

LHIN is listening to the community

May 31, 2010

Orangeville Banner - Editorial

Dear editor,

I appreciated Richard Vivian's May 19 article about the Ontario Hospital Coalition's report and the fact he included a response from Margot Hornseth, chair of the board for Headwaters Health Care Centre, showing how that hospital is working hard to listen to the concerns of those they serve.

Indeed, the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and Headwaters continue to work with residents, other health care providers and local municipal leaders on establishing health services that meet the needs of local communities. LHINs replaced the old system of District Health Councils and offices of the Regional Ministry of Health. LHINs are smaller and now able to respond to issues quickly with local solutions.

For example, we are continuing to hold public meetings to inform the Shelburne Health Task Force on the implementation of a Health and Care Centre in Shelburne to serve area residents. The next community public meeting was to be held on June 2 but we are rescheduling that meeting for later in the month.

The last meeting was held May 5 and over 40 residents participated. They gave feedback on what was being proposed including what services they thought were critical for their community. They also looked at important information such as the fact that Shelburne residents made 5,474 trips to hospital emergency rooms in 2008/09, yet over half of those visits were of a non-emergency nature and could have been handled by a local nurse practitioner, doctor or other health care worker. The fact that these visits could have been handled locally underscores the need for better primary care services in the area so that residents don't have to travel to the hospital for non-emergencies.

The public will again be invited to come out and give their input at an upcoming meeting. The Shelburne Community Health Task force will use the information to make its recommendations to the board of the Central West LHIN. The board will then work with local health service providers and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to bring a Health and Care Centre to Shelburne

This is an example of transparency and community involvement in getting the right health care system in place based on the needs of each unique community.

Mimi Lowi-Young, CEO, Central West LHIN