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2 MPPs say the Ontario government will provide funds for its capital and operating costs



Left to right: Stephen Smith, board of directors, Local Health Integration Network; MPP David Zimmer; Dr. Sandy Buchman, medical lead, Neshama Hospice; Debbie Berlin-Romalis, board member, Neshama Hospice; Robert Kamen, chair of the board, Neshama Hospice. In the front is MPP Monte Kwinter.

A group of volunteers says fundraising is well underway for a new residential hospice in North York that will be built on Jewish values.

The 10-bed medical facility, which will provide end-of-life care, is to be called Neshama Hospice. Neshama means soul in Hebrew.

Dr. Sandy Buchman, medical lead for the volunteer group working to build the project, said it will be the first of its kind in North York. A residential hospice is a facility where people at the end of their lives can have all of their needs met in one place, he said. "It's not enough to meet the needs of the population, but it's a start," Buchman told CBC Toronto on Monday. "We envision a hospice that is a centre of excellence. We see a beautiful, bright environment where people can have independence and all of these needs met. It's the whole continuity of end-of-life care."

The Ontario government promised in 2016-2017 to support up to 20 new hospices across the province within three years. The Neshama Hospice is one of those.

Buchman, who practises palliative medicine with the Temmy Latner Centre for Palliative Care, which is part of the Sinai Health System in Toronto, said the group has raised about \$10 million. Its goal is \$18 million. About \$15 million is needed for capital costs, while \$3 million is needed for operating costs over three years.

Buchman, who also serves as a palliative care physician through the Palliative Care and Education for the Homeless program out of Inner City Health Associates in Toronto, said land for the facility has yet to be bought and there's no word on when construction will begin. But he said the hospice will be an important facility that will provide nursing, personal support and other services to patients at the end of their lives and their families.

The hospice will provide nursing, personal support and other services to patients at the end of their lives and their families. It will also provide family-centred, community-based palliative services, including outreach, outpatient care and bereavement counselling.

On Monday, two Ontario MPPs announced in a news release that the provincial government will provide financial support for the hospice. MPP David Zimmer and MPP Monte Kwinter said the province will provide up to \$2 million in capital costs for the hospice, and once it is constructed, the government will provide \$105,000 per adult bed annually in operating costs.

Buchman noted that an Ontario's auditor general report in December 2014 suggested that about six to seven hospice beds are needed per a population of 100,000. The current situation is nowhere near that figure, he said. "As Toronto's population rapidly ages, the need for compassionate, respectful end-of-life care is more urgent than ever," he said in the release.

He said it would have the capacity to meet the needs of about 200 patients annually.

Currently, about 70 per cent of Ontario residents die in hospitals. The cost of a palliative care unit is about \$750 a day, while the cost of a hospice bed is \$450 a day.