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Media Release

York Central Hospital to Conduct Additional Public Engagement on Transition of Cataract Surgery

Richmond Hill, ON: York Central Hospital announced today it will conduct additional public engagement before moving forward to fully implement the relocation of cataract surgeries to the Eye Institute at Southlake Regional Health Centre (SRHC), a decision which responds to the Central Local Health Integration Network's (LHIN) recommended strategy to develop a north/south collaborative for cataract surgery in order to reduce wait times and improve patient outcomes.

“We have heard from the community, we have heard from the Richmond Hill Town Council and we have decided to take some additional time to conduct a comprehensive community engagement strategy,” said Dr. Larry Grossman, Chief of Staff at York Central Hospital.

These activities are currently in the planning stages to provide face-to-face opportunities for local residents to provide feedback on the transition of cataract services. Further details will be announced shortly. The decision to extend our community engagement activities was endorsed today by York Central Hospital's Board of Trustees at their meeting and will ensure York Central Hospital has had time to consider and address the concerns of our citizens before services are fully transitioned.

Initial discussions and consultations on the issue began in late October 2006 and included both physician and administrative representatives from across the Central LHIN hospitals. Discussions leading to the submission of the current integration proposal from York Central Hospital and Southlake Regional Health Centre have been ongoing over the past six months with full participation of the relevant ophthalmologists and administrators.

As part of both the federal government's wait time strategy and that of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's Provincial Wait Times Strategy, York Central Hospital was mandated by the Central LHIN to pursue strategies that would:

- Deliver better patient outcomes;
- Deliver care more efficiently; and
- Reduce wait times.

The decision to create a cataract surgery centre of excellence at SRHC was made in collaboration with the Central LHIN, with extensive consultation and input from administrators and ophthalmologists from across York Region.

Clinical evidence from similar cataract centres has shown significant benefits for patients with this approach, including:

- Shorter wait times for surgery;
- Better clinical outcomes with fewer post-operative complications and infections;
- A better patient experience, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of older adults; and
- An increase in the number of patients able to receive surgery.

York Central Hospital's commitment is to provide the best possible eye care to the people in its community and believes the transition of cataract surgery to the Eye Institute will help achieve that.

An additional benefit to our strategy to improve the quality of care and access cataract surgery is that this transition will allow York Central Hospital to reduce wait times for cancer surgeries and orthopedic surgeries, including hip and knee replacements.

The move of cataract surgeries does not affect York Central Hospital's ability to treat other eye conditions or provide emergency eye care. In fact, pre- and post-operative cataract surgery care will continue to be offered through the ophthalmologist's offices in Richmond Hill.

"Cataract surgery is an elective procedure that does not require a traditional operating room," said Dr. Grossman. "It does however require specific tools and expertise. The Eye Institute at Southlake was created specifically with cataract surgery in mind and is able to cater to the specific needs of seniors who comprise the bulk of this patient population."

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