

Delegation to the Municipality of Port Hope 10 January 2023

Proposal for a project entitled the **Northumberland Centre for Healthy Independent Living (NCHIL)**

Margaret H. Kerr

NCHIL is a holistic and community based project that would identify and test cost effective solutions to keep an aging population healthy and happy at home, to prevent, delay or mitigate entrance into serious medical care, and to promote Port Hope commerce.

Ontarians are all too aware that the provincial health care system is not effectively, or humanely, serving an aging population. The Municipality of Port Hope, reflecting Northumberland County as a whole, has a significant population of seniors, access to small but valiant hospitals, and too few family physicians to meet population needs. The trauma of the years since 2020 has shown that the health care system is not capable of taking care of everyone who needs care. Further, many seniors are “orphans” with no close family or friends who can provide assistance.

Mark Kingwell writing in the Globe and Mail recently noted that “we make a catastrophic mistake if we assume that political institutions will do the work of citizenship for us. ... Stop looking at them for answers ... they do not possess.”

There are issues that the Municipality or the County cannot address, for example increasing the numbers of physicians or nurses or giving more powers to pharmacists or nurse practitioners to diagnose and prescribe. These are in the hands of the Province.

But there is “work of citizenship” that Port Hope can do itself.

Port Hope, in some areas in conjunction with the County and the local LHIN, can take steps to improve care for seniors. Looking to models that have been pioneered and proven in other jurisdictions, Port Hope can create a “Naturally Occurring Retirement Community” that provides important goods and services to seniors living in their homes rather than in retirement homes or long term care homes—and keeps them safely in their homes for additional months or years. These goods and services can be provided by the local business community as well as community organizations (see below) and include such things as assistive devices (hearing aids, glasses, mobility devices), safety programs (fall alarms, friendly visits and phone calls, exercise), dental care, nutrition counselling, physiotherapy and massage, hair care, meal delivery of real food (have you ever tasted a Meals on Wheels meal?). The list could be much longer but you get the idea.

Port Hope can also bring health care to those in need of it rather than requiring the elderly ill to search out help through hard-to-find family physicians or crowded (or even closed) emergency departments. This model is sometimes called “Hospital Without Walls” and is already being put to use in the Northumberland community paramedicine program. A sister program could be established to locate seniors who do not require emergency care but are unable by themselves to obtain required physician referrals to existing programs, or who are unaware how to access programs that do not require referrals. Such a program would keep seniors out of hospitals, and out of long term care homes: HKPR District Health Unit offers vaccination against diseases that decimate the elderly such as COVID, pneumonia and shingles; the Community Health Centres of Northumberland offers primary health care as well as clinics for memory problems and diabetes; Community Care Northumberland, a volunteer organization, offers various kinds of home support including a blood pressure clinic. (A little further afield, FareShare is a food bank, and the Legal Centre of Northumberland provides assistance with matters such as disability support, CPP and tenants’ rights. Poverty is a healthcare issue too.) A community outreach program would ensure that all who need help would receive it. Outreach would not be one-time but continuous. (Getting existing organizations to work together may require diplomacy and effort. They may be siloed, and/or they may not want to cooperate with each other.)

The ideas set out above are not radical and they are not new. They are in fact obvious. We are all just waiting for someone else to do the work!

### Looking Ahead

Great news! Port Hope has already independently started doing the work. In December I met with the Interim Older Adult Activity Coordinator at the Ruth Clarke Activity Centre for Seniors. She is a smart and energetic employee of the Municipality who told me she is starting to network with the organizations mentioned above in order to provide better care coverage for seniors. She also hosted a “fair” for seniors and Port Hope businesses and found there was a lot of interest in more connection between businesses and senior customers. She mentioned, in addition, that a number of people had asked how they could help with these endeavours. (I asked her if she would come to this delegation with me but she declined.) Please talk to and support her.

In order to move NCHIL and the Port Hope project ahead there are some essential matters:

1. Data collection will be very important from the very start of the project:
  - a. To track the elderly who need assistance and ensure they receive it
  - b. To determine whether the project is creating a healthier retirement for citizens
  - c. To determine whether the project is saving money for the Municipality, County or Province
  - d. To assist local businesses to determine on an ongoing basis what goods and services to provide

Consideration needs to be given early to how data would be collected and used. Is there a locally available database that can be used for healthcare matters, and that is compatible with OHIP and related Provincial databases? What kind of database would assist businesses?

2. An advisory council of Port Hope/Northumberland citizens is required to get the project started. The project described here is multi-pronged and would benefit from the advice and assistance of a range of individuals including those familiar with healthcare policy, government and private funding, and local commerce, to name a few areas. A council of 10-15 people would be optimal (no advisors who are merely “interested”—every advisor should bring something important to the council). In addition, it would be helpful to obtain the advice of a Canadian geriatrician who advocates for a revolution in senior care. Dr. Samir Sinha of Mount Sinai/UHN in Toronto comes immediately to mind.
3. Engagement with David Piccini early in the project would be extremely beneficial, to promote interest from the Ontario Government. He has already shown himself interested in the community paramedicine project.

