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# living IN THE HILLS

## Seniors voice concerns at special forum

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

If one thing was confirmed at last week's Seniors Community Forum hosted by Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital, it is that a lot of changes need to be made before seniors feel they're being properly serviced.

This was the overwhelming concern of the over 60 seniors who attended the forum and demanded changes in their social-recreational, transportation and health care services.

The forum was held at the Halton Regional Police station in Georgetown.

The seniors came to contribute their ideas for a study which is being conducted by Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital on 'Health and Related Social Service Needs for Seniors in Halton Hills.'



LES MELLISH

"Today, we want you to look at the work we've done and tell us if you think we're going in the right direction," the Hospital's Executive Director, John Oliver told the seniors at the start of the meeting.

"Our intent is to complete a study to develop an action-plan document so agencies in Halton Hills know what they have to do to meet the needs of seniors," he said.

And tell him what they're needs were they did.

Groups were formed based on issues seniors were most concerned about and these concerns were recorded by study committee members and reported at the end of the group discussion period.

By far the most important issue for seniors was the lack of a seniors recreation centre.

"There is no seniors centre and our group felt strongly that there should be one," said study consultant Debbie McDonald. "They felt the centre would be excellent not only for social functions but as a focal point for other senior-oriented services."

Les Mellish, chairman of the meeting and a study committee member said "we're willing to go with a multi-use complex that could include a base for Meals on Wheels and medical and social services."

"It's important that it get built as soon as possible and there's talk about getting it going now on a temporary basis," he continued.

Another issue seniors were very vocal about was the difficulties many face in accessing available services.

Study committee member and Halton Public Health Nurse, Maggie Connolly, led a group concerned about health and social services.

"I kept hearing one question over and over-how and where can we access services," she reported. "The solution could be the creation of a central service agency to help answer questions and coordinate services, similar to Acton Social Services and Information Centre (ASSIC) in Acton."

Another area seniors indicated there was need for was more flexible services.

"Services like homecare have certain hours and don't provide service on nights or weekends but there's a need for these types of ser-



MAGGIE CONNELLY

VICES on weekends and nights," said Ms. Connolly. "Also, seniors in this group felt it was time to get rid of medical models when it came to services. Some services are only available when you're ill but many seniors need these services in-order to stay in their own homes."

Another hot issue at the Seniors Forum was transportation and the lack of it.

Many seniors expressed dissatisfaction with the inflexibility of available transportation services. One solution mentioned was to make use of school buses when they're not being used for school transportation.

Mr. Oliver assured the seniors in attendance that their were noted and would be "condensed into a focussed direction." He warned the

residents however that funding always plays a part in change and "creative solutions might be required."

Work on the 'Health and Related Social Service Needs for Seniors in Halton Hills' study began in Aug. 23 when Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital received funding from the Provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services.

## Home is where the heart is

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

When you're sick and need emergency help you can call 911. But what or who can you call when you're not sick and need help, wonder Jack and Betty Pickup of Georgetown.

"911 is good when you're sick but they're should be a 912 number to call when you're not sick and really need help," says Mr. Pickup.

The Pickups aren't poor and they aren't sick. What they are is elderly and facing the reality that their bodies are no longer capable of what they once were.

Mr. Pickup is 88 and legally blind. He developed Retinitis Pygmentosa in 1975 and his eyesight has been slowly deteriorating since. Mrs. Pickup is 77 and has trouble breathing due to a childhood bout with tuberculosis which scarred her lungs.

They live in a two-story house in Georgetown where they've lived for 33 years. It's where they raised their two children and where their grandchildren and great-grandchildren come to visit.

They've remodelled, refinished and red-decorated the house during those 33 years, and in Mr. Pickup words, "It's just now the way we like it."

Their biggest fear now is that they'll be forced to leave this house of memories-their home- because they'll no longer be able to keep it up.

"We're getting along nicely now but it's getting harder and harder to keep going," admits Mr. Pickup.

"It scares us that the time will come when we can't get by unless some new agency comes along to help us out," he said.

His fear and the fear of many other seniors facing similar circumstances were voiced at a Seniors Community Forum hosted by Georgetown District Memorial Hospital last week.

The hospital is conducting a study on 'Health and Related Social Service Needs for Seniors in Halton Hills' and hosted the forum to determine what seniors themselves felt was needed in Halton Hills.

John Oliver, Executive Director at GDMH said the study was initiated after hospital administrators wondered if they were properly planning for seniors needs.

"We were in the process of developing nursing home beds at the Bennett Centre when we asked ourselves if nursing beds were the best solution," he said.

"We wondered what the seniors themselves thought would be best."

What the Pickups think would be best, is developing more services to prevent seniors from getting ill so as to reduce the drain on health care service costs.

Mr. Pickup has had to be treated back to health with pills and hospital care because he was out doing a job his aging body was no longer able to do.

"A couple of years ago, I was in the house by myself after,

shovelling snow and a disc slipped in my back. I could hardly move but I managed to call a friend who in turn called the ambulance," recalled Mr. Pickup.

"The ambulance was here in no time and I thought, what a marvellous service. But it seemed strange to me that so much money was being spent to get me better but no money was being spent to prevent me from getting injured in the first place."

As he says, "OHIP subsidizes health care costs. Why isn't there subsidized help for seniors?"

A draft copy of the seniors study, containing issues, possible solutions and strategies, has the issue of home support services listed. That proves health care givers have been listening to seniors and are now looking beyond traditional health care measures to find better ways to serve this important sector of our society.

For seniors like the Pickups, change in the system can't come soon enough. They don't want hand-outs, they just want in-home help at a reasonable rate so they can continue to live at home.



Picking up the shovel

Jack and Betty Pickup are getting to the age where picking up a shovel or rake isn't fun or healthy. The couple is one of many who have concerns about Halton Hills home-care system and the Pickups fear if they don't get home-care, they'll have to leave their home of 33 years. (Herald Photo)

## Provincial promises

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

Increased emphasis on community-based services to help the elderly and physically disabled stay in their homes, is the thrust of a new Ontario Ministry of Health document.

The document, entitled the 'Redirection of Long-term Care and Support Services in Ontario' was released in October and cites key directions for change.

These directions include 'integration of long-term care health and social services; improved access to quality services and the creation of community alternatives to institutions.'

In the document, the government has promised a "major investment" in long-term care and support services over the next several years. This includes a "large expansion in funding for community support services," states the document.

According to the document, the current annual funding for long-term care is 2.2 billion. Francis Lankin, Minister of Health, says the province will increase funds every year over the next five years so that by 1996-97, an additional \$64.7 million annually will be invested in long-term care and support services.

Approximately \$440 million of the new funding will be for community programs and the remainder will be directed to facility care.

John Roe, the Community Planning Coordinator for North Halton said the plan "is not just a case of new funding but it's about reallocating funding to meet the needs of communities."

In North Halton, the problem is of access to services said Mr. Roe.

"We need more in-home services here and that is what the thrust of this redirection is about."

The process of changing services in Ontario will include consultation with seniors and the physically-handicapped, advocates and caregivers, labor and women's groups and health and social service providers and planners.

At the local level, 11 Community Health and Support Services area offices will assist communities in developing consultation plans.