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South East LHIN engagement meetings to begin end of May

The community engagement process will be ramped-up in the South East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) beginning May 24th. The LHIN is one of fourteen local decision making bodies set up to better integrate health care delivery in Ontario. LHIN board members have invited the public and community health care providers to offer suggestions on how to improve care and services in their respective communities.

The board hopes the community engagement process will serve to shape the Integrated Health Service Plan (IHSP), says Paul Huras, CEO. The IHSPs, which will outline priorities, identify issues, and articulate a course of action in each LHIN, are expected in September.

“We want to get qualitative information out of these meetings,” says Huras. “People in Canada feel strongly about their health care system and want to have a voice. We want them to provide the input.”

Board members will hold meetings in 24 different communities in the South East LHIN, with the possibility of up to five meetings per community. The meeting setting will not be theatre-like or orchestrated solely by LHIN representatives, says Huras, but rather will facilitate discussion in a variety of formats.

“The flavour will change depending on the different communities,” he adds.

In a May 5th information notice, Huras identified four key areas of input they are seeking from the public and providers:

- 1) Tell us about any care and/or services that are working well now

- 2) Tell us about any unmet needs for care and/or services
- 3) Tell us about any issues in access to the services that currently exist
- 4) Identify potential improvements in the organization and delivery of services

“We don’t mind criticism,” says Huras. “[Through this] we’re trying to make the system better, and we may not please everybody. But we want to create an open environment.”

Recognizing that many people’s schedules are prohibitive when it comes to community participation, Huras explains that although meetings are community centred, people are welcome at meetings outside of their own locale.

In roughly their 200th day on the job, South East LHIN board members and staff have met with over 3500 people in their region, says Huras. The consultation session phase, which wrap up in the end of June, will be followed by a draft document highlighting the key priorities and concerns offered through the course of the sessions.

“We’ve been overly pleased with our reception up to this point. We don’t mind if people talk tough to us either – saying ‘here’s our concerns.’ More often than not people are saying that they want to work with us,” he explains.