### Looking Further Ahead

If Port Hope/Northumberland, with the resource of a large senior population, show that they are taking a strong interest in seniors issues and are effectively tracking data related to provision and results of enhanced care, the municipality/county will attract the interest of innovators in seniors care. This could include clinical drug trials, but also research and testing programs and devices to improve care: just a few recent examples of novel ideas – breathalyzer for diabetes, home robotics, exoskeletons for strength and mobility, programs to enhance memory. Innovators may choose Port Hope for a base of operations and a local industry could be born, to say nothing of the benefit to senior citizens receiving cutting edge care.

# Northumberland Centre for Healthy Independent Living (NCHIL)

Rough Draft Proposal

Margaret H. Kerr

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NCHIL would act as coordinator for the following steps, as well as for obtaining of grant funding to carry them out:

Steps	Benefit to Seniors	Benefit to Health System	Benefit to Local Business	Community Volunteerism
<p><b>Initial health census and continuous monitoring (by trained individuals, e.g. nurses, but potentially also specially trained community workers)</b></p> <p>Model: “Hospital Without Walls”—but modified to “Holistic Healthcare Clinic Without Walls”</p>	<p>Determine: where seniors live, state of health, what healthcare services are required; immunization status (COVID, influenza, pneumococcal, shingles, tetanus); provincial testing participation (e.g. mammograms, colonoscopies), what assistive devices are required (hearing aids, glasses, canes, walkers &amp; rollators etc); oral health</p> <p>At this stage, seniors can be referred for medical care where appropriate</p>	<p>Detect problems that can be dealt with before serious medical intervention required, and prepare plan to maintain health; for example, risk of falling, diabetes or pre-diabetes, mobility issues</p>	<p>Fulfilling and lower stress employment for local health professionals.</p>	<p>Volunteers may be required for assistance with census and monitoring</p>

<p><b>Provision of health-related goods and services by the appropriate sources.</b></p> <p>Provincial and county organizations: Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, Community Health Centres of Northumberland (Central East Healthline), and Community Care Northumberland</p>	<p>Many of the above services and goods are already available from provincial or county organizations on referral or request, and some are provided free—but the individual has to initiate by seeing a doctor or contacting agency. Access to the goods and services will be greatly improved and equalized.</p>	<p>More vulnerable people will receive appropriate services that before they have serious medical problems.</p>	<p>Opportunity to participate in pre-medical health intervention such as emergency alarms, foot and hand care, optometry and audiology, cleanliness (hair care, laundry, house cleaning), safety and accessibility (contractors for carpentry, bathroom renovation etc), dentistry, nutrition counselling, exercise programs.</p>	
<p><b>Initial community census and continued monitoring</b></p> <p>Model: “Virtual Retirement Community” aka “Village to Village” or “Village Network”—but with less emphasis on volunteerism and more on commercial provision of goods and services</p>	<p>Determine from seniors themselves what non-medical goods and services will make life better: for example, each individual assessed for access to standard technology such as smart phone and tablet; need for meal delivery, transportation, social interaction; need for financial and estate planning need for assistance in obtaining government benefit</p>			<p>Volunteers required for census</p>

<p><b>Provision of goods and services by the appropriate business sources.</b></p> <p>In conjunction potentially with a telecommunications company; Town of Port Hope and local businesses; and with The Help Centre of Northumberland.</p>	<p>Improved physical and mental health</p>	<p>Improved physical and mental health</p>	<p>Opportunity for technology assistance— purchase of hardware/software, training and help desk; production of phone/computer apps with local content; expansion of existing restaurant business for daily meal prep and delivery; opportunity for banks, financial and law firms</p>	<p>Volunteers required for friendly visits, phone calls etc</p>
<p><b>Data Collection and Analysis</b></p> <p>Health data initially collected and analyzed by e.g. Community Care Northumberland</p> <p>Potentially university researchers and/or ICES (formerly Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences) may be interested in data analysis.</p> <p>Business data collected and analyzed by Town of Port Hope and local businesses</p>	<p>Personal data with consent can be used to optimize personal medical care</p>	<p>Aggregate de-identified data can be used to improve county and provincial health care delivery</p>	<p>Business statistics will help Port Hope to determine what goods and services are or are not needed, so that local businesses can optimize their provision of goods and services</p>	

<p><b>Technology testing and transfer: as available, researchers/companies can test new devices and ideas. An appropriate population for research is available, as well as baseline data on the population and (with consent of research subjects) individuals</b></p> <p>Note: for research of this kind the services of a research ethics board would likely be required</p>	<p>New technologies may improve independent healthy living further for individuals.</p> <p>Seniors may appreciate opportunity to help others by volunteering as research subjects.</p>	<p>New technologies may improve independent healthy living further for health care system as a whole.</p>	<p>Potential for innovative businesses to locate in area because of supports provided by NCHIL program.</p> <p>Potential for local businesses to collaborate with innovative businesses.</p>	
<p><b>Export of NCHIL model and of acquired knowledge</b></p>	<p>Seniors outside initial program area will obtain the benefits that NCHIL has tested</p>	<p>As more locations adopt proven benefits the provincial healthcare system will be under less stress</p>	<p>Opportunities for local businesses to consult in new locations, and possibly expand their own operations</p>	