

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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News Release:

**REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE; SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FOCUS OF TALKS**

Department: Community Development

Some 150 area residents--representing community, professional and business organizations; health and environmental groups; educational institutions and governments--are taking part in day-long discussions aimed at making Greater Sudbury a more sustainable community.

The talks are the first step in delivering on the city's designation earlier this year as a Regional Centre of Expertise in Sustainable Development by the Institute of Advanced Studies, an arm of the United Nations University.

The ideas being put forward at today's meeting are part of the Healthy Community Initiative launched by Greater Sudbury Council in September 2004.

Last October, Greater Sudbury Council approved a Healthy Community Charter developed by the city's Healthy Community Cabinet as part of the initiative launched two years earlier.

The charter focuses on four priorities;

- active living and healthy lifestyles;
- the natural environment;
- civic engagement and social capital; and
- economic growth.

In approving the charter, Council also approved a plan to have the city recognized by the UN as a Regional Centre of Expertise in Sustainable Development. The UN University accorded the city that designation at the end of February.

'Today, we're here to identify what we need to do to address the four priority areas that we know are essential to a healthy, sustainable community,'" Mayor John Rodriguez told the community leaders. 'Education is key. In order to change people's behaviours and begin working together to build a brighter future for our community and for one another, we need to raise awareness, understand the challenges that are facing us and learn how best to address them.'

The Mayor went on to say that Greater Sudbury has a well-established track record for successfully tackling tough challenges. He pointed to the city's re-greening efforts as an example.

'This part of the country used to be known for its moon-like landscape," said the Mayor. 'Now, we're recapturing people's attention with our region's rugged, verdant beauty--the kind that was made famous by Canada's Group of Seven. We know how to pull together as a community to get a job done. That's one of the reasons we were successful with our bid to get the UN's designation as a Regional Centre of Expertise. This city has a reputation for being innovative, resourceful and determined. Our discussions here today are an opportunity to put those skills and abilities to work for a healthier, sustainable community."

Bob Rogers, chair of Greater Sudbury's Healthy Community Cabinet, said four Sudbury-based organizations will be spearheading the initiatives coming out of today's talks.

'The Sudbury and District Health Unit will focus on activities aimed at addressing active living and healthy lifestyles, EarthCare Sudbury will take the lead on environmental issues, the Social Planning Council will focus on civic engagement and social capital, and the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation will deal with economic initiatives," said Bob Rogers, Chair of the Healthy Community Cabinet.

'The idea is to strike a balance among all four of these areas. That's the key to a healthy sustainable community. It's all about taking a balanced, holistic approach that considers every aspect of everyday living, and that leaves nobody behind. Our objective in this conversation for action is to tap into people's intelligence, experience and expertise to identify the challenges we are likely to encounter under each of the four pillars and to explore ways of working together--through formal, non-formal and informal education--to address those challenges."

Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) are located within communities that are granted status by the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies. They share information and experiences between one another and form a knowledge network of best practices. They are 'major engines" for the exchange of information and program development relating to sustainable development. Based on inclusiveness, cooperation and flexibility, RCEs and their outcomes will be monitored and reviewed locally, nationally and internationally. At this time, thirty-five RCEs, including Greater Sudbury, have been acknowledged worldwide.

Backgrounder

Healthy Community Initiative; Greater Sudbury's designation as a Regional Centre of Expertise--chronology

- September 2004. The City of Greater Sudbury Council identifies the Healthy Community Initiative as one of four strategic priorities for the City. Council sets up an 18-member Expert Panel to develop the

concept and put forward a strategy.

- June 2005. Council approves the Expert Panel's Health Community Strategy, which is based on a broad view of community health and which recognizes the need for a balanced, sustainable approach to economic growth, social development and environmental stewardship.
- January 2006. Council approves the creation of a Health Community Cabinet made up of community leaders drawn from the City's economic, social and environmental sectors.
- October 11, 2006. Council unanimously approves the Healthy Community Charter put forward by the Healthy Community Cabinet. The charter proposes that actions aimed at achieving a healthy, sustainable community be focused on four priority areas: Active Living/Healthy Lifestyle; Natural Environment; Civic Engagement/Social Capital; and Economic Growth. At the same meeting, Council unanimously approves the Cabinet's plan to seek from the United Nations University the designation of Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development for the City of Greater Sudbury.
- October 20, 2006. The City submits its application to the United Nations University's Institute of Advanced Studies for the creation of a Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development in Greater Sudbury. The applications document proposes four lead organizations for each of the four priority areas, as well as a process to map out formal and non-formal education strategies aimed at sustainable development in the City of Greater Sudbury.
- February 28, 2007. The City announces it has been named a Regional Centre of Expertise by the UN University's Institute of Advanced Studies. In receiving the designation, Greater Sudbury joins a network of 35 centres around the world that have been recognized by the United Nations. (The United Nations General Assembly declared January 2005 as the start of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). ESD outlines economic growth, social development, and environmental protection as subject areas for research and education that will, in combination, positively contribute towards an improved quality of life. The concept of ESD aims to encourage individuals and communities to create visions, and subsequently action plans, for sustainable development. Project implementation must include promotion, education, public understanding and training. Between 2005 and 2015 regions from different parts of the world will be participating by acting as Regional Centres of Expertise.)

- May 16, 2007. The City and the Healthy Community Cabinet bring together some 200 community leaders to identify challenges facing the City under each of the four priority areas, as well as ways of addressing those challenges.

Next steps

The Health Community Cabinet and the four lead organizations for each of the four priority areas--the Sudbury and District Health Unit for Active Living/Healthy Lifestyle; EarthCare Sudbury for Natural Environment; the Social Planning Council for Civic Engagement/Social; and the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation for Economic Growth--will review the recommendations coming out of the May 16 discussions in consultation with other community stakeholders groups with an eye to developing an implementation road map, focused primarily on educational initiatives.

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