

Information Report

Title: Physician Recruitment and Retention Update August 2024

Report Number: Strategic Initiatives-2024-13

Director: Chief Administrative Officer

Manager: Strategic Initiatives

Meeting Date:

Wednesday, August 14, 2024

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on Physician Recruitment and Retention in the Strategic Initiatives Department.

Context and Background Information:

Current Status

The current status of physician recruitment is:

- 10 physicians currently make up the Kincardine Family Health Organization (KFHO, also known as the Kincardine Physicians Group), with 14,500 attached patients.
- Estimates show another possible 3000 unattached people without a family doctor in our area. Plus, future growth in population will need access to healthcare.
- 16 physicians at minimum are needed now to serve our current population, work in ER, and provide hospital inpatient coverage.
- 1 physician transitioned from primary care to full time emergency room work.
- 1 physician left Kincardine in June after more than 12 years of service.
- 2 new physicians started work in February and July of 2024.
- 2 more physicians are planning to start work in 2024.
- Kincardine will have an estimated 12 physicians working as family physicians by the end of 2024.
- Urgently need to recruit 4 more physicians.
- Future population growth will require more physicians to join our community.

Recruitment work

The Municipality of Kincardine's revised Physician Recruitment has had success in recruiting physicians. We are currently seeing the rewards of the work and support that has gone into the physician recruitment and retention program since 2021. On average, it takes at least 18 months from first contact with an interested physician to having them start practicing in our community.

According to the Ontario Medical Association at least 2.3 million Ontarians do not have regular access to primary care, and this is expected to double in the next two years. The shortage is especially acute in rural areas. According to survey results, 40% of physicians are considering retiring in the next five years. The implications of not having access to primary care for all members of our community is significant. There are impacts beyond health challenges, as lack of health services has impacts for economic growth.

Along with the revised incentive package approved by municipal council in 2021, there is support from Bruce Power through both the newly announced financial support and the longer-standing support to assist in finding spousal employment when possible. The Society of United Professional's support of accommodations for physicians to have a place to stay so they can focus on care is also extremely beneficial component of the suite of incentives to attract physicians.

There are 4 new physicians who have signed approved agreements and have started, or planning to start, work in Kincardine in 2024. Without replacements for two physician's practices there would have been an additional 2600 un rostered patients. Which would have brought our community estimated un rostered patient total to 5600 people. The impact of this possibility on the ER and hospital could have been a crisis.

Practice Ready Ontario (PRO) is a new Ministry of Health program to streamline the integration of Internationally Trained Physicians (ITPs) into high need communities in Ontario. Their target in Ontario is to bring up to 50 candidates each year to practice medicine. It was an extremely competitive process, there were more community applications than candidates and we were fortunate to receive candidates. One PRO candidate has accepted an offer to complete a 3-year return of service in Kincardine under a local physician's supervision.

Onboarding support for new physicians

Work continues to onboard newly signed physicians. This is a crucial part of the process, ensuring that everything is ready for the physician.

This work includes planning events to meet the team, ensuring clinic space is ready and equipped as advertised, Ministry paperwork, accommodations acquired, staff hired, information on the rostering process, spousal employment, school tours, day care placements and other needs as they arise. We want them to feel welcome and part of our community as soon as possible!

Retention support

Retention work is ongoing, and a part of the Physician Recruitment and Retention Program. The agreement between physicians and the municipality related to the existing medical facility is an important component to support recruitment and retention.

Locum Recruitment

As both recruitment and retention efforts, there have been 8 locum doctors recruited to work at the medical clinic, in 2024 so. These locums provided coverage for physicians to work in the hospital, ER shifts or vacation coverage.

Hawthorne Community Clinic

The new full-time Lead Hand - Building Maintenance position has been successful in adding staff capacity for overdue repairs and maintenance.

With three tenants in the clinic, it is nearly full. Based on the current set-up, there will not be room for 16 physician offices in the clinic or room for more in the future as the number of physicians grows to accommodate community growth.

Locum Houses

Housing is provided for locums, medical residents and their families through the generous support of The Society of United Professionals, who purchased two homes in Kincardine in 2014 and leased them to the Municipality of Kincardine at no cost for 10 years. In 10 years over 300 physicians have stayed at the locum houses.

Having housing available for new or visiting physicians is crucial so they can settle in quickly and provide immediate care in the clinic, ER and hospital.

The Society of United Professionals has decided to sell the properties on Weick and McKendrick. They will continue supporting the Physician Recruitment and Retention Program in Kincardine and are planning to purchase two condominiums, which is what they provide in Saugeen Shores. We appreciate their continued support for our recruitment and retention program. And an update on the impact of the new condo purchases will be provided to Council once more information becomes available.

Regional recruitment

There have also been many regional recruitment efforts made this year. Including:

- Grey Bruce Primary Care Recruitment Collaborative was created in June 2024 after work done by a Grey Bruce Owen Sound Recruitment task force which folded. Next meeting is in October, looking at ways to leverage the areas collaboration to recruit physicians to our area.
- SOPRA Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Association: the Municipality joined this regional group that includes 17 physician recruiters representing their individual areas but working together to leverage international reach.

ER Department Support Program

The ER program has allowed for the use of a \$500/shift stipend to be paid to locums or physicians completing third year of residency to work shifts in the Kincardine ER. It has been successful in helping keep the ER open through a budgeted \$10,000 per year since 2022.

Bruce power committed \$25,000 a year for 3 years to this program in April.

Healthcare Partnership Program

The Kincardine Saugeen Shores Healthcare Partnership Three Year Pilot Program has received funding from Bruce Power, \$50,000 annually to each community for three years.

The goal of the program is that communities are resourced, so every resident has access to a Family Physician.

Progress to date is focusing on recruitment, marketing and promotion. Including a 2.5-minute video featuring two local physicians, showcasing their professional work and community. Four 15-second media clips derived from the main video will enhance social media marketing.

Nurse Practitioner (NP) support

The Family Health Team same day clinic with 2 Nurse Practitioners and support staff at the medical clinic help divert Emergency Room visits and support patients access to primary care. The municipality provides 60% funding of one full time NP, less if there are staffing shortages.

The Family Health Team same day clinic has reduced hours due to a lack of nurse practitioner candidates; the job has been posted to cover two temporary leaves for months.

A new NP was recruited and is working for the Kincardine Family Health Organization, covering a personal leave.

Education Programs

There have been 10 visiting physicians completing their rural residency rotation in Kincardine so far this year. Each resident physician completes two months of primary care, hospital inpatient care and emergency room work.

A Kincardine Residency program proposal to host 2-4 resident physicians has been developed and is being sent to universities for consideration of the 2025 CaRMS. The retention rate of similar programs is 80-90%.

Huron Kinloss

The request sent to Huron Kinloss for \$17,000 in financial support for the Physician recruitment program was approved for 2024, a letter from Mayor Murray is attached.

Future Impacts

To meet the needs of our growing community more physicians will be needed in the future to deliver healthcare to all residents. Clinic space will be a challenge.

Consultation Overview:

Worked with the Kincardine Physicians, Saugeen shores and Bruce Power to implement the Healthcare Partnership for Physician Recruitment and Retention.

Origin:

Providing an update on ongoing recruitment efforts.

Attachments: Attachment 1 OMA factsheet Feb 1, 2024
Attachment 2 HK letter confirming financial contribution 2024

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