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News

Windsor Regional racing to the finish line for mega-hospital approval

Windsor's not alone in its bid for a new \$2-billion regional hospital, so health officials remain determined in their race to successfully pry highly sought after infrastructure funding from the province.

Derek Spalding • Windsor Star
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The proposed site for the new Windsor mega hospital at the corner of County Road 42 and the 9th concession is seen in Windsor on Wednesday, July 15, 2015. (TYLER BROWNBRIDGE/The Windsor Star)

Windsor's not alone in its bid for a new \$2-billion regional hospital, so health officials remain determined in their race to successfully pry highly sought after infrastructure funding from the province.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

To much fanfare, Windsor Regional recently submitted a proposal to Ontario's health ministry for a new mega-hospital near the city's airport.

But with several other communities also in the running for similar projects, the hospital has to find ways to secure local funding, while reassuring ministry staff that Windsor is a safe place to invest.

“Until we get approval from the province, there's no wait list. If other municipalities move faster than we do, they could jump ahead of us to get to stage two,” said David Musyj, CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital.



Files: David Musyj president and CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital speaks at a press conference at the Ouellette campus on Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2014. (DAX MELMER/The Windsor Star)

The Star asked Health Minister Eric Hoskins for an interview about how much competition there is for funding — among many other issues — but he was not available. In a written response, the minister's office failed to answer any of the questions submitted to him by email.

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But Musyj said the competition is there.

Other areas, like Ottawa, Niagara and Muskoka, are also in need of hospital upgrades and replacements, so the pressure is on, according to Musyj, who says the already stiff competition gets more intense because of limited provincial infrastructure funding.

While it could be months before the ministry gives its approval, Windsor Regional is already mapping out how the city and the county will pay for its share of the cost.

The local bill for the new hospital — and its three satellite sites within the urban core — is estimated at \$200 million, which could be paid for in many ways, Musyj said. Some communities have used tax levies or borrowed cash with a 20- or 30-year repayment plan in order to spread the cost to users over time.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Communities can also reduce the overall financial burden by offering up land or they can raise funds. Either way, the region's ability to come up with its portion of the cost illustrates to the ministry the level of support for the new hospital. Without that buy-in, the less likely it is government will support the project overall, according to Musyj.

“Communities need to show they want it,” he said. “I can tell you, doing nothing is not an option, especially when you look at what’s happening elsewhere.”

It could be months before the ministry comes back with feedback on the proposal, but the process could

be a bit easier than what other communities experience because the province has been involved since Windsor Regional started looking at overhauling its facilities.

Upgrades to both the Met and Ouellette campuses were estimated to be far more than \$2 billion, so the ministry recommended looking at an entirely new site for an acute care centre.

“We’re a bit different here,” Musyj said. “The ministry is the one that pitched a new acute care site to us. So, that could help us a little bit.”

He doesn’t expect an ministry decision until next year.

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