

HEALTH: New beds will bring total to 48 at local facility

Green Gables granted 11 long term care beds

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
STAFF WRITER

Renovation is underway at Stouffville's Green Gables Nursing Home to accommodate 11 long term care beds.

Construction began yesterday, while the new beds are expected to open April 1, said Paula Jourdain, president of Specialty Care Inc., owner of Green Gables. The beds are the first stage in the firm's redevelopment plans for the five-acre property.

"Specialty Care hopes to add up to 100 additional permanent long term care beds to the site if successful in bidding for the new beds," Jourdain said.

Green Gables now has 37 long term beds and 25 retirement spots. The additional beds will bring the number of long term to 48, manager Kathy Szela said. "The renovation has begun. It's needed."

Last April, Premier Mike Harris announced 20,000 new long term care beds for the province, the first in 10 years. Of these, 420 were allocated in York Region.

As soon as they are open, patients occupying beds in general hospitals will be moved to the long term care facility. "Our plan

to extend long term care is freeing up much needed acute care beds in Ontario hospitals," Harris said. "The end result is a reduction in emergency room waiting times."

The new beds at Green Gables "will significantly improve access to community services for the elderly and disabled," Durham-York MPP Julia Munro said. "With an aging and changing population, we need a health care system that meets our needs."

The 11 beds will be housed in the upper floor at Green Gables. The renovation will include updating the bathroom facilities and installing a kitchenette and laundry facilities, Jourdain said.

The staff at Green Gables has been working closely with Markham-Stouffville Hospital to develop a program to meet the needs of residents discharged from hospital, Jourdain added.

"Our expansion ensures people will enjoy more freedom, privacy and recreation than is possible in a hospital ward," Jackson said.

Specialty Care is a family-owned business and includes a lodge in Keswick and four other nursing homes across the province.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Construction is now underway at Green Gables nursing home in Bloomington to make way for 11 long term care beds.



Joan Ransberry

Tax hike imminent with complex plan

The longstanding tax freeze in Stouffville is about to end.

A decision being made tonight on the library/indoor pool project by council will deliver good news and bad.

The good news first: The \$5-million complex will improve and enhance both recreational and library services for all.

Now, the bad: The project will increase taxes. Yes, my crystal ball tells me the twin complex will be a go, complete with a tax jump.

The amount of the tax increase is not known at this time. However, the complex's projected annual operating costs could hit \$400,000. Unless there's a serious reduction in services, the complex's operating costs will mean a tax increase.

I've got mixed feelings about this project. I agree that an indoor pool is a great asset, offering wonderful fun for all ages as well as therapeutic benefits. I do not, however, agree that it be built with a library on South Park, south of O'Brien Avenue.

Rather, let's go back to the drawing board and see if a partnership can be struck between the town and the board of education to build an indoor pool beside Stouffville District Secondary School. Since the pool could be incorporated into the physical education curriculum for student use, the operating costs could be shared with the school.

Ask the Town of Georgina how its brand new library/pool and school complex is working?

Apparently, the board expressed no interest in a partnership. People in the education business seldom relinquish a speck of control without a big fuss.

Let's revisit the board of education — only, this time with feeling.

The need to expand Stouffville's library services is long overdue. It is crowded, tired and tattered.

I'd prefer the library be expanded at its present site. I'm not sure moving the library out of the downtown is good for the library or good for the downtown.

I agree with library board chairperson Jan Williams. Moving it to South Park could jeopardize the \$600,000 library expansion fundraising campaign.

Still, the library board voted to accept the proposal. The board is politically smart; it knows when it's beaten.

"If this is the way to get a bigger and better library, then great. Let's go for it," Williams said.

The complex proposal is the brainchild of chief administrator Merlin Dewing. He's spent a great deal of time and energy drafting the plan to move the existing library to South Park. The town's lawn bowling facility, including the greens as well as the senior's centre, would then be moved to the spot vacated by the existing library; the Jubilee Club building could be sold to create revenue for the town; baseball diamonds near the outdoor pool beside Memorial Park will be shut down, while ball diamonds could be built at South Park. Under the plans, Latham Gallery could also return to the library site.

I can't go along with the location. Nor am I eager to accept a tax hike.

TRANSPORTATION: GTSB member calls for merger of region's transit services

'Tremendous savings' wasted

BY MIKE ADLER
STAFF WRITER

The newest member of York Region's transit task force is an outsider with a blunt message: the region's different bus systems had better merge.

Toronto councillor David Shiner, whose Seneca Heights ward sits in North York, sat through his first task force meeting last week.

Their very first step has to be to get their own house in order," he said in an interview Thursday.

"Look how silly Toronto would've been (before its amalgamation) if we had six cities with six different transit authorities."

Shiner, a Greater Toronto Services Board member recruited by Regional Chairperson Bill Fisch, will be crucial to the region's push this year for better, faster transit.

Half of all trips made by York Region residents are between the region and

Toronto. The region wants agreements that will let more York Region bus routes reach Toronto subway stations, and it eventually wants to see the subway extended to Richmond Hill.

But to do that, it will need cooperation from someone like Shiner, who is convinced York's municipal systems — particularly where Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill connect at Yonge Street — are squandering "tremendous savings" by not merging.

More transit integration with Toronto is a great idea, but mergers in York are necessary first, he said. "What would the city do now at Yonge and Steeles, make three different agreements?"

Toronto had declined York's invitation to join the transit talks last year, before Shiner agreed. But although Shiner called the task force meetings encouraging, he and fellow North York councillor Norm Gardner have suggest-

ed commuters from the region won't be welcome on Toronto's roads if public transit here isn't improved soon.

Task force chairperson Diane Humeniuk, while praising co-operation between the municipal systems, said her group will try to decide whether the region should have only one or two transit authorities, instead of five.

Task force meetings in March, April and May will be critical, she said, because its possible short and long-term transit improvements will be studied again — this time to decide who will do them, what they will cost and who will pay.

That is where I really feel the rubber will hit the road, because we'll have to make some tough decisions from now on," said Humeniuk. And sometime this spring, the task force's proposals will be explained to local councillors in a special session, she said.

NOW AVAILABLE in Stouffville, From Our Kitchen To Yours

DELIVERY

SWISS CHALET (416) 439-1000

DELIVERY AREA			
PRESTON LAKE	ALBION RD.	BALLANTRAE	MUSSELMAN'S LAKE
WOODBINE AVE.	WARDEN AVE.	BLOOMINGTON RD.	DURHAM RD.
		19TH AVE.	

*Monday - Sunday 4 pm - 10 pm. Minimum food order \$8.50