

Two Local Issues: Health and Wind Turbines

On November 4 the local branch of CARP (the Canadian Association of Retired pensioners) and SHAC (the Seniors Health Advisory Committee) sponsored the Age Well –Live Well Forum. Both of these groups represent and advocate for seniors. The forum's intent was to inform seniors of current issues in health care and the efforts of some of our community's health care providers and government officials to meet the needs of seniors.

Presenters included Elaine Pitcher, chair of the SAH Board of Directors; Karen Raybould, Manager of Client Services with the North East Community Care Access Centre (CCAC); Sharon Swain, Manager of Red Cross Health Services; Bruce Villella who represented Peter Vaudry who is the acting chair of the North East LHIN, and Tony Martin, MP. MPP David Oraziatti did not attend the forum but sent a letter as his presentation. Pat Mick, acting mayor, spoke on behalf of our city council.

After presentations the floor was opened for questions. A major concern was the number of alternate level of care (ALC) patients in our overcrowded hospital. The lack of long term care beds and the lack of supportive housing in our community are problems that contribute to overcrowding and less than ideal conditions for patients at SAH. Various presenters indicated that, though resources are limited, inroads are being made in a united effort by health care agencies to address these problems. The Aging at Home program and the Home First program are helping seniors stay in their homes longer. If a national Pharmacare program were instituted it would keep drug costs under control and limit health care costs. It is only through a coordinated effort that health concerns will be alleviated. Seniors must be vigilant and outspoken on healthcare issues if their concerns are to be recognized and addressed.

Another issue that is gaining momentum is the growing concern over wind turbine projects. On November 10 a newly formed organization called Save Ontario's Algoma Region (SOAR) together with Tony Martin MP sponsored a public forum at Alexander Henry High School. The cafeteria was packed as residents voiced concerns about the Ontario government's Green Energy Act. Many expressed frustration at what they saw as a lack of public consultation over proposals for many more wind turbines. SOAR claims that private wind energy companies are planning as many as 600 or more wind turbines for the northern region including the Lake Superior shoreline, Goulais, Heyden, Ranger Lake and Stokely. Many retirees were in the audience since homes, cottages and recreational activities are found in these same areas. SOAR is concerned about the cumulative effects of wind turbines on health, the environment, recreation and tourism. The efficiency and cost effectiveness of wind energy was also questioned. SOAR maintains that far too little research and information is available at present. Do we know the cumulative ecological and social effect of Ontario's wind turbines? MPP David Oraziatti and MPP Michael Brown were in attendance to hear concerns and answer questions. Judging by the interest and emotion expressed at the meeting this issue is of great concern to many people.

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