



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Jasbir Raina, Chief Administrative Officer

Meeting Date: April 2, 2024

Report: Physician Recruitment Action Plan, Report CAOGR24-003

Subject

A report to identify key considerations for local physician recruitment, summarize physician recruitment initiatives being led by other municipalities in Ontario and propose a dynamic, multi-pronged approach for physician recruitment and retention to be led by the City of Peterborough.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CAOGR24-003 dated April 2, 2024 of the Chief Administrative Officer as follows:

- a) That a \$580,000 budget be established to implement a multi-pronged, pilot approach for physician recruitment and retention activities for a term-ending December 31, 2025, including:
 - i. Continue the existing \$15,000 incentive (over three years) for family physicians that establish new practices in the City of Peterborough;
 - ii. Develop and implement a “Whole of Village” incentive program, engaging local physicians, organizations and businesses as part of the recruitment efforts;
 - iii. Consult with the local Family Physician Think Tank about short, medium, and long-term actions for family physician recruitment and retention in Peterborough;
 - iv. Create a temporary Physician Recruitment Coordinator position for a two-year period to support the provision of the incentive program and implement a

strategic workplan including coordinating with the Family Physician Think Tank; and

- v. Develop and implement an advocacy plan related to the provincial health care system to support physician recruitment efforts.
- b) That the budget for the pilot approach be funded from the Physician Recruitment Reserve of \$350,000, the 2024 budget allocation for physician recruitment of \$100,000 and a pre-commitment of the 2025 budget of \$130,000.
- c) That staff report to Council by the third quarter of 2025 on the status of the “Whole of Village” incentive program efforts and the in-house physician recruitment services ahead of 2026 Budget deliberations.

Executive Summary

- The recruitment of family physicians to Peterborough is a critical issue for the community and is highlighted in the City’s Strategic Plan.
- Physician recruitment challenges are being felt globally, including by municipalities across Ontario who are implementing a variety of models to attract family physicians to their communities.
- The challenge is a complex one. A comprehensive and creative approach to recruiting and retaining physicians in Peterborough is required. Ensuring local responses are evidence-based, bench-marked and reflect physician input will be essential.

Background

There is a critical need for family physicians in Peterborough.

In 2022, there were estimates of 13,000 to 15,000 unattached patients in Peterborough. More recently, according to the Ontario College of Family Physicians, 32,000 individuals in Peterborough, Haliburton and Kawartha Lakes do not have a family doctor and that number is expected to double in the next two years.

On December 11, 2023, City Council directed the following:

- That the amount for Physician Recruitment of \$226,021 be transferred temporarily to the Doctor Recruitment Incentive Reserve; and
- Staff report back about hiring a physician recruiter for the City of Peterborough.

Staff have engaged in research and consultation efforts to provide a proposed path forward, for consideration.

Physician Recruitment in Other Municipalities:

A jurisdictional scan was completed of approaches to physician recruitment currently being implemented by other municipalities in Ontario. There is a range of financial incentives provided by municipalities to recruit physicians to communities. For example, Hastings County provides \$150,000 over five years to medical students or residents as part of agreements they offer. Kingston and Belleville also offer similar financial incentives. While some municipalities (like Kingston) report success with large financial incentives, other experts flag that “incentive hopping” is a concern where physicians tend to leave communities shortly after their agreements expire.

Other municipalities such as Kitchener-Waterloo focus resources on actions like annual physician recruitment events and other public-private partnerships rather than focusing on financial incentives provided by the municipality. The Greater KW Chamber of Commerce drives recruitment locally, with municipalities and the local hospital supporting.

Currently, the City of Peterborough is in a group of municipalities that offer some financial incentives to physicians practicing within the boundaries of the city. The City of Peterborough currently has multiple agreements with physicians for \$15,000 over three years (\$5,000 each year).

By means of example, Kingston offers a \$100,000 incentive for a five-year commitment by physicians. Kingston does not use the services of a physician recruiter and relies on in-house staff support of marketing (e.g., video content and social media), wrap-around services for physicians and personal community networks for recruitment efforts. Additionally, the municipality attributes data analysis that targets their efforts to be part of their success. According to staff, working with local family physicians, engaging with personal community networks and being creative have been critical ingredients for their success in physician recruitment.

