

Bruyère and Perley and Rideau Bring Village Concept to Ottawa Area

Ottawa-area seniors waiting for housing that meets their needs will soon have new options thanks in part to two large projects at Saint-Louis Residence in Orleans and Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa. Both OANHSS members are currently expanding on their repertoire of services by building seniors' villages, which include independent and assisted living accommodations.



Amy Porteous is overseeing the creation of Bruyère Village, a centre of seniors' accommodation and services to help older adults live as independently as possible.

Greg Fougère is spearheading the Seniors Village project at Perley & Rideau Veterans' Health Centre.

On the grounds of one of Bruyère Continuing Care's two long term care homes, Saint-Louis Residence in Orleans, is Bruyère Village, a \$70-million project that will include the construction of four low-rise buildings with 227 apartments. The first phase of the project will be completed in November 2012, when three of the buildings will open with a total of 78 apartments for seniors who wish to live independently. Of those units, 39 will be offered at below-market rent and six will be rent-geared-to-income. The second phase, to be completed in January 2014, will see the opening of a four-storey building with 149 assisted-living apartments. Seniors in this building can receive help with activities of daily living and housekeeping as well as have access to 24-hour emergency response. Among these units are 36 studio-based apartments for high-risk seniors; on each floor, nine apartments will share a common kitchen, dining and living room area and have group activities and 24-hour staffing.

The village concept at Bruyère will also extend beyond housing. The Village will have an indoor area with services such as a pub, convenience store, fitness centre, hair salon, music room, arts and crafts room, solarium, cafeteria, and physiotherapy clinic. Outside, on the expansive grounds will be a terrace overlooking the Ottawa River.

Bruyère's three levels of accommodation (independent living, assisted living and long term care) will help meet important housing and health care needs in the Ottawa region. In the nation's capital, about 1,000 people over age 65 are on a waiting list for subsidized accommodation. As well, seniors with more serious ailments are tying up long term care beds and hospital beds as alternate level-of-care patients, when in fact their needs could be better met in assisted living accommodations. In addition, the Ottawa region is home to more than 90,000 seniors, 23% of which need help with activities of basic living, such as meal preparation, shopping and personal care.

"Bruyère Village will help bridge the gap between independent living in the community and long term care," says Amy Porteous, Senior Director, Planning and Residential Programs and Administrator at Saint-Louis Residence. "It's about providing services for people when and where they need them and helping people to maintain their independence for as long as possible."

Meanwhile, at Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, which has served the community for 114 years, a similar project known as the Senior Village is taking shape.

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There, two residences are being built that will have 139 apartments for up to 200 to 225 seniors, depending on how many couples reside together. Of these units, 20 to 30% will be earmarked for Canadian Forces seniors' veterans, and 33% will be rented at below-market rates for those who qualify. Six units will be rent-geared-to-income apartments.

The five-storey Building A will be completed in October 2013 and will have 94 apartments. Of those, four clusters of 10 studio apartments will be used by seniors with mild to moderate dementia. Similar to Bruyère, the apartments will share a common kitchen and dining area. The three-storey Building B will be completed earlier, in January 2013, and will have 45 units for independent living. The \$42.3-million project will also see the development of a multi-purpose celebration room, theatre, fitness centre, terrace, and village commons, which will include retail services as well as space for leisure, learning, and community social events.

"The village concept allows for a wider range of options for seniors in one setting," says Greg Fougère, Chief Executive Officer of Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. "It's about providing a spectrum of care and services to help people. Seniors can choose the privacy of independent living or the security of assisted living."

In both communities, the villages will fill an important gap. Both organizations currently offer community outreach services, convalescent care, short-stay respite care, and long term care. However, there has been a shortage of affordable housing alternatives for seniors in the region -- until now. The new buildings at both Bruyère and Perley and Rideau will help older adults find the accommodation they need to transition through the stages from wellness to decreased function, all while helping them maintain their independence.

As well, the villages will serve seniors in the community

by acting as "one-stop shopping" hubs where older adults can have their physical, mental and social health needs met in one convenient location, all while avoiding hospital-based beds when managing less serious illnesses. "It's about creating a hive of activity where we have services on-site both for the people that live here as well as for those in the community," says Fougère.

Porteous sees Bruyère Village sharing that role. "It's a vision of what seniors' care could be," she says. "It's about creating a community at Bruyère that will be part of the broader Orleans community."

The vision for both villages began in December 2007, when the United Way released a report on the dearth of affordable and supportive housing in the Ottawa area. At the time, both OANHSS members collaborated on a submission to the local LHIN to develop programs to fill the gap in services. From that joint submission for funding grew the idea of creating similar housing projects on their respective grounds. "The core of our projects is similar," mentions Fougère. "We worked together to apply for the affordable housing funding, and we both received similar grants. The difference in our projects is that each is tailored to meet the unique needs of our local community."

It is this type of collaboration through OANHSS that has helped to make the vision of creating villages of care a reality. "OANHSS members have always been at the forefront of creating continuums of care," says Fougère. "We've learned from our colleagues, and now we're taking the concept and evolving it further. We're taking a more integrated approach and seeing it as one part of the health care system."

Porteous agrees, "One of our goals behind our collaboration is to create a model of health care villages that can be successfully used by others across the province and country. If the village concept is better for our seniors, then it will be better for other seniors and, ultimately, the health care system."



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