

Hospital's \$14 million ambulatory wing officially opens

By Mike Pickford

Walking through the corridors of the new ambulatory care wing at Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC), it's easy to see why staff at the hospital are so excited to have it open to the public.

A little later than scheduled, the \$14-million facility officially opened its doors in September. It will serve as home base for all the hospital's high-demand clinics, while integral services and programs such as dialysis, chemotherapy, minor procedures, orthopaedics and plastics will also be relocated to the approximately 8,700-square-foot space.

The culmination of more than a decade of planning and over a year of construction, the new site is considered to be something of a crown jewel for a facility that recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Speaking to the Citizen during a special media tour last Monday, Geoff Harris, director of Emergency, Ambulatory Care and Clinical Support Programs at the hospital, said he was majorly impressed with the finished product, predicting the new wing will drastically improve the level of service for local residents.

"We are so thrilled to open the new ambulatory care unit to our patients," he said. "It has been remarkable to see the space transform from a parking lot to a beautiful, cutting-edge structure in just over a year."

"It's really impressive to me to see how we've been able to bring a state-of-the-art facility to a community that is expanding," he added. "It means we will be able to meet the needs of not just the people of today, but the future needs of the community also."

One of the hallmarks of the new facility is a spacious, 11-unit treatment area designed to house all chemotherapy sessions at the hospital. A state-of-the-art medical prep room has been placed at the heart of the facility, while there is also space dedicated for minor surgical procedures.

"The greatest part of this expansion is the treatment area," Harris observed. "If you've ever visited our current treatment area for chemo patients, you'd know right away how big an upgrade this new space is. It's bright, it's beautiful and there's amazing views out into the patio. Just being in this room is uplifting."

"What this does is allow patients to come into a much more welcoming area," he continued. "They can feel comfortable in a nice, new space while they receive their treatment."

Headwaters President and CEO Stacey Daub said this new space would assist HHCC in its main mission: bring quality care close to home.

"This is an exciting time for the hospital and the community," she said. "With the opening of the new expansion, we are able to provide greater access to the programs and services that are needed most by this fast-growing community, while enabling us to continue providing exceptional, patient-focused care experiences, closer to home."

The first of a two-part redevelopment of the hospital, the opening of the new ambulatory care unit will serve as the unofficial kick-off to an ambitious second phase of renovations. With the new wing rendering the current ambulatory care unit obsolete, that space will be turned into a third operating room, lightening the load on the facility's current operating areas. Upgrades will also be carried out to the hospital's emergency and pre/post operation departments. In total, roughly 11,800 square feet of space will be renovated.

If the numbers are anything to go by, the renovations could not come soon enough for HHCC and its staff. The facility had a record-breaking year in terms of the number of patients it saw come through its doors in the 2016-17 fiscal year (May to April). The hospital recorded 43,161 emergency visits, 5,649 in-patient visits (where patients are formally admitted to hospital for at least one night) and 17,676 outpatient visits (not hospitalized overnight).

Headwaters saw 4,239 visits to its dialysis units, 1,996 oncology visits and 1,030 chemotherapy visits. Its surgeons performed 4,388 day surgeries and 1,007 outpatient surgeries.

Upon completion, Headwaters will be one of the most modernized hospitals in the province. Harris believes the two-part project was needed to take HHCC to the next level, expressing his hope that the renovations will provide an opportunity for program and service expansion in the future.

"I think that's the aim, I think it has to be," Harris told the Citizen. "We have several areas of this new wing not yet allocated to any particular service."

"That was done in mind of the fact that we're going to be meeting with the Ministry (of Health) and discussing our six-year, 10-year and 15-year plans," he said. "Now we have the facilities and the infrastructure to support growth in the future. It's really exciting."

While he kept his cards fairly close to his chest regarding any potential new service, Harris specifically named urology as a possible area of focus for the future.

"Our aim is to provide the services our community needs right here at Headwaters Health Care Centre," he remarked. "We don't

want our residents traveling 40 kilometres down the road to Brampton if they don't need to, but, on the flip side of that, we have to make sure there's a need here first.?

The hospital will hold something of a mini celebration during Monday's opening, where it hopes to interview the new facility's very first patient, while also hosting various fun filled activities for staff.

?This renovation is the biggest upgrade the hospital has seen since it opened in 1997, so we kind of have to celebrate,? the centre's Communications Manager Erin Burcham said.

For more information on Headwaters Health Care Centre and all the services the local facility provides, visit headwatershealth.ca