

Hospital plan continues

GBHS officials, MPP expect to hear soon that Markdale hospital plan will move to next phase

ROB GOWAN
SUN TIMES STAFF

Grey Bruce Health Services is hoping to learn soon from the Ontario government that the organization can proceed to the next stage of the Markdale hospital planning process.

GBHS president and CEO Lance Thurston said Wednesday that they are anticipating a letter imminently from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care with details



SUPPLIED IMAGE

An artist's rendering of the proposed Markdale hospital.

on how to proceed on the project.

"The Markdale hospital, we have been assured, is still proceeding through the ministry approval

process," said Thurston. "They have not been ordered to lay their pens down and stop working on it."

In May, GBHS completed Stage

3.2 of the planning phase, and submitted final designs for the hospital to the ministry for approval.

See **HOSPITAL** | A3

Construction expected to begin in 2020

HOSPITAL from A1

At that time it was hoped that they would hear back from the ministry by the end of the summer so they could move on to Stage 4, which involves developing contracts, finalizing construction-ready plans, completing and issuing tender documentation and eventually awarding construction contracts.

Thurston said they are optimistic that the project will be proceeding, despite the change in government.

"We have had no signal from anybody at the ministry that we should not be expecting that," Thurston said.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker, who was also recently named Minister of Government and Consumer Services, said it is also his understanding that the project is just working through the process within the government and will proceed as planned. He said he talked to Christine Elliott after she became Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and it was her understanding that the normal steps of the process were being followed.

Walker said his government is doing a line-by-line spending audit, but projects such as the Markdale hospital, which is well into the process, aren't being "overly scrutinized."

"I think everybody is of the understanding we have to have hospitals and we have been going through a process for quite some time now," said Walker. "That is why I had gone to the minister and said I wanted to make sure there were no hold-ups and to my understanding there isn't with ours."

Walker said the Markdale hospital is a project he has been pushing for since he was first elected MPP and he looks forward to seeing it completed.

"For me it has been seven years, but more importantly for the people of Markdale we are getting up to 16 or 17 years now," said Walker. "I want to see this one get over the line, I want to see holes being dug in the ground and more importantly I want to see the front doors open and the first patient being taken in."

GBHS is optimistic that construction of the estimated \$63-million project will start in 2020.

Construction to replace the community's 67-year-old Centre Grey Hospital is expected to take about two years.

GBHS has been involved in the five-stage process to build the hospital since it was announced in September 2015 by former Health Minister Eric Hoskins

that the province had approved the project.

The province had committed to funding 90 per cent of what it considered allowable construction costs, with the other 10 per cent covered by the community through the Centre Grey Hospital Foundation.

Residents and businesses of the community have already raised about \$11 million for the project, in fundraising efforts that have gone back more than a decade.

The new facility is to include 68,000 square feet of space over two floors and house four acute care beds, a palliative care room, 24/7 emergency room with seven treatment areas, a procedures room, laboratory, diagnostic imaging services, physiotherapy and space for ambulatory care clinics.

There will be about 100 parking spaces for vehicles and three spots for horses and buggies.

Thanks

Paul A

Ga7