

WAIT TIME FOR BED CAN BE UP TO TWO YEARS

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Active Living adult lifestyle building on Halton Hills Drive.

The three-storey, 160-bed home will replace the Bennett's aging 66-bed space it currently leases from the Georgetown Hospital. If all goes as planned, construction on the building will start in spring 2023, with an opening date projected for fall 2025.

"The new home will better serve the community of Halton Hills and also Halton Region," said facility executive director Soo Wong. "There's a lot of excitement and a lot of inter-

est from everyone involved."

With over 200 seniors on the wait list for the Bennett Centre as of last month, board chair Brian Clark said "the need for more beds has never been greater."

"There's a critical shortage of long-term care beds in Halton Region," he said during a recent presentation to Halton Hills Council, noting there are fewer beds available locally for those over the age of 75 than any other region in the province.

"Wait times can be up to two years, which means many seniors in our area are forced to leave the

"It is very much needed, not just for Georgetown, but all of Halton and a wide region around Georgetown."

- Neil Hageman

community that they have called home to seek care and accommodations elsewhere."

The new facility will have a secured specialized behaviour unit, and a unit devoted to Francophones with culturally-specific programming and services. Clark said currently there's a list of 700-plus French-speaking seniors

in the GTA waiting for a long-term care spot.

To help get the \$60-million endeavour off the ground in the most cost-efficient way, the Bennett Centre is now appealing to the town to consider waiving development charges.

The Bennett team is also asking Halton Hills Council to re-confirm its support of the project, enable town staff to work with Bennett Village staff, and refer the development to regional council for its support.

Local residents who

have parents living in the Bennett Centre turned out at the recent council meeting to back the project and urge the municipality to waive the development fees.

"It is very much needed, not just for Georgetown, but all of Halton and a wide region around Georgetown," said Halton Hills resident Neil Hageman, whose parents now both reside at the Bennett after spending several months on the wait list. "Even though my parents are 95 now, I would love to see them move into the new building."

The sentiment was echoed by Rick Stomphorst, who spoke of the "loving care" his father has received at the Bennett Centre since moving in just before the pandemic started.

"Georgetown is excep-

tionally lucky to have such a resource in the community," he said, noting he thinks the new facility will be "a model of long-term care in Ontario."

Council referred the matter to staff, who will come back with a report addressing the requests at a later date.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With long-term care spaces continuing to be in high demand locally and across Ontario, we wanted to take a closer look at the Bennett Centre's plans to substantially increase the number of beds available in Halton Hills.



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