

# Grey County transfers land to GBHS for new Markdale hospital

ROB GOWAN

A new hospital in Markdale is another step closer to reality, with the possibility of ground being broken on the nearly \$70 million build later this year.

On Thursday, Grey County council

passed a bylaw authorizing the lands next to the Grey Gables long-term care home at the south end of the town in Grey Highlands to be transferred to Grey Bruce Heath Services.

The hospital corporation's president and CEO Gary Sims said Fri-

day that the land transfer is a key step in the process to build the new hospital.

"We are really thankful to our county partners for working closely with us and helping us move that forward," Sims said.

"It is just one step closer to getting the hospital built so we are pretty darn excited."

Sims said the land transfer is key for the province's approval of Stage 4.1, which also included the submission of more than 300 detailed architectural drawings for the facility.

Once Stage 4.1 is approved, expected to be sometime this summer, then GBHS can move into Stage 4.2, which is the final approval process, "basically awarding the contract to a company and picking a start date" when building begins, Sims said.

And if all goes as planned, shovels could hit the ground in the fall.



An artist's rendering of the proposed Markdale hospital. SUPPLIED

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# Project long time coming

HOSPITAL FROM A1

"For us, ideally the timeline would be that in the late fall or early winter we might be seeing some land prep and site preparation work going on," said Sims. "But it really then becomes up to that company and our negotiations depending on when they are available and, of course, to some degree weather."

But regardless of when the work starts, the many years of waiting is just about over for the community.

"I am grateful for all the folks that have hung in, stayed with this, committed money to it and time and effort," said Sims. "Hopefully they will get to see the shovels hit the ground soon enough and that will help people to see this is very real, because I know people have waited a very long time."

Plans to build the new hospital in Markdale to replace the almost

70-year-old Centre Grey Hospital go back more than a decade. Residents and businesses of the community raised about \$11 million for the project in the 2000s.

GBHS has been involved in the current process since former Liberal Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced in late 2015 that the province had approved the project.

The new hospital is to include 68,000 square feet of space, with four acute care beds, a palliative care room, 24/7 emergency room with four exam and treatment areas, laboratory, diagnostic imaging services, physiotherapy, space for ambulatory care clinics and two ambulance bays.

Once construction begins, it is expected to be take about two years to complete.

Sims said once construction has been approved, GBHS will begin looking at plans to transition to the

new facility and what services will exist in the building and if the plans still match the direction GBHS wants to go.

"It is an exciting time for people to start to figure out what's the future for a brand new hospital," Sims said.

The province had committed to funding 90 per cent of what is considered allowable construction costs, with the other 10 per cent to be covered by the community through the Centre Grey Hospital Foundation. The transfer of the land by Grey County will be part of a \$1-million commitment to the project the county made back in 2005.

The land being transferred has been appraised at \$220,000.

Grey County director of planning and development Randy Scherzer told county council on Thursday that the value of the land had been appraised at about \$400,000, but there is some contaminated land that will need to be remediated, which reduced the value.

Scherzer said the balance of the

county's commitment to the project -- \$780,000 minus any additional costs related to survey or appraisal work - would be transferred to GBHS either when the final building permit is issued or when GBHS receives all necessary approvals for the facility, whichever comes last.

Those funds have already been placed in reserve, Scherzer said.

Grey County CAO Kim Wingrove said the land transfer marks a positive day for the county and GBHS.

"It has been a long time and a lot of work and a lot of support has gone into making this transfer possible," said Wingrove. "I think the hospital is working closely with the province and looking forward to being able to move forward with the next phase in the approval process for the new hospital in Markdale. This is critical."

Warden Paul McQueen, who is also the mayor of Grey Highlands, said the land transfer is a positive step, as his municipality also continues to move forward with the site plan approval process.