

'There are so many people waiting'

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term care bed since last fall and about four weeks ago was upgraded to crisis status by the Central Community Care Access Centre, an organization funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that connects residents to health services in the community.

This week, Sarah learned her mother was being offered a long-term care home bed. Sarah, whose husband has cancer, has cut back her hours as a health care worker to care for her mother.

While she is applauding an announcement last week by associate health and long-term care minister Dipika Damerla at Bloomington Cove Care Community Centre in Whitchurch-Stouffville that will see the province upgrade more than 300 long-term care facilities across Ontario over the next nine years, Sarah is disappointed there was no mention of creating new long-term care spaces.

"There are so many people waiting. The system is terrible. I don't think our government has given enough to long-term care. I really do think they are in crisis," she said, adding the government also needs to add more staff highly trained in geriatric care.

"The staff from the (home care) agencies that come in, they do a great job, great job. But I think the system is really bad for the people who really need to get in (to long-term care). I'm basically told, 'OK, now (my mother's) in crisis, within a month she will get in because she really is in crisis' and I'm told another time when I speak to the case worker that there are others in crisis, she has to wait her turn."

The government continues to monitor the

need for beds throughout the province while also ensuring the needs of residents in existing facilities are being met, Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek, also minister of community and social services, said.

"We want to make sure that residents of all long-term care homes throughout the province, such as those residing at Bloomington Cove, have facilities that are up to current standards and feel as much like home as possible," she said, adding more than 30,000 beds in the 300 facilities will be upgraded.

That means making improvements to things like wheelchair accessibility, air conditioning and room for rehab and physio programs, as well as improving the overall comfort and design of long-term spaces, she said.

Facilities approved for redevelopment will receive a construction subsidy, which involves receiving funding per bed, per day for 25 years, starting with admission of the first resident meeting applicable conditions, Jaczek said.

Between 2011 and 2031, York Region's senior population will increase by 148 per cent, almost four times faster than the overall population, according to a report called Towards a Seniors Strategy, released by the region last year. Seniors will make up 21 per cent of York's population in 2031, up from 12 per cent in 2011.

What's more, York seniors are living longer than the provincial and national averages, thanks, in part, to the region's high quality of life. Life expectancy in York is 84.1 years, compared to 81.5 years in Ontario and 81.1 years in Canada.

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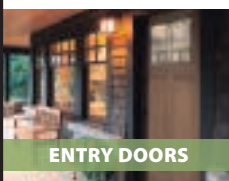
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