

Construction started on new Kitchener hospice

Waterloo Region Record

KITCHENER — Construction is under way at a new residential hospice in south Kitchener, with about a third of the needed funds still to be raised.

"Every donation is important and everyone can contribute in some way," said Jackie Hatherly-Martin, chair of the capital campaign council.

The fundraising goal for Innisfree House, which will have 10 beds to provide comfort and care to end-of-life patients and their families, is \$4.4 million and so far \$2.8 million has been raised.

The hospice is much needed in the region. It's an expansion of Lisaard House in Cambridge, which has six beds. Since it opened in 2000, Lisaard House cared for more than 1,100 people — but double that number were turned away because of lack of available beds.

Care provided at Lisaard, and soon Innisfree House, is free. Both will depend on donations for more than half the operating budget because government only provides partial funding for bedside care.

"We've worked really hard to make it a good, sustainable organization, which is why we're in the place now to expand to the next step," said Hatherly-Martin.

Lisaard is dedicated to cancer patients, while Innisfree — expected to open in the spring — is for any palliative diagnosis.

"We're hoping the roof will be on by the end of December," Hatherly-Martin said.

Construction began at the site in south Kitchener near Conestoga College a few weeks ago, with a driveway from Homer Watson Boulevard among the first work.

"We really want this to be a community project," Hatherly-Martin said. "It is for everybody."

The first part of the campaign focused on personal calls for donations, garnering significant gifts from family foundations of \$250,000 and \$100,000.

The next step is reaching out to the community. They're hoping 1,000 people will donate \$1,000 each, whether all at once or over a year, to bridge the gap by another \$1 million.

But the charity is thankful for what anyone can give.

"Every gift helps," Hatherly-Martin said.

The care provided makes a big difference for the people coping with a terminal illness and their families.

"Hospice care is for people who are dying, but it's about living those final days."

A hospital is institutional, while staying at home can become difficult for family.

"Hospice helps people get the medical care they need, but it allows families to be families again and not caregivers," Hatherly-Martin said.

Lisaard was carefully designed to feel like a home, and that will be the same at Innisfree to make everyone comfortable. There have even been weddings and family celebrations at Lisaard House.

"It is very sad when people die, but there's a real joy in being able to share those last days," Hatherly-Martin said.

"When you talk to families who have been to Lisaard House, they are ever so grateful to have those moments."

Find out more at innisfreehospice.com

jweidner@therecord.com , Twitter: [@WeidnerRecord](https://twitter.com/WeidnerRecord)



An architect's rendering of the new Innisfree residential hospice.