

Priority Population Review: Final Report June 23, 2011

The attached report is the result of a request by the Board of Directors of the Guelph Community Health Centre that the consulting firm Public Interest Strategy & Communications conduct a study of the challenges facing the Centre's delivery of primary health care services to the Centre's priority populations and make recommendations for action. For many years, the Board had been aware that a significant number of the Centre's primary health care clients did not fit the priority populations that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds and expects the Centre to be serving. At the same time, there are many people belonging to the priority populations who are not being served by Guelph CHC or indeed being otherwise served effectively by the primary health care system in Guelph.

If the Ministry's funding rules are to be strictly followed, the Board and the Centre must address the question of who should be receiving services. The key question is how to respond to the clients who are not part of the priority populations. This is, of course, a very sensitive issue and until recently, the shortage of family physicians in Guelph precluded any action which would involve moving non-priority population clients off the Centre's roster. Now, however, there no longer exists a physician shortage in Guelph as demonstrated by the growth in group practices and the policy question can no longer be avoided. The Board's responsibilities to the Ministry funding contract (operated through the Waterloo-Wellington Local Health Integration Network) include a clear definition of the Priority Populations we are mandated to serve, and must be addressed.

The Board is acutely aware that any action on this issue must be undertaken very carefully and only with a full appreciation of the consequences for the Centre's current clients and their health care needs. The intent in appointing Public Interest Strategy and Communications was to conduct an in depth analysis of the services and populations served by the Centre, and to offer recommendations on how to move forward. A challenge of the review was to determine how Guelph CHC can fulfill its mandate related to the priority populations while supporting its current client base.

The Board's intention now is to consider the data and the implications of the recommendations for all those who are affected, along with other information the Board can gather from the Centre's staff and the Board's own contacts within the community. On receiving the report in June, 2011, the Board committed itself to an extensive review, in hopes of reaching a decision on a suitable policy position regarding its services in the fall of 2011.

Feedback to the report is welcome. Please send your written comments to Nancy Mykitschak, Interim Executive Director (execdir@guelph.ca). The final report and the summary report will be posted on the Guelph CHC website (www.guelphchc.ca).



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