

Panel discusses what a seniors'-friendly community looks like

By Bill Rea

There are varying opinions on what a seniors'-friendly community would look like, and many of them were discussed recently. Mayor Allan Thompson hosted his second annual Seniors' Forum, which included a panel discussion addressing that issue. Christine Sevigny, executive director of Caledon Meals on Wheels, said a seniors'-friendly community is one in which they are valued, and which offers affordable housing for them, as well as access to nutritious food and medical care. She also said they need to have a sense of belonging.

Sevigny also said there are a lot of programs and services available, and the need is to make sure everyone has access to them. She also pointed to the need to work collaboratively with agencies and businesses, while making sure people have sufficient information on what's available.

"It's a busy time for health care," observed Mark Edwards of the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

He said the LHIN was formed in 2006 to plan integrated health systems and make them closer to the community.

In the case of the Central West, Edwards said there are a number of factors that need to be addressed. They include geography, as he pointed out it includes Caledon, Dufferin, Brampton, Malton and parts of north Etobicoke. There are also demographics, with many new Canadians and the second lowest rate of English being spoken in Ontario.

He also pointed out this area has a population that is rapidly growing and aging, and it needs a health system to address that.

He pointed to the need to improve the experience patients have as they navigate the system.

The LHIN is also responsible for funding the system, and there have been significant investments made, resulting in a lot of home and community care. He pointed out that \$1.3 million has gone into expanding home physiotherapy services.

Palliative care is another important component that he cited, commenting the LHIN works with Bethell Hospice in providing palliative and holistic supports to patients and their families.

Geraldine Aguiar, director of health services at Caledon Community Services (CCS), said she oversees five programs that focus on seniors and how they can be more integrated in the community.

She said access and transportation are important considerations. If they're going to have the programs, they want to make sure people can get to them.

Peel Region Commissioner of Health Services Janette Smith there is a focus on serving seniors.

She said a subcommittee of Regional council was set up in 2014, and it came up with 26 recommendations aimed at making the Region and Caledon more age friendly. That means having a place where seniors have access to supports that allow them to age in safety and with dignity.

Smith said they're learning that the environment has a big impact on quality of life and health for these people.

Affordable housing is an important consideration because people want to be able to age in place. There's a range of housing needed so people will be able to stay near to their social networks, friends and families.

"You can't do it if you can't get around," she remarked.

Caledon's General Manager of Community Services Peggy Tollett said the Town's been at the forefront in making universal designs policy that will enable changes in the future to meet demands. This would include designing homes with things like lifts to enable people to get to other floors, or making sure there are full bathroom facilities on the main floor.

The Town is also preparing an Official Plan amendment aimed at age-friendly communities and housing.



Mayor Allan Thompson was joined for a panel discussion by Christine Sevigny of Caledon Meals, Mark Edwards of the Central

West Local Health Integration Network, Geraldine Aguiar of Caledon Community Services, Peel Region's Commission of Health Services Janette Smith and Caledon's Manager of Community Services Peggy Tollett. The topic was what does a seniors-friendly community look like?.



Judy Vincent-Lewis and Andrea Seydel of Live Life Happy were putting forum participants through some stretching moves.



The Mayor's Seniors' Forum included the opportunity to write encouraging messages to Caledon athletes who will be competing in the upcoming Olympic Games. Leone Beck from Caledon East was among those offering her support.



Caledon's Chief Fire Prevention Officer Dave Pelayo and Public Education Officer Gillian Boyd had some useful safety information to hand out.



Caledon Community Services (CCS) were represented by Senior Manager of Health and Wellness Carolyn Langan and summer student Sheila Donkor.



Caledon OPP's Media Relations and Community Safety Officer Constable Stephanie Hammond had lots of information that would be of use to seniors.



Councillor Annette Groves (right) was greeting Ram Sivasubramanian and Stephanie Anderton of Senior Saviour Solutions.