Analysis:

Several options were considered as part of the research about potential options for the City of Peterborough’s physician recruitment efforts going forward.

Previously, efforts in Peterborough have primarily focused on a traditional physician recruiter model wherein relevant budgets have been directed towards hiring a physician recruiter and supporting marketing and conference expenses. These efforts focus on increasing the visibility of Peterborough to potential physicians domestically and abroad and often include hosting booths at university fairs, conferences and events for medical students.

Holding a professionally-facilitated, community workshop to capture stakeholder perspectives, concerns and potential next steps was also considered. This approach could capture the perspectives of key partners such as the Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC), Peterborough Family Health Team (PFHT) and put forward a roadmap for future actions.

Proposing a larger financial incentive for potential physicians was also considered. This model would emulate other municipalities who have created agreements with physicians who agree to practice in their communities.

Recommended Approach:

Council could consider implementing a dynamic, multi-pronged approach for physician recruitment on a two-year, pilot basis. The following actions could be taken:

- i. Continue the existing \$15,000 incentive (over three years) for family physicians that establish new practices in the City of Peterborough;
- ii. Develop and implement a “Whole of Village” incentive program, engaging local physicians, organizations and businesses as part of the recruitment efforts;
- iii. Consult with the local Family Physician Think Tank about short, medium, and long-term actions for family physician recruitment and retention in Peterborough;
- iv. Create a temporary Physician Recruitment Coordinator position for a two-year period to support the provision of the incentive program and implement a strategic workplan including coordinating with the Family Physician Think Tank; and
- v. Develop and implement an advocacy plan related to the provincial health care system to support physician recruitment efforts.

The recommendation is that staff report to Council by the third quarter of 2025 on the status of the “Whole of Village” incentive program efforts and the in-house physician recruitment services ahead of 2026 Budget deliberations.

Additional information:

The following details are intended to provide additional information about the recommended approach. In an effort to deliver short, medium and long-term deliverables in support of this community priority, a suite of parallel actions could be taken.

Continuation of Existing Incentives

The City of Peterborough currently offers a \$15,000 incentive (over three years) for potential physicians practicing in the boundaries of the City of Peterborough. There are currently multiple agreements in place with local physicians that require continued support in 2024 and 2025.

Continuing this incentive would ensure that there is no interruption in honouring existing agreements as well as establishing new agreements with potential physicians to the community while a robust incentive program is developed.

Development of a “Whole of Village” Incentive Program

A “Whole of Village” incentive program could be developed as a pilot program for Peterborough. This work would entail developing the governance framework for a “Whole of Village” physician recruitment incentive program for Peterborough in the next three to six months. The program would be a creative, local solution that could be piloted and assessed based on deliverables after implementation.

The program could include:

- 1) With a specific focus on current medical students in Peterborough, provide financial incentives to physicians based on the number of patients they roster;
- 2) Explore opportunities whereby local physicians may be eligible for financial incentives if they recruit a physician; and/or
- 3) Explore possibility of a new “Hometown Proud” financial incentive for Peterborough students attending medical school elsewhere who agree to practice in Peterborough upon graduation.

Consulting with local physicians and residents as well as key partners such as the Peterborough Family Health Team, Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) and administrators of individual Family Health Organizations (FHOs) would be part of this work to develop a governance model for the new incentive program.

Exploring opportunities for “Whole of Village” support from private sector partners could be considered, as well. This approach might leverage potential offers of support from local businesses to support physicians as they start a practice to demonstrate a “whole of village,” wrap-around commitment to these future community leaders. As an example, this could include professional services for new physicians as they start a new practice.

Valuing Local Physicians’ Expertise

In the spirit of valuing the expertise and recruitment efforts of current, local family physicians, the City could consult with the existing, local Family Physician Think Tank with a two-year commitment to working with the arms-length consulting group. The consulting body - which is open to family physicians in Peterborough who are practicing comprehensive, community-based family medicine - would provide recommendations that are evidence-based, physician-driven and solution-oriented for short, medium and long-term priorities. Specific key performance indicators could be developed.

