

Oakville Beaver

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New hospital moving ahead

As the Town of Oakville ponders whether to contribute \$200 million to the new Oakville hospital through property taxes, the Province is moving ahead with the hospital by paying \$39.5 million for its planning and design.

Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn was in town Friday to confirm that the Province is giving \$39.5 million to Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) to pay for the plan and design of the hospital to be located at the corner of Third Line and Dundas Street - and said the announcement marks a point of no return.

"You don't spend that sort of money unless you are going to build, it's that simple," said Flynn during the presentation at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital's (OTMH) Cafeteria.

"This says very emphatically that the new hospital is being built and it's being built very, very soon and I can't tell you how happy I am to announce that."

While the size of the contribution may have been surprising, the fact that the provincial government would be paying it was not, as under the Province's funding formula for the hospital, the Province is required to cover 100 per cent of the planning and design costs associated with the hospital's construction.

The Province will also cover 90 per cent of the eligible construction costs and 90 per cent of the costs associated with building equipment (such as elevators and heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems) and 30 years of building maintenance.

"This investment by the Province in our local health care is going to be the largest investment by any level of government in Oakville's history," said Flynn.

"I know the importance and I know the value that residents place on their local hospital and what OTMH means to the people of Oakville. Over the years, our government and previous governments have put money into this building and simply we can't do it anymore. Each and every one of you who do the wonderful things you do here, sometimes in very crowded facilities, knows that it is time to move on. Our community, and you, have earned the right to a brand new, state-of-the-art facility right here in this community because we know this building is simply not sustainable into the future and as much as we love it, it's time to leave it."

The Province's formula that sees the Province cover 90 per cent of building, does leave HHS on the hook for the remainder of the hospital's cost - estimated at \$530 million.

The Oakville Hospital Foundation is heading a \$60 million campaign to purchase medical equipment for the new hospital.

The Town of Oakville is being asked to contribute \$200 million to assist with the estimated \$530 million in costs not covered by the province and will make a decision as to whether to do that at a council meeting on Monday, March 1.

HHS must come up with \$270 million through hospital revenues.

Halton Healthcare Service President and CEO John Oliver has previously stated that not getting the \$200 million from the Town, would send HHS staff back to the drawing board to figure out how they could continue to serve a growing population in the existing OTMH building that has no room to absorb this growth.

Despite the possibility Halton Healthcare may not get that money Oliver said the project is moving forward.

"Today is a milestone, the RFQ(Request for Qualifications) closing date is today," said Oliver.

"We have firms and consortiums identifying themselves from across Canada and from the international community. There are many competing firms coming in with a desire to build this hospital for us. We will select from these firms, and issue to the ones we've selected, the RFP that goes out in May. One year later, we are into full design mode with that consortium and the construction starts and about three years after that we're in the building."

While the hospital funding was the big news, it was not the only funding HHS received from the provincial government.

Flynn also announced a \$1 million contribution to the renovation of OTMH's maternity child unit, something Oliver said the hospital desperately needs.

"We will need to provide services here for at least another five years so we need to continue to upgrade and maintain the facility for patients coming through," he said.

"We did some significant environment improvement and some changes in the delivery area so we can do more volume, see more moms and babies and have a bit more capacity. It was a 1970s built room that hadn't seen any upgrades since 1970 other than fresh paint."

Flynn also announced the province has given Halton Healthcare Services \$1.4 million to support additional chronic kidney dialysis services and funding to co-ordinate regional diabetes programming in the Mississauga/Halton LHIN (Local Health Integration Network).

The Province has also given the Mississauga/Halton LHIN \$315,000 in funding to increase community capacity to assist adults with acquired brain injuries to live more independently in their communities.