through this project, 100 new inpatient beds are expected to be added to Southlake, bringing their total number of beds to over 600. Services, including acute and post-acute care, critical and emergency care, and mental health and addiction care, will be further expanded as well.

As phases of the plan are completed, families will be able to look forward to increased access to the high-quality care and services that they need and deserve, Ms. Elliott concluded. Thank you to everyone who has come together to support Southlake's expansion. Together, we're building a stronger, more resilient healthcare system and a hospital that is truly by the community's side.

This theme of Southlake being 'by the community's side' was echoed by York-Simcoe MPP Caroline Mulroney, who said the \$5 million investment is a 'win' for the community.

By building a new state-of-the-art hospital and redeveloping existing infrastructure, our PC government is making sure that the needs of our rapidly-growing region continue to be met by high-quality care, she said. That is something we can all be proud of.

Stephen Lecce, MPP for King-Vaughan added this was an 'exceptionally positive step' for the community.

I am here to echo a message of gratitude [and] express our shared commitment to getting this project done and moving it forward in a positive way for families across York and the GTA, he said. Today's announcement gives tremendous hope to families who for so long have wanted to access care in their community. With this expansion of hospitals right across the GTHA, including right here in York, this project will build tremendous confidence, hope and opportunity for the best care available in Ontario.

Southlake, noted Newmarket Mayor John Taylor, is 'our community's most important asset without question' and thousands upon thousands of families have relied on the hospital and its team.

The tricky part is we've relied on it for many, many years and we have got such an exceptional level of service, but we're growing very rapidly in this area, said Mayor Taylor. Southlake finds itself in the unenviable position of having one of the busiest emergency rooms in Ontario. They have had to unfortunately become experts in areas you shouldn't need expertise in: hallway healthcare.

Added Ms. Krystal: It takes a village to get a project of this size approved and everyone you see in this room today has leant their voice to a call for a new Southlake. It was mentioned before at Southlake our tagline is 'By Your Side.' Today's announcement reassures everyone in our hospital family and our communities that our Provincial government is also by our side. I know you're all as excited as I am to complete the next steps of planning and to get shovels in the ground as quickly as we can.

A new campus for Southlake Regional Health Centre was identified in its most recent master plan.

Several options were considered to meet the current and future demands of the community, with an option to keep ambulatory care at the current Davis Drive site and shift acute inpatient services to a new site.

This was the preferred option, the hospital said, because it 'maximizes use of existing assets over time; aligns best with emerging trends in healthcare; minimizes service delivery disruption and impacts on patients, families, staff and our community;' and it is the lowest-cost option.

For more on Southlake's future plan, visit [anewsouthlake.ca](https://anewsouthlake.ca).

By Brock Weir  
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