

# Bed shortage forces man to U.S. for surgery

BY SEAN PEARCE  
Staff Writer

It's never easy to have a loved one undergo surgery, but in Stouffville resident Cathy Robinson's case, it may have been made much more difficult than it needed to be.

At the beginning of September, Ms. Robinson brought her 76-year-old father, who lives in Newmarket, to Southlake Regional Health Centre for treatment.

"We were there for 13 hours," Ms. Robinson said. "One hour of that was actually seeing the doctor."

Still, Ms. Robinson wasn't upset and she called the treatment she received there, despite the wait, excellent. What did upset her, however, was what she learned next.

It turned out Southlake could not accommodate her father's necessary neurosurgery due to a lack of adequate beds for him to recuperate. In fact, it wasn't just Southlake that was in that position. It was every hospital in Ontario. The only option was to have her father flown, via helicopter, to a hospital in Buffalo.

Following that news, on Sept. 8, Ms. Robinson's father was flown down to Millard Fillmore Gates Hospital in Buffalo, the same hospital that treated Buffalo Bills player Michael Everett for his recent spinal injury.

The surgery was a success. Ordinarily, the ordeal would have been over, but not in Ms. Robinson's case. Her father was cleared to return home by the hospital Sept. 21, but couldn't due to, again, a lack of adequate care beds at Southlake.

Weeks went by with Ms. Robinson's father stranded in Buffalo. Ms. Robinson got fed up and,

To view a video on this issue, go to [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com)

finally, called Progressive Conservative candidate Frank Klees.

Mr. Klees, obviously on the campaign trail, stepped in on Ms. Robinson's behalf and contacted Southlake to see if Ms. Robinson's father could be hastened home. Mr. Klees said the situation indicates what four years of "neglect" has done to Ontario's hospitals.

"On the positive side, he was well looked after, but he had to be sent to Buffalo to get treatment," he said.

"The problem is, he was cleared Sept. 21 and was available to be moved back, but Southlake couldn't take him."

The hospital confirmed it is, indeed, short of beds, largely due to the fact a number of them were occupied by people awaiting long-term care; another area Mr. Klees described as in rough shape.

"There are literally hundreds of stories like this," he said.

"(The Liberals) are people who keep saying how bad the health care system is in the United States and yet we are having to send people there for treatment."

Southlake spokesperson Tammy La Rue explained personnel at the hospital can't comment on specific cases but, generally speaking, conceded there was a shortage of beds and that 47 are occupied by individuals awaiting proper long-term care beds elsewhere.

The demand for beds is primarily due to the explosive growth in the region coupled

with a generally aging population.

Usually, demand doesn't get quite so high until the winter months.

From the hospital's perspective, Ms. La Rue said, stories such as Ms. Robinson's are unfortunate, but the hospital can only do so much to hold beds, as the needs of emergency patients from the local community have to come first.

"The patient at a hospital elsewhere is safe," she said. "It's not ideal, but emergency patients need to be our first priority and that's how it's handled at all hospitals, not just Southlake."

In any case, Ms. Robinson said she's just happy her father is finally on his way home, even though it's now Oct. 5.

The real losers are not just her, she added, as taxpayers across Ontario have had to pay for her father's trip to the United States and those of many others.

While in Buffalo to be with her father, Ms. Robinson was told 40 per cent of the neurosurgery beds in at Millard Fillmore Gates were occupied by Canadians.

"You can imagine that, for my 76-year-old father, stuck in Buffalo, away from his wife, family and friends, he was anxious to return to Newmarket," Ms. Robinson said.

"My mother is in a nursing home in Newmarket and requires full care. In addition to the cost to our family in time and money, commuting between Buffalo and Newmarket, this has taken a toll; emotionally, physically, financially, on our jobs and on our families."

Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman could not be reached by press time.



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Aurora PC candidate Frank Klees addresses media Friday outside Southlake Regional Health Centre alongside Cathy Robinson whose father had to have life-saving surgery in Buffalo, N.Y. due to a shortage of beds at this hospital and other Ontario hospitals.

**OPEN FOR BREAKFAST**  
Mon to Fri: 8 am to 11 am  
Sat All Day: 7:30 am to 8 pm  
Sun All Day: 7:30 am to 4 pm

**FREE DELIVERY**  
OVER \$15.00  
5PM TO 8PM

**Detville**

**BREAKFAST SPECIAL**  
3 Eggs, 2 Pancakes, Home fries, Toast, Coffee **\$4.99** plus tax

**ADD WITH Bacon, Ham, Sausage, Peameal .75¢ each**

**All Day Home Made ANGUS CHEESE BURGERS \$7.00**

**LUNCH SPECIALS \$7.50**  
Montreal Smoked Meat or Corned Beef on Rye Bread with coleslaw & pickles

**Every Day \$5.00 LUNCH SPECIAL**

**CATERING AVAILABLE**

**DINNER SPECIALS (5pm to 8pm)**  
Dine in Only

Chicken Fusilli	\$8.99	Monday 1/2 price \$4.49 + tax
Penne Arrabiatta	\$8.99	Tuesday 1/2 price \$4.49 + tax
Pizza Italiano 10"	\$7.99	Wednesday \$4.99 + tax
Chicken Pesto 10"	\$8.99	Thursday \$5.99 + tax
Seafood Linguini	\$11.99	Friday 1/2 price \$5.99 + tax

**SATURDAY BURGER NIGHT (5pm to 8pm)**  
**Home Made 8oz ANGUS BURGERS \$5.50** plus tax

*We serve nonalcoholic Beers & Wines*  
**5917 Main Street, Stouffville**  
**CALL NOW 905-642-3939**

**Girl Guides of Canada**  
Join us at anytime.  
**1-800-565-8111**  
www.girlguides.ca

This message brought to you as a community service of The Economist/Sun-Tribune.

**york region**  
e.com  
It clicks home.

Check Out Real Estate Listings Every Week!

**WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE SOCCER CLUB**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Thursday, October 25, 2007**  
**7:30 p.m.**

**Christ Church Anglican**  
(254 Sunset Blvd., Stouffville)

**ALL MEMBERS WELCOME**

More info at 905-640-1800 or [www.wssc.info](http://www.wssc.info)

LET US HAND SELECT YOUR  
DIAMOND WHILE IN

**Antwerp, Belgium**

**ORDER YOURS TODAY**

**905-640-4646**  
6312 Main St., Stouffville  
"Across from the Clock Tower"

**Barthau Jewellers**  
Brilliance You Deserve

**LAST 2 DAYS!**