

The impact of LHINs on residents of Halton Region

AN ANALYSIS BY JERRY FORD

The January 28 issue of the Halton Compass reported how the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have re-defined Halton Region for access and delivery of health-care services. Halton Region has been split into three sections, each being added to a neighbouring Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

This is part of a total overhaul of the healthcare system, developed and in the process of being implemented by Queen's Park with no public consultation. LHIN is scheduled to be operational on April 1, 2005.

A summary of what has happened so far, and the timetable for future developments as set out by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is as follows.

By March 1 the LHIN boundaries originally proposed October 6, 2004 will be finalized. Each LHIN will be managed initially by a full-time director who will begin work on March 1. These directors have already been hired by Queen's Park, and they will each be assisted by two unpaid, part-time directors appointed by Queen's Park. These three will then select directors from the community to manage the LHIN operations. All directors must reside in the LHIN.

A national search campaign is currently under way for a CEO for the entire LHIN system. The CEO will begin work April 1, the day the LHIN structure takes over our healthcare system.

On January 18 the sixteen District Health Councils (DHCs) were given notice that they were to be dissolved on March 31; the work they do will be assumed by the respective LHIN on April 1. It appears that staff laid off by the DHCs will be utilized in part to staff the LHIN offices.

There are 42 Community care Access Centres (CCACs) in Ontario. While no announcement has yet been made concerning their future, three facts suggest very strongly that they will also be dissolved.

- The LHIN mandate includes work done by CCACs
- The level of active involvement in healthcare service procurement that has been an integral part of CCAC operations is specifically excluded from the LHIN mandate, and
- Procurement contracts between healthcare providers and CCACs that were to expire December 31 have been extended to March 31, 2005.

The new LHIN Boards are to meet early in April and have an implementation plan and budget completed by September 30. The Ministry of Health documents indicate that 'Community Planning and Engagement' will occur throughout the entire twelve-month process. 'Community', in the first third of the restructuring, has been defined to exclude all but a group described as 'healthcare experts'.

What does all this mean to the people of Halton?

Essentially Burlington becomes part of LHIN 4, which is dominated by Hamilton. Oakville and Milton become part of LHIN 6, which includes central and south Mississauga. Halton Hills joins LHIN 5 with Brampton as the major population centre.

Based on the population levels used by the Province for their October 6 report the results for Halton residents, population rounded to nearest 1,000, follows:

| LHIN | Pop'n | Total Pop'n | Halton %age |
|---------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| 4-Hamilton based. | 1,262 | 175 | 13.9% |
| 5-Brampton based | 699 | 49 | 7.0% |
| 6-Mississauga based | 860 | 175 | 20.3% |

Halton residents have been relegated to this minority position in healthcare decision-making, not because of population base (3 LHINS have lower populations than Halton Region), but because of policy decisions previously made on hospital restructuring. Halton Region does not have a major hospital, which is a hallmark of the LHIN definition.

Halton Region has been targeted for rapid development by the Province of Ontario's 'Places To Grow' strategy and could justify the creation of a new, modern hospital in Milton (which would be central to all of Halton Region) to accommodate the burgeoning population.

Pet Therapy at Allendale

By ANN KORNUA

They provide constant comfort and attention at the Allendale home. Working tirelessly, they nurture both residents and staff workers. These volunteers are the four-legged friends of Allendale enrolled in the Pet Therapy program, a branch of the Life Enrichment department run by Tracy Faulkner. Stroking a dog, seeing a kitten play, or watching fish can unwind a frazzling day and lighten your mood.

Animals can make us feel safe and accepted, unlike with other people where interactions may be complex and unpredictable. Tracy explained that the pets in Allendale play a very vital role in care giving to each resident.

"Some residents are not very responsive to us but when we bring the animal in, their faces just light right up. When they stroke or talk to the animal, they are more responsive,"

said Tracy.

For over eight years at Allendale, pets have been providing this service to residents. They are furry super-stars, working long hours, and live in the residence.

Currently, Allendale is home to five cats, three rabbits, one dog and numerous birds and fish. Family and volunteers who work at Allendale have donated most of the animals that live at the residence. The animals reside in numerous resident areas all over the Allendale quarters. Often you can find a cat curled up in a chair or purring on the lap of one of the residents in the home.

"It gives them an opportunity to take care of the pets and feel accepted. It gives them meaning as well to take care of the pet and we encourage that," said Tracy. "They can reach out to residents in ways that we can't."

The resident dog, Tinkerbelle or Tink, is a wired hair whippet and the star attraction with residents at Allendale. "She makes it feel more like home here," said Tracey.

In addition to the pets in residence, guests have interacted with special animals such as llamas and lizards. "We've had lion cubs, lizards and a llama come to visit residents. It is interesting to see the llama in the elevator and the residents just adore her. If someone wants to bring an animal in, they contact us and we organize a day to do it as long as the animal is not aggressive," Tracy explained.

Pets such as dogs and cats offer unreserved non-judgmental love and affection to humans. Animals can help us to feel connected to a larger world. The Pet Therapy program at Allendale does this and more.

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