

March 1, 2006

ONTARIO'S HEALTH INTEGRATION ACT

The Local Health Integration Act, 2006, which provides Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) with new powers to make local health care decisions, received third and final reading today. The act includes a number of amendments requested by organizations and individuals. Some of the more notable changes to the legislation include:

- Further defining community engagement
- Emphasizing the government's commitment to public health care
- Listing the exceptions to the requirement for LHIN meetings to be open to the public
- Requiring advanced notice of any LHIN integration decision or Minister's order
- Requiring the posting of all public information on the Ministry and LHIN websites.

Community Engagement

The government made changes to the community engagement section of the legislation by more broadly defining "community" to include individuals, health service providers, employees of the health system and patients. LHINs are also required to consult with prescribed organizations dealing with Aboriginal, First Nations and French language health issues. This will ensure that LHINs hear from a wide range of people and organizations about local needs and priorities.

The amendments also set out possible methods for carrying out community engagement, including holding community or focus group meetings and establishing advisory committees.

Commitment to Public Health Care

Changes to the preamble were made to confirm the government's commitment to the promotion and delivery of public health care services by not-for-profit organizations, and the commitment to the principles of the *Canada Health Act* and the *Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004*.

LHIN Meetings

The act now states the exceptions to when LHIN board and committee meetings will be open to the public, (before this information was to be listed in regulation). The act says that LHIN meetings will be open, with some exceptions, including where personnel matters, issues related to public security, the safety of an individual, personal health information or litigation or contemplated litigation may be discussed.

Advanced Notice For Integration Decisions/Orders

Under the act, the LHIN or Minister must provide at least 30 days' notice of the intention to issue a decision or order. During this notice period, any person would be able to make a submission with respect to the proposed decision/order, which must be considered by the LHIN or Minister before issuing a final decision.

In this way, a person or organization with concerns about a proposed integration decision or Minister's order would be able to make those concerns known before a decision/order became final.

Posting Public Information On Websites

The Minister and all LHINs are now required to post on their websites any information they are obligated to make public – including accountability agreements between the Minister and a LHIN, and between a LHIN and service providers. This is in addition to requiring the Minister and LHINs make the information available at their offices.

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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