

SFMH receives Champlain LHIN support

A proposal by St. Francis Memorial Hospital (SFMH) in Barry's Bay to redevelop its emergency department has been endorsed by the Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). With an estimated cost of \$8.7 million, the proposal would upgrade and renovate SFMH's ER space to meet infection control, privacy, occupational health, quality and patient care standards.

The Champlain LHIN's endorsement letter, signed by CEO Chantale LeClerc, said that the SFMH proposal is aligned with Champlain LHIN's key priorities to reduce wait times, improve access to care, and enhance the sustainability of the health-care system by improving patients' experiences in a rural and isolated area.

The endorsement letter also cited capacity issues at SFMH's emergency department, which sees more than 10,000 patients per year, and is staffed 24 hours a day by nurses and physicians. It points out that the ER's existing space was designed to see patient volumes of only 3,000 per year.

Randy Penney, president and CEO of SFMH, said the Champlain LHIN's endorsement letter is an important step in this much-needed project.

Penney added, "[The ER is] outdated, overcrowded and it doesn't meet the necessary standards of care. It is essential that we provide a safe environment for our patients, staff and physicians in order to provide quality care.

"At SFMH, we strive to meet the highest standards of patient safety and quality of care. As a rural hospital, SFMH plays a vital role in our community. The ER receives patients who require assessment, resuscitation, stabilization and/or appropriate transfer to another level of care. In order to provide the best quality of care possible, we must have the facilities to accommodate our patients."

Penney also noted that as the only emergency department located between the communities of Renfrew and Huntsville "a huge geographical area" the need for a state-of-the-art facility is critical.

There has not been a major capital investment in the hospital for more than 50 years. SFMH's proposal would double the ER space from 2,000 to 4,000 square feet, which would allow the hospital to accommodate a projected increase in patient volumes.

The ER team at St. Francis Memorial Hospital is excited to see the progress with this project said Dr. Jason Malinowski, chief of staff, St. Francis Memorial Hospital.

"The practice and delivery of emergency medicine, as well as the standards that we need to follow, have changed significantly since the previous build. We've been able to deliver amazing, personalized care for the patients in the ER with the current infrastructure. So, we're really looking forward to redeveloping the ER space to better enable us to meet the standards while increasing our patient-centredness. It truly is a win for patients and providers alike," stated Dr. Malinowski.

"We very much appreciate the support that the Champlain LHIN has given to SFMH's proposal," Penney concluded. "I believe that the hospital's ER project is essential to providing continued quality care for the community of Barry's Bay and surrounding areas."

Submitted