

Pine River Institute lands \$4.2 million in funding

By Paula Brown

Pine River Institute has received \$4.2 million in additional funding from the Ontario government to support an expansion of the treatment centre's mental health and addiction services.

Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, joined Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones and Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, on Monday, September 27, outside the Pine River Institute in Mulmur to announce the investment.

The increase in funding will allow for Pine River Institute to add 30 new youth treatment beds to the facility, expanding their total number of beds to 59.

"Supporting the health and well-being of children and youth has never been more important," said Elliott. "We know that children and youth are struggling, families and communities are struggling as well."

Pine River Institute, which opened in 2006, is a not-for-profit treatment facility for youth aged 13-19 living with addictive behaviours and other mental challenges. The centre offers individualized plans to youth based on their developmental needs which combine therapy, a structured environment, and life skills with an educational program.

According to the Pine River Institute, the treatment centre can have upwards of 200 people on the waitlist for a bed at the facility and the average wait time is more than 14 months.

"Pine River has consistently had a waitlist that far exceeds our capacity. The pandemic has shone a light on the growth of addiction and mental health concerns, generally and with youth in particular. We know that the post-pandemic world will likely see even more adolescents struggling with these issues," said Vaughan Dowie, Chief Executive Officer for Pine River Institute. "This investment could not be more timely."

The funding from the Ontario government comes during the province's first-ever Recovery Month, and is part of a \$32.7 million investment to expand addictions services and the \$175 million investment in Ontario's 2021 budget.

In a press release on Monday, the province said they are looking to address gaps in care and reduce wait times to improve access to care.

The funding is also part of the government's commitment to invest \$3.8 billion over 10 years to implement the Roadmap to Wellness, a plan to build mental health and addictions systems centred around the need of individuals and their families.