

Cambridge's St. Luke's Place to receive funding for more long-care beds

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(Left to Right) Saint Luke's Place CEO Brian Swainson, resident Norma Thomson and Cambridge MPP Kathryn McGarry share the good news that 51 more Long-Term Care beds will be added to Saint Luke's Place. – Walter Gowing/Photo

There were a lot of happy smiles and hand clapping when Cambridge MPP Kathryn McGarry delivered the news that Cambridge's St Luke's Place will receive 51 new long-term care beds.

This project has been in the works for some time. Only in the recent provincial budget has there been money to proceed with building larger facilities to accommodate the increase.

Saint Luke's Place presently accommodates 114 long-term care patients. Now, with the announced increase, the seniors' home will serve 165 long-term care individuals. There are currently 320 people living at Saint Luke's Place, including both long-term care and self-contained apartment residents. When the new facilities are built about 371 people will call Saint Luke's Place their home.

McGarry said that she was extremely pleased that the provincial government gave approval for this needed addition of long-term care accommodation. She knows from experience the needs of the elderly in Cambridge.

The local MPP first came to this city as a Victoria Order of Nurses (VON) nurse in 1988. She had dealt with schools and families in their homes before joining the nursing staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital where she worked from 1999 to 2012.

Norma Thomson, a seven-year long-term care resident, has made Saint Luke's Place her home. Confined to a wheelchair, Norma is on the resident council.

CEO Brian Swainson praised three members of the redevelopment committee for their work — Bob Pettitt has been on the board since 1974, Anne Tinker since 1988 and Paul O'Krafka since 2013.

Swainson said Saint Luke's Place is 42 years old and the buildings are in the plans to be revitalized.

The original redevelopment budget had been set at \$25 million but now has to be raised to \$33 million.

“The increase in beds will require a greater effort in raising our share of the funding,” said Alison Haddaway, director of donor relations and fund development.

Walter Gowing is a lifelong Cambridge resident, author and journalist who has been to 131 countries worldwide.