

## It's Time... To Have Your Say in Building a Stronger System of Care for Northerners

Dear Northerners,

Suzanne Salituri has first-hand experience with the health care system. She is a Northern caregiver.

Since her 80-year-old mother, Fernande LeClair, was diagnosed with vascular dementia seven months ago, Suzanne has accompanied her to 93 medical and home care appointments, five visits to the emergency department, spent hours by her hospital bedside, helped her through a convalescent care program, and now helps care for her in a long-term care home.

Through this process, Suzanne and Fernande have experienced nearly all care aspects of our health care system – primary, hospital, community and long-term.



**Fernande LeClair**

Like many caregivers, Suzanne has advocated on behalf of her 'maman' to receive the best coordinated care possible -- and in her case, trying to get services in French. The family has also been fortunate to have other caregivers within their family, such as Suzanne's sister Micheline, and is grateful for the support the Alzheimer Society of Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District has provided.

Throughout the journey, Suzanne has remained positive about her role as caregiver, cherishing the small moments of shared laughter and the smiles that offer glimpses of the person she once knew.

"I'm not sure how much longer this journey will last, but I know my decision to take a caregiver leave from work has been a blessing and I will hold my Maman's hand all the way through this journey of vascular dementia," Suzanne said.

Suzanne reminds us of the need to make our health care system more focused on people's needs. Her positive outlook is admirable, but we still need a stronger system of care here in Northeastern Ontario – one that is more coordinated and focused on what patients need along their health care journey.

As a LHIN we're calling on all Northerners – caregivers, family members, patients, clients, and providers - - to comment on a provincial proposal to transform the health care system. This past December, Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins, [released a discussion paper](#), which proposes ways to strengthen care across Ontario.

The *Patients First Proposal* details four key components to reform the system:

- More effective integration of services and greater equity.
- More timely access to primary care, and seamless links between primary care and other services.
- More consistent and accessible home and community care.
- Stronger links between population and public health and other health services.

I encourage you to read the paper and offer your thoughts. This is *the* time to have your say in how to make our health care system stronger so that people like Suzanne and Fernande can focus on their moments together and not have to worry about organizing care for the next part of their journey.

Please take the time to tell us what you think. We will be asking and listening over the month of February. We will then roll up Northerners' input to send to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for their consideration, and to help us in our NE LHIN efforts to continue to strengthen the system here in Northeastern Ontario. You can email us at [engagingwithyou@lhins.on.ca](mailto:engagingwithyou@lhins.on.ca) or complete our survey by clicking [here](#). You can also come out to one our [community and health service provider engagement](#) sessions across the region.

I look forward to hearing from you and perhaps seeing you at one of our sessions. Together, we Northerners have what it takes to make our health care system better so that we, our parents, our children, and our grandchildren, can live healthy and well in our beautiful part of the province.

*Louise Paquette,*

CEO of the North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)