

Stevenson updates Town Council on redevelopment campaign

Stevenson Memorial Hospital's redevelopment continues and an update was provided by its CEO, Jody Levac, at this past Monday night's Council meeting.

The hospital plans to open Level 2 ICU beds for the first time ever at Stevenson in January 2021 as Levac notes they want to bring critical care to close home.

"It breaks my heart whenever I see people who have to travel to our wonderful institutions down the road or up north of us because they have a loved one who's sick and we're really excited, we're in the midst of trying to work with this rotten 1964, old hospital to bring it up to speed to modern day innovations that provide critical care," he said.

Respiratory therapists are now employed at Stevenson, another first for the hospital, and they're in the building 24/7.

The Emergency Room (ER) and trauma room has also been modernized, since Stevenson is seeing more need for trauma services and motor vehicle accidents, according to Levac.

"We've even got proper ventilation and negative pressure in and out of those rooms and they've got this fancy opaque glass door that goes in and out for privacy, maintaining confidentiality; it's just state of the art and we're really pleased to be able to have that opening last week," he said.

There were almost 40,000 visits to Stevenson's ER last year and close to 50 per cent of people coming into the emerge are from New Tecumseth.

Looking back to March, Stevenson was able to open a COVID-19 assessment centre in its parking lot and, at one time, the centre was doing over 400 swabs a day. In total they've tested over 9,400 people.

The assessment centre is relocating to Stevenson's insulated garage for mid-November as winter nears.

Levac said the hospital staff continue to assess local schools, long-term care and retirement homes, in addition to its work with the local Family Health Team and public health to carry out mobile testing where it's needed.

"We're also looking at work to open an ILI [Influenza-like Illness] Clinic to be able to serve the community because influenza's here," Levac said. "We'll be able to look at providing services to make sure that you get your flu shots and assess people who have influenza type illnesses."

In terms of redevelopment, it's been a long road for Stevenson and the hard work will continue for years to come as its expected to be fully complete for 2025.

"The long-term vision? Boy, it's a marathon not a sprint? but I was pleased to announce that in July we managed to get our Stage 1 Approval. That's a first, and that's a real recognition from government that we're on the right track to revitalize this hospital," said Levac.

The Stage 2 Approval has faced scrutiny by the Ministry of Health, in their attempt to align the redevelopment with its Health Based Allocation Model, which is designed to ensure hospitals are getting revitalized with the correct number of beds.

The model indicated Stevenson should be running a 35-bed hospital, which is three less than what's running today, despite the continued growth and size of its service area.

In the draft Stage 2 plan, the hospital includes 47 beds, which is what Levac says is needed to properly service the community.

?On the 28th of September, after a number of debates with capital branch and the Ministry of Health, they came back saying we could open to 42 beds and just last week I finally had my last go with capital branch and I don't know if it's my tenacity, my perseverance or stupidity, but they finally agreed they'll let this fella submit his 47 bed hospital. We have no further questions,? he said.

The primary challenge now is raising \$30 million, which is the local contribution of the \$167 million redevelopment as it stands today.

?We're really going to have to get assertive at trying to raise the local share portion, it's our signal to government that this community is serious about wanting a new and revitalized hospital, Levac noted.

For redevelopment, Stevenson is looking at maximizing its property on Fletcher Crescent to triple its parking space, preserve its heliport, put in a new ambulance garage and double the square footage of the current hospital building.

All inpatient services and rooms will be put together on one floor to maximize the nursing model efficiency and cleanliness, said Levac.

Meanwhile, community support has been fantastic through COVID-19.

"The community has been unbelievable with its outpouring for our staff,? said Levac. ?These are warriors, since COVID broke, these have been some very trying times for healthcare professionals but you get to see why people go into this field, it's really a dedication to want to serve our community and serve they have.?"

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