

# Construction set to begin on new Markdale hospital

DENIS LANGLOIS

Construction is set to begin Monday on a new \$68 million "state-of-the-art" hospital in Markdale.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott announced during a "virtual groundbreaking" event Friday that the work has been approved by the province, which has awarded to Bird Construction the contract to build Grey Bruce Health Services' new 68,000-square-foot Centre Grey hospital on Toronto Street South.

"This is a monumental event for the province," Ford said during the

Zoom event.

"It's not every day that you start construction on a new hospital and I'm thrilled to announce that we're investing up to \$53 million to support the development of a new Markdale hospital, which is in addition to the \$3 million we invested for the planning and design."

Provincial and area politicians noted the construction kick-off comes nearly two decades after local efforts began towards building the new hospital, which the province approved in 2015.

"What's really incredible is what the community and the effort they have put into this announcement.

They've been absolutely spectacular," Ford said.

"A special shoutout to the Centre Grey Health Services Foundation who raised - these are amazing numbers - \$7 million to help get this project off the ground."

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Progressive Conservative MPP Bill Walker said it's truly a fantastic day for the riding, particularly for Markdale and its surrounding communities.

"We have been trying for 20 years to get this over the line and today we have been able to do that. There's a lot of smiles here," he said.

SEE MARKDALE ON A3

## Hospital expected to take two years to build

MARKDALE FROM A1

The new hospital, to be built next to the Grey Gables long-term care home, is expected to take two years to complete. It will include inpatient 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.

GBHS said Bird Construction, a firm with offices across Canada that has built many large health care facilities, has begun site preparation work in Markdale.

"To all those people that have waited as long as you have, I want to say, it's finally time - we are ready to do this and to do it together," GBHS president and CEO Gary Sims said.

In a telephone news conference after the virtual event, Sims said he expects fencing will be erected for the project Monday before work begins to clear the site, build roads and start utility work.

"I think you'll see a lot of activity over the next three to four weeks. The overall goal, of course, is to get



Participants in Friday's announcement that construction is to begin next week on a new hospital in Markdale include, clockwise from top left, Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker, Grey County Warden Selwyn "Buck" Hicks and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MP Alex Ruff.

a closed-in premises by the early fall, with all the interior work going into next winter," he said.

Betty Bassett, board chair of the Centre Grey Health Services Foundation, said the organization has collected about \$7 million in donations for the project so far, with

a goal of raising around \$12 million for the build and equipment.

"Fundraising will need to continue. Stand by us friends and we will see you at the grand opening of the new Markdale hospital in a couple of years," she said.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Con-

servative MP Alex Ruff, Grey County Warden Selwyn Hicks and Grey Highlands Mayor Paul McQueen also participated in the virtual event.

GBHS began a five-stage provincial approvals process to build the hospital after former Liberal Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced in late 2015 that the province had approved the project.

The province committed to funding 90 per cent of what it considers allowable construction costs, with the other 10 per cent to be covered by the community through the Centre Grey hospital foundation.

GBHS submitted its Stage 4.1 documents to the Ministry of Health in early 2020, which contained more than 300 detailed architectural drawings for the build. Key to the province's approval of that submission was the passing of a bylaw by Grey County in July to officially transfer to GBHS the land next to Grey Gables for the build.

GBHS issued a call for tenders to build the new hospital last summer, after the province approved the pre-tender documents for construction. A recommendation from GBHS' board to award the construction contract was forwarded to the ministry in late November.