

Lanark County reunited under LHIN replacement

By Gena Gibson
Era staff

Officials at the North Lanark Community Health Centre are happy that Lanark County will all be under one Ontario Health Team in the replacement to the Local Health Integration Networks.

John Jordan, chief executive officer of umbrella organization Lanark Renfrew Health and Community Services, said a team including LRHCS submitted an application to the provincial health ministry for a Lanark County Ontario Health Team. He said the main objective was to unite the two parts of Lanark County's health-care system, which had been divided by the creation of the LHINs.

Northern Lanark County belonged to the Champlain LHIN, with southern Lanark County part of the South East LHIN.

"The different funding priorities and policy directions between these two LHINs created service and system navigation problems for health-care providers and their clients," Jordan said in an e-mail last week. "Putting Lanark County back together again - from a health-care perspective - would eliminate the challenges we have collectively faced for several years."

He said the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care did not approve the Lanark County application, mainly because the ministry failed to provide attributed population data for Lanark County as a whole, as well as its desire for larger Ontario Health Teams.

"To this end, the Lanark County Ontario Health Team members have united with our Leeds and Grenville partners and have signed on to the Lanark Leeds Grenville

OHT," he wrote. "This application has already received ministry approval, under the leadership of Dr. Barry Guppy, CEO and president of the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital."

The Lanark, Leeds and Grenville application included the southern portion of Lanark County in its initial application, but left the rest of the county to be part of a different OHT. A third application, called Three Rivers Ontario Health Team, would have brought in that section with Arran prior and area, with the Three Rivers proposal still considered in development by the province.

Kara Symbolic, the community programs and communications coordinator with the local health centre, said the province initially wanted to keep the Champlain and South East LHIN boundaries in place, with data based on those boundaries.

"We were trying to do the best that we could to advocate for a whole Lanark County solution," she explained. She said the steering council of the Lanark County proposal met with the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville and Three Rivers groups to move that solution forward.

She pointed out that with county-wide organizations such as Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth, Lanark County Interval House and Lanark County Mental Health, "it wouldn't have worked well to let the county be split apart again."

While the whole county is now part of the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville proposal, the Almonte Family Health Team and Carleton Place doctors' group have signed on with the Three Rivers proposal. Symbolic said that is actually a good thing.

"We collaborated well with them," she explained. "We have a foot in both camps.... Information can flow from both."
"There was no LHIN mechanism for collaboration."
She said Ontario Health Teams will work at improving the experience for clients and primary-care providers, and will be less of a hospital-based service and more focused on primary care such as mental-health supports and addiction services that would lower the need for emergency services.
Jordan said the experience has been positive. "Having been involved with the steering committee of the LLG-OHT and the development of the Collaborative Decision Making Agreement, I am more confident than ever that the best interests of the people in Lanark County will be achieved," he stressed.

Correction

A story on fundraisers for Maple Grove Public School's play structure in last week's Era included a wrong telephone number for information on how to donate. Call Ashley Lee at 613-812-3660 or e-mail ashley_johnson1984@hotmail.com for information. The Era apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused.

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