

Valley Manor project speeding up, with COVID pressure easing: CEO

The CEO of Valley Manor says she's optimistic construction on a new long-term care home for Barry's Bay could begin sometime in 2024.

Trisha DesLaurier says she's hesitant to announce a firm timeline for the project. But she's confident the pace will pick up, after plans for the new home were heavily derailed with the onset of the pandemic.

She says the provincial government has said it will expedite long-term care projects like this one.

Plans for a new manor to replace the current one on Mintha Street started several years ago, but got derailed.

"The pandemic became top of mind, first and foremost, a priority," she says. "Our re-development project was put to the side somewhat. We were still working on it slowly behind the scenes. However, the pandemic was the number one priority.

"Now that things have settled down a little bit, the redevelopment is back at the top for us and we're eager to get moving."

She said COVID brought changes to the way the long-term care industry works and designs for the home had to be tinkered with to meet new infection control protocols. New drawings are now being reviewed by the province.

"Now, we need to enhance the size of the dining rooms and expand the adjacent spaces for physical distancing," she says. "That encompasses all of our other areas, such as our lounge and activity spaces.

"It also includes staff areas, so physical distancing during staff breaks and meals can be accommodated. As well, the rooms themselves have to be larger for the distance between beds."

The new home will replace the current Manor on Mintha Street and add six new beds, upping capacity to 96. It will be built on land behind St. Francis Memorial Hospital.

