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Elderly care gets boost

BY MICHAEL POWER
Staff Writer

Seniors looking to live at home as long as they can should get help from several new services scheduled to roll out this spring.

The list of projects is going through the approvals process of the provincial body overseeing health care in York Region. The board of directors for the Central Local Health Integration Network, which is in charge of health care across York Region, parts of north Toronto and southern Simcoe County, has given the green light to 26 proposed projects through a strategy called Aging at Home.

Health Minister George Smitherman announced the \$700 million plan in Markham last August. The Central network receives \$106.5 million over three years. Mr. Smitherman originally announced the plan during a visit to the Markham Seniors Activity Centre.

"It's a very, very substantial amount of new money," Mr. Smitherman said at the time, adding the cash will allow more seniors to remain in their homes with "dignity and independence".

"This is the most advanced model around funding allocation we've ever used. It takes growth into account. It

understands who the client is."

Overall, Queen's Park plans to invest \$702 million in the program across Ontario.

That model considers only at how many people live in each area of the province, but accounts for the ethnic, gender and age make up of each location, Mr. Smitherman said.

HAVE YOUR SAY

► With an aging population in Canada, do you believe enough is being done to cater to the needs of a growing seniors demographic? E-mail jmason@yrmg.com

The proposed services would also programs for seniors with conditions such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and mental health needs.

The programs are grouped into several areas, said Kim Baker, the health network's senior director of planning, integration and community engagement.

One such group includes nine projects designed to aid not only seniors, but also caregivers, such as in-home palliative and end-of-life care and chronic disease management, Ms Baker said.

Funding for a second group of programs focuses on providing services for seniors on waiting lists for long-term care homes, but who are also able to stay home, she said. Those supports could include cash for Meals on Wheels programs, day programs or personal support workers.

A third category includes projects focusing on ways to help seniors remain in their homes longer, Ms Baker said.

For example, the health network plans a program to help prevent at-home falls among seniors.

The program trains support workers to assess the risk of falls.

From there, support workers can suggest changes to the home to help reduce the risks of seniors suffering injuries due to falls.

Falls among seniors can lead to serious injuries such as broken hips that need extended hospital stays, said health network CEO Hy Eliasoph.

"This is an issue," Mr. Eliasoph said. "Falls are a big problem and typically if someone falls they can end up in emergency."

The first year of new programs sees \$13.5 million in new funding, with about 90 per cent of that going to front-line services. The second year should see \$33.6 million in funding while the final year will cost \$59.3 million.

"It's not pocket change, by any means," Mr. Eliasoph said. "It's very significant and we think it will help build capacity and help seniors stay in their own homes where they generally prefer to be."

ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD CAPITAL STRATEGY 2008-2010

The York Region District School Board is pre-qualifying architectural firms. Architects are requested to submit proposals for design and construction services in the following categories:

1. new elementary schools (\$8M);
2. new secondary schools (\$22M); and/or
3. additions, alterations and renovations to existing schools (up to \$6M).

Only firms who have completed similar work of value suitable to each category will be considered.

All architectural firms interested in being pre-qualified must participate in this process and must obtain the prequalification submission requirements via our website: www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/plant.services or by electronic request at nadia.iacoucci@yrdsb.edu.on.ca.

Pre-qualification submissions must be received no later than March 27, 2008 at 4:00 p.m., and delivered to 1260 Gorham Street, Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 8W4. Attention: Mr. D.J. Snelgrove, P.Eng., Superintendent of Plant Services, Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Responses received beyond this deadline or received at another location of the Board will be returned unopened.

The Board reserves the right to select and approve only those architects which the Board deems suitable for these projects.



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