

Hospital all smiles over donation

John and Diane Gibson's \$500,000 gift largest individual donation to Markham Stouffville

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

Hospitals aren't normally places for parties, but when a record individual donation was made to Markham Stouffville Hospital, there were a half million reasons to celebrate.

A festive get-together in recognition of John and Diane Gibson's donation of \$500,000 in support of the facility's expansion and redevelopment was held Wednesday.

Attended by Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, hospital foundation president Suzette Strong Randall, foundation chairperson Dan Amadori, staff and Gibson family members, the joy and generosity escalated.

"We're ecstatic," Ms Strong Randall said, noting the fundraising continued through the evening when the Gibsons announced they would match donations made that night by party attendees. In addition to the largesse of the guests of honour, attendees added an additional \$27,500 to the hospital's

fundraising.

In honour of the contribution, the Gibsons were granted a naming opportunity within the hospital. They chose the breast health reception area to bear their family name.

Longtime Markham residents, the Gibsons decided to make their donation in celebration of their company's 40th anniversary.

E.E.S. Financial Services Ltd., a pioneer of fee-only financial services, was founded in Montreal, Mr. Gibson said.

They relocated to Ontario in 1979 and moved operations from Toronto to Hwy. 7 near Markham Road in 2000.

Mr. Gibson recalled the lengthy commutes and long days when the business was downtown.

"We'd leave at 6:30 a.m. and get home after 8 p.m.," he said with a chortle. "Now, I leave home just before nine and get home at five and get in nine holes of golf at York Downs. I'm home by eight."

"It's that quality of life that makes us think of life in Markham and the cornerstone of that quality is our hospital."

His family and most of his extended family, including employees, live in Markham, he said.

"All of us, everyone in Markham, now or in the future will touch the hospi-

tal," he said. "The hospital isn't always about bad news. It's a place where dreams are fulfilled."

For that reason — and the fact the hospital was built 20 years ago to handle 70,000 residents and now faces a constituency of 300,000 — he paraphrased the Kevin Costner film *Field of Dreams*. "They will come and now we must build it," he said. "We all have to do our part to build it."

"Markham Stouffville Hospital is truly a wonderful place and we all have to do our part to keep it as a state-of-the-art health facility. I encourage everyone to dig deep."

It was a pleasant surprise for the foundation, Ms Strong Randall said. The record donation is a major infusion to the \$50 million fundraising target, she said.

The hospital is still waiting for the Health Ministry's green light. "When we get approval, we'll be able to show the government we've got money in the bank," she said. "The Gibsons' contribution is a real leadership gift."

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Dan Amadori, board chairperson of the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation (left), Diane and John Gibson and Suzette Strong Randall, foundation president, join in celebration of the Gibsons' \$500,000 donation.



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