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Inserts for Thurs., January 21, 2016

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'We realize that a goal of zero parking charges is still a long way off, but we also realize the economic impact of this decision.'

John Hazlewood,
Stouffville advocate

Hospital parking fees 'burden for some'

From page 1.

"We realize that a goal of zero parking charges is still a long way off, but we also realize the economic impact of this decision."

"While the public, as a whole, benefits from these initiatives, it has always been our position that it shouldn't fall on the shoulders of the poor, the elderly or their families in times of crisis to pay the rising prices they've encountered while parking at hospitals," Hazlewood added.

Not everyone is thrilled with the decision.

Ontario Hospital Association chair Anthony Dale has indicated the change will create a \$30-million shortfall of the \$100 million collected through parking fees used to fund patient care, equipment and research, which are not funded by the province.

However, Ballard points out some hospitals are expected to make more money, since visitors will be more likely to use the parking lots instead of alternate parking venues and there will be no change in the daily fees collected. But he does admit there is a possibility that some hospitals may experience a drop in revenue.

"Those who expect to experience a shortfall are being encouraged to work with their LHINs and monitor to see how it settles in the next two years," Ballard added. "I don't believe any of the facilities will fall short."

Markham Stouffville Hospital participated in the province's consultations regarding parking fees and believes this move is a good one, according to hospital president and CEO Jo-anne Marr.

"We know, for some, the cost can be a burden and we have taken steps to address the issue," she said.

Currently, Markham Stouffville offers 30- and 120-use parking passes that provide parking at an 80 to 87-per cent discount. Depending on the pass purchased, users pay \$3.17 or \$2.16, per use, with the discounts.

"We are better than the 50 per cent proposed," corporate services vice-president Elena Pacheco added. "Typically, we are flexible if a patient comes to us."

The next step will be to begin a review of creating five-day and 10-day passes. However, the hospital plans to maintain prices it currently offers even though it exceeds the discounts laid out by the province.

Newmarket's Southlake Regional Health Centre confirming it, too, currently offers discounted parking fees on a multi-use basis.

In Ontario, 45 hospitals offer free parking, 54 charge \$10 or less per day and 36 charge more than \$10 per day.



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