

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Corporate Services Committee  
**Report From:** Tim Simmonds, City Manager  
Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief  
**Meeting Date:** April 13, 2023  
**Report Code:** CM-23-006  
**Subject:** Physician Recruitment Update

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-23-006 respecting the Physician Recruitment Update, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

### Highlights:

- Multiple efforts are underway to attract Family Physicians
- Community groups formed to lead recruitment initiatives

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Prosperous City - KR2 - Develop a framework to attract key industry sector(s) for economic growth and investment that are matched to Owen Sound's economic strengths

### Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

### Previous Report/Authority:

[Physician Recruitment - CM-22-004.docx](#)

## Background:

Access to local family physicians and healthcare professionals impacts a community's overall health and well-being. Our community is changing and growing; we have an aging population and a retiring population moving to the area. Our population encompasses residents who can access a local family physician, residents who travel greater distances to access their family physician in another region or part of the province and residents who do not have access to a family physician and rely on local clinics or the emergency room for access to primary health.

Latest update - March 17th, 2023

CSD	Health Card Holders	Rostered to a Family Physician	Not Rostered
Chatsworth	7,687	5,955	1,732
Georgian Bluffs	16,931	14,164	2,767
Owen Sound	23,974	19,310	4,664

It is important to note that the numbers above include only the residents registered on Health Care Connect who do not have a doctor. We estimate the number of patients living in Owen Sound who do not have a doctor locally could be as high as 6,000. It is further estimated that 15,000 people are without a primary care practitioner in the broader area served by the 21 Physicians of the Owen Sound Family Health Team.

The City is estimated to require 12 new doctors to relocate or start their careers in Owen Sound over the next three years. This estimate includes a modest factor of population growth, the current orphan patients currently registered with Health Care Connect (HCC), the estimated orphan patients not registered with HCC, and the patients rostered to current physicians who plan to retire in the near future.

## Analysis:

This Staff Report informs Council of the local and regional efforts currently being used to attract physicians to the area. The report will include a brief update on the following seven initiatives:

1. Owen Sound Community Primary Care Recruitment Task Force

2. McMaster Rural Family Practice Residency Program
3. Grant Application for Funding
4. ROMA Delegation – January 2023
5. Grey Bruce Regional Health Human Resource Task Force
6. Rural Ontario Medical Program – Collingwood
7. Physician Appreciate Event – Hibou Conservation area
8. Rural Resident Retreat Event – Kincardine, ON

## **1. Owen Sound Community Primary Care Recruitment Task Force**

The Owen Sound Primary Care Recruitment and Retention Taskforce began in the early 2000s when local community leaders organized efforts to recruit new physicians and support the Owen Sound Family Health Clinic launch in 2011. Local leaders organized successful grassroots and fundraising recruitment efforts, including offering bursaries, scholarships, daycare, career placements for spouses, welcoming events and housing for new residents and locums.

Following a dormant period after the opening of the Owen Sound Family Health Team clinic in 2011, the Taskforce re-emerged in late mid-2022 to address the combined impacts of the pandemic, physician retirements, workforce burnout and the increasing needs of an ageing population, as well as the increased influx of newcomers from the city.

The revised Task Force has been formed to continue the work of the previously named Owen Sound Family Physician Recruitment Committee for the community of Owen Sound. The City currently holds funds that were distributed from the Owen Sound Family Physician Recruitment Committee Endowment Fund. The task force is accessing these funds for incidental expenses. Physician Recruitment Reserve currently has a balance of \$15,975.

The current community members are:

Dr. Elyse Savaria – Owen Sound Family Health Team

Dr. Gurdeep Singh - Owen Sound Family Health Team

Pat Kelly, CEO - Pat Kelly Associates

Michele Mannerow, Financial Advisor – Manulife

Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief – City of Owen Sound

Paul Hoban, Executive Director - OSFHT

Wendy Pratt, Director, Human Resources - McLean Engineering

Mark Womack, Community Development Coordinator - Parkinson Society

### **TASKFORCE GOALS:**

- Increase local educational opportunities provide more family practice rotations - especially for foreign-trained health professionals and those seeking Indigenous and/or rural specialty training.
- Support Work to attract primary care professionals and new residents to help plan career paths and family life in Owen Sound, lessening feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed.
- Streamline rural locum opportunities across GB by creating a bank of locums.
- Leverage opportunities for socialization/welcoming physicians and their families in Owen Sound.

### **TASKFORCE DELIVERABLES:**

- Create an inventory of regional/provincial/federal incentives and their relevant impact on retention and recruitment.
- Produce an Owen Sound specific, sustainable recruitment and retention plan & initial leadership team established.
- Create a rural marketing/communications plan finalized with associated resources.
- Increased the number & kind of diverse opportunities for learners and visiting physicians.
- Develop equity-informed Community Recruitment and Retention toolkit.
- Liaison with area employers – create an inventory of local employers for spouse/partner employment.

