

Hospital awaits approval for expansion

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Markham Stouffville Hospital is awaiting provincial approval for an ambitious \$120 million expansion plan, one aspect of which will include a private-public funding partnership.

"The plan is for the development of an integrated health care campus," explained Dr. Jim MacLean, the hospital's chief executive officer. "We need to look at the growing and aging population in Markham and southeast York Region.

"We have been working hard with the ministry for the last year and a half, with up-to-date population projections, to determine the size of the project that will meet the needs of the community."

The plan centres on the construction of two separate, but connected, buildings on land surrounding the hospital.

One would house a long-term, complex care facility and would be financed through York Region, which earlier this year pledged a total of \$62.4 million for the area's three hospitals, in \$7.3 million-a-year increments until 2009.

"We want to move the long-term care portion of the hospital to a suitable integrated facility.

"The hospital's complex, continuing care and rehabilitation patients would be all in that facility.

"Then we can use that (hospital) space for acute care," MacLean said, adding the plan does not include new beds now, but the space will be there as they are needed in future.

The plan centres on the construction of two separate, but connected, buildings on land surrounding the hospital.

"This will create the opportunity for more acute care beds as the community demand goes up, without having to build them," he said.

The second new building would contain the hospital's administration offices, again freeing up more room in the existing hospital for acute care and various clinics.

That portion of the plan would be financed through a public-private partnership, MacLean said.

"We're looking at various options for that financing,"

he said. "I can't tell you now what that financing will look like, but we're looking at all options."

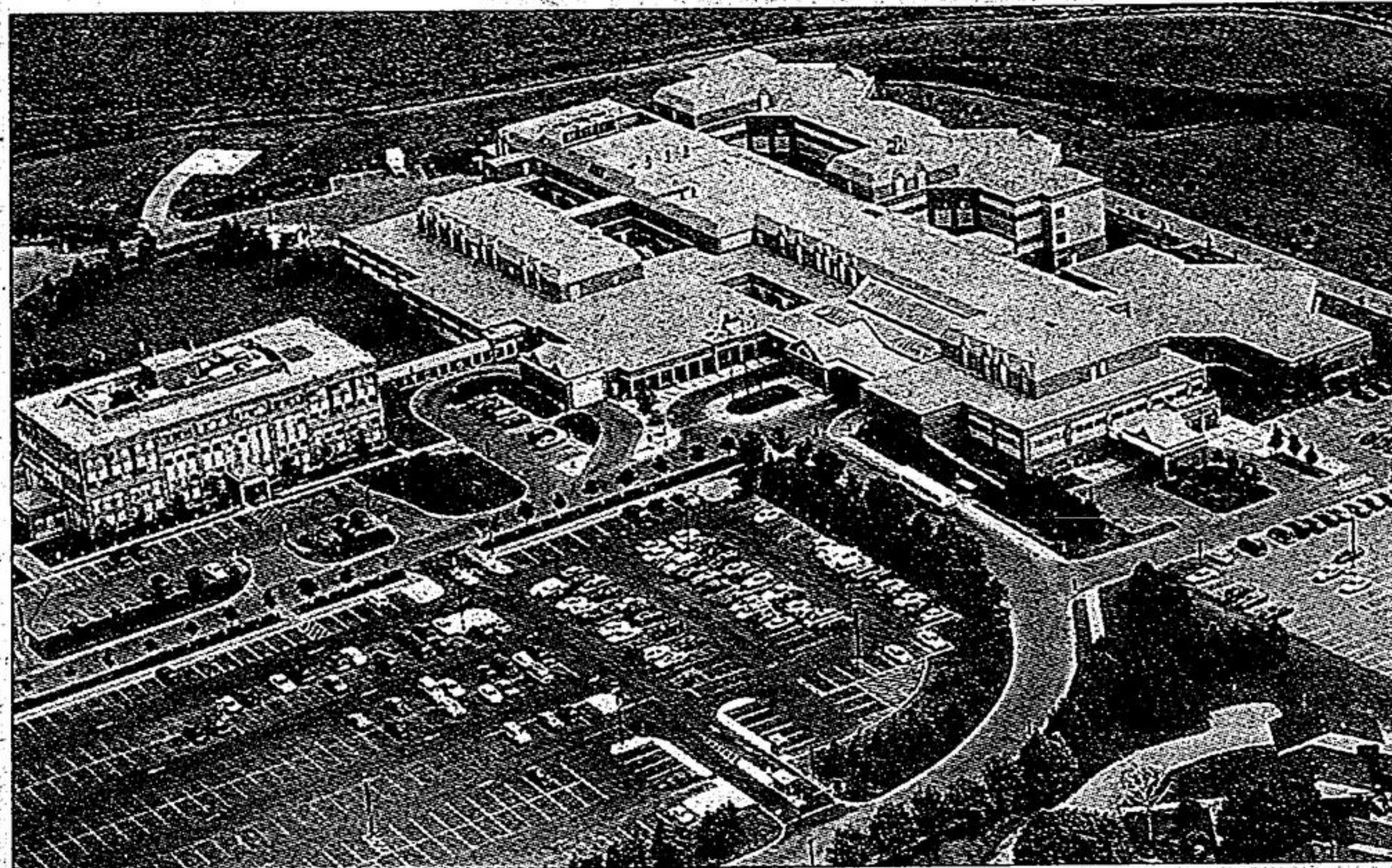
Some expansion to the existing emergency room, diagnostic imaging and ambulatory care departments is also necessary, MacLean said.

That portion is the province's responsibility and should be financed by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

As well, a multi-storey parking facility "as close as possible" to the hospital is included in the plan.

Rapid growth, coupled with increasing demand for long-term and continuing care beds has proven the hospital's future plans must be bigger in scope than an earlier \$30 million, 75-bed proposal, MacLean said.

"That was just an estimate based on the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommendations, which were based on inadequate projections," he said, adding it never received ministry approval.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Markham Stouffville Hospital looks big from the air, but CEO Jim MacLean says two new structures are needed to deal with a growing population.

"This plan is something that has evolved over time and this is the latest concept."

MacLean said he hopes to see provincial approval early this year.

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