

## Southlake receives 2.2 per cent boost from Province

By Brock Weir

Southlake Regional Health Centre will have more resources available to them this year to address patient care with a \$5.75 million boost from the Ontario government.

On Friday morning, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard, along with Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe, was at Southlake to announce this year's Ontario Budget would provide a 2.2 per cent funding increase to the local hospital, meaning a \$284,398,584 investment for 2017-2018.

"This will provide faster access to health care, expand crucial services and procedures, and improve the experience of patients," said Mr. Ballard. "This investment will help hospitals that are experiencing an unprecedented rate of growth in patient volumes so that they can continue to deliver high-quality health care. This significant new investment for hospitals will mean reduced wait times, better access to more procedures, and an improved experience for all Ontarians at their local hospital.

"It will help provide more access to cardiac services, critical care, organ and tissue donations and transplants, rare disease care, and bariatric services, as well as support for new and redeveloped hospitals, improved access and reduce wait times for chemotherapy, stroke treatments, hip and knee replacements, and MRIs allowing an additional 6,800 people to access key procedures in hospitals. It will support service delivery by hospitals in high-growth communities, as well as small, medium, northern and rural hospitals, and mental health and stand-alone paediatric hospitals."

Responding to the announcement, Helena Hutton, Southlake's Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, said the increase in funding will help address increasing needs in an ever-growing community.

"Southlake serves more than a million residents in York Region and Simcoe County," she said. "These communities are both growing and the population we serve is also getting older and requires our services more. We feel the effects of this growth everywhere in the hospital, particularly so in our Emergency Department, which has seen a 20 per cent increase in patients over the past five years and is now the third busiest emergency department in Ontario, seeing over 110,000 patient visits last year.

"The investment announced here today will alleviate pressures and help us to meet the needs of this growing population, while continuing to maintain some of the shortest emergency department wait times in Ontario. The additional funding will also benefit patients in our regional programs. For example: we will be able to improve access and reduce wait times for specialized cardiac procedures. Our success in delivering the ultimate patient experience and our ability to transform the healthcare system so that patients are truly at its centre, are dependent upon strong partnerships - partnerships with our patients, our people, and our community."

Friday's announcement was part of a coordinated series of announcements carried out by York Region MPPs. While Chris Ballard announced funding at Southlake, MPPs Dr. Helena Jaczek, Michael Chan, Steven Del Duca and Reza Moridi held additional events at Mackenzie Health in Richmond Hill, which received an additional \$5.8 million - an increase of 3.26 per cent - and Markham Stouffville Hospital, which received an additional 2.02 per cent, or \$3.3 million.