

## **Local health providers organizing to work with LHIN**

Providers of long-term care along with other health care providers in Perth and Huron counties are continuing to take a proactive role in the transformation of health services envisioned in the establishment of Local Health Integration Networks (LHINS) by the province.

Board chairs for all local health care providers met Friday (Feb. 24) to discuss a proposal to establish a Huron Perth Providers' Council to actively engage with the Southwest LHIN on system integration and co-ordination issues.

"We see the council's role as a liaison between the providers and the Southwest LHIN," says Archie MacGowan, administrator of Braemar Retirement Centre in Wingham.

There were 50 to 75 providers at Friday's meeting and they agreed to study the proposal and meet again in about a month, MacGowan says. "Judging from the attendance at the meeting and the discussion, I am anticipating the council will go ahead," he says.

MacGowan is a member of the Community Advisory Council for Huron-Perth, which began this process with a meeting of local health care providers in April 2005. "As health care providers we want to be part of the solution rather than having a solution imposed on us," he explained.

Southwest LHIN representatives have been meeting providers individually and a meeting with all providers is scheduled for the spring in London, MacGowan says.

The community advisory council which is slated to disappear with the arrival of the LHINS, set up three action groups; one on supporting the transformation of the

health system, one on improving communications and one on community support services.

Under the proposal, the three action groups would continue their work and present regular progress reports to the provider's council.

The council's proposed mandate includes working with the Southwest LHIN on its integrated health system plan and providing input on the health needs and required services for Huron-Perth.

The mandate also includes sharing information and advocating for appropriate resources "to meet the unique challenges of delivering services to a rural area," according to the proposal.

The council would also develop and implement an annual priority-setting process for identifying and resourcing local integration and co-ordination projects considered mutually beneficial by all council members.

Representatives of hospitals, long-term care homes, home care, community support services, mental health and addictions, family health teams and public health are included in the proposal.

The proposal includes a vision statement that calls for "a healthy Huron-Perth community where residents have access to a full range of health services, and when they require care and support as patient/clients, they experience a seamless continuum of care based on the co-ordinated efforts of all service providers working together."