

Lakeshore General Hospital to get new emergency department

The new \$90-million building is expected to open to the public in five to seven years



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West Island health authority's Benoit Morin says the news is welcome, adding "things were grim" at the hospital when he took over the top job six years ago. (Peter McCabe / MONTREAL GAZETTE) PETER MCCABE / MONTREAL

GAZETTE

The Lakeshore General Hospital is getting a new emergency department. Not a renovation of the existing facility at the Pointe-Claire hospital, but a brand new building.

Quebec Health Minister Gaetan Barrette made the announcement Monday, before a crush of hospital staff and elected officials, including Minister Responsible for Native Affairs and MNA for Jacques-Cartier Geoffrey Kelley and Finance Minister and MNA for Robert-Baldwin Carlos Leitão. The estimated price tag is \$90 million and the three-phase project is expected to be ready to receive patients in five years at the earliest and seven years at the latest.

“The quality of infrastructure has an impact on the quality of care,” Barrette said. “The new building will triple the size of the department to meet the needs of the community.”

Barrette said the preliminary planning — a study of what the building should include — will take between one and two years. The \$1.5 million needed for that stage has already been allocated by the province. The second stage — diving deeper into the building’s details and doing cost breakdowns — will take up to two years. The construction will take around three years.

Benoit Morin, executive director the West Island health authority, said that the announcement was particularly meaningful to him because “things were grim” at the hospital when he took over the top job six years ago.

Communication between departments was lacking, programs needed overhauling and new staff needed to be recruited.

The LGH has struggled over the years to combat a sagging reputation within the community but Morin said Monday’s announcement, along with completed projects over the last five years — including the expansion of the intensive care unit, an upgrade to the radiology room and the expansion of the Renal Care Clinic — have helped shift public opinion. Over the last 18 months, the emergency department has reduced wait times for people on stretchers in the ER from 26 hours to less than 15 hours.

“Reputation is the first thing to go and the last thing to get back,” Morin said. “We’re building it back up, one stone at a time.”

Morin thanked Lorne and Louise Rousselle Trottier who, through their Trottier Foundation, have given the hospital millions of dollars over the years. He thanked West Island mayors for their support and the Lakeshore General Hospital Foundation for its fundraising efforts.

Kelley called the announcement “a game changer for health care in the West Island.”

“I first noticed (the department’s) shortfalls during the SARS scare in 2003,” Kelley said. “The rooms didn’t have the (air-flow management) systems necessary to keep a room airtight. It’s taken a long time, but now it’s our turn. This is the last ER before the border. That’s a lot of pressure.”

Barrette bristled when it was suggested that the commitment to build a new emergency department was just the latest in a series of pre-campaign (<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/quebecs-future-in-flux-as-six-month-countdown-to-provincial-election-begins>) announcements designed to win over the anglophone vote. He said he had made many infrastructure announcements over the course of his term as health minister.

The construction will take place at the south end of the hospital and will not interfere with the operation of the existing emergency department.

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