

November 20, 2020

RVH set to open Regional Pandemic Response Unit

As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to surge across the province and in Simcoe Muskoka, today Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) cut the ribbon on its Regional Pandemic Response Unit (PRU).

The 70-bed, 8,250 square-foot modular structure is a four season, fully-functioning field hospital located in RVH's parking lot and connected to the health centre by an enclosed walkway. Professionally staffed and fully-equipped, the unit is a regional asset for partner hospitals facing capacity challenges, including, Collingwood General and Marine, Georgian Bay General Hospital, Muskoka Algonquin Health, Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital and Stevenson Memorial Hospital.

"RVH's mantra throughout this pandemic has been 'safety first and prepare for the worst'," says Janice Skot, RVH president and CEO. "Rest assured, RVH is very well-trained and well-prepared to respond to this pandemic. We have the staff and supplies; equipment and expertise; and now, the bed capacity to care for patients from across the region."

The PRU was built at the direction and support of the provincial government which recently provided \$12.3 million in new operational funding. The funding will allow RVH to open 99 additional beds, including 70 in the PRU.

"This investment for the new Pandemic Response Unit at Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre will help to increase hospital capacity and reduce wait times for patients and families in Simcoe Muskoka and beyond," says Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Together, we are ensuring that our healthcare system is able to respond to the second and future waves of COVID-19. Thank you to the frontline health care heroes at Royal Victoria for your unwavering compassion and dedication to care and protect patients and the community."

Andrea Khanjin, MPP for Barrie-Innisfil notes, "This additional funding of more than \$12 million for RVH demonstrates our government's commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of Ontarians. With the funding provided by our government for additional beds at RVH, the people of Barrie and Innisfil will be supported with the care they require. It is another example of how, when RVH requests support, as local Members of Provincial Parliament, we work with the Minister to find funding."

It's important to note, the PRU is not a unit for COVID patients. The patients who will be cared for in the unit are well defined – medically stable with an estimated stay of three to five days. The PRU will open safely in phases, beginning late-November as needs of the community dictate.

"As our hospitals ramp-up surgeries and procedures that were paused in mid-March, our occupancy rates are increasing. Meanwhile, we are facing a perfect storm; a collision between Wave 2 of the pandemic and the looming flu season which could significantly stress the healthcare system," says Gail Hunt, president and CEO, Georgian Bay General Hospital. "Having these beds available means our patients can finish their recovery in a fully-functioning field hospital and then safely return to their home communities when ready."

The PRU is one of only three such units in the province. It is outfitted with modular walls for privacy and head walls with suction and oxygen, a call bell system for patient assistance, interprofessional stations and washrooms. The unit itself is very sturdy and can withstand high winds and snow loads. The opening ceremony is available for viewing [here](#) and a virtual tour is also [available](#).

"The PRU is an insurance policy in the face of a very uncertain and unpredictable future. As always, RVH is well prepared and ready to work with our regional partners to ensure all residents of the region can get the care they need – close to home," says Charlotte Wallis, chair RVH Board of Directors.

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In the photo: Charlotte Wallis, RVH Board chair, centre, cuts the ribbon to officially open the PRU. She is joined by, left, Andrea Khanjin, MPP Barrie-Innisfil; Janice Skot, right, RVH president and CEO. Middle row right, Gail Hunt, president and CEO Georgian Bay General Hospital; back, Mayor Jeff Lehman, City of Barrie; Dr. Derek Benjamin, chief of Medicine, RVH; Dr. Charles Gardner, medical officer of health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Photo by Denise Philpott, RVH

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