Physician-driven input would ensure that actions taken by the City of Peterborough reflect the current interests of both physicians and medical residents. Since physicians are often active recruiters on behalf of their communities, working directly with this

group would demonstrate an interest in being responsive to physician-driven recommendations and ideas in a timely manner. Collaboration could also include efforts to support local family physicians as they communicate with existing medical student and colleague networks (e.g., the sharing of video and social media content, as prepared within the City of Peterborough, with community family physicians).

The consulting body would provide local and timely data to the City of Peterborough to support evidence-based decisions about physician recruitment and retention. Examples could include reports, surveys or studies.

Finally, the Family Physician Think Tank could support local recruitment and retention events that are strategic, targeted and physician-driven.

Temporary, In-House Physician Recruitment Coordinator

Hiring an in-house Physician Recruitment Coordinator would ensure that there is one main contact for physician recruitment at the City of Peterborough for the two-year pilot. An in-house Physician Recruitment Coordinator could be hired for a two-year contract that would be tied closely to a performance evaluation with key performance indicators.

The workplan could include: supporting the implementation of the incentive pilot program, working with the City of Peterborough's in-house communications team to develop marketing content (e.g., social media and video), tracking and maintaining relationships with Peterborough students in medical schools, planning targeted events (e.g., with Queen's medical students) and coordinating with local physicians. This position would be the key contact for the Family Physician Think Tank to work with.

The in-house Physician Recruitment Coordinator could also lead the exploration and analysis of other options for municipal involvement in physician recruitment and retention. Medium to long-term options that could be considered include establishing a new medical clinic(s) using city-owned property(ies), child-care support options for physicians and/or potential medical school opportunities for Peterborough.

Advocacy to Provincial Government

Health care remains within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. The development and implementation of an advocacy strategy for primary care enhancements in Ontario could be a critical part of this work. Planned meetings with elected officials and public service representatives from the provincial Ministry of Health and other strategic engagement could be part of this strategy.

There is an opportunity to leverage the expertise from local physicians in this area and to work with local physicians to champion key priorities (e.g., enhanced medical student opportunities) to other levels of government on behalf of the community.

Other Considerations

Recent local initiatives from partners to combat this critical issue for the community include provincial funding for a Community Health Centre as announced on February 1, 2024, the Peterborough Family Health Team's expanded Health Clinic and the Peterborough Newcomer Health Clinic, among others.

Since physician recruitment efforts had previously been completed with the County of Peterborough, there is a need to work collaboratively at the staff level to separate shared resources such as an existing website and social media accounts. Information-sharing with the County of Peterborough physician recruiter will be important going forward, as well.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Pillar: Community & Well-being

Strategic Initiative: Physician Recruitment

Implementing a dynamic, multi-pronged approach would work towards enhancing physician recruitment in Peterborough.

Engagement and Consultation

Staff engaged with members of the local and provincial medical community as well as relevant staff in other municipalities to prepare this report.

Additional engagement with local family physicians and key partners is a key component of the recommended approach.

Budget and Financial Implications

The City of Peterborough currently has funds allocated for physician recruitment for 2024, including:

- \$100,000 for physician incentives including current multi-year agreements with several physician; and
- \$226,021 approved for 2024 Budget (had been going to Peterborough and Kawartha Economic Development, PKED), pending report to Council.

In order to implement the dynamic, multi-pronged approach, approval is requested to draw \$350,000 from the Physician Recruitment Reserve and pre-commit \$130,000 in the 2025 Budget. These funds in addition to the \$100,000 approved in the 2024 budget for physician incentives will fund the two-year pilot program budget of \$580,000.

After withdrawing these funds from the Physician Recruitment Reserve there will be an uncommitted balance of \$53,146 remaining.

It is recommended that staff report to Council by the third quarter of 2025 on the status of the “Whole of Village” incentive program efforts and the in-house physician recruitment services ahead of 2026 Budget deliberations.

Conclusion

The City of Peterborough has an opportunity to update its approach to physician recruitment and retention. By implementing a suite of parallel actions, a creative and local plan for action could be pursued.

Submitted by,

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