

Memorandum

Date: Tuesday, June 6, 2023

To: Members of Council

From: Jason Schildroth, Manager, Community and Cultural Development, Community Services

Subject: Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force

Family physicians are an important element to community wellbeing and quality of life for residents. When communities lose family physicians in the area, the reduction in services creates additional capacity pressures, affects staffing shortages, increases work volumes for existing physicians, and will increase the number of patients seeking emergency care.

In January of 2023, the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT) identified a need to establish a Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force to address the shortage of family physicians across the County of Dufferin and the Town of Caledon, after the loss and retirement of family physicians in Orangeville and Caledon East. There have been additional losses of family physicians in the community since then. The HOHC OHT invited specific Mayors, Chief Administrative Officers, and staff with relevant portfolios across Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon to join this Task Force.

A snapshot of some of our OHT data presented to the Task Force earlier this year includes:

- 78 family physicians in Dufferin & Caledon (including Walk-Ins), 35 of which are located in Caledon.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a ratio of 1 Primary Care Provider (PCP) to 1000 patients. Previous efforts in Ontario have recommended a ratio of 1 PCP to 1250 patients.
- On top of the need for retention of existing PCPs, an additional 29 PCPs will be needed in Caledon by 2031 based on the recommended ratios, and considering Caledon's population growth

Historically, Caledon had received 'underserved' designation which was helpful in securing the supports needed to bolster recruitment and retention efforts. This designation has been replaced with the rurality index score, which takes into account rurality, travel time to basic referral centres, and travel time to advanced referral centres. Communities with a score over 40 on the index are eligible for incentive grants. Within our the HOHC OHT, six communities have a score over 40. Caledon currently scores 8, however our vast geography makes our score somewhat misleading as areas such as Bolton may reduce our score significantly, while communities in our rural areas may experience a score that would be comparable to other communities in our OHT.

The new Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force will bring together leaders across both Dufferin and Caledon who are committed to both attracting and keeping local family physicians. We have invited community members and local physicians to participate in the task force. The Task Force will:

- Identify our current family physician providers and support them in continuing successful practices in our communities;
- Identify opportunities that may exist in Dufferin and Caledon to create additional practice spaces for physicians to work in our community;
- Quantify the gap in family physicians and actively work to fill this gap;
- Develop a value proposition for Dufferin and Caledon as a great place to live, work and raise families; and,
- Work in a collaborative and comprehensive manner to target physicians and support them to establish themselves and their practice in our communities.

The Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force is organized into two sub-groups. The Steering Group is a decision-making body and is responsible for championing the work of the Task Force, and for providing resources and skills to advance the activities of the Action Team. Town of Caledon representatives at this group include Mayor Groves and Jason Schildroth, Manager, Community & Cultural Development. The Action Team is responsible for delivering the activities and tasks as directed by the Steering Group. The Town of Caledon representative at this group is Sandra Dolson, Officer, Economic Development.

The Task Force is currently in the formative phases of its work plan development, which will include identification of resources required for support. The Town's economic development office is committed to supporting this work through existing programs and budget commitments that are available.

Town staff are convening a Caledon Working Group under the Task Force specifically dedicated to our efforts. This Working Group will align a number of initiatives that can impact the Task Force's success, organize projects, and dedicate resources.

Staff will provide recurring updates on the progress of this Task Force and Working Group through correspondence and the appropriate Council