

Hospital Confirmed for Swift Current

After months of rumours and speculation, the official word is that Swift Current will soon be home to a new hospital.

As reported in the Sept. 5 edition of the Prairie Post, the new location for the hospital will be adjacent to the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 4 North of the Swift Current Mall.

"We are very excited with the location because it benefits those across the region," said Andrew Will, chief executive officer for Cypress Health Region.

The city needs 30 acres of land and after narrowing the choices down to a select few spots, it felt this was the best choice. Will says it was the No. 1 location asked by the public.

"Whether it was downtown or not, we needed the 30 acres there and that ruled out anything downtown," said Will.

The 30 acres is required to provide plenty of space for the hospital to expand.

Construction is slated to begin in August 2004 and will be complete by late fall 2005. Will and others have been planning the design for the last month and the blueprint should soon be complete.

"We have six different teams of staff that are working on the design, we want to meet our own needs now and 20 years down the future," said Will.

"We want this to be a top facility in the region and province."

The towns, RMs, Saskatchewan Health and the Dr. Noble Irwin Foundation have all financially supported the new hospital and they along with residents have made it become a reality.

Funding comes from the province as well as the city of Swift Current and the surrounding area. Sixty-five per cent of the funding comes from the province and 35 per cent comes from the city and surrounding area.

Swift Current and area have had to raise \$10.5 million to go towards the \$30-million project.

"Swift Current has raised \$6.5 million and we received great funding so far from the R.M.'s and municipalities, we are at \$8.3 million," said Will.

Will figures there to be \$3 million to \$5 million in extra costs for equipment and furniture and hopes to bring as much equipment and furniture as they can from the old building.

Mayor Paul Elder was delighted with the decision of the new location and is pumped to break ground.

"We've been fighting for this for a long time now, I personally have for 12 years. I am delighted it has passed and I am very grateful to the people of the southwest," said Elder.

Jim Parsons, who has been serving co-chair of the Southwest Municipal Government Committee, feels it's an excellent location and very accessible from both sides of the city.

"This puts some realization to the fact we're getting a new hospital. Out of the 79 urban and rural areas we have received over \$8 million."

Parsons, who is also the reeve of the RM of Swift Current, says they have received funding of all different amounts in hopes of achieving their goal.

A fundraising committee has been struck to secure funds from southwest Saskatchewan's rural areas and they have been receiving funds on a regular basis. Parsons says they based it on the usage of the hospital and how much they can afford.

Committee members are not setting a requirement and they stress rural areas don't have to commit to donating money.

Dennis Lefreniere, chair for the Cypress Health Region, says it has taken the steps required for the process of getting a new hospital and he says it's well

deserved for the southwest corner of Saskatchewan.

“We hope to get the rest of the funding in the next three weeks, we understand some communities are still deciding or are just getting back into meetings after the summer. We have taken all the required steps now to fulfill the process and there is no turning back,” said Lefreniere.

Marty Salberg, Director of Economic Development for Swift Current, feels economically this could attract more people to the city and from a business standpoint it has been received very well.

“Anytime you can add a \$30 million development into your city, you have to be extremely happy. This will ensure good health care, but as well it will attract more doctors and nurses for the area,” said Salberg.

Not only will there be an increase in doctors and medical staff, Salberg feels there will also be an increase in seniors as well because they would feel safer with a better health-care facility.

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