

MEDIA RELEASE

North East LHIN and Community Partners Announce Formation of Sault Ste. Marie ALC Solutions Group

For immediate release – Friday, April 30, 2010 – Earlier today, the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) and a group of community leaders from Sault Ste. Marie and Area held a media conference to announce the creation of a newly formed **North East LHIN/Sault Ste. Marie ALC Solutions Group** representing a wide spectrum of community partners who will serve as a coordinating body to plan and implement programs and initiatives related to the ALC challenge in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Group, whose members include local representatives from the Ontario March of Dimes, Algoma District Medical Group, Group Health Centre, Blind River District Health Centre, Sault Area Hospital, North East Community Care Access Centre, and the City of Sault Ste. Marie agreed that their work will focus on the interest of patients. They also agreed to meet frequently over the next several months and provide regular updates to the community to ensure citizens are kept informed of their work and progress. Within a few hours today, members agreed on six priorities on which they will immediately focus, including a hospital ALC plan, community support/assisted living, human resource strategy, long-term care opportunities, emergency department wait times, community geriatric services. An action plan with details on the priorities will be established when the group next meets in May.

The number of ALC patients in Sault Area Hospital's acute care beds is at an all time high, often accounting for 40% or more of the total approved acute bed complement for the hospital. This has resulted in significant overcrowding, longer wait times for patients requiring acute care, and significant impact on local seniors and their families who are looking to receive the right care in the right setting.

The NE LHIN is playing an active role in finding solutions to ALC pressures right across the region including: Co-chair of the ALC Community Steering Group in Sudbury, member of the Nipissing ALC Partnership and member of the Cochrane Seniors ALC Working Group.

QUOTES

Shelley McEachern, Administrator, Extendicare Nursing Home and Co-Chair of the Group said, "This group is a result of partners, from various parts of our community coming together to place their energies on a common goal of better care for our seniors."

Terry Tilleczek, NE LHIN Senior Director of Planning, Integration and Community Engagement and Co-Chair of the Group noted that "Members of the Sault Ste. Marie ALC Solutions Group are focused and determined to make a difference in ALC pressures this community is facing."

Tracy Macdonald, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Sault Area Hospital noted, "The Sault Area Hospital is committed to working with its partners to find creative solutions that benefit our community both in the short-term and the long-term."

Dr. Patti Avery, CEO, Algoma District Medical Group, "The Algoma District Medical Group truly supports the ALC Solutions Group endeavours in its efforts to optimize care seniors in our community. We look forward to working together to enhance a system that will provide quality care and assist with recruitment of health care professionals in our community."

David Oraziotti, MPP Sault Ste. Marie noted, "Our government is committed to providing health care resources that ensure the dignity, respect and quality of life patients deserve. It is very encouraging that the NE LHIN, Sault Area Hospital, the municipality and local health care stakeholders are more effectively coordinating their efforts to address alternative level of care challenges in Sault Ste. Marie."

John Rowswell, Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie stated, "It is good to see the community rally together to seek solutions to this long-standing community challenge. ALC is not just a hospital issue and we are keen to partner with the NE LHIN and others to find solutions."

Louise Paquette, CEO of the NE LHIN confirmed that, "17% of people living in our region are age 65 and over and this number is increasing at an alarming rate. We are committed to working with our partners in Sault Ste. Marie in an effort to find solutions to our ALC challenges."

QUICK FACTS

- The North East LHIN has the highest rate of ALC patients of any LHIN across the province, approximately 31%.
- Up to 40% of the beds at the Sault Area Hospital are occupied by ALC patients on any given day.
- 17% of people in Northeastern Ontario are age 65 and over. This number is expected to increase to 30% in 20 years.
- The ALC Solutions Group will draw on the expertise within each represented organization to develop concrete plans to move key priorities forward in a timely manner.

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