

Damerla fields concerns at hospital expansion town hall

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With a growing community comes the need for expanded hospitals.

That said, Mississauga East-Cooksville MPP has been pushing for an expansion at Mississauga Hospital, one of three hospitals under the Trillium Health Centre umbrella.

Ontario's recently appointed Minister of Senior Affairs fielded questions from her constituents on Friday, Feb. 24 at Central Library in the first of two Town Hall meetings scheduled to inform the public of the hospital expansion plans.

"(The Ministry of Health's budget) just tells you how important (healthcare) is to Ontario's government and any province's government," Damerla said, referencing the \$52 billion out of Ontario's \$134 billion budget that's dedicated to

healthcare, the largest allocation in the budget.

Shawn Kerr, associate vice president of public affairs and strategic partnerships for Trillium Health Partners, was also on hand to highlight Mississauga Hospital's expansion plan.

It calls for a new 15-level acute care facility with up to date beds among other necessities.

The Trillium network, which also includes Credit Valley Hospital and Queensway Health Centre, serves the largest number of patients in Ontario with more than 1.6 million visits per year, including more than 270,000 emergency and urgent care patients.

A large concern is the lack of hospital beds while Damerla and Kerr fielded several other concerns, most notably the long wait period at hospitals.

Damerla said the prov-

ince is looking into ways to help those in need identify the fine line between urgency and emergency.

"If it's two in the morning and my baby is not healthy, but not critical, where do I go?" she said.

The issue of wait times for surgery due to a shortage of specialists was also brought up in the relatively civil town hall.

Even though Damerla claims wait times for surgeries in Ontario are the lowest in the country, some Ontarians are still waiting for months.

"There's a really great saying that says what gets measured gets done," she said, explaining that the province continues to measure wait times. "Hospitals are only as good as the people."

Another town hall meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 3 at the Pope John Paul II Polish Cultural Centre (4300 Cawthra Rd.) at 7 p.m.



Metroland file photo

Mississauga East-Cooksville MPP Dipika Damerla hosted the first of two town hall meetings about a potential expansion at Mississauga Hospital on Friday, Feb. 24.