

Promoting Health and Social Service Hubs in the Downtown: Planning for a changing downtown

Over the past 3 years there has been a growing interest in our downtown and its future. As we continue to develop a downtown with a greater density of people living and working in this central community, there is growing concern that we must begin to plan and maintain health care and social service hubs in the area.



The downtown core of our city is a unique area with a diverse population. This population includes a high proportion of people with limited income, single parent families, people with disabilities, seniors and immigrants from other cultures.

For a variety of reasons (including mobility problems, lack of vehicles, inability to pay for public transportation, unfamiliarity with the language and apprehension about large institutions), many of these people are unable or unwilling to attempt to access services in the hospital or in distant activity centres in areas beyond the downtown.

Over the past three years, numerous studies have stressed the importance of having user-friendly service hubs which these people can easily access. (Excerpts from some of these studies follow in this Infonote.)

We have some very successful models of service hubs upon which we can build: the Women's Health Care Centre and the Peterborough Networked Family Health Teams.

As we move to increase the population in our downtown at a time when health and social service systems are being restructured, the following questions must be addressed:

- 1. How can we reconfigure health care resources to be more accessible to people living in the downtown?**
- 2. How can we develop health and social service hubs in the downtown?**
- 3. What is required to enhance the service delivery of existing service hubs such as the Women's Health Care Centre and the Family Health Team?**
- 4. What is the largest radius that is effective for service delivery for special needs populations such as seniors, low-income groups?**

What follows is an overview of the rationale for this service development.

1. Central Area Master Plan

The City of Peterborough released the Central Area Master Plan in December 2008. This plan is intended to complement the Commercial Land Use policies of the city's Official Plan. "The Central Area Master Plan is intended to stimulate creativity. It is intended to capture opportunity. It is intended to direct priority. It is a statement of vision for what the Official Plan considers to be the *historic heart of the community – the Central Area,*" states the document.



Why is this an important document for our community?

- It encourages downtown intensification, therefore increasing housing opportunities and it identifies what is needed in order to encourage people to live in this neighbourhood.
- It promotes alternative transportation methods and identifies that trails and walking paths must continue to be built to encourage pedestrian travel.
- It connects the many components of a municipal infrastructure that are needed to ensure a high quality of life in our downtown.

Who lives in our downtown?

Looking at the area in census tract 7 (this is the area from London Street to Rink Street and bordered by Reid Street and the Otonabee River), the 2006 census indicates the following:

- There is a total population of 4,710
- 820 families live in this area of which there are 205 lone parent families
- There are 605 youth (defined as 0 to 19 years of age)
- 1,085 people between the age of 20 and 24 form the predominant population group
- Nineteen percent of the total population (900) are over 65 years of age

(Note: the Central Area Master Plan covers a slightly larger area than this one census tract)

Service Hubs in the Downtown

2. Integrated Women's Health Care Strategies: Final report to the Central East LHIN as prepared by the "Peterborough Continue the Care Coalitions"

In December 2006, a group of health leaders met with concerned citizens through the *Peterborough Health* and *Continue the Care Coalitions* to discuss the future of women's health care in Peterborough and area. That meeting led to the idea of a regional "Integrated Strategy for Women's Health Care". With support from health leaders and women concerned with health issues, the Community Committee (*Peterborough Health and Continue the Care Coalitions*) took on the challenge. The recommendations contained in this document promote an integrated strategy.

Top concerns identified by women:

- To ensure that women's health care be seen as a "whole-person" approach.
- To access holistic, integrated care that encompasses mental, physical economic and spiritual health. This was defined as involving a broad range of options which women believe should be on an equal footing: e.g. nutritionists, family doctors, naturopathic practitioners, nurses, bio-medicals, midwives, specialists, exercise, massage, hospital care, counselling of many types, community educators. An adequate income and decent housing were identified repeatedly as critical to health.
- To provide supportive services for women: the Women's Health Care Centre was seen as an important "portal" giving referrals, access, education, peer support and linkages for women across the system, and giving particular support for low income women; Family Health Teams were deemed critical in ensuring multi-care services and in breaking the cycle of insufficient care over the long-term. Gender training for all health professionals was seen as very important.

3. Peterborough Best Start Phase 2 - Moving Forward Update

The Ministry of Community and Social Services: Children and Youth Services requires the Best Start Networks, to update their strategies for achieving their community vision for Best Start, ultimately leading to an integrated system of services that is responsive to the needs of all community members, including families of children with special needs, Aboriginal, Francophone and other culturally and/or linguistically diverse families.

The work of the Network indicated that there is an increasing commitment to enhancing service delivery in a way that meets the needs of people in their own community and/or neighbourhood. Through this consultation, which included the review of other community initiatives and reports, it was well documented that there is a need to proceed with the development of service hubs and indeed there are a variety of opportunities that presently exist to build on models of co-ordinated service delivery.



4. “Faces of our Future: planning for a diverse community” prepared for the Partnership Council on Immigrant Integration

In 2009, individuals and organizations in the Peterborough community came together to form the Partnership Council on Immigrant Integration. The purpose of this Council is to help enhance the existing working relationships between the public, private, social service, and third sector partners in our area in order to foster an integration of immigrants into the community. With the help of community partners our community has begun the preliminary process of developing a strategy on immigrant integration.

Undertaking a community consultation was the first step to developing a community plan for change and providing strategic direction to the Partnership Council on Immigrant Integration. This process commenced in December 2009 and was completed in February 2010. The resulting report documented the following issues for new Canadians and spoke to the importance of central access to health and social services.



From the health and social service sector:

- The New Canadian Centre plays a pivotal role in supporting newcomers/ immigrants as well as employers.
- Navigation of the service system is difficult. There are obstacles for people to obtain services in this country if they do not have adequate/ appropriate documents.

5. Proceedings of Peterborough’s First Senior’s Summit “Improving Navigation of the System” (2009)

On June 18 2009, Peterborough’s first Seniors Summit was held. The goal for the day was to provide a gathering of seniors, families and service providers to make plans to meet the challenges of the ‘senior tsunami’. The need for comprehensive service delivery systems was identified as a priority if we are able to help people age in the community. With 19% of the downtown population being over 65 years of age, we must plan for a comprehensive service hub that supports people as they age in place.



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