

Central West LHIN presents overview at Shelburne Council

Representatives from the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) presented an overview to Council July 27th. Maria Britto Central West LHIN Chair accompanied by Chief Executive Officer Scott McLeod made the presentation in a delegation to Councillors. The overview explained the history and development of the organization as well as accomplishments, challenges and goals providing Councillors "in a whirlwind - a 101 on LHINs," said McLeod.

LHINs are established in 14 geographic areas of Ontario to accommodate a more regionalized model to serve the specific health needs and challenges of residents in each locale. LHINs are non profit crown agencies responsible for "planning, funding and integrating local health services" working within the framework of the Local Health System Integration Act of 2006.

The Chief Executive Officer said that "unlike other provinces that do not deliver, but broker services, the local health service provider Boards have been maintained." He said what made the boundaries of the 14 divisions interesting was that they were drawn using a methodology that looked at where people seek health care. Shelburne is part of district 5, the Central West LHIN, which also serves Brampton, Caledon, Malton, north Etobicoke and west Woodbridge as well as Dufferin County.

LHIN strategic planning and reporting at the local level includes an integrated health service plan which sets out "local vision, priorities and strategic direction for each LHIN." An annual business plan communicates the goals for the fiscal year; LHIN and local health service providers are monitored and reports made quarterly and annually. The community engagement plan is key to defining LHIN goals and reporting on outcomes.

A mounting challenge in the Central West district, according to McLeod, is the significant population growth that has occurred since 1995 - a 50% increase. Other significant factors include the urban and rural mix, a diverse community, and an aging population. McLeod said historically the district has operated under a structural deficit, struggling to keep pace with "local population growth, geographic and ethnic diversity and the aging population."

These challenges are set to escalate in the coming years with a predicted 23% population growth and a 64% projected seniors' growth (65 and over) by 2021. Future investments will be required to fulfill the growing needs of the population. Investments that include home and community care reform, to manage patients when they are released back into the community, as well as chronic disease prevention and management in a population where 36% of the residents have at least one chronic condition and the 3rd highest rate of diabetes in the province. The delegation noted that there would be an increasing "demand for acute services, specialty care and clinical interventions."

Mayor Ken Bennington questioned the funding formula considering the historical deficit in Central West. Chief Executive Officer Scott McLeod said there was a system of different formulas that determined the funding for each district. "We would like to see Central West at the provincial average of \$1600 per capita, he said, "Currently it sits at \$1000 per capita." Councillor Walter Benotto asked the delegates, "Is there anyway, we at the lower level can assist with getting funding?" at the end of the day it hurts our people." McLeod answered that they were "always looking for support for the cause." He continued on to say, "Our challenge is we need to fix funding faster."

By Marni Walsh