

# New hospital approved for Markdale



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**MARKDALE HOSPITAL PROJECT APPROVED** - On left, Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins makes the announcement on Tuesday, Sept., 16. Those present included residents, politicians and many volunteers on the hospital campaign, as well as health services representatives.



**MARKDALE HOSPITAL PRESS CONFERENCE** - From left, Health minister Dr. Eric Hoskins, Bruce Grey Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker, Mayor Wayne Fitzgerald and Deputy-Mayor Paul McQueen, prior to the announcement of funding for the new hospital. (Photo by Don Crosby)

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(by Don Crosby)

At long last the provincial government is moving forward with plans to build a new hospital in Markdale.

Ontario health minister Dr. Eric Hoskins announced approval for the multi-million dollar facility that will replace the aging 63-year-old Centre Grey Hospital in Markdale.

"This is news that you've been waiting for a long, long time. There isn't much to see here yet. There's a nice sign but soon there will be a lot of activity at this site because I'm delighted to tell you that our government is moving forward with plans to construct a brand new Markdale hospital," Hoskins said to wild cheering and applause during Tuesday's announcement.

He made the long-awaited announcement before about 100 people at the proposed new hospital site located next door to Grey Gables, Grey County's long term care facility.

"You know the hospital is an important health care centre and employer and our government wants to make sure it will continue to serve the needs of the people who live here and in the neighbouring communities for many years to come," Hoskins said.

He promised the new facility will remain a hospital, offering improved patient services, integrated round the clock urgent and primary care services. It includes short stay beds, space for minor procedures as well as diagnostic and laboratory services.

"It will be a better and stronger hospital... It will have that big blue 'H' on it," Hoskins promised to another round of cheering and applause.

The province has approved up to \$3 million to support the capital planning for this facility.

Hoskins said he wouldn't know the cost of the new hospital until the architectural design of the building is com-

plete and the tender is awarded to a contractor.

"It's a very significant investment and as a government we are committed to seeing it through," he told reporters later during a question and answer session.

Grey Bruce Health Services CEO Lance Thurston said the most recent proposal for the new hospital presented to the ministry of health in 2013 was for a \$50 million facility.

That figure was confirmed by Dr. Hamilton Hall a long time supporter of the project who never gave up hope when others enthusiasm began to flag.

"I knew we were right which is kind of a nice position to be in. What we were asking for made all the sense in the world. We had done the work, done the planning and knew the cost wasn't out of sight. Really it was just finding the political champion who would take us forward," he said.

"Today is just amazing. I literally have tears in my eyes. Here it finally happened after all these years, well over a decade of my life dedicated to this. It's great," he added.

Hoskins couldn't say for sure when construction will begin but is looking forward to seeing construction begin.

"I'm as anxious as everybody else to get that shovel in the ground as quickly as possible," he told reporters.

It's been more than 12 years since the community raised more than \$12 million toward the cost of the new hospital.

Hoskins said he was overwhelmed when he learned that the small rural community had raised that amount of money in support of the proposed new hospital.

"It's been a long process I know but there is deep community commitment. That weighed heavily on my mind as minister and part of the government," he said.

When asked why the gov-

ernment finally approved the project Hoskins said it was the right thing to do.

"I'm the kind of guy, I like to get right down to the heart of the matter, the meat of it. . . this is a project (whose) day has come and I wanted to make sure that our government and my ministry were doing our part," he said.

In 2006, the Liberal government provided the hospital corporation with a \$3 million planning and design grant to kick start the process of building a new hospital.

In 2009 the government said the project was a priority but nothing happened over the intervening years.

Since 2003, 23 new hospitals have been built or are under construction across the province.