

Hospice expands its plans



Hospice Wellington plans to start construction in March of a residential hospice that will be bigger and cost

more than originally planned.

Renovations and new construction will start on the facility at the corner of Scottsdale Drive and Kortright Road once architectural drawings are finalized and building trades have been tendered and selected, board chair Liz Fisk announced Thursday.

The first palliative patients are expected to be admitted to the residential facility by March 2010, or possibly earlier.

Hospice Wellington announced earlier this year that it had secured pledges totalling \$4.8 million for the area's first residential hospice for people in their last stages of life.

Individuals, families and businesses donated a total of \$1.6 million, while another \$600,000 came from estate gifts.

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Hospice takes out mortgage for renewed expansion plans

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The other \$2.6 million for the capital campaign came from government - \$1.2 million from the province, \$1 million from the city and \$400,000 from the county.

After reviewing the project, though, the board decided a larger building than originally intended is needed, a news release said.

"The original concepts and budgets were drawn up three years ago in the early planning stages before our capital campaign," Fisk said in the release.

"Many things have changed in that time, from funding models to best practices in hospice care, as well as construction and building costs."

The final facility will be about 16,000 square feet, up from the original plan of 13,000 square feet. It will mean more program space and clinic services, as well as

patient rooms that will be 12 per cent larger at 215 square feet.

During the board's recent review of the project, "we learned that the size of the rooms is very important for proper patient comfort and care," Fisk said.

"We want to be sure to have the appropriate space for family members to be with loved ones, sleeping overnight in the room if they desire, and also have ample space for caregivers to come and go and do their jobs" with as little impact as possible on patient comfort.

Weighing all the information, she said, "the board determined the previous model would not have supported the community's long-term hospice care needs."

The additional square footage, along with building costs that have increased 20 to 25 per cent over the past three years, sets a new total project budget of \$6.3 million,

she said.

To cover the shortfall, Hospice Wellington has secured a mortgage from the Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corporation, an arm's-length Crown corporation that provides Ontario municipalities, universities and other public bodies with access to affordable loans to build and renew local public infrastructure.

"Hospice Wellington has been prudently managed for many years and is in a position to support the increased costs of a mortgage for at least five years. We will not immediately ask the community for more donations in this economic climate, only that people honour their pledges made," Fisk said.

"All indicators are that the community continues to strongly believe in and support the need for hospice care, and long-term fundraising will remain an important priority for Hospice Wellington. With this construction soon to be underway, the board will shift its focus to ensure long-term planning to support ongoing and increasing operating costs," she said.

The facility will include 10 patient care rooms, along with multipurpose space that will be used for Hospice Wellington's many wellness and therapeutic programs, group and one-on-one counselling, a community resource centre, and a clinic for physicians specializing in palliative care and advanced pain management.

"Our mission is to be a centre of expertise for palliative care and bereavement support," Fisk said. "We are very pleased to be able to work with the leading physicians in the area, and to have them right on site to support our patients and staff, and members of the community."

"It allows for the best comfort and continuum of care for our patients, and meets a high standard for residential hospice care."

The modern hospice movement began in the 1960s in England. In 1980, Hospice Wellington was established as the result of the efforts of concerned citizens who believed that services in the community did not adequately meet the needs of individuals in their last stages of life.