

Southlake to tackle wait times with new Provincial funding



Wait times will be tackled at Southlake Regional Health Centre through \$17 million in new Provincial funding.

Announced at Southlake's Stronach Regional Cancer Centre on Friday afternoon, \$11 million will support the continued operation of 41 acute surgical, transitional and acute mental health beds for children and youth. A further \$3.1 million will come to the hospital through the Province's Health Infrastructure Renewal fund to complete critical upgrades and repairs to create a safer, more comfortable space for people and their families connecting to care and services at the hospital.

"I am thrilled to deliver this exciting news for our community on behalf of Premier Ford and Minister Jones and our entire government," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Parliamentary Assistant to Health Minister Sylvia Jones, at the November 10 announcement. "As many of you know, Southlake Regional Health Centre is a hospital near and dear to my heart, serving as a pillar of our community for patients and their families, as well as myself and my family as well. Our government is continuing to take action to build a better-connected healthcare system for all Ontarians, including right here in York Region and South Simcoe. That is why I am thrilled to announce that the Ontario Government is investing more than \$17 million this year to increase hospital capacity, reduce emergency department wait times, and support critical upgrades here at Southlake.

"This includes over \$11 million to support the continued operation of 41 acute surgical transitional and acute mental health beds for children and youth, which is part of our government's investment of over \$1.5 billion this year to support the continued operation of over 3,500 beds across the Province. Southlake will also receive \$3.8 million to help reduce emergency department wait times through local innovative solutions that will help people receive care faster and reduce their length of stay in the emergency department."

The funding, she added, is part of an Ontario-wide investment of \$44 million to 165 emergency departments across the Province to cut down on wait times.

"This more than \$17 million investment in our local hospital will help ensure patients in Newmarket, Aurora and beyond can connect to the high quality and convenient care that they need and deserve right here in our community for years to come because whether you're a patient sitting with your child in the emergency department or if you are a loved one recovering from surgery, you deserve to be able to connect to care close to home," said MPP Gallagher Murphy.

The impact this funding will have on local healthcare services will be immediate.

According to Stella Johnson, Director of Emergency and Mental Health for Southlake, the emergency department serves an average

of 117,000 patients each year, or approximately 320 patients every day.

‘That’s one patient every four minutes or 55 ambulances every 24 hours,’ said Johnson. ‘Our community needs these investments in order to continue to deliver that type of care our community expects from the providers – the physicians and the team that work here at Southlake in our Emergency Department.’

‘Despite our volumes, Southlake continues to rank in the Top 10, from a performance improvement perspective related to wait times, and these investments will allow us to continue to do lots of that great work and invest in new opportunities to really continue to focus on our wait times, our length of stay, and our hospitals’ overall performance. Our unique model of care prioritizes that patients are seen in a timely manner by a physician in one of the best wait times in the Province. This is thanks to the over 200 dedicated staff, providers and individuals who work in the emergency department and are dedicated to the care we provide every single day.’

In recent months and years, however, Southlake has seen a ‘significant increase’ in patients’ lengths of stay in the emergency department when they require admission to the hospital and an in-patient bed. Sometimes up to 40 individuals are waiting for care in different areas of Southlake at any one time, she added.

‘We have approximately 25 stretcher spaces in the emergency department to care for those 300 individuals and when someone is waiting, upwards of 24 hours to move to that next care setting,’ she said. ‘It does create congestion—we have been experiencing every day.’

‘Our hospital has a quality improvement plan, which is our commitment to the public to really focus on some of those quality indicators. This year we have committed to reducing our time to inpatient bed metric to 31 hours to really commit to making that change and seeing an improvement in those wait times.’

And those wait-times could be eased just in time for an important milestone in Southlake’s history.

‘Southlake needs critical upgrades and today’s healthcare infrastructure renewal fund investment will help with that improvement,’ said Marilee Harris, Chair of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Board. ‘[These are] important enhancements to ensure Southlake can reach our 100th anniversary next year and continue to serve patients in the next 100 years. Just keep that 100 in our mind as we go forward with our advocacy.’

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