

Brantford City Council
58 Dalhousie Street
Brantford, ON
N3T 2L2

October 17, 2023

Dear Mayor Davis and Members of Brantford City Council:

RE: Funding Request for Family Physician Recruitment Program 2024 Recruitment Year

Please accept this letter and attached briefing note as our formal request for funding for the Family Physician Recruitment Taskforce for the 2024 recruitment year.

As requested by the Brantford City Council last year, a significant amount of effort has gone into the development of partnerships with local organizations in order to support this important initiative.

The following steps have been taken to build relationships with other local organizations:

- **Grand Erie Six Nations Clinical Education Campus (GE6NCEC) Family Medicine Program**
 - The GE6NCEC Family Medicine Program Director was invited to join the Family Physician Taskforce in order to provide important perspective and information regarding the family medicine residents*.
 - This has provided valuable feedback on strategies to be used in order to retain family medicine residents to the community.

Note: The previous GE6NCEC Family Medicine Program Director left the role at the end of August. The role is currently vacant with recruitment efforts for a new Program Director ongoing.

- **Brantford/Brant/Norfolk Primary Care Council**
 - The Brantford/Brant/Norfolk Primary Care Council continues to be engaged with a representative on the taskforce.
 - Feedback provided on opportunities to partner on efforts to engage existing family physicians for targeted retention efforts.
- **Engagement of Brantford/Brant/Norfolk OHT Region Partners**
 - **County of Brant**
 - Mayor David Bailey continues to sit on the taskforce committee.
 - A presentation was made to the County of Brant in February with a request for funds to support this initiative to effectively support recruitment to the County as well as the City.
 - We are still awaiting confirmation of the final outcome based on County's plans.
 - **Norfolk County**
 - Engaged the new President & CEO of Norfolk General Hospital to discuss opportunities for collaboration.
 - Confirmed collaboration with region for future recruitment events as applicable.
- **South Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance ("SOPRA")**
 - Engaged with other local recruiters in Southern Ontario for the creation of the new South Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance. Currently there are fourteen regions engaged in the alliance.

- Mandate of the alliance is to support international recruitment of family physicians with a focus on repatriation of Canadians training internationally.

We look forward to continuing to engage with these partners to support the recruitment of family physicians.

These partnerships also speak to the change to the current environment for physicians. We are currently in a physician recruitment shortage across the country with the family medicine specialty being hit especially hard. Regions are competing within provinces and across the country for the limited family physicians that are available. Of those that are available, fewer and fewer are going into and staying with family practice versus other hospital opportunities.

Budget Request

For the last 15 years the City of Brantford has been providing the taskforce with the same investment of \$110,000 despite a 2.35%¹ average annual inflation increase since 2009. Throughout this the Brant Community Healthcare System has managed the increasing costs especially those related to salary increases. This has also been exacerbated by the overall increase in costs post pandemic. To manage costs this year, fewer in person events were planned and significant cuts were made to the overall marketing and media strategy by utilizing in house resources within the recruitment team and BCHS instead.

As noted last year, an increase to the budget has been overdue especially with the increased costs as well as the increased demands/need for family physicians. Based on information collected from partners as well as historical data from the previous few years, the estimated cost to effectively run the recruitment taskforce in the current environment is \$245,000. We understand this is a significant jump from the current budget thus we are asking for an increase to the budget to **\$200,000** for the 2024 recruitment year with the goal of building up to \$245,000 for the 2025 recruitment year.

Recruiter Salary and Benefits	\$90,000*
*Funds for a 0.9FTE resource to support this work (split across two individuals).	
Recruitment and Retention Costs	\$110,000
Total Request for Funding	\$245,000

See attached briefing note for additional details and break down of proposed costs.

The environment for family physician recruitment has changed drastically in the last year alone. Prior to 2023 the area lost an average of 1-2 family practice physicians per year. This year alone, 5 family practice physicians have left the area with another 4 who have reached out with potential retirements in the next 1-2 years. Of the 5 physicians that have left, 2 were retirements, 2 moved to other areas to continue family practice and 1 moved to another location to do only hospital work. We have known that the number of physicians retiring was going to continue to increase in the next few years and we are seeing this effect now. This will continue as currently over 25% of the Brantford family practice physicians are estimated to be aged 60+ as of today². That average increases to almost 30% when including Brant County and the Six Nations. We anticipate that number will increase to 36% of physicians who will be over 60 in the next five years and 48% in the next ten years. With those numbers

it will nearly be impossible to recruit enough physicians to catch up with the retiring physicians if something drastic does not change soon.

The taskforce continues to be successful in the recruitment of family physicians in general, the majority of these physicians are being recruited for hospital work as fewer physicians want to continue the tireless work of family practice. **To date we have recruited a total of 12 unique physicians to the City of Brantford.** Of those physicians, only 2 have been recruited as locums for family practice work in the community, with the remainder being recruited for hospital work including hospitalist, emergency medicine and surgical assisting.

We know that recruiting family physicians to family practice is going to take an increased amount of effort to recruit the right people. We also know that this is likely going to be a multi-year, expensive process. Currently it is a “buyer’s market” for family physicians; they are the buyers and have the leverage to get what they want.

One of the strategies that have been used this year to try and recruit physicians has been taking advantage of the changes to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (“CPSO”) licensure allowing for American Board Certified physicians to obtain CPSO licensure. To support this we have traveled to a few events across the border and increased the online advertisements to the US. A number of leads have been generated for this work including residents in the last few years of residency. Our goal is to continue to engage these individuals to line them up for the 2024 years and onwards.

With the expansion of our search to events in the US we have been able to generate a total of 315 leads from a combination of in person events, email blasts, social media (Facebook) and online marketing. This more than doubled our target of 105 new leads for the year. Additional leads were generated through email blast sent to over 4,000 family medicine residents in Canada and the US.

Next Steps

Even with ongoing recruitment efforts, we estimate we are currently short the equivalent of **fourteen (14) to sixteen (16) family physicians** in the community based on the growing Brantford and Brant County population and the estimated 2023 unattached rate for the region of approximately 28%. Our goal for 2024 is to recruit a total of **10** family physicians to the area with **5** of them specifically for family practice.

Ms. Numekevor continues to lead recruitment efforts while managing her role as the Director of Medical Affairs at Brant Community Health Care System. She is now supported on a part time basis by Kirstine Colyn. With the need for full time equivalent support for this work there will also be a review of staffing model to best meet the needs of the region.

Please feel free to direct any inquiries to either Lebené or Kirstine via the recruitment email info@familyphysicianrecruitment.com or our website www.familyphysicianrecruitment.com.

We appreciate your historical and ongoing commitment to this initiative. With the increase in population and the change in demographics is putting primary care as we know it is at risk for our community. This also adds added strain to our already stretched hospital system.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. Your support goes a long way in better preparing us for a future healthier community.



Sincerely,

Sandra Vos & Lebené Numekevor

Sandra Vos
Chair, Family Physician Recruitment Committee
The Family Physician Recruitment Committee
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Lebené Numekevor
Director, Medical Affairs

cc: Dr. Anirudh Goel, Chief of Staff & VP Medical Affairs
Family Physician Recruitment Task Force Committee

Data Sources

- 1 – Bank of Canada Inflation Rate Calculator <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>
- 2 – HNHB LHIN Data released June 14, 2023