

MEDIA RELEASE

North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) Takes Steps to Rethink and Improve Health Services for Northerners

November 29, 2011 -- Numerous efforts to help enhance Northern access to health care – all focused on listening and responding to local citizens – were in the spotlight this week at the November meeting of the NE LHIN Board of Directors.

Held in Sault Ste. Marie, Board Directors received updates on initiatives that demonstrate the value of the NE LHIN, including: Northerner's thoughts on health care, the creation of an Emergency Department Network, care for the region's elderly, future work on chronic disease and prevention management in the NE LHIN region, and ways to improve the health of our Aboriginal population.

Additionally, major steps were taken to integrate the Algoma District's mental health and addiction programs and services with a community engagement session held following the Board meeting. More than 150 people came out on a chilly November evening to offer their input into how to create a less fragmented mental health and addictions system in Algoma. The opportunity for input was timely given the just-appointed Board of Directors to the **Algoma Anchor Agency** – a NE LHIN facilitated integration of 13 mental health and addiction providers and more than 100 services in Algoma district. The new organization will offer a single point of access and more patient-focused care.

Highlights of the marathon day include:

- **[Summary Report of the NE LHIN's Community Engagement Sessions](#)** -- A resolution was passed by the NE LHIN Board of Directors for the summary report to be directed to Northeastern Ontario communities and District Social Services Administration Boards to work in partnership on improving access to care for Northerners.

The report is a summary of health care opinions gathered during the LHIN's 25 community engagement sessions held across the region with close to 700 Northerners earlier this year. It groups comments into 12 themes which show a need and willingness to rethink how local health care is delivered and experienced. The comments received confirmed the need for enhanced integration and coordination of services; a shift to more community-based care to meet the increasing demands of an aging population; more sharing of human resource planning and recruitment efforts; better navigation and discharge planning by hospital and community; and more coordination of mental health and addiction services.

The opinion-gathering sessions are an important part of the NE LHIN's *2011-2012 Annual Community Engagement Plan*. With a locally managed and locally responsive system, Northerners can suggest ideas and make decisions that respond to the needs of fellow Northerners, particularly the frail elderly.

- **NE LHIN Emergency Department Network**

An Emergency Department Network is being formed to act as a regional planning and implementation body for initiatives related to emergency services in Northeastern Ontario. The Network will include the Medical Directors/ED Chiefs or ED administrative lead from each of the 24 general hospitals in Northeastern Ontario.

- **NE LHIN Response to the Report by Dr. David Walker, Provincial ALC Lead**
Board members reviewed the NE LHIN's responses to the summary of recommendations given in the report *Caring For Our Aging Population and Addressing Alternate Level of Care*, submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care by Dr. David Walker, Provincial ALC Lead. The NE LHIN has already put initiatives in place to focus on the shift in health care underway – less focus on institutional- based care, more on community-based care. Examples of these initiatives: behavioural support systems, more assisted living services, Home First, assess and restore beds, and a primary care lead appointed to the NE LHIN administrative structure.
- **Aboriginal Health**
The Board reviewed a paper authored jointly by the North East and North West LHINs that examines issues and ways to improve the health of Aboriginal, First Nation, and Métis people. It also discussed the work of the LHIN's Local Aboriginal Health Committee which is holding a full day engagement in Sudbury today to discuss priorities for a mental health and addiction strategy, communication enhancement, and how to proceed with a Northern Ontario First Nation Health strategy.
- **Health Human Resources (HHR) Planning in the NE LHIN Region**
One of the twelve themes in the NE LHIN's community engagement summary report, the LHIN has been working with a Health Human Resources Planning Steering Committee to develop a NE HHR Inventory database and an Action Plan to better sustain personal support occupations.
- **Chronic Disease Prevention and Management (CDPM) Forum – Report**
As a follow-up to the NE LHIN's first regionally focused CPDM workshop in October, the Board received a summary report which recommends the NE LHIN's next steps include creating a CDPM inventory that identifies services, best practices, and training opportunities; a follow-up forum in partnership with health units; and a First Nation CDPM forum. The forum's presentations are online [here](#).

Learn More:

Visit www.nelhin.on.ca to read more about any of these topics. Contact: Cynthia Stables, Director of Communications and Community Engagement, NE LHIN, 705-845-1887.