

# Information Memo

To: Council-In-Committee Meeting  
Date: November 15, 2023  
Division: Corporate Services  
Department: Corporate Services Administration  
Ward: All Wards  
Subject: Physician Recruitment Update

## Recommendation(s):

THAT the Information Memo regarding the Physician Recruitment Update be received as information;

AND THAT Staff bring back a further report to Norfolk Council to provide options, including identified funding sources, for the County to consider in support physician recruitment activities in Norfolk County.

## Background

The matter of physician recruitment in Norfolk County was initially discussed at the Health & Social Services Advisory Committee and Board of Health. Norfolk County's CAO and General Manager of Corporate Services have met with the Norfolk Physician Recruitment Committee to discuss physician recruitment activities currently being undertaken in Norfolk County and opportunities for expanding efforts to recruit additional physicians. The purpose of this Information Memo is to provide Council with an update and also to provide information about ways that other municipalities assist with physician recruitment efforts.

This information memo is being provided to Council in Committee rather than the Board of Health as it pertains to physician recruitment in Norfolk County only and any resources the County may provide for physician recruitment would be Norfolk dollars outside of the Haldimand Norfolk Health Unit operating budget that is partially funded by the Ministry of Health.

## Discussion:

The need for additional primary care physicians in Norfolk County is a matter that has been discussed at the Health & Social Services Advisory Committee and Board of Health and has been the subject of Norfolk County AMO and ROMA delegations for the past two years. Below are some statistics related to primary care in Norfolk County that have been guiding the discussions.

- The ratio of physicians to population in Norfolk County is below the provincial standard.

- 17% of Norfolk County residents are not attached to a primary care physician
- 22% of primary care physicians in Norfolk County are over 60 years of age and
- 21% of Norfolk County residents are rostered to a physician who is over 60 years of age. This is important for future planning as these physicians may choose to retire in the next few years.

The Norfolk County Primary Physician Recruitment Committee was formed in early 2022 and has been meeting to discuss physician recruitment needs and activities in Norfolk County. The committee membership includes representatives of Norfolk General Hospital, the Norfolk Family Health Team, the Regional Advisor for Ontario Health Workforce, local physicians, Norfolk County CAO and General Manager of Corporate Services. The Hospital and the Family Health Team both actively undertake physician recruitment and have been successful in attracting physicians to Norfolk. Successful recruitment requires resources, and this is where the County could choose to play a role.

Some municipalities in Ontario contribute to physician recruitment in a variety of ways, including:

- supporting the hiring of a recruiter
- providing financial support to their community's physician recruitment committee to participate in recruitment events
- sponsoring community visits and local experiences for prospective physicians
- offering financial incentives directly to physicians who make a commitment to practice in the community for a specific period of time
- providing housing for medical students, residents, physicians who are new to the area or who are practicing in the community for a locum (a covering physician for a definitive period of time).

Finance Staff have been looking into various funding options should Council wish to contribute to physician recruitment efforts in Norfolk.

Norfolk County Staff will continue to participate in the Primary Physician Recruitment Committee. Should Council wish to consider providing additional support, Staff will investigate further and bring forward a report to Council with options for consideration.

#### **Financial Services Comments:**

As noted above, Finance Staff have been actively investigating options which Norfolk County could pursue in order to provide support to physician recruitment efforts. The available options for funding recruitment efforts will largely depend on the amount of funding required and what form of support will be provided to further efforts toward physician recruitment in Norfolk. Should Council wish to proceed with offering support, staff will provide options for funding as appropriate and note that the County has some remaining Safe Restart funds which could be applicable for this purpose as it will address the capacity of the local health care system.

**Attachment(s):**

Not applicable.

**Conclusion:**

Information provided by Workforce Health Ontario shows that Norfolk County has fewer primary care physicians per 100,000 people than the provincial average and that 17% of residents are not currently attached to a physician. This could become an even greater issue should current physicians move out of the area or retire. County Staff have been involved with the Primary Care Physician Recruitment Committee and are bringing forward this information memo to provide information for Council on ways that the County could consider providing financial support to the existing recruitment efforts.

**Approval:**

Reviewed and Approved By:  
Al Meneses, CAO

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