

Ministry wants feedback on Central LHIN

By **Angela Gismondi**

The Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) is holding public consultations this month to get feedback on Patients First: A Proposal to Strengthen Patient-Centred Health Care in Ontario, a discussion paper which outlines significant structural changes to the health system.

The paper was released December 17 by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

One of six public engagement sessions to gather input was held in Newmarket-Aurora earlier this month.

The Central LHIN is one of 14 LHINs established by the provincial government to plan, coordinate, integrate and fund health services at the local level.

LHINs work with local health service providers and communities to design real-life solutions that improve access to care, better coordinate services and improve people's experience with the health care system. LHINs were put in place to be more regional than the provincial government and to align provincial priorities at the local level.

The paper focuses on four interconnected and overarching themes that will inform ministry policy and program decisions moving forward ? more effective integration of services and greater equity, timely access to primary care and seamless links between primary care and other services, more consistent and accessible home and community care and stronger links between population and public health and other health services.

The Ministry has asked the LHINs across the province to engage health system users at the local level to collect feedback on the ideas presented in the discussion paper and how to make LHINs and the healthcare system more integrated, accessible and better for patients.

?We're trying to get different parts of the system to work better together for patients and their families,? said Barbara Jones, of the Central LHIN, who facilitated the meeting. ?There are some big changes being proposed including a significant change to the function of the LHINs. LHINs would take more responsibility in connecting different parts of the system.?

Another proposal is to create sub-LHINs within the Central LHIN, the most populous LHIN and the fastest growing.

The engagement sessions are open to stakeholders including health care providers, patients and caregivers. Participants who attended the session were asked to review the proposed changes and provide input and comments. The feedback will be put compiled by Central LHIN and sent to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

?The policy paper is conceptual and we have no idea how it's going to look once it's implemented,? said Jones. ?If you have any ideas on how to make it successful, we'd like to hear those.?

The public is welcome to provide feedback to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care at health.feedback@ontario.ca by 5 p.m. on Monday, February 29.