



Town of The Blue Mountains

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May 13, 2022

Mayor and Council
c/o Town Clerk

RE: Creation of a Regional Board for Physician Recruitment and Retention

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

The Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee (JMPRRC) is excited to have recently received strong support from the Town of The Blue Mountains Council to proceed with coordinating a dialogue with key stakeholders and to consider the creation of a Regional Board for Physician Recruitment and Retention that will build on our success to date.

The entire South Georgian Bay Region is designated by the Ministry of Health as an Area of High Physician Need, compounded by:

- 2021 Census data confirmed an unprecedented growth of 11,347 residents who are in need of 14 locally based Family Physicians in addition to those currently without one;
- 27% of Family Physicians in the Region are 60 years of age or older and therefore, nearing retirement and typically cannot be replaced on a one for one due to their roster size; and
- 12,560 residents are currently un-rostered and therefore rely solely on walk-in clinics and/or Emergency Department both of which provides fragmented care.

To date Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee has achieved the following:

- Collingwood designated as an Area of High Physician Need as given accelerated population growth and potential retirements
- White Paper – [Creating and Sustaining Access to Primary Care in South Georgian Bay Region](#)

- Regional Survey April 2021 with results summarized in [Staff Report FAF.21.095](#) noted that:
 - 1 in 3 respondents indicated their primary care provider is located outside of the area covered by the municipalities surveyed
- Support for the expansion of the Owen Sound Family Health Team to Grey Highlands, Meaford and The Blue Mountains

Therefore, The Town of The Blue Mountains Council, in consultation with Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee (JMPRRC), recently passed a resolution directing staff to investigate the option of creating a Regional Board of stakeholders for the purpose of addressing the immediate need of Family Physician recruitment and retention.

As Physician Recruitment remains of critical importance for the South Georgian Bay Region, Municipal Councils play can play an important role in supporting physician recruitment and retention efforts and would be best served to be kept apprised of these types of initiatives.

As a valued stakeholder, we would like to invite a member of your Council and staff to participate in a discussion regarding the potential creation a Regional Board to tackle the topic of Family Physician recruitment and retention and build on the successes of the JMPRRC.

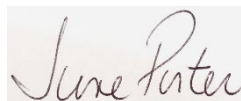
A meeting date of **May 26, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.**, has been selected for the discussion which will be hosted virtually using the Microsoft Teams platform. If you are interested in participating in the discussion and are able to attend the scheduled meeting, please RSVP to cao@thebluemountains.ca and you will be forwarded a meeting link.

If you are interested in participating, but are not able to attend the scheduled meeting, please send your regrets and any comments you may have to cao@thebluemountains.ca and we will share your comments and keep you apprised of the outcome of the discussion.

Respectfully,



Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer
Town of The Blue Mountains



June Porter
Chair, JMPRRC
Town of The Blue Mountains

Enclosed (1) – Town of The Blue Mountains News Release (May 13, 2022)



Media Release

May 13, 2022

Notice – Physician Recruitment Remains of Critical Importance for the South Georgian Bay Region

**The following press release is being shared by the Town of The Blue Mountains on behalf of the Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee.*

As the work of the Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee (JMPRRRC) comes to a close next month, Committee Chair June Porter would like to provide an update to residents regarding the progress made by the committee.

With the need for family physicians at a critical point, the JMPRRRC has worked closely with the Ministry of Health over the last four years to address the identified primary health care needs and challenges in the South Georgian Bay Region and to present solutions for consideration.

Significant progress was made by having the Town of Collingwood designated as an area of [High Physician Need](#). Over time, this will lead to increased access to health care for all residents throughout the region and will help to reduce loads on walk-in clinics and emergency departments. The change of status was achieved by working directly with the Ministry of Health and with local Regional Advisors at Ontario Health. To continue the work of the JMPRRRC, an invitation was recently extended to key stakeholders, including healthcare providers and municipal leaders within the South Georgian Bay region, to focus on improving access to primary health care through a new not-for-profit governance structure. Similar structures to this are already realizing successful results across Ontario, and include Kawartha Lakes, Lambton County and Docs by the Bay in Trenton and Brighton.

Understanding the current state of access to primary health care within the South Georgian Bay region is critical to highlight the significant need to keep these efforts moving forward. Over the past decade, the population of the South Georgian Bay Region, including the communities of the Town of The Blue Mountains, Town of Collingwood, Township of Clearview, Municipality of Meaford, Municipality of Grey Highlands, and the Town of Wasaga Beach, has grown by over 45%. However, during that same time, new Family Physicians to the area have primarily replaced Family Physicians who have retired or relocated. This has resulted in little, if any, additional capacity to handle the primary care needs of the growing population.

In addition, there are currently over 17,000 residents in the South Georgian Bay region that are not rostered to a Family Physician. This means they do not have access to a Family Physician, and instead rely on walk-in/after-hour clinics or an emergency department for primary health

care needs. At current patient levels, this equates to a need for 22 new Family Physicians to fill the gap. When Chatsworth, West Grey and Southgate are factored in, the total number of unrostered residents increases to over 23,000, which equals a total regional need for 28 new Family Physicians. It's also important to note this is in addition to the significant number of residents that travel outside of the local region to access their Family Physician. To add further stress, 27% of Family Physicians in the South Georgian Bay region are 60 years of age or older and may be considering retirement within the coming years. These Physicians will be more difficult to replace on a one-for-one basis due to their large roster size.

The use of walk-in/after-hour clinics or emergency department services is an inadequate substitute for Family Physicians as they do not promote continuity or coordination of care which results from an ongoing relationship between a patient and a Family Physician. This relationship is developed over time as it spans various health care events, and results in an accumulated knowledge of the patient and care consistent with their individual needs.

Understanding these challenges, it's clear there is a significant need to recruit Family Physicians to the region. This need is growing at an unprecedented rate and as history has demonstrated over the last ten years, this situation is not going to address itself. The JMPRRC looks forward to having key stakeholders, municipalities and community members get engaged and participating to consider the creation of a Regional Board of stakeholders for the purpose of addressing the immediate and growing need of Family Physician recruitment and retention in the region.

For more information, please contact:

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