



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Southlake Health Care Centre nurse Diane Paton checks a patient's chart as Health Minister George Smitherman, Newmarket-Aurora MP Belinda Stronach and others tour the cancer facility Thursday. An expansion was approved and will be called the Stronach centre due to the family's \$8-million donation.

# CENTRE TO OPEN IN THREE YEARS

BY CHRIS TRABER  
Staff Writer

The \$60-million Southlake regional cancer centre, approved by the province Thursday, could treat as many as 62,000 patients a year.

The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, scheduled to be completed within three years, is to begin construction next year.

The project has been all but guaranteed since early 2004 when the province committed \$6 million for design and planning costs.

"Our government is ensuring that people in all areas of the province have access to the health care they need and that includes first class cancer services," Health Minister George Smitherman said.

Mr. Smitherman, who had stated as recently as last December that a York Region cancer centre was not a priority, praised the hospital's staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment.

"What I really want to say to the folks at Southlake is Southlake rocks."

Southlake's cancer centre will be more convenient for most York Region residents. Those who live near the Toronto border may still opt to get treatment at Sunnybrook or other existing cancer centres, according to Southlake spokesperson Mandy Downs.

The centre will be invaluable for York residents undergoing radiation and chemotherapy, said one Newmarket cancer survivor.

"Like the credit card commercial, having a full service cancer centre in your own back yard will be priceless," said breast cancer survivor Kathy Proudfoot, volunteer spokesperson for the

centre.

"It's huge. As you can imagine, when you're going through treatment, you're not well and you have to travel hours for care, it's difficult on oneself, family and friends.

"Bottom line is people want to help, but you want to be self-sufficient and not turn everyone's life upside-down. Not to have to travel two and half hours one way for treatment really will be priceless."

*The news is most welcome and gratifying. It's good the Ontario government is now embracing all the work done by Dan Carriere and his team.*

A first-class cancer treatment facility nearby offers all-important confidence and peace of mind for patients, Mrs. Proudfoot said.

"When you're going through radiation and chemotherapy, your immune system is wiped out," she said. "If something goes wrong, you need to access care quickly. There's a huge difference between having to travel up to three hours to Toronto, depending on traffic or weather, versus maybe 40 minutes at best within York Region.

The facility was named after the Stronach family who donated \$8-million contribution to the project.

The politics of the event wasn't lost on Conservative Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees, hinting

the government was recycling old news.

"The news is most welcome and gratifying. It's good the Ontario government is now embracing all the work done by Dan Carriere and his team. But the fact remains that the government made this commitment two and half years ago. The only disappointment is we waited two and half years for reaffirmation of a commitment our government originally made," Mr. Klees said.

"Now, here is Mr. Smitherman putting his stamp of approval on work previously done."

Ontario will fund approximately 70 per cent of construction expenses with the hospital funding the rest, Mr. Smitherman said in an interview.

The cancer centre is one of several hospital projects approved under the ReNew Ontario program, a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan, which is earmarking \$5 billion to support health care initiatives.

Mr. Carriere is confident the hospital's portion of the cost, approximately \$18 million, is on track.

"I have no misgivings and expect we'll raise the full amount," he said. "We're in the middle of a silent campaign and we're already at the \$10-million mark."

Tenders will be completed by February, Mr. Carriere speculated.

He remains anxious to begin construction by next year's thaw.

"Yesterday is when I wanted the first shovel in the ground," he said. "We've all heard about life and death situations. This is one. We want to start saving lives as quickly as possible."

Mrs. Proudfoot couldn't be happier.

"Really, when it comes to cancer care and treatment close to home, we're all shareholders."

## CENTRE TO OFFER:

- Chemotherapy suite with 23 treatment areas;
- CT simulator suite, where technicians can identify areas of the body requiring radiation therapy;
- Four radiation treatment rooms;
- Two large clinics with 20 individual rooms for examinations, counselling and special procedures;
- Place to provide support for those living with or affected by cancer and;
- Terrace and gardens for patients and their visitors.

## Radiation treatment offered at cancer centre

The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre will serve residents of York Region and south Simcoe County, a population base of more than one million people.

The centre will conduct clinical drug trials.

These controlled studies play an important role in the discovery of medical advancements that can result in longer or improved quality of life for cancer patients.

Southlake continues to provide diagnostics, surgery, chemotherapy and support for more than 16,000 yearly patient visits.

By 2008, patient visitor treatment will quadruple to 62,000 annually, including 31,000 patient visits for radiation therapy currently not available in York or south Simcoe.

By 2014, York Region can expect 484 new cases of lung cancer, 614 new cases of colorectal cancer, 880 new cases of prostate cancer and 431 new cases of breast cancer each year.

For information or to support the new cancer centre, call 905-895-4521, ext. 2639, or visit [www.southlakeregional.org](http://www.southlakeregional.org).

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