

Post-IHSP community engagement a 'new beginning,' says CEO

The questions then and now were similar and the expectations the same.

Central West LHIN staff and board members began community engagement in the spring of 2006 by posing two key questions:

- 1) What do you like about the health care system in our region?
- 2) What would you change about the health care system?

After meeting with hundreds of individuals – consumers and providers – and establishing Integration Priority groups to define areas of greatest need, the Central West LHIN is posing the same questions to the community over the IHSP (Integrated Health Services Plan); a document that outlines and articulates the reform priorities and based in part on answer to those initial questions.

The expectation is that the community – consumer, providers, frontline workers, governance boards – will continue to be the prime mover in strategy planning.

“The feedback [on the IHSP] has been great,” says Mimi Lowi-Young, CEO of the Central West LHIN. “Most people have said that it reflects what we think is important.”

Although the IHSP is close to being finalized – it will be shipped to the Minister of Health for October 31st – the Central West LHIN is going to include specific comments from the public in an appendix being compiled from recent community forums.

The forums have taken place in different communities in the LHIN such as Malton, Brampton, and Rexdale. Central West is a diverse region, a mix of rural and smaller

urban centres, with a large (40 percent) new immigrant population. The total population of the LHIN is 720,300 people, 5.8 percent of Ontario's total population.

Community engagement doesn't end with the IHSP document, says Lowi-Young. Rather, this is a new beginning.

Lowi-Young says that more work has to be done to educate the public about the role of LHINs.

The LHIN also plans to try different methods of engagement, such as meeting with leaders in different communities – such as a faith-based community – an approach which will continue to widen current efforts.

The inclusion of community agencies such as the Rotary Club will also be part of continuing engagement strategies.