

## News Release / Pour publication immédiate

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 26, 2013**

### **Transportation in Sarnia/Lambton Gets Funding Boost Thanks to New LHIN Funding**

SARNIA/LAMBTON – The Erie St. Clair (ESC) LHIN is pleased to announce the approval of \$1 million for the purchase of new vehicles to provide health-related transportation services across Erie St. Clair. Sarnia/Lambton transportation providers will receive approximately a third of this funding to help replace their aging vehicles. Included in this investment is \$25,000 which has been approved to help people with a limited budget ensure cost is not a barrier to transportation and improve access to their health care appointments. LHIN-funded agencies such as Lambton Elderly Outreach (LEO) and the Canadian Red Cross will be able to access the fund to help clients based on need.

Prior to the ESC LHIN Open Board Meeting, the board heard questions and comments about rural transportation from the public during a one hour community session. This input was in addition to over 600 survey responses that were received noting the importance of affordable and accessible health-related transportation in the area.

During the meeting the board received a report from the Sarnia/Lambton Transportation Working Group. The report, which was developed by 12 local organizations on the working group, concluded eight months of work. It includes over 15 recommendations to improve access to, and ensure sustainably of, health-related transportation in rural areas. Highlights of the report include:

- Over the past five years, LHIN-funded providers have experienced a substantial increase in service volumes. The number of clients served has increased by 49 percent and ride volumes have increased by 60 percent
- A significant portion of rides provided are to social and wellness engagements; including grocery shopping, day programs and volunteer placements
- An immediate need to replace service vehicles, as many are very high in kilometers and not able to be retired due to volume increases
- An urgent need to ensure health-related transportation is accessible and affordable to everyone, through a subsidy program

Recommendations in the report include:

1. The creation of a single access phone number for transportation services and common marketing materials to make it easier for residents to access a transportation provider
2. Improved coordination of LHIN-funded transportation services with LEO and Canadian Red Cross continuing to work together to find ways to improve efficiency, access, and better coordination of transportation across Sarnia/Lambton



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3. Entering into discussion with the County of Lambton to explore additional funding avenues to increase services and ensure a sustainable transportation program

The full report can be found on the ESC LHIN website at [www.eriestclairhin.on.ca](http://www.eriestclairhin.on.ca).

### QUOTES

“Transportation is a fundamental element to ensuring access to health care services. By investing in our local transportation services we are ensuring that more of our residents, including seniors, will continue to access the health care services they need to live at home.” – Gary Switzer, CEO, ESC LHIN

“Lambton Elderly Outreach looks forward to working with our Community Partners to establish a transportation service that is client centered, easily accessible, affordable and empowers clients to remain independent in their own homes” – Agnes Soulard, Executive Director, Lambton Elderly Outreach

“The Sarnia-Lambton Transportation initiative aligns well with the Canadian Red Cross mission to improve the lives of vulnerable people. Increased partnership and networking has been an outcome of this committee’s work over the past few months, and is indicative of the caring and thoughtful approach that each member and agency brings to this community on a daily basis. The Red Cross is committed to ensuring that our community has appropriate resources to ensure our clients receive Better Care, Better Experiences, Better Value.” – Cheryl Tompkins, Senior Manager CSS Programs, Canadian Red Cross

### FACTS

- Sarnia/Lambton has the largest geography in the ESC LHIN and the highest percentage of seniors
- LEO – 2012/2013
  - Clients Served: 1,071
  - Total Number of Rides Provided: 36,325
  - Annual LHIN Funding: \$638,656.00
- Canadian Red Cross (Lambton County) – 2012/2013
  - Clients Served: 844
  - Total Number of Rides Provided: 18,032
  - Annual LHIN Funding: \$116,523.00

### LEARN MORE

Read more about Erie St. Clair LHIN at [www.eriestclairhin.on.ca](http://www.eriestclairhin.on.ca)

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