



## County of Brant Council Report

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**To:** To the Mayor and Members of County of Brant Council  
**From:** Adam Crozier, Project Manager, Office of the CAO  
**Date:** December 20, 2022  
**Report #:** RPT-710-22  
**Subject:** Development of Physician Recruitment Program  
**Purpose:** For Approval

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### Recommendation

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Whereas the need to develop a Physician Recruitment Program was identified as a specific action in the 2019-2023 County of Brant Strategic Plan coinciding with the opening of the Cowan Community Health Hub;

And Whereas proactive physician recruitment is required to reduce the approximately 16% of County residents currently without a primary care physician, and to replace physicians who may choose to retire within the next 5 years;

And Whereas municipalities have become increasingly involved in the funding and operation of Physician Recruitment Programs as competition to attract primary care physicians to practice in individual local communities has increased;

Therefore, that a Decision Package in the amount of \$200,000 for the development of a Physician Recruitment Program be referred to 2023 Budget deliberations.

### Strategic Plan Priority

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Strategic Priority 5 - Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens

Action 5.2.2 - Initiate a County physician recruitment program and recruit 4 new physicians by the opening of the Brant Community Health Hub project.

### Impacts and Mitigation

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#### Social Impacts

The need to recruit for primary care physicians to both: a) provide coverage for individuals who currently do not have a primary care physician, and b) replace physicians who will be retiring, is significant. The downstream issues associated with individuals who lack a primary care physician using emergency resources such as paramedic services and emergency departments are well documented and impact the effective operation of specific County services (Brant-Brantford Paramedic Service), local residents, and are contributing to the crisis in the provincial healthcare system.

The recruitment of additional physicians for both the newly opened Cowan Community Health Hub and to provide adequate opportunities to receive primary care in all areas of the County

is paramount to the health and safety of all County residents. Strong primary care service delivery positively influences the goal of a healthy community and includes acute services, chronic disease management, and preventive health measures.

### Environmental Impact

There are no environmental impacts associated with this report.

### Economic Impacts

A lack of primary care physicians inadvertently contributes to increased costs to operate the Brant-Brantford Paramedic Service and reduces access to effective primary healthcare.

## **Report**

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### Background

As noted above, the impacts of individuals without a primary care physician or “family doctor” are significant, and place strain on emergency services such as the Brant-Brantford Paramedic Service, which continues to see record highs for calls for service, and visits to the emergency department at the Brantford General Hospital. Increasingly efforts to fill the gaps in the provincially operated healthcare system have fallen to municipalities to serve as the advocates and funders for their specific communities and residents, and most physician recruitment programs locally are operated with partial or full funding from municipalities. The crown agency responsible for the provincial healthcare system, Ontario Health, operates a section, HealthForceOntario, which provides resources for physician recruitment to municipalities and agencies, but does not undertake actions to promote the recruitment of primary care physicians to a specific community.

Currently, the County does not provide funding to, or undertake efforts for physician recruitment. Between 2006 and 2011 the County provided nominal funding to the Brantford Family Physician Recruitment Taskforce and continues to appoint a member of Council to this Taskforce, but the primary focus of this Taskforce is on recruiting efforts for physicians to locate in the City and not the County.

The model for physician recruitment in the province typically involves a community-based Committee overseeing a dedicated recruitment manager who manages inquiries from potential physicians and plays an active role in recruitment process, including community visits by potential physicians. According to statistics provided by HealthForceOntario there are currently 11 primary care physicians practicing in the County, with most a part of the PrimaCare Family Health Team operating primarily out of the Cowan Community Health Hub, with facilities located in St. George and Ayr, and most current recruitment handled by the Executive Director of the Family Health Team responding to inquiries. As noted above, the importance of strong primary care in a community setting positively impacts overall community health through acute service delivery, chronic disease management, and preventive health measures and to protect higher order services delivered at hospitals.

### Analysis

The two main reasons associated with physician recruitment are: a) providing a physician to those currently without one, and, b) replacing a retiring physician to avoid those currently “rostered” from losing a primary care physician. From figures provided by HealthForceOntario, 4-5 new physicians are required to cover those currently without a family doctor in the County, which currently stands at 16% (6,485 individuals) of the County’s population, and physicians 60 years of age and older are responsible for 45% of all rostered

patients with a County-based physician. Finally, it should be further noted that the population of the County continues to grow at an accelerated level, which will further necessitate additional physicians.

The opening of the Cowan Community Health Hub presents a tremendous opportunity to ease the recruitment process by promoting a modern facility and an active Family Health Team for a new physician to begin their practice. That said, the opening of a full-scale medical facility further adds to the urgency of ensuring that enough physicians are practicing within the community to support the activities occurring at the Health Hub, as well as representing a potential loss of lease holding fees paid by practicing physicians.

Staff tentatively propose that a Committee comprised of members of County Council, the PrimaCare Family Health Team, and other subject matter experts would be responsible for guiding the program, with the assistance of the CEO of Brant Municipal Enterprises, and the retention of a professional recruiter to organize all recruitment efforts. A further report outlining the operations of the program will be forthcoming should the program be funded in the 2023 budget, and it is intended that the amount of funding required to operate the program would be re-evaluated prior to 2024, noting that a multi-year effort is envisioned. This funding would be used to retain a professional recruiting manager to undertake proactive measures, fund marketing materials, and community visits by potential physicians.

**Summary and Recommendations**

As noted above, the development of a physician recruitment program was identified as a specific action to be completed in the County 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Approximately 16% of all County residents are “unrostered” or do not have a primary care physician which leads to significant issues and increased usage of emergency related services, and nearly 45% of “rostered” individuals have a physician who is over the age of 60.

The opening of the Cowan Community Health Hub represents a tremendous opportunity to attract primary care physicians to the County but is also a necessity to ensure that enough physicians are present to ensure sufficient clientele for the associated services located at the Hub, along with the lease holding fees paid by practicing physicians. As such, staff recommend that a Decision Package be referred to 2023 budget deliberations which would provide funding of \$200,000 per year to operate a physician recruitment program, with further details outlining the operations of the program to be forthcoming to Council.

**Attachments**

None.

**Reviewed By**

Darryl Lee, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

**Copied To**

Brooke Hayward, Chief Executive Officer, Brant Municipal Enterprises

**By-law and/or Agreement**

By-law Required	No
Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk	No