## **2. McMaster Rural Family Practice Residency Program**

Historically the mentorship program in Owen Sound has been highly successful in bringing students (residents) to the community. The program's more significant benefit is that many residents have returned to Owen Sound to establish a practice. This program is supported by local physicians and requires additional time obligations from our existing physicians. The Owen Sound Family Physicians, the College of Family Physicians, and the McMaster University Residents

program must support a request to expand the current Residency program in Owen Sound. If approved, the increase to the valuable learning program will bring more future physicians to Owen Sound to experience the community and potentially join the Health Team. This initiative is being lead by a Physician at the Owen Sound Family Health Team.

### **3. Grant Application - Community Service Recovery Fund**

The Owen Sound Community Primary Care Recruitment Task Force submitted a grant application for the Government of Canada Community Service Recovery Fund. The funding could significantly address the greater regional need for family physicians within the Owen Sound Family Health Team. If approved, the funds would benefit residents both in Owen Sound and regionally. Funds would support creating a regional recruitment strategy and fund the contract employment of a recruitment coordinator. The grant application was submitted in February; we anticipate a response in July. This initiative is being lead by a member of the Owen Sound Primary Care Recruitment and Retention Taskforce.

### **4. ROMA Delegation – Minister of Health Sylvia Jones**

January 2023, during the annual ROMA convention, Mayor Boddy, Deputy Mayor Greig and members of Georgian Bluffs Council made a delegation requesting support for physician recruitment in our area. Our request was focused and specific. We asked that the City be granted access to Provincial Physician Incentives currently available to other Rural Municipalities in Ontario. We recently received follow-up correspondence from the Minister’s Office. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in our request, and Owen Sound continues to be disadvantaged in competing for Doctors with other Rural communities.

### **5. Grey Bruce Regional Health Human Resource Task Force (GBRHHR)**

The GBRHHR Task Force was recently formed and includes representatives from every community in Grey and Bruce that hosts Physicians, clinics, or a hospital. The GBRHHR Task Force’s primary purpose is to work regionally to close the gap on critical vacant positions (Primary Care Physicians and Nurse Practitioners) in the healthcare sector across Grey Bruce. The group’s main function will be to work collaboratively to market the area to a targeted audience. In

doing so, we will raise the profile and attractiveness of the Grey Bruce Region to recruit and retain healthcare professionals successfully. The GBRHHR Task Force is an ad hoc task group created for the particular purpose of primary care practitioner regionally focused recruitment activities. The goal of this group is to cast the wide net and not to take away from the recruitment efforts at the local level. The group will initially form for two years, commencing in January 2023 and tentatively ending in December 2025.

## **6. Rural Ontario Medical Program – Collingwood, Ontario**

Staff attended the Rural Ontario Medical Program held on February 23 and 24 in Collingwood. The Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP) coordinates medical rotations for future physicians from the six medical universities in Ontario. The event aims to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals to practice medicine in rural Ontario. It was an ideal opportunity to connect directly with future physicians and learn what they seek from a community while considering their future. Several of the attendees have a connection to Owen Sound and are aware of what we have to offer them. Thirty other rural Ontario municipalities attended the event and showcased their communities.

## **7. Physician Appreciate Event – Hibou Conservation Area**

Planning is underway to host a Physician Appreciation event locally at the beautiful Hibou Conservation Area this June. This event will serve as a recruitment opportunity and have value in retaining our current physicians. Our current group of Medical Professionals will be invited to the event as we demonstrate our appreciation for their work. This initiative is being lead by the Owen Sound Primary Care Recruitment and Retention Taskforce. Funding from the Physician Recruitment reserve will be used. Budget is not finalized at this time.

## **8. Rural Resident Retreat Event – Kincardine, ON**

Planning is underway to host a Resident "Retreat" for future Physicians. This event will serve as a casual recruitment opportunity and an opportunity to showcase the Grey-Bruce area to the residents attending. Med students from across Ontario will be in attendance and social events are planned. This initiative is being lead by the Grey Bruce Regional Health Human Resource Task Force. Full time community Physician Recruitment Specialists from Chesley and

Kincardine are the events hosts. Date of the event is August 25th - 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Future Priorities**

1. Continue to support the local community groups volunteering time to promote our area and attract new Physicians.
2. Work with the dedicated recruitment staff at Grey Bruce Health Services to promote awareness of the quality of life achieved by working in our rural community, creating a welcoming environment, and making community connections.
3. Explore community partnerships to support regional recruitment efforts.
4. Engage our neighbouring municipalities and develop long-term cooperative strategies to increase access to primary health care in our area.

### **Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications at this time. Should it be determined there is a need and benefit to contribute funding to future Physician Recruitment needs, staff will provide a report to Council for consideration at that time. The Physician Recruitment reserve is currently \$15,975. This reserve continues to fund incidental costs of recruitment and retention efforts.

### **Communication Strategy:**

Presentation of this report to the Corporate Services Committee

### **Consultation:**

n/a

### **Attachments:**

n/a

### **Recommended by:**

Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief, at [peagleson@owensound.ca](mailto:peagleson@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 x2244.