

Partners to build research centre for seniors at the University of Waterloo

WATERLOO, Ont. (Monday, Aug. 29, 2011) - An ambitious partnership involving the Ontario government, postsecondary sector and Schlegel Villages will develop a centre of excellence for research, training and innovation in senior health care and wellness at the University of Waterloo. The goal is to help Canada better prepare for an aging population.

The development on Waterloo's north campus will be built in three phases, starting with a 192-bed long-term care home owned and managed by Schlegel Villages. It will include a specialized building where faculty, staff and students from the University of Waterloo, Conestoga College and the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA) will work and learn with residents and staff from the adjacent long-term home.

Two later phases will develop assisted living and independent living for seniors as well as a primary care health centre to create a full continuum of care. Total construction costs will be about \$130-million.

"This project is a sterling example of government, university, college and private collaboration," said Ron Schlegel, chair of Schlegel Villages and Founder of the RIA. "We have a university that is tops in Canada for innovation and entrepreneurship, a college with a passion for building a workforce better equipped to meet the needs of growing numbers of seniors, a research institute with a strong track record in practice-relevant research, and a provider of long-term care and retirement that is a leader in the province."

The Ontario government will contribute \$20-million in capital funds for the 192-bed long-term care home. The province will also provide \$625,000 a year in operating funds for the learning, research and innovation centre. The provincial funding will enhance capacity and expertise in the long-term care sector, as well as improve the delivery of existing long-term care services.

"I have worked consistently for the last four years to secure 192 long-term care beds for the seniors in our community," said Leeanna Pendergast, MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga. "The Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging brings cutting-edge services to our community not found anywhere else in North America."

The province's investment unleashes an estimated \$84-million in additional funding for teaching and research, including financial and land contributions from the University of Waterloo. The Schlegel family will provide a minimum \$45-million over 20 years to fund 14 research chairs in aging, matched fifty-fifty by the University of Waterloo and one research chair matched fifty-fifty by Conestoga College. The family will also contribute \$3-million to the capital costs for the learning, research and innovation centre.

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John Milloy, M.P.P.
Kitchener Centre



LEEANNA PENDERGAST, MPP
Kitchener - Conestoga

These contributions build on the \$6-million Schlegel has already committed to found the RIA for a total investment of over \$50-million. Four research chairs are already in place and actively working in the areas of geriatric medicine, geriatric pharmacotherapy, vascular aging and brain health, and nutrition, while a fifth chair in enhanced senior care is at Conestoga College. The new learning, research and innovation centre will be operated as part of RIA.

The work of the centre of excellence will inform policy and program decisions to directly and positively impact on a number of government priorities, including long-term care transformation, building human resource capacity in the seniors care system, resident-centred care, reducing emergency room visits, and job creation/economic activity stemming from commercialization and export of products internationally, including curriculum.

The centre will provide students, researchers and educators with the opportunity for direct engagement in seniors care environments. It will develop new training programs and enhance gerontology content of existing programs to build a workforce better prepared for the rapidly increasing senior population.

"Ensuring an appropriate quality-of-life for an increasing population of seniors may prove to be one of our greatest challenges in the decades to come," said Feridun Hamdullahpur, president of the University of Waterloo. "Innovative collaborations like this one – marrying research and education with the daily experience of resident seniors – will help incubate programs and services that will improve that quality of life."

Over the next 20 years, the number of seniors in Ontario will double, with the fastest growing group being those over age 80. This will put unprecedented pressure on healthcare systems serving seniors – programs that are already under strain.

Construction on the first phase should begin in late 2012 and be completed late spring 2014. While construction is underway, faculty and staff will begin developing learning, research and innovation programs from the nearby Village of Winston Park and RIA offices in Kitchener.

The centre of excellence will also include the Village of Winston Park, Williamsburg Town Centre and Williamsburg South in Kitchener. These locations extend the model to provide a range of research and development sites to study aging at home and broader health system issues.

About Schlegel Villages

Twelve long-term care and retirement communities in Ontario owned and managed by Schlegel Villages will serve as accelerator centres leading to dissemination of products and services developed through the learning, research and innovation centre. For more information go to www.schlegelvillages.com.

About Schlegel-Waterloo Research Institute for Aging

The Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging was created in 2005 as a senate-approved research institute at the University of Waterloo, then became a non-profit charitable organization in 2006 with core partnerships with University of Waterloo, Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages. The RIA conducts research aimed at enhancing the care, health and wellness of older adults in community-based and long-term care environments. The 2,500 residents living in 11 Schlegel Villages provide voluntary and vibrant living research environments and living classroom environments. The best of what is learned in these environments is disseminated broadly to benefit seniors everywhere. For more information go to www.the-ria.ca

About Waterloo

The University of Waterloo, located at the heart of Canada's Technology Triangle, is one of Canada's leading comprehensive universities. Waterloo is home to 30,000 full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students who are dedicated to making the future better and brighter. Waterloo, known for the largest post-secondary co-operative education program in the world, supports enterprising partnerships in learning, research and discovery. For more information about Waterloo, visit www.uwaterloo.ca

Partner quotes:

"Today's announcement is evidence of the Ontario government's commitment to providing first-class care for seniors in our community. The creation of these additional beds means that we will have more services in Waterloo Region for those who require them, " – **John Milloy, minister of training, colleges and universities, and MPP for Kitchener Centre**

"We are very pleased to be a partner in the centre of excellence. We look forward to working with the RIA to address the growing need for knowledgeable and skilled workers dedicated to senior living and care. Our early experience with the Schlegel Chair for Enhanced Seniors Care and our living classroom at the Village of Riverside Glen indicates that this collaborative approach creates a positive impact on students' attitudes about working with seniors, often leading them to choose careers in the field."

– **John Tibbits, president, Conestoga College**

"As researchers, we need to think not only of our contributions to knowledge, but how we're changing the lives of Canadians. The Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging has been a defining force in enhancing the health and care of older adults. This new centre will be the catalyst for experiential learning and innovative discoveries to address the complex needs of our aging population." – **Susan Elliott, dean, faculty of applied health sciences, University of Waterloo**

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