

Hospital expansion gets \$750,000 kick start

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A \$750,000 investment in Kincardine's hospital expansion plan will help provide much needed improvements to better local health care services.

Minister of Health George Smitherman made the announcement at the South Bruce Grey Health Centre, Friday.

The investment will help with the facility's renovations for better emergency, ambulatory, diagnostic and laboratory care. The expansion will increase the hospital's capacity for emergency and ambulatory care, resulting in better access to hospital services for people in and around Kincardine.

"This investment will help give the hospital more of what it needs," said Smitherman. "It will help us move to the next step to deliver better health care to the people of Kincardine and surrounding areas."

South Bruce Grey Health Centre president and CEO Paul Davis said he is thrilled with this investment.

"We are pleased with the government's support for our redevelopment planning," said Davis. "This funding will help us develop an innovative solution to provide a much needed expansion of services and patient care space."

He said they will start by spending the money on soil samples and drainage work in order to get tendering developed for the expansion.

The expansion will include 20,000 sq. ft. added on to the north side of the hospital, bringing the parking lot closer to the emergency, the lab, X-ray, diagnostics, and the physiotherapy departments will be included in the expansion. Renovations will be done inside the emergency department as well.

Kincardine mayor Larry Kraemer, said he is excited about this news.

"The redevelopment of Kincardine's site has been ongoing for five or six years, so it's nice to finally start moving forward," said Kraemer. "It's exciting that we can go full steam (with the expansion and renovations) in the not so distant future." See 'Local man' on page 3



Minister of Health George Smitherman and Huron-Bruce MPP Carol Mitchell enjoy a chat with volunteer Jean Colling at the South Bruce Grey Health Center.

Blair Pollock photo.

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County supports 50-acre farms

PAT HALPIN

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Bruce county is acting on a 15-year long debate and recommending 50-acre farms be allowed in a corridor between Hanover and Kincardine.

The area - ranging from two to six concessions deep - was originally surveyed into 50-acre farm lots in the 1850's. Those lots were merged into larger properties over the years as neighbouring farms were purchased by the same owner and went on title under one name. Severing back to the original farms has been obstructed by planning policies at the provincial and county level that set 100 acres as the minimum farm size.

The county planning committee went against its own staff in the recommendation supporting 50-acre farms.

"The position of the director and staff on this issue is no secret," director Chris LaFfest said in a report to the committee. "We feel the creation of 50-acre farm parcels is not in the long-term interests of the agricultural community."

Smaller farms will fragment agricultural land and encourage hobby farms, LaForest predicted. Those moves will increase competition for land and won't help beginning farmers.

The Christian Farmers Association was the only group to speak in support of that view.

Allowing 50-acre farms in the Hanover to Kincardine corridor will set a precedent, said spokesperson Gerald Poehchman.

"We felt that this was only in reference to the Crown Survey, but we're hearing that politically it seems to be something acceptable. We're concerned about this 50-acre

parcel size spreading to the rest of the county," he said.

In fact South Bruce and Huron-Kinloss want 20-acre farms allowed across the county, and there's pressure to give the small farm option to other areas of the county.

"If this is a good thing in that small narrow strip, should it not be a good thing everywhere?" asked South Bruce mayor Bill Goetz.

Several delegations including the Mennonite community spoke in favour of smaller farms. They say it will open up opportunity for beginning and niche farmers.

"It's rare that young people can go out and buy 300 to 400 acres of land," said Ripley area farmer Anne Eadie. "I don't know of too many people that started that way."

Planning staff pointed to statistics showing the average farm size in Bruce is 261 acres and that 60 per cent of farms are over 130 acres in size. But councillors said they're answering public demand by allowing a return to the historic 50-acre lots.

"I've got a lot of phone calls and letters (on the issue)," said Warden and Huron-Kinloss mayor Mitch Twolan. "To be honest I've got about two phone calls against it."

"I haven't had any against it," said Kincardine mayor Larry Kraemer, a long-time advocate for smaller farm size. "I would argue the lots were created by the Crown in 1850 and clearly they were intended to be farms."

The unanimous vote in favour of 50-acre farms is a "baby step" in the right direction, Twolan said.

The next step is to see if the province appeals the Official Plan change.

Flowers, flowers and more flowers
June 27 2007



Smiles, laughter and flowers were all in full bloom during the Ripley Horticultural Society's annual flower show and bake sale at the arena on June 20. Society president Ann Finlayson and society life time member Ruth Bogues hold some submitted entries.