

## Health minister visits Ajax-Pickering emergency room

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By [Kristen Calis](#)

AJAX -- It's thanks to a supportive community and staff the Ajax-Pickering hospital now has a top-notch emergency room, said the Province's health minister.

Deb Matthews toured the new emergency room at Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering hospital Nov. 27, just three days before it officially opened. After inspecting every room and questioning the chief of the emergency department, Dr. Gary Mann, and others on the tour, she was pleased.

"It's wonderful to see," she said in an interview. "It's clear to me that people who work here have really put a lot of thought into it, (understanding) what the patients' needs are, (understanding) what the staff's needs are. This is going to work really well for the people who make their way to emerg(ency), so it's pretty exciting."

She also toured the old emergency department, which will be demolished.

"It's a pretty clear demonstration of why this kind of investment's important," she said after seeing the old ER.

The new ER began accepting patients at 4 a.m. Nov. 30.

Ms. Matthews said reducing wait times, especially in emergency rooms, is one way the Province plans to accommodate growing populations such as that in Ajax and Pickering. It's also important alternate levels of care be used for those people who don't need all of the hospital supports, she said. This will allow them to go home, use those supports while freeing up space in the hospitals.

"I think we've got some big challenges that way but we really want to strengthen the community supports as much as possible so people can stay in their homes as long as possible," she said.

When asked about concerns the Central East Local Health Integration Network doesn't get as much funding per resident as the provincial average, Ms. Matthews said it's not an easy comparison to make. For example, she said people in some areas of the province (such as Durham) live closer to areas where more intensive and expensive supports are available, which all factor into the equation.

"You have to be pretty careful," she said. "It can be deceiving."

The Growing Communities Health Care Alliance claims the CE LHIN receives less funding per resident than the provincial average in areas such as mental health, addictions programs, community health centres and assisted living.



Sabrina Byrnes / Metroland

AJAX -- Health Minister Deb Matthews received a tour of the new emergency department at the Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering Hospital November 27. November 27, 2009

