

Mackenzie hospital facilities will be on the cutting edge

By Mark Pavilons

While the pressure continues to mount to meet the health care needs of York residents, the new Mackenzie Health facility in Vaughan is on track. In less than 600 days, the new hospital will open its doors, and stand ready to serve King residents. Altaf Stationwala, president and CEO of Mackenzie Health, provided an update to King councillors recently. It will be a "pivotal point" when the facility becomes a two-hospital model, which will serve all of King, Vaughan and Richmond Hill with services split between the new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital and the Mackenzie Richmond Hill Hospital. Stationwala pointed out Mackenzie Health has the 7th highest emergency department volumes in Ontario, and they continue to see an increase in emergency volumes. Over 2017-18, an estimated 124,000 patients came through the ED urgent care centre. That's equivalent to almost 350 per day. They stand at roughly 103% over capacity. Officials have come up with a creative interim solution, the Reactivation Care Centre (RCC). Stationwala explained multiple units were opened up in late 2017 in the RCC in Humber River Hospital's former location. It's a collaboration between Central LHIN hospitals to care for patients who no longer need acute care. The RCC ensures that patients being cared for in acute care settings have access to specialized, focused care and attention, aimed at increasing their mobility and independence. "The model is working incredibly well," Stationwala said. "Patients love it." The RCC will continue even after the new Vaughan hospital opens. The two-hospital "ultimate solution" will not only benefit residents, but it will attract the best medical talent. By combining the bed capacities at both Mackenzie Richmond Hill and Mackenzie Vaughan, it creates a "critical mass" and they can create many more sub-specialties, given their volumes. The new Mackenzie Vaughan site will be Canada's first "smart hospital," and the Richmond Hill facility will also be enhanced. They're working on digital pathology, lab automation improvements in the diagnostic lab, to make way for new, state-of-the-art automated chemistry and hematology systems. Stationwala stressed with these "smart" innovations in place, patients can get consults from specialists anywhere in the world. The Vaughan site, located directly across from Wonderland, is 70% complete. They have already secured 60% of the equipment, fixtures and furniture. Stationwala said they will soon begin the "enormous exercise" of recruiting some 2,000 staff. They will hire 100 new physicians and the facilities will enjoy the help of some 700 volunteers. The hospital has come to fruition, thanks to many layers of funding. The total cost is pegged at \$1.6 billion and the Province is pitching in \$1.3 billion. York Region has pledged \$50 million and \$250 million will come from Mackenzie's "Exceptional Care Belongs Here" campaign, with \$120 million raised so far. Stationwala pointed out this is the largest fundraising driver ever led by a community hospital in Canada. The project will provide more than 1,000 construction jobs through 2020 and more than 20 York-based companies are involved in the construction phase, benefitting the local economy.