

CAS building 'milestone'

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By: Chris Traber, Staff Writer

York Region's Children's Aid Society made history yesterday in Newmarket with the purchase of land to build its newest home.

"It's historic," executive director Martin McNamara said yesterday.

"This facility allows us to consolidate and enhance services and gives us a major location in an area with so much growth. It's a pleasant and centralized location with convenient access for clients and staff," he added.

The ground-breaking doubly describes the ceremony to launch construction of its newest building in the region, Mr. McNamara added.

Along with board president Barkat Kara and Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Mr. McNamara deemed the official ground-breaking a milestone, where the organization will construct its first wholly owned building in its 72-year history.

The non-profit society was incorporated and received its charter in 1935 and has always leased its facilities.

The new 17,000-square-foot, three-storey building will be on the east side of Leslie Street, between Mulock Drive and Gorham Street.

It will be home office to 150 of the society's 260 staff. Scheduled to open next October, the building will include staff training facilities and a wellness centre.

The \$4.5-million cost will not impact on the bottom line, he said.

By divesting of two leased properties, one in Newmarket and one in Keswick, the society was able to purchase, without incurring additional costs, a property that will be the permanent home, Mr. McNamara said.

"By constructing a new home, the first in our history, York CAS and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services are reaffirming its commitment to the people of York Region to deliver our very best service to children and families," he added.

The society will still maintain its Eagle Street property and a 20-year lease with the Town of Newmarket, as well as a leased property in Richmond Hill.

"As fiscally sound a decision as this new building is, service to the community was and continues to be uppermost in our minds," Mr. McNamara said.

"We will continue, as always, to strive to deliver our very best, most responsive service to all corners of our diverse region."

More than 500 children are in the society's care and more than 2,000 families are served each year.