

Southlake celebrates 'game-changer' in local cancer care

By Brock Weir

Providing quality care close to home has been the mandate of the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre at Southlake Regional Health Centre for more than a decade, but this week the Centre celebrated as a 'game changer' for both the hospital and anyone in York Region and South Simcoe on their cancer journey now and into the future. On Monday, dignitaries converged on the Centre's healing garden in Newmarket to celebrate the arrival of a new PET-CT (Positron Emission Tomography & Computed Tomography) machine that will allow for an earlier cancer diagnosis without having to travel to Toronto or Mississauga for treatment. The new equipment was made possible through fundraising efforts of more than \$12 million through Southlake's \$20 million 'HERE is Where Cancer Meets its Match' campaign, and an additional infusion of \$2.8 million from the Provincial Government. The new PET-CT machine will be operational this month and help Southlake be able to 'deliver tailor-made cancer treatments to patients.' 'I can tell you that as a former cancer nurse, spending time with people who have been diagnosed with cancer, or even who have not been diagnosed yet but think they may have it, it's a very, very challenging time for people, (and) they are anxious,' said Arden Krystal, President & CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre. 'To have the best diagnostic and treatment equipment possible, it is really, really amazing. 'Patients in our communities will no longer need to travel for this service, and they did have to travel to Toronto for this. We can now diagnose patients much more quickly here at Southlake. Once fully operational, this machine will serve more than 1,200 patients every year and it will make a huge difference to the lives of our patients.' The impact of the new equipment on both diagnosis and patient care was underscored by Dr. Peter Anglin, Physician Lead at the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre. 'I was asked to comment on what this means for us and I really can't say enough,' said Anglin. 'PET scanning has changed how we manage a number of malignancies, particularly lymphomas, lung cancer and a number of others. My physician colleagues and I over the last few years have been utilizing PET a lot; the only challenge is our patients have had to make a little trip to Mississauga or downtown Toronto. 'For patients to go downtown would be a day out of their lives, let alone the traffic at the 404 and the 401. Now we're able to offer this close to home. There will not be two- or three-week delays to get a PET scan done. If you come here and you have a lung cancer and we order a PET scan, you will get it done in the next few days; that will allow us to make state-of-the-art 2023 decisions and allow patients to get the best care they can. When I see patients everyday who have to go Downtown ' what it means to stay here, it's like a day back in their lives and that can mean a lot for patients. You can get top care close to home and that's what we're about. That's what it means for patients.' The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre opened its doors in 2010 and is consistently ranked among the top cancer centres in the Province. It was the first partner to sign on to the Princess Margaret Cancer Care Centre. The capital campaign that led to this new installation was to 'preserve and advance this level of excellence' and address Southlake's most urgent priorities,' all the while keeping pace with rapidly changing technology, added Jennifer Klotz-Ritter, President & CEO of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation. 'As we know, this is one of the fastest-growing populations in northern York Region and, as well, an aging population, so we have to be cognizant that these are factors that contribute to the need for cancer care,' said Ritter. 'To date, we have raised over \$12 million, 60 per cent of the way to our goal. These funds have empowered us to make headway on several important projects, keeping as Dr. Anglin said, the very best cancer care right here in our communities easy to access. We have replaced two of our aging linear accelerators, that's the equipment that delivers radiation therapy. We have funded 15 new chemotherapy chairs as part of our systemic therapy program, and today, of course, we're celebrating the important milestone of bringing a new PET CT, a game-changing piece of technology, and our first PET CT in the Region. 'This really is a milestone moment. This project is an extraordinary example of what we can achieve with all of you by our sides: the government leaders, hospital leadership, and team, our volunteer leadership, and our donors and supporters. It truly takes a village. 'Members of this 'village' were well-represented at Monday's dedication as members of the Southlake Board, Foundation Board, Philanthropic Cabinet, individual fundraisers looked on ' including area MPPs and Magna International founder Frank Stronach, an early supporter of the Cancer Centre that now bears his name. 'A cancer diagnosis is scary enough without having to travel for care. Now approximately 1,200 residents in my community of Newmarket-Aurora and surrounding areas will be able to receive the advanced cancer care that they need and deserve right here at Southlake,' said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Health Sylvia Jones, who was joined by King-Vaughan MPP Stephen Lecce and several York Region mayors. 'For patients, this means an earlier diagnosis and tailor-made treatments. This is a true

game-changer. With the support of our health system partners like Southlake, our government is continuing to build a better-connected healthcare system where Ontarians, no matter where they live, can access the right care in the right place where and when they need it. Added Mr. Stronach: "I want to see this hospital be number one in the world and I think we can do it. I think hospitals, besides treating people and making them healthy again, should also think about how we can be preventative. We can save billions and billions. I look forward to when this place will be number one (and) what can we do so that we can have a lot of empty beds here?"