

***MEDIA RELEASE***

**'Aging at Home' kick-off in the South East:  
Area seniors meet with Local Health Integration Network  
Forum is start of consultations for \$17.4M initiative to support seniors in their homes**

**October 15, Belleville** – Seniors from across the South East region met on October 11 to discuss ideas and priorities for seniors who need some help to live independently at home. The forum was the regional kick-off for the new provincial *Aging at Home Strategy*, announced in August.

The South East Local Health Integration Network will invest \$17.4 million over the next three years to fund enhanced support and care services that will assist seniors to preserve their independence at home. These may include traditional supports such as care before and after hospitalization to help seniors cope with illness, but could also include nontraditional approaches to prevent the need for admission to long-term care facilities. Caregivers of seniors are also expected to benefit from the program.

The provincial funding for the *Aging at Home Strategy* totals more than half a billion dollars (\$593,452,800) over three years. Each LHIN is now preparing a plan for its region.

**A first step in community engagement**

To begin to bring planning closer to the users of health care services, the South East Local Health Integration Network partnered with Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging to meet with the 34 seniors from across the region (which extends from Brighton to Prescott and up to Smiths Falls, Perth and Bancroft). Topics discussed included priorities such as elderly-at-risk identification and contingency planning, supportive housing and supported living, and access to primary health care. Said Brian Brophy, president of the Council on Aging: "It's great to be asked for the chance for input right at the start, and for seniors to be able to directly influence the development of the services that they will use."

*Cont'd ...*

Attendees came from Brockville, Brighton, Tamworth, Verona, Picton, Bancroft, and points in between. “There was a lot of participation, and I was really pleased with that. Sometimes people just sit by and nod, but this forum wasn’t that way at all,” said David Dean of Brockville, who attended with his wife Judy. “If the South East LHIN needs some more discussion and debate, I’d be glad to participate.”

The forum was an essential first step in the consultation and planning process, adds Georgina Thompson, Board chair of the South East Local Health Integration Network. “It is important that we go directly to the people who will use the services. They expressed their enthusiasm for this process and many have shown a continued willingness to help us move the development of these plans further along,” she said.

Held in Napanee, the seniors’ forum was the first of a multi-phase community engagement process. Next steps include bringing health care providers and community support services, plus seniors from this first round of consultation, into joint discussions.

The draft plan for *Aging at Home* will be presented to the full board of the South East Local Health Integration Network, and then to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in January 2008.

#### **Aging in the South East Region**

- The South East’s population of 482,000 includes more than 80,000 seniors
- This represents the highest ratio of people aged 65 and over (16.7%) of all 14 LHIN regions in the province
- Diseases of aging – arthritis, high blood pressure, chronic bronchitis, heart disease – are common in the region
- A substantial amount of community support for seniors is provided by volunteers
- Many of the volunteers are themselves seniors

The South East Local Health Integration Network is responsible for planning, integration, and funding of a total of 124 health service providers in the South East region.

For interviews or more information:  
Polly Thompson  
South East Local Health Integration Network

(613) 967-0